

# Artist has a way with camembert and herbs

MANY dishes that have become gourmet delights started off far more humbly as everyday fare. Camembert cheese is one of these, and Louis Jansen van Vuuren discovered his favourite starter during a stay in provincial France.

Louis, chairman of the Western Cape branch of the SA Association of Arts and new national president of the organisation, teaches graphic design at the Michaelis School of Fine Art. He is also a professional painter.

Louis spent six months in the south of France, exploring "Impressionist country". He says that mainly because of poverty, he learnt to cook with herbs that were readily available. He also discovered that cheese such as camembert, considered something of a delicacy in South Africa, is a reasonably inexpensive commodity in France.

One of his many "experimental" recipes is *deep-fried herb Camembert*, which, with the help of seasoning from his herb garden in Tamboers Kloof, makes a tasty and spectacular starter.

Louis reflects that local camembert does not compare with the French varieties. Our regulations dictate that pasteurised milk must be used and as a result "you can't taste the grass". Prepared in this way, however, the full taste can be realised.

Take six half camembert, two beaten eggs and 2½ cups of dried white bread-crumbs — coarsely crumbed baguette is ideal "to get the right feel".

Use plenty of freshly chopped and bruised rosemary, thyme, fennel, dill weed and ground black pepper.

You will need a small bottle of sesa-



## FOOD FOR THOUGHT

Louis Jansen van Vuuren



me oil to mix with two parts of sunflower oil. Louis says that pure sesame oil is ideal "if you are feeling very affluent".

Make a sauce out of a bottle of cranberry or wild cherry jam, mixed with 1½ cups of brandy.

First dip the cheese into the egg and then into the crumbs. It should be well coated. Now add the herbs and pepper to the crumbs and re-dip the camembert to put on a second layer, this time with herbs.

Chill the crumbed cheese in the refrigerator for about 30 minutes so that it firms.

Warm the brandy-cranberry sauce in a separate pot. Fry the camembert in the oil for about three minutes, browning well on both sides. Be careful when handling it, especially after cooking, as it is very soft. Put it in with tongs, but be careful when taking it out — rather use a skimmer or a runcible spoon.

While the cheese is frying, the sauce can be poured on to small plates. Remove and drain the cheese when ready, and place on the plates — use your imagination to decorate, and serve immediately.

Louis says that he likes it served with melba toast and dry, sparkling wine. "It looks good and tastes amazing."