

Alcohol distribution in Nev. signals economic recovery

By Adelaide Chen, Las Vegas Review-Journal

Credit tourism – more alcohol is flowing across Nevada.

Compared with five years ago, distribution of wines increased 18.2 percent, spirits went up 14.8 percent and draft beer 10 percent, all in gallons, according to the state's taxation department.

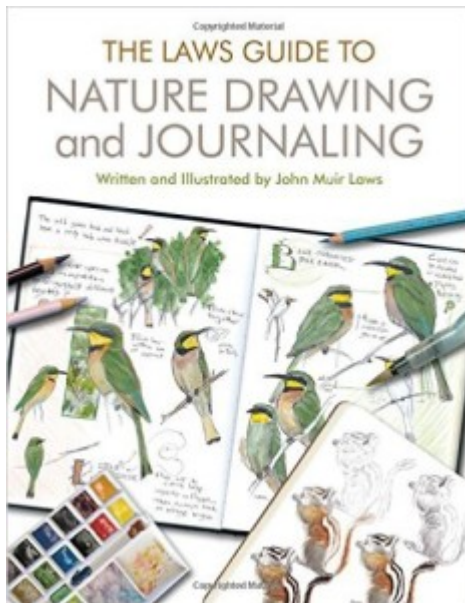
"I can guarantee you anytime you see big swings like that, very rarely is it occurring by local consumption. People don't just change their drinking habits that dramatically," said David Ozgo, senior vice president of economic and strategic analysis for the Distilled Spirits Council of the United States.

Statewide, an average of 7.6 million gallons of alcohol per month were distributed in 2015 – the best so far in the years following the recession – but fell 164,000 gallons short of the pre-recession peak in 2007, based on state taxation figures.

Read the whole story

Book review: Learning to see with latest 'Laws Guide'

By Kim Wyatt



“The Laws Guide to Nature Drawing and Journaling”

By John Muir Laws

Heyday Books, 312 pages, \$35

One-line review: An excellent art instruction book that could also improve one’s life.

Many of us in the Sierra are familiar with the illustrations of John Muir Laws, the naturalist, educator and artist behind the “The Laws Field Guide to the Sierra Nevada.” In his latest book, “The Laws Guide to Nature Drawing and Journaling,” just out from Heyday Books, rather than simply teach technique, Laws shows us how to see.

For anyone who has ever looked at an illustrated Laws Guide and thought, I wish I could do that, Laws gives you the tools and the inspiration. “The Laws Guide to Nature Drawing and Journaling,” is essentially a master class in capturing the Sierra Nevada in pencil, pen and ink, gouache, watercolor, and more. Although the book is ostensibly a guide to drawing, we learn how to deepen our observational skills, the practice (and benefits) of intentional curiosity, and the value of cultivating creativity—all of which expand our understanding of the natural world and our place in it.

The book is broken into useful sections: How to think about what we are seeing, how to capture it in a journal, what to keep in our journaling kit and how to draw our favorite subjects: animals, wildflowers, trees, and landscapes. At 312 pages, it's not the kind of book you'll carry in your backpack, but it is good for car camping, road trips and as an indispensable home reference. (You can always photocopy pages and stick them in your journaling kit.)

Hundreds of colorful illustrations with step-by-step instructions make this book a keeper. From beetles to bears, it's all here. On a recent trip, I took the book and learned a few things new to me: When drawing waterfalls, you draw the rocks around the waterfall, not the water. Conifer branches reach out like a hand near the bottom of the tree—how had I not noticed this before? Now, when I'm in my backyard, I not only greet the lizard, but also note its proportions and where the light falls, which deepens our relationship. The habit of careful attention Laws encourages heightens our appreciation of the environment, which will make us better stewards.

"The Laws Guide to Nature Drawing and Journaling," would be a great graduation gift for a budding artist or naturalist. Those new to drawing and journaling will find it an amazing resource, while veteran creators will appreciate the depth and specificity of Laws' tips and hacks. All, however, will find inspiration—this book will elevate the wonder that lies in us all, and give us a new way to look at our beloved Sierra.

"The Laws Guide to Nature Drawing and Journaling" also has a great companion website, with a blog featuring video tutorials, and instructor guides. You may find it [**here**](#).

*Kim Wyatt is the owner of the independent press **Bona Fide Books** in Meyers.*

Gardeners needed for asparagus study

The master gardener phenology and grow-out trial is designed to determine the suitability of asparagus in the Truckee-Tahoe region.

To facilitate the evaluation master gardeners and public gardeners with an interest in science reporting and with special interest in growing asparagus for personal consumption are needed. Those participating will receive instructions on the history and cultivation techniques related to asparagus

Each participant will have the opportunity to receive at no cost several asparagus plants to grow.

During the course of this study, those participating will be able to obtain assistance in cultivating the plants, including information on plant maintenance and pest management. The project is expected to take a minimum of two growing seasons, and with success possibly a third season.

For more info, contact Ericka Kay at erickarkay@gmail.com.

Snippets about Lake Tahoe



• Kelly Shanahan is retiring after 22 years as an OBGYN in South Lake Tahoe.

• Tahoe Paradise Resort Improvement District board meets March 31 from 6-8pm at the park.

• El Dorado County Supervisor Sue Novasel is conducting a **survey** regarding the parks and trails in the district.

• Texas native Granger Smith will be appearing in concert at TJ's Corral at the Carson Valley Inn on May 28.

• Barton Foundation's Tiki Tee Off Golf Tournament and Lei Up Luau Lunch is June 3.

Deaf cook lets food speak for him



Charlie Somers enjoys learning the inner workings of a professional kitchen. Photo Copyright 2016 Carolyn E. Wright

By Kathryn Reed

STATELINE – Only one ingredient is missing from the kitchen at Mirabelle – the chatter among the staff.

Well, there's chatter, it's just not audible.

With the hiring of Charlie Somers, owner-chef Kenn Druley has had to rethink how he communicates with staff. Somers is deaf. Druley isn't proficient in sign language, nor is anyone else who works at the Stateline restaurant.

It can be a challenge at times because the work of a chef involves having one's head down nearly all the time cutting, chopping and stirring. It can be fast moving as well.

"It's kind of like with any new language or any new guy in the kitchen, there are always things to adjust to. It's just a

different way to communicate,” Druley told *Lake Tahoe News*. “I see it as more of a positive challenge for the kitchen; for myself and Charlie as well. It’s a verbal occupation and you are constantly working with your hands and talking. So when Charlie needs some instruction or directions I have to stop and put things down.”



Charlie Somers doesn't let his disability of being deaf slow him down in the kitchen. Photo Copyright 2016 Carolyn E. Wright

Despite what could be perceived as a language barrier, Somers, through interpreter Karla Johnston, told *Lake Tahoe News* that the “joking, teasing and camaraderie” are the best parts of the job.

Right behind that is learning to cook French cuisine – not something he does at home. Burgers and fries are his specialty when not at work.

He said there are few chefs in the United States who are deaf. The challenges, he assumes, would be the same whether it's a small kitchen like Mirabelle or a larger one.

Mozzeria, a pizza place in San Francisco, is one place Somers believes would be interesting to work because it is owned and operated by deaf people.

Somers is cognizant that his disability can be more of a challenge to others than it is to him.

"I'm used to working with it, others aren't," he said. "I adapt pretty well."

Everyone at Mirabelle has learned a little sign language.



Salads are one of Charlie Somers' responsibilities. Photo Copyright 2016 Carolyn E. Wright

"He has to learn to work within this environment and how to

teach other people how to work with him. It's not a one-way street at all. It is a two-way street. Teaching is going on both ways all the time, every day," Druley said.

Somers took a break from whipping the chocolate mousse into the perfect consistency to chat about how at age 43 he got into this profession. He credits his three children.

About five years ago they were all watching the movie "Ratatouille" and from there Somers got the idea that working as a chef would be interesting and rewarding. He was fairly proficient at barbecuing, but the intricacies of the kitchen – especially a commercial one – were foreign to him. That led him to Lake Tahoe Community College.

Somers now has a certificate in culinary arts. Last fall he answered an ad from Druley on Craigslist that led to him to Mirabelle. He started just before Thanksgiving.

"The ad didn't say anything about hiring deaf guys only. It said it was open to anyone with a passion for cooking who wants to learn, would be here every day and had a great attitude. Charlie showed up and fit the bill. He was exactly what I was looking for," Druley said.

Normally Somers works four days a week. A regular shift includes preparing the salads, then dessert, onion tart, bacon, chopping onions, doing dishes, taking out the trash and helping Druley and the line cook with whatever they need.

For Somers, the onion tart is one of his favorite items on the menu. He describes it as being like a French pizza. For now, it's all about following the chef's recipes and becoming proficient in various techniques.

Prior to putting on a chef's jacket, Somers had been working in data entry before going to LTCC. His time in a kitchen had been at Bread & Broth and Little Philly Cheesesteak.

As for his future, he's not sure. Owning a restaurant seems daunting to him. For now, though, he's perfectly content to learn all that Druley has to teach.

Druley gives Somers high praise for how far he has come in these four months.

"He is anticipating what the line needs during service. He is learning how to be a good cook, what good cooks do and how they work," Druley said.

Editorial: What are Nevada lawmakers hiding?

Publisher's note: *This editorial is from the March 27, 2016, Reno Gazette-Journal.*

In the final hours of last year's Nevada Legislature, a bill was rushed through and passed unanimously making almost all communications by lawmakers secret.

This harms the public's interest in understanding the actions of their representatives.

The state Senate and Assembly have the ability to temporarily change the policy themselves each session. They should do this if they believe in the government transparency so many of them trumpet – and they should make the change permanent.

This law only recently came to light when the Associated Press asked top elected officials in each state for emails using their public accounts in the first week of February and for their calendars showing whom they met with during that time.

Read the whole story

Candidates gone but not forgotten on Calif. presidential primary ballot

By Phil Willon, Los Angeles Times

When California Republicans cast their votes in the June 7 primary, an election that could decide the GOP's presidential nominee, they'll probably be confronted by the ghosts of candidates past.

That means Republicans could still cast a vote for former Florida Gov. Jeb Bush, retired neurosurgeon Ben Carson, New Jersey Gov. Chris Christie, former Hewlett-Packard chief executive Carly Fiorina, former Virginia Gov. Jim Gilmore or Florida Sen. Marco Rubio, even though they all have ended their campaigns.

They're all on the state's presidential ballot alongside the Republicans still in the race: New York billionaire Donald Trump, Texas Sen. Ted Cruz and Ohio Gov. John Kasich.

Read the whole story

Study challenges benefits of wine consumption

By Angus Chen, NPR

You've probably heard that a little booze a day is good for you. I've even said it at parties. "Look at the French," I've said gleefully over my own cup. "Wine all the time and they still live to be not a day younger than 82."

I'm sorry to say we're probably wrong. The evidence that alcohol has any benefit on longevity or heart health is thin, says Timothy Naimi, a physician and epidemiologist at Boston Medical Center.

He and his colleagues published an analysis of 87 of the best research studies on alcohol's effect on death from any cause in the Journal of Studies on Alcohol and Drugs on Tuesday. "[Our] findings here cast a great deal of skepticism on this long, cherished belief that moderate drinking has a survival advantage," he says.

SLT youth dies in single-vehicle accident

A South Lake Tahoe teenager died early Saturday when the vehicle she was driving hit a tree on Highway 89 near Pope Beach.

Jillian Pruitt, 19, was the only occupant of the vehicle.

The accident occurred about 3:40am March 26.

According the California Highway Patrol, they turned the investigation over to the El Dorado County Sheriff's Department because it may not have been an accident.

Multiple calls were placed to EDSO and no one returned calls.

– *Lake Tahoe News staff report*

Tahoe resorts eye longest ski season in decade



Heavenly Mountain Resort and all Tahoe ski areas are having their best season in years. Photo Copyright 2016 Carolyn E. Wright

By Benjamin Spillman, Reno Gazette-Journal

Don't give up on that season ski pass just yet, Tahoe locals.

The Monday morning powder dump that disrupted commutes in Reno

served as an exclamation point for the 2015-16 season which is likely to be the longest in more than a decade.

So far Mt. Rose Ski Tahoe and Squaw Alpine resorts have announced plans to continue spinning lifts well into May. Although whether it actually happens still depends on the weather in coming weeks.

If Mt. Rose makes it's anticipated closing date of May 8 it will mark 185 days of skiing at the resort, it's longest season since at least winter 2005-06. Mt. Rose opened the 2015-16 season on Nov. 6. Squaw-Alpine officials have only stated they plan to offer skiing "into May as long as weather and conditions permit."

Read the whole story