Beer aficionados now have equivalent to sommelier

By Deena Prichep, NPR

If you've been to a fancy restaurant, you've probably seen a sommelier – those wine experts who make sure you get the best possible match for your meal. But what if you don't want a Chardonnay or Pinot? What if you want a nice cold beer?

A new program is working to bring this same level of knowledge to the world of malt and hops by turning out batches of certified beer experts known as Cicerones.

Ray Daniels, a Chicago brewer, started the Cicerone program five years ago. And he jokes that he did so for a fairly simple reason: bad beer.

"You'd go into a place that had a lot of taps, that you'd think might know their beer. And they really didn't," Daniels sighed. So Daniels came up with the Cicerone exam to standardize a canon of beery knowledge.

There are three levels of of Cicerones, starting out with Certified Beer Servers (an online exam), Cicerones (an in-person test, complete with a tasting component), and the top level of Master Cicerone (an in-person exam lasting two days). The exams focus on five basic components: keeping and serving beer; beer styles; flavor and tasting; brewing process and ingredients; and beer and food pairing.

Read the whole story

Learn how to properly prune

Arborist William Probst will give a talk title Pruning – The Proper Way, The Proper Tools on Sept. 10 at noon.

This free talk is sponsored by the South Tahoe Garden Club. It will be at the Ledbetter Terrace at Lake Tahoe Community College in South Lake Tahoe.

Tahoe basin socked in with smoke; fires rage

Appreciable smoke continues to linger in the Lake Tahoe Basin this morning.

The Rim Fire that is burning near and in Yosemite National Park is bringing the smoke to the South Shore and Carson Valley. Reports are that the smoke is worse in the Carson City-Dayton area than in the basin.

Counties throughout the region have issued health advisories because of the smoke. More information about what to do and the levels of risk may be found online.

Barton Memorial Hospital's emergency department reported a higher than normal number of patients in the past 24 hours.

"While we cannot provide an exact count, most patients seen have existing chronic pulmonary issues. Their problems have been escalated due to the smoke. Most symptoms have been shortness of breath," spokeswoman Monica Sciuto told *Lake*

Tahoe News.

Barton Urgent care is open this weekend from 9am to 5pm at Stateline and the emergency department is open 24/7.

The Rim Fire has grown to more than 125,000 acres and is 5 percent contained. Thousands of homes are threatened and nine structures have been destroyed. Gov. Jerry Brown declared a state of emergency for San Francisco. The Hetch Hetchy Reservoir, which is about four miles from the fire, provides The City with 85 percent of its water. Two of the three hydroelectric power stations in the area have been turned off because of the fire.

The American Fire near Foresthill is at 22,040 acres and is two-thirds contained. Full containment is expected Sept. 1.

According to fire officials, "The forest, timber industry, local agencies, and private landowners continue to contribute to collaborate to implement strategy and tactics that will minimize impacts on high value timber resources."

Four outbuildings have been destroyed and part of the Tahoe National Forest remains closed.

– Lake Tahoe News staff report

S. Tahoe launching fall Citizens Academy

South Lake Tahoe is accepting applications for the fall 2013 Citizens Academy.

The Citizens Academy will be on Wednesday evenings from 5:30-8

from Sept. 25–Oct. 30.

The application deadline is Sept. at 5pm.

The South Lake Tahoe Citizens Academy is a free, six-session interactive course designed to provide residents with an in-depth look into municipal government, as well as, information about the services and programs of South Lake Tahoe.

More information is available online.

Hints of fall popping up on foliage in Tahoe



Shades of fall on Aug. 16 hiking to Raymond Lake in Alpine County. Photo/Kathryn Reed

By Kathryn Reed

While the calendar says fall is still about a month away, the foliage throughout California is saying it's on its way. Signs of autumn started appearing in earnest last week.

Trees in the Lake Tahoe Basin are starting to turn yellow, with the change even more prominent at higher elevations.

But it's not just Tahoe – trees in San Francisco are turning, leaves on Napa grapevines are not all green and the corn husks in Lake County along Highway 20 have already dried out and turned golden.

Early September is the normal time to be seeing signs of fall color.

"Temperatures and lack of water play into it," Michelle Breckner, senior climatologist with the Western Regional Climate Center in Reno, told *Lake Tahoe News*. "The quick burst of hot temperatures this year just dried everything out and it was drier this year."

She said the ongoing drought in California and Nevada is making things drier each year.

"It is climate change and the Earth is hotter," Breckner said. "The water is directed to other areas of the world."

June and July were unusually warm in the Tahoe-Reno area, with August starting off cooler than normal.

"What you want for good fall color is warm daytime temperatures and chilly overnight," explained Scott McGuire, meteorologist with the National Weather Service in Reno.

For the first half of August the daytime temps have been slightly below normal and the night temps just above normal. Still, the color is here.

“It seems like it’s been 15 years or so since we have had a cool August. August has generally been above average for the last decade and a half around Lake Tahoe. This one is starting out on the cool side,” Kelly Redmond, deputy director and regional climatologist with the Western Regional Climate Center in Reno, said.

It’s possible the colors may not be as vibrant as some years because of the lack of moisture. It’s been relatively dry since January.

“The best fall colors occur following a growing season with plenty of moisture or at least a good snowpack the previous spring and then a dry clear fall with cool nights but not freezing temperatures. Frost will cause the leaves to brown and drop quickly,” Blake Engelhardt, botanist with the Lake Tahoe Basin Management Unit, told *Lake Tahoe News*. “Local temperature and moisture characteristics as well as small genetic differences between individual (plants) will affect when and how the color change progresses. Even with the dry conditions, we could still see some really nice fall colors.”

This is how Engelhardt explained the leaf color transformation process: “During the summer growing season, the leaves are constantly producing chlorophyll which gives them their green color. In the fall, longer nights trigger the formation of the abscission layer. This is essentially a thickened layer of cells at the base of the leaf where it attaches to the stem that blocks the transport of water and sugar into the leaf. Thin deciduous leaves won’t survive the freezing temperatures of winter, so there’s no reason to keep feeding them. Once chlorophyll synthesis stops, the green quickly disappears and other more persistent pigments become visible yellows, reds, purples. If the growing season is particularly dry, the abscission layer can form sooner and the leaves may turn color earlier or drop before a very brilliant display.”

But just because the leaves are turning sooner does not mean

winter will arrive sooner.

However, pay attention to what the squirrels do because their behavior can be an indicator of the winter ahead.

“We find if they drop a whole lot of pine cones, we will have a heavy winter,” Cheryl Millham, executive director of Lake Tahoe Wildlife Care, told *Lake Tahoe News*. Heavy winter means lots of snow or super cold.

Millham said she has started to notice some cones falling, but she isn’t ready to make any predictions just yet based on squirrel activity.

Letter: Angry about parking ticket

Publisher’s note: ***This letter was sent to South Lake Tahoe officials and then the author asked for it to be published on Lake Tahoe News.***

The City Officials of South Lake Tahoe,

I am a new resident of Nevada. I reside in (Southern) Nevada. I recently visited Lake Tahoe for the first time ever on July 7, 2013, and received a very unwelcoming welcome to your city, in the form of a parking ticket.

Minutes after arriving in town, my boyfriend and I went down to the beach to see the sunset and to grab a bite to eat at the Beachhouse Restaurant.

We parked along the fence next to the restaurant. There were no signs indicating that this was a paid parking area. I took

pictures that show very clearly that there were no visible signs to pay for parking, in front of my car, nor were there signs to the left or right of my car, nor were there any signs in front of the car parked to my right. Nothing.

Shame on you South Lake Tahoe for purposely creating a parking ticket trap for tourists. I did some simple math, using conservative figures, based on my ticket fine of $55. I figured that you are probably making over $100,000 in revenue per year, for the city, from parking ticket fine … just in that one location.

I appealed my ticket online based on the fact that: The city is negligent in their lack of sign postings. How can you expect folks to see the signs that are so far and few between, with SUVS, vans, and vehicles parked along the fence, blocking the signs from view?

The appeal process online only allowed me to upload one photo. I had three photos which clearly showed no visible signs that could be seen from my SUV in any direction.

As I had said in my appeal, I am not a chancer or a cheater, nor am I a wealthy person. If I had seen a sign that required me to pay for parking, I would have and I should have been able to upload more than one photo in my defense online. The appeals board upheld their decision, and I must pay $55. I never even had a chance.

Shame on you South Lake Tahoe for purposely creating a money-making trap, penalizing hard working people out of their hard earned money, that they had intended to spend on their vacation in your city.

The city should post signs in front of every parking space clearly indicating that this is a paid parking space.

Stop cheating tourists out of their money by issuing bogus parking tickets.

Do the right thing. Make signs visible and put them in front of every parking space.

Sharon Resnick, Southern Nevada

Cocktail contest in South Lake Tahoe

The annual Signature Cocktail Contest at Riva Grill in South Lake Tahoe is Sept. 12 from 5:30-8pm.

Money goes to Barton Health’s Festival of Trees & Lights.

Local bartenders will vie for best cocktail and most congenial bartender.

So far the contestants will be from Chart House, Heavenly, LewMarNel’s, MontBleu, Naked Fish and Riva Grill.

Tickets are $30 and may be purchased online.

Healthy-sounding food labels being challenged

By Paul M. Barrett, Bloomberg News

Over the past 18 months, a group of plaintiffs’ lawyers who got rich suing the tobacco industry have turned their litigious attention to what they hope will be the next big

thing: challenges to healthy-sounding food labels they allege are misleading.

Hailing from across the U.S., the lawyers decided to sue in federal courts in Northern California, where the consumer-protection laws are expansive and the jury pool nutrition-conscious.

“Even the judges are calling this jurisdiction the Food Court,” says Pierce Gore, the San Jose attorney serving as local coordinator for plaintiffs’ firms in Mississippi, Texas, Tennessee, Illinois, and New York.

So far three dozen suits seeking class-action status are pending in the Bay Area. The grocery list of targets includes Unilever’s Ben & Jerry’s ice cream, Chobani yogurt, Kraft’s Trident gum, Hershey chocolates, Ocean Spray beverages, and Associated British Foods’ Twinings teas.

Unlike suits over cigarettes, these food label cases don’t allege that anyone has been physically injured or addicted; nor do they suggest that the products in question are dangerous or defective. Instead they challenge the hawking of granola bars, fruit juice, and green tea as being good for you.

Specifically, the suits say consumers are being tricked by such claims as “100 percent natural” and “no sugar added.”

Read the whole story

Dangerous smoke cancels South

Lake Tahoe air show; health officials say stay inside



This NASA image shows smoke from the Rim Fire blowing toward Lake Tahoe.

By Kathryn Reed

A fire hundreds of miles from Lake Tahoe has forced the cancellation of the 24th annual Lake in the Sky Air Show.

South Lake Tahoe City Manager Nancy Kerry said the FAA requires 1.5 to 3 miles of visibility and that as of Friday afternoon it is only at one mile.

And with the National Weather Service in Reno saying the smoky skies are expected to stay through the weekend, city officials did not want to take a chance and wait to call off of the show on Saturday morning – the day of the show.

The Rim Fire burning out of control near Yosemite National Park is bringing the eerie color skies to the basin. As of 3pm Aug. 23 that fire was at 105,620 acres and 2 percent containment. Fire crews say the growth potential is “extreme”.

Kerry said there was talk of having a static air show – as in planes just on the ground. However, she said with El Dorado County public health issuing a warning for people to stay indoors, the city could not justify having people stand around inhaling the smoke – including employees and the public.

“By Labor Day it will blow out. I wish we could just switch the air show to then,” Kerry told *Lake Tahoe News*.

El Dorado County has said the air quality is “unhealthy”. The smoke is prevalent in El Dorado Hills and only gets stronger coming through the American River Canyon into the Lake Tahoe Basin.

Douglas County officials are also recommending people stay indoors. Air samples taken Friday in Gardnerville put the air quality in the upper end of the “moderate” level in the Carson Valley.

The National Weather Service in Reno has issued a dense smoke advisory for Alpine County and the southern part of the Lake Tahoe Basin through 7pm Aug. 24. Visibility in Markleeville and along parts of Highway 50 is expected to drop to one-quarter mile.

Ash has fallen in the Carson Valley and Alpine County.

Air quality is also an issue for the North Shore and Truckee and Carson areas. The American Fire that is burning near Foresthill is also hitting those regions.

“Afternoon-evening winds are forecast to increase somewhat each day this weekend, with winds gusts 20-30 mph Saturday and up to 35 mph Sunday. Any holdover fires from the lightning

earlier this week could flare up with these gusts," Jon Mittelstadt with the Weather Service said.

The good news about the wind is that should blow the smoke out of the basin.

In addition to the air show's being canceled, the South Lake Tahoe city pool and Bijou Golf Course are closed. The decision to open them will be on a day-to-day basis, but Kerry said to expect them to be closed through the weekend.

Other cancellations:

• Aug. 23 Minden Concert in the Park.

• The Aug. 24-25 Lake Tahoe Outrigger Challenge Race at Lakeview Commons.

• The Strawberry Music Festival at Camp Mather on Labor Day weekend.

Armed robber snares cash from Kings Beach bank



This man is a suspect in an Aug. 23 bank robbery in Kings Beach. Photo/Provided

The Bank of the West in Kings Beach was robbed Friday morning.

A man entered the bank about 10:30am Aug. 23 and showed a black handgun to a teller. The teller then gave the man an undisclosed amount of cash.

Placer County sheriff’s detectives are working with South Lake Tahoe police officers to see if there are any similarities between this robbery and the one at El Dorado Savings on Aug. 21.

The suspect in the Kings Beach case is described as an older white male, wearing a baseball cap, sunglasses, black jeans and gray sweater. No vehicle was seen.

– Lake Tahoe News staff report