McDonald’s makes move to sell coffee for home brewing

By Huffington Post

Do you like the taste of McDonald’s coffee, but dislike how convenient it is to buy coffee already-brewed? You may be in luck. BurgerBusiness reports that the fast food chain could soon start selling its coffee beans in packages for home brewing.

The evidence for BurgerBusiness’s theory comes in the form of a trademark application McDonald’s filed on Sept. 18. The blog sought, but did not obtain, confirmation for the product launch from McDonald’s PR.

Still, the trademark application alone is a sign of how seriously McDonald’s takes coffee these days. Since the mid-aughts, the company has made a concerted push to challenge the dominance of Starbucks and Dunkin’ Donuts in the brewed coffee market. The company’s efforts boosted McDonald’s market share from 2 percent in 2004 to 6 percent in 2010.

The market for packaged beans is already competitive. Coffee-focused Starbucks and Green Mountain Coffee are two of the five biggest players, according to a August 2012 report by IBISWorld. But multinational food giants Smuckers, Kraft and Nestle are also in the fray, through their Folgers, Maxwell House and Nescafe brands respectively. That means it will be hard for any new entrant, even the world’s biggest fast-food chain, to break in.

But the at-home coffee market is worth $10 billion annually in the U.S. alone, with a profit margin near 30 percent. And it’s growing at an estimated 5 percent a year. That’s such a big pie that even a tiny sliver could be tremendously lucrative for McDonald’s.

Growing number of Chinese interested in wine

By Bruce Einhorn, Bloomberg

On the outskirts of Yinchuan, a sleepy provincial capital near the Gobi Desert, workers put the finishing touches on Château Changyu Moser XV, a vast building with white stone walls and black-tiled mansard and domed roofs. If it weren't for the cast-metal statues of Chinese lions guarding the main gate, it could pass as a classical château found in the cradle of France's Loire Valley.

When it opens soon, the 150-acre estate will serve as local headquarters for Changyu Pioneer Wine, a Chinese vintner that already has ersatz châteaux in other parts of China. This summer the company announced plans to spend $950 million on a "wine city" in eastern China's Shandong province, complete with two châteaux and a European-style village.

As the country's nouveau riche continue to spend lavishly on wine, such copycat French castles – as well as Mission-style Napa Valley knockoffs – are rising out of the countryside. In some places winemakers don't even bother with a vineyard – they just have a castle with a cellar full of trucked-in wines.

"I almost don't care about how good the wine is," said Chinese architect and winemaker Qingyun Ma. "As soon as I see a fake French château, I think there's something wrong."

Ma is one of the growing number of Chinese oenophiles who want the wine world to look beyond hyperreal European settings and start thinking of made-in-China Cabernet Sauvignon or Pinot

Noir without laughing. That’s not easy, since the country has no winemaking tradition of its own.

In China, people who wanted a drink traditionally downed shots of baijiu – fierce, clear booze made from sorghum that remains a staple at Chinese banquets. When they tried to make wine, the product was barely drinkable.

Shao Xuedong, chief winemaker at Cofco Junding Winery, a state-owned company that operates a Napa-inspired winery in Shandong, remembers when he first started in the business in the 1990s. Back then, “at least 95 percent” of Chinese wine wasn’t real, he said. “It was just some blend of water, sugar and grape juice.”

Emma Gao is the winemaker at Silver Heights, a family winery in Yinchuan that produces some of China’s most admired vintages. Gao, who studied at La Faculté d’Oenologie de Bordeaux, said many of her neighbors don’t understand what she’s trying to accomplish.

Huge potential

“Here, people think a good wine shouldn’t give you a headache the next morning,” she said.

Even so, Gao and other serious vintners see huge potential. Chinese bought 156 million cases in 2011, making the country the world’s fifth-largest wine market, and purchases should hit 250 million by 2016, according to International Wine Spirit Research.

“Before, people would just buy wine to show off, but that’s changing,” said Shaun Rein, managing director of China Market Research Group in Shanghai. “Younger Chinese are drinking it at home.”

California wines are popular, too. After retiring from the Houston Rockets, Chinese basketball star Yao Ming launched Yao

Family Wines in November. The company produces a Cabernet Sauvignon in Napa Valley, with French beverage maker Pernod Ricard distributing it in China.

The emphasis may be on imports, but local wine is improving. More Chinese are going overseas to study winemaking, and critics have noticed: A Cabernet red blend by Helan Qingxue, a winery in Yinchuan, last year won the Best Red Bordeaux Varietal Over £10 International Trophy at the Decanter World Wine Awards.

China's boutique winemakers hope the plaudits will attract more experts to China to nurture its winemaking culture. France's Castel Group and Rémy Cointreau have both teamed up with Chinese winemakers. Perhaps the biggest name in Bordeaux, Domaines Barons de Rothschild (Lafite), has staked its flag in China, with vines planted and a winery under construction in Shandong. Working with state-owned local partner Citic, the famed French winemaker had a groundbreaking ceremony in March for the 4.3-acre winery. Overseeing the project is General Manager Gerard Colin, a Frenchman with more than 50 years of wine-producing experience who has lived in China since 1997. "I think we can make a wine with balance and complexity," he said.

Before teaming up with the Rothschilds, Colin helped out a winery just down the road called Treaty Port. At the center of its 52 acres is an imitation 17th century Scottish castle, a stone fortress complete with a Union Jack flying on the flagpole at the top. Finished in 2009, the castle has six bedrooms and a large wood-paneled hall.

Don't expect any European gimmicks from Lafite's first Chinese operation, however. Colin vows no cheesy castle this time.

"We are in China," he said. "We don't do Versailles."

King of the chicken wings to be determined in Carson City

Ultimate Wing Wars, a chicken wing cook-off event, is coming to the Best Western Carson Station hotel-casino Oct. 5-7.

Organized by W.R. “Willie” Davison, the self-proclaimed Chicken Wing King, bars, restaurants and catering groups will serve up their sauced wings to the public and prepare for battle.

Attendees, armed with napkins and a hearty appetite, will help choose the winner of this war.

Carson Station’s Ultimate Wing Wars will also feature dozens of vendors for shopping, kids games and casino giveaways and special promotions inside the newly remodeled Carson Station in Carson City.

Admission is free. Wing sampler plates start at $3.

Schedule:

Oct. 5: 10am to 8pm

Oct. 6: 10am to 8pm

Oct. 7: 10am to 6pm.

Northern Nevada is home to state’s only organic apple orchard

By Alyx Sacks, KRNV-TV

Al and Delane Pennington never farmed a day in their lives up until about eight years ago.

Now they’ve fallen into what they call a labor of love.

Nestled in the heart of Washoe Valley is a 1 acre-rarity.

“Can you imagine a more beautiful spot than here,” Al Pennington says.

The Apple Basket is the only organic apple picking orchard in Nevada.

The Penningtons have operated the orchard about a year after they bought it, but spring freezes the last two years have forced it to stay closed.

Last weekend they got to re-open.

“You know it’s a lot of work and my wife and I do it all and we enjoy it just love having the people come out here,” Pennington says.

Apple lovers are enjoying it too.

“It’s a tradition for my family being from the east coast that we get to use great grandma’s recipe and make some apple sauce,” Tracy Jung says.

There’s some 200 trees full of golden delicious’, braeburns, cameos, and galas to choose from.

The apples are $1.50 a pound.

They’re certified organic; therefore no pesticides and no oils are used to treat them.

According to the USDA, the average cost this year in September for organic apples ranged from at least a $1.72 on up to $2.54.

“You don’t even have to buy them at a store you come here and pick them and you save money,” Elise Draeger says.

So what does it take to be the only organic apple picking orchard in Nevada?

Pennington says a lot of hard work.

Including constantly removing dead apples and debris under the trees and that helps with pest control.

The Penningtons also use chickens to help clear up unwanted pests.

All their methods seem to be working.

“It was really fun and I think everyone should do it,” Draeger says.

The Pennigtons hope to keep the orchard open until the end of October.

Students adjusting to more

healthy school lunches

By Sarah Handel, NPR

This fall, the more than 38 million kids who get their lunches through the National School Lunch Program are seeing big changes on their trays.

Generally, “it’s more fruits, more vegetables, more whole grains, low-fat, no-fat dairy,” Jessica Donze Black of the Pew Trust’s Kids’ Safe and Healthful Foods Project told Talk of the Nation host Neal Conan on Thursday. “The things we know kids need more of.”

Federal guidelines governing what and how much kids are served are being phased in gradually over three years, starting this year. But the new kinds of food – more salad, less 26-ingredient mystery burgers and fried spuds – coupled with the perception that costs are up and calories are down, is making for a bit of a rocky transition.

Chef Ann Cooper, also known as the Renegade Lunch Lady, is the food director for the Boulder Valley School District in Colorado. Cooper started out in food service as a “white-tablecloth sort of semi-celebrity chef,” but now she celebrates her work as a lunch lady, she tells Conan.

She was changing up school menus before the law required healthier choices. Her menus are full of “all kinds of great things …. [such as] chicken pot pie … ribs, and … chicken quesadillas,” and everything’s made from scratch.

Cooper says it wasn’t always easy to get kids excited about healthier foods. First, in Berkeley, California and then in Boulder, “I said, ‘We’re getting rid of all the trans-fats and high-fructose corn syrup and no more chocolate milk, no French fries, no tater tots, no chicken nuggets.'” There was pushback initially, she says, but eventually the kids came around.

Read the whole story

Volatile weather changing how California farmers grow food

By Mark Shapiro, California Watch

Ten miles outside of Modesto, in the farming town of Hughson just off Highway 99, the Duarte Nursery is at the front line of dramatic changes now under way in California's immense agriculture industry.

The family-run nursery, founded in 1976, is one of the largest in the United States, and there's a good chance the berries, nuts and citrus fruits eaten across the West began their journey to market as seedlings in Duarte's 30 acres of greenhouses, labs and breeding stations.

The nusery's owners have built a thriving business using state-of-the-art techniques to develop varieties adapted to the particular conditions and pests California farmers face.

These days, according to John Duarte, president of the nursery, that means breeding for elevated levels of heat and salt, which researchers say are symptoms of climate change – even if Duarte doesn't necessarily see it that way.

"Whether it's carbon built up in the atmosphere or just friggin' bad luck," he said, "the conditions are straining us."

The cause of Duarte's woes might be in dispute among farmers in California's $31 billion agriculture industry. But the symptoms are clear. From the vast fields of fruits and nuts in

the Central Valley to the wineries of Napa and Sonoma, the increasingly volatile weather is altering the fundamental conditions for growing food, California's largest industry.

Farmers are in many ways at the front line of climate change. They conjure food from soil, sunlight and water – all of which are profoundly affected, scientists say, by climate change. Stresses have emerged across the state as water supplies tighten. Rain is coming at unexpected times. Winters aren't getting cold enough. And salt from the rising ocean is making its way into Central Valley water.

Climate change already has cost farmers money. In the Central Valley, some growers are paying more for seeds designed to withstand the new extremes.

At the nurseries and colleges in what Duarte calls "the Silicon Valley of agricultural innovation," these changing conditions have forced botanists to look for varieties of almond, pepper, citrus, cherry and other crops resistant to drought and salt.

Other interests also are bracing for dramatic change. The crop insurance industry is calculating potential billion-dollar losses from extreme weather conditions, as well as the floods and fires that occur in their wake. Climate change could join the ranks of earthquake and hurricane insurance as a special – and hugely expensive – problem for insurers.

Over the past 20 years, there has been more than $500 million in crop losses from heat waves, floods and ill-timed rainstorms in the heavily agricultural counties of San Joaquin, Merced, Kings, Kern, Napa and Sonoma, according to a study last year by a team of Stanford University researchers.

"Compared to 20 or 30 years ago, farmers are recognizing a lot more risk factors in climate events," said Jeff Yasui, director of the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Risk Management Agency office in California, which handles crop

insurance in the state.

Climate and agriculture scientists predicted much of this. Charles Kolstad, an environmental economist at UC Santa Barbara, said California agriculture is being hit with a trifecta of converging forces prompted by climate change: longer seasons of extreme heat, shorter cold seasons and dwindling water supplies.

Yields of key crops are expected to drop significantly over the coming decades as climate change alters these growing conditions, according to a report Kolstad co-wrote for the state Environmental Protection Agency and Energy Commission and published last fall in the peer-reviewed journal Climatic Change.

Climate scientists believe the Earth's average temperature will rise at least 2 degrees in the next four decades – their most conservative estimate. Along the way, the yields of citrus crops in the San Joaquin Valley are expected to drop about 18 percent, grapes about 6 percent, and cherries and other orchard crops about 9 percent.

Those crops – accustomed to the cooler edges of California's climate – are showing declining yields already, according to the USDA's National Agricultural Statistics Service. That could mean higher prices for consumers as the supply shrinks. This summer's record droughts in the Midwest also prompted the USDA to predict a similar rise in prices driven by devastated yields for corn and soybeans, the primary food for chicken and cattle nationwide.

Kolstad and other scientists have focused on tree-based perennial crops because they are fixed in 25- to 30-year cycles and cannot easily be adapted to changing conditions. Switching a tree orchard from cherries, for example, to more heat-tolerant pistachios, avocados or tangerines can cost millions of dollars before the trees start bearing marketable

fruit.

If California's water crisis persists, seasonal vegetables and fruits also will be dramatically affected. Some already are.

Much of the southern Central Valley, spreading along either side of Interstate 5, is now a patchwork of fallow fields, according to Gayle Holman with the Westlands Water District in Fresno. Thousands of acres that once grew onions, tomatoes, melons and other crops have been set aside by farmers because they can no longer obtain, or afford, water – a scarcity, scientists say, that is significantly due to the dramatic shifts in the timing of rainfalls in the state.

Those grower cutbacks are felt most acutely in Central Valley towns like Mendota, where farm workers can no longer find the seasonal fieldwork upon which they once relied. Official unemployment in the area ranges between 15 and 20 percent. Studies by the state's Employment Development Department show an inverse correlation between water allocations and unemployment in the valley: The water supply goes down, and the unemployment rate goes up.

One problem, then another

Like just about everything having to do with climate change, the consequences unfold like a sequence of trapdoors. First, there's the temperature, a jagged progression over the past decade of unusual highs and lows occurring at times of the year that can debilitate growing crops.

Then there's the water. California's water sources are caught in a pincer: More water is needed at a time when less water is being delivered into the network of canals carrying it from the north to the agricultural regions in the south.

A precipitous drop in snowfall has led to declining water runoff in the San Joaquin and Sacramento rivers in the spring and summer months, when it's central to irrigation in the

valley. Over the past century, the state Department of Water Resources has measured a steady 10 percent decline in runoff from April to July. In recent years, however, the rate has accelerated to as much as 20 percent during those critical months.

For the three years between 2006 and 2009, the runoff amounted to the equivalent of two “normal” years, according to John Leahigh, chief of operations planning for the California State Water Project.

In fact, such calculations appear to be the new normal. This year, Sacramento Delta water supplies are not expected to come anywhere close to filling the irrigation needs of Central Valley farmers.

In February, the Department of Water Resources cut the delivery of water to valley farmers from 60 to 50 percent of their allotment – a practically unprecedented reduction that late in the growing season, according to Leahigh.

Parts of the valley supplied by the federal water project have been cut even more severely, to 30 percent of their normal allotment.

Farmers in the valley generally blame the drop-off in water on the 2007 state Supreme Court decision affirming the need for water to preserve Pacific smelt and other endangered species.

A study by the Public Policy Institute of California, however, concludes that the roughly 300,000 acre-feet of water diverted to comply with the Endangered Species Act constitutes no more than 15 to 20 percent of the reduced water flow to the valley.

Rather, the overall pool of water is shrinking.

“There’s less water coming into the system,” said Francis Chung, chief of the Modeling Support Branch for the Department of Water Resources. “The water that used to exist is now

coming earlier in the year. So there's less water to distribute (to the valley) during the summer."

Rising sea levels threaten water supply

Another growing problem has been rising sea levels associated with climate change. The San Francisco Bay, according to a recent assessment by the National Academies of Sciences, is projected to rise by as much as 18 inches, and potentially triple that by the end of the century. Those inches translate into waves of new salt sources lapping into the delta.

Less water channeled into the delta from the Sierra means less available freshwater to dilute the onrush of salt, which has been pushing steadily eastward.

For each foot in sea level, 200,000 acre-feet of freshwater, known as "carriage water," is needed to hold the line on the saltwater. That amounts to one-fifth the volume of Folsom Lake each year, according to Chung, and the diversions will only increase as the sea level rises.

A study by UC Davis estimates that if salinity continues to rise at the current rate, by 2030, the financial costs to the Central Valley could be huge: as much as $1 billion to $1.5 billion a year in decreased agricultural activity, amounting to some 27,000 to 53,000 jobs lost.

Over the next 40 years, salinity is expected to increase by 4 to 26 percent, depending on the time of year, at the two water-pumping stations outside of Tracy. From there, most of the water destined for the valley is sent southward, according to a study by the Public Policy Institute of California and the Center for Watershed Sciences at UC Davis.

Ellen Hanak, senior policy fellow at the institute, explained that inside the delta, the network of waterways helps to dilute the salt content. But in the Central Valley, she said, there's not enough freshwater to reduce the salt's impact.

That’s partly the result of farmers using more targeted irrigation to reduce waste; they no longer have the excess spillover to mix with the salt.

“There’s no drainage,” she said. “They can’t get rid of it.”

As freshwater supplies decrease, the decisions over how to use it are likely to become even more difficult.

“Water used to push the ocean back is water not used for agriculture,” said Tara Smith, an analyst and water modeling expert for the Department of Water Resources.

In other words, the liquid barricade needed to hold back the ocean is drawn from a dwindling amount of freshwater. The reduction in allocations issued by the water board in February means that more water is necessary to hold back the advancing Pacific Ocean and push the saltwater intrusion westward.

“We’re going to have to keep reducing the volume of exports from the delta because of the increased volume needed of carriage water,” said Chung at the Department of Water Resources.

Nevertheless, 40 railroad cars’ worth of salt – about 500,000 tons a year – flow daily out of the delta into the fields of the Central Valley. That adds extra salt to valley soils already made salty by the intensive pumping of groundwater from what millions of years ago was the ocean floor.

Daniel Cozad, executive director of the Central Valley Salinity Coalition, a group of local farmers, businessmen and government officials, said some farmers in the western valley are being forced to adapt by switching from salt-sensitive crops like strawberries and avocados to less sensitive – and less profitable – crops like alfalfa and wheat.

“Unfortunately,” Cozad said, “the higher the value of the crop, the more sensitive it is to salt.”

Food and wine festival is more than eating and drinking

By Kathryn Reed

TRUCKEE – It's not often the secret ingredient is wiggling around on the counter. But that is what two chefs had to overcome during the annual Blazing Pans competition.

2011 champion Chef Sean Conry of Longboards Bar & Grill at Plumas Pines took on Chef Elsa Corrigan of Mamasake Sushi from the Village at Squaw Valley.

Crawfish from Lake Tahoe was the secret ingredient the two chefs had to incorporate into a handful of dishes at the 27th annual Lake Tahoe Autumn Food & Wine Festival earlier this month.



Lake Tahoe Lobster Company provided the secret ingredient -- crawfish -- for the Blazing Pans competition at Northstar on Sept. 8. Photos/Kathryn Reed

The fun thing about the entire multi-day event that is mostly at the Village at Northstar is that it’s more than eating and drinking. Non-food vendors are interspersed with those with food. Cooking related demonstrations are going on at various locations. Some things are free, while others have a fee associated with them.

Based on the Iron Chef competition on the Food Network, the Blazing Pans contest tests the chefs’ ability to create dishes using the secret ingredient in a certain amount of time. More time was incorporated to accommodate the need to peel the crawfish. Each chef had the assistance of one sous chef.

Crawfish is not something either chef has in his or her kitchen, so each was at an equal disadvantage.

“I changed my original plan 10 times,” Corrigan said. “For training for something like this you have to be fluid because time is of the essence.”

Salads, bisques, spring rolls, chicken stuffed with crawfish – those were just some of the dishes the chefs created.

In the end, it was Corrigan who was crowned the winner of this year’s Blazing Pans competition.

Other winners from the 27th Annual Lake Tahoe Autumn Food & Wine Festival:

Judges’ Awards – Culinary Competition & Grand Tasting

Best Food & Wine Pairings:

Gold: Granlibakken Lodge – Mushroom stuffed with Red Lentil Hash, Chevre, Duck and Red Currant

Morgan 2010 Pinot Noir

Silver: Jake’s On the Lake – Seared Scallop

Wente 2010 Chardonnay

Bronze: North Tahoe Catering – Chile-Smoked Beef Tender, Roasted Peach Truffle Sauce/Beet/Yukon Chip

Renwood 2010 Old Vine Zinfandel

Best Pairing Food and Beverages (Other Than Wine):

Gold: Hard Rock Café, Lake Tahoe – Bayou Shrimp Burger with BBQ Coleslaw

Charbay Artisan Distillery – Blood Orange Vodka Negroni

Best White Wine:

Gold: Wither Hills 2010 Sauvignon Blanc (Marlborough New Zealand)

Silver: Wente 2010 Chardonnay (Monterey)

Bronze: ZD Winery 2010 Chardonnay (Napa Valley)

Best Red Wine:

Gold: Frank Family 2010 Pinot Noir (Napa Valley)

Silver: Morgan 2010 Pinot Noir (Santa Lucia 12 Clones)

Bronze: Renwood 2010 Old Vine Zinfandel (Amador)

Best Food:

Gold: Jake’s On the Lake – Seared Scallop 2

Silver: Six Peaks Grille – Roasted Beet Salad, Arugula, Goat Cheese,

Shallots, Whole Grain Mustard Vinaigrette.

Bronze: Hawk’s Restaurant – House-Smoked Duroc Pork Belly, Sweet Corn Pudding, Mariposa Plums

2012 People’s Choice Awards

Best Food & Wine Pairings:

The Chocolate Bar – Turkey En Crepinette with Sweet Potato Gaufrette

Francis Coppola 2009 Petite Sirah (Napa Valley)

Best Food:

The Chocolate Bar – Turkey En Crepinette with Sweet Potato Gaufrette

Best Red Wine:

Stanger Vineyards 2006 Syrah Library Reserve (Westside Paso Robles)

Best White Wine:

ZD Winery 2010 Chardonnay (Napa Valley)

Best Pairing Food and Beverages (Other Than Wine):

Hard Rock Café, Lake Tahoe – Bayou Shrimp Burger with BBQ Coleslaw

Charbay Artisan Distillery – Blood Orange Vodka Negroni

Best Table Presentation:

Northstar California Resort.

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Crew creating Tahoe holiday tradition sworn to secrecy

By Kathryn Reed

Orders are already being placed – even from doctors who know this is not health food. It's quite the opposite.

But there seems to be something therapeutic about this once-a-year specialty item. While they can't actually be bought until November, a gang of aficionados gathered on a September Sunday morning in a back corner of Barton Memorial Hospital to start the process.



Bob Harms is at the walnut station during the September assembly of cheeseballs. Photos/Kathryn Reed

It was like it was their religion – the reverence with which they spoke of these cheeseballs, the dedication they have year in and year out to assemble them.

Lake Tahoe News was not allowed in until the secret ingredient was well out of sight.

“The secret ingredient comes in bulk. We can get it in smaller amounts, but it’s cost prohibitive,” Pearl Parks explains.

All of this secrecy and early assembly is for the more than 1,000 cheeseballs the Barton Auxiliary sells each year. And each year they sell out.

Parks rallies the troops to make sure the cheeseballs are ready for the masses to buy at the holiday fair on Nov. 4 from 9am-3pm at St. Theresa’s. It all started in June with the ribbon being cut, bags bought and tags set to go.

When the fundraiser first started in 1988 all the mixing was done by hand. At that time the cheeseballs were not a big seller.

But through the years it has become a tradition. Some people place their order a year in advance. It’s not uncommon for people to order a dozen.

Parks is pretty sure these cheeseballs have shown up as hors d’oeuvres at the same party.

The base is cream cheese and butter. Then there is a secret ingredient. Parks says people have guessed it. A tiny taste on a cracker was not enough for this reporter to figure it out. (Time to make a cheeseball order.)

Big mixers in the kitchen at Barton churn for 3½ hours. Half were made this particular day, the other half will be made on a Sunday in October.

Each ball is measured before the nuts are put on. Each is 10 ounces.

Then the balls are rolled in walnuts. There was a time when the walnuts were cracked and hulled – not anymore. But they

are chopped up fine before the ball is rolled in them. Other nuts have been used, but it got to be too expensive.

Another station is responsible for putting them in the bags. All are tied with a gold ribbon and have a little tag with a blurb about the cheeseballs.

All are frozen – in a locked freezer. And they aren't at the hospital.

Parks said people have found the balls in their freezer years later and they still taste good. They can be refrozen. Some people have melted them over fettuccine or turned them into a dip.

For the first time in 12 years the price is going up – to $8. This is an increase of 50 cents. To place an order, call (530) 573.1416 or (530) 577.0328. Besides the holiday fair, cheeseballs will also be available at Barton Hospital on Nov. 7 from 10am-1pm, Carson Valley Medical Center on Nov. 15 from 10am-2pm, and during the Festival of Trees and Lights at MontBleu Nov. 30-Dec. 2. The money raised goes to the Barton Auxiliary, which in turn uses the money on various Barton Health projects.

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French vintners want

‘chateau’ off U.S. wine bottles

By Edward Cody, Washington Post

PORTETS, France – When Dominique Haverlan pastes the label “Vieux Chateau Gaubert” on his wine bottles, he proclaims this to his customers: I am selling you 400 years of French pedigree, the shadow of aged Palladian buildings restored at a cost of nearly $2 million, the fruit of 87 acres of vines tended to like children and the glories of a winemaking heritage here in the Graves flatlands near Bordeaux that reaches back for centuries.

How, then, Haverlan asks, can American winemakers pretend to put “chateau” on their labels from the New World? What chateau? They have chateaux in America? The very word is French, he notes, and the Vieux Chateau Gaubert, formerly Le Bordillot, was standing here before there even was an America. Worse, how can American merchants try to sell such wines in Europe? And even in France – maybe even Bordeaux?

But they are.

The European Commission, the 27-nation European Union’s executive body in Brussels, is considering a U.S. request to drop a ban on import into Europe of American wines bearing the label “chateau” or “clos,” a similar term used mainly on wines from Burgundy in eastern France. An E.U. wine committee is tentatively scheduled to vote on the request Sept. 25, whereupon it will go to the commission for a final decision that, given the tides of globalization in Europe, could well be positive.

“They’re trying to steal our reputation,” Haverlan said during a tour of his sun-splashed property. “The real chateaux, they’re certainly not in the United States.”

Preservation of “chateau” on wine bottles is another chapter in France’s long struggle between tradition and globalization. Throughout the country, peasants and craftsmen are fighting to maintain the value of expensive prestige accumulated over centuries – just the right cheese, or a perfect dress – against an onslaught of cheaper imitations sloshing in on the latest freighter from abroad. With borders disappearing and trade increasingly ignoring origins, their voices are getting weaker every year.

Read the whole story

Wine is mothers’ liquid helper

By Joel Stein, Time

It took nearly a year after having our son for my lovely wife Cassandra to get her body back to where it was before. It took nearly three years to get her drinking back to where it was before. For a while, she and her new-mom friends met once a week at the playground to watch their kids and have cheese and wine.

“Being a stay-at-home mom is isolating,” she told me. “If you’re chilling out with other moms, it’s social. I guess we could have been meeting for tea, but that seems a lot more dorky and a lot less fun.”

I considered telling her that supervising a child should be more job-like than Studio 54-like. But that would mean she could start questioning every crucial two-hour work lunch I go to at high-end restaurants.

Moms drinking wine is now too normal to question. On Facebook the group Moms Who Need Wine has more than 640,000 subscribers. OMG I So Need a Glass of Wine or I'm Gonna Sell My Kids has 127,000. Stefanie Wilder-Taylor took mom drinking so far, through her blog and best sellers Naptime Is the New Happy Hour and Sippy Cups Are Not for Chardonnay, that she eventually had to admit she had a problem and quit.

Last year, Clos LaChance wines asked a California court to declare that its MommyJuice line did not infringe on the trademark of rival wine Mommy's Time Out.

These are not the kinds of wines Cassandra would take to the playground, because while I might silently object to her drinking wine while watching our son, I'd get more upset about her drinking mediocre wine while watching our son.

But if you're looking for American reds and whites at around $10 per bottle, "they're perfectly nice," says Ray Isle, executive wine editor of Food & Wine. "It's not a wine I'd stick away in a cellar and age. But they're going for the opposite: you're supposed to drink it while your child is an infant."

Starting this month, one of the biggest American wineries is marketing directly to moms of young kids. Chateau Ste. Michelle in Washington has begun a Facebook campaign asking women to customize an equation to sum up what makes them want a glass. ("Me + a glass of wine – juice boxes + quiet time for 15 minutes = My Chateau.") The ads – -tagline: "It's where you become you again" – will run in places women go when they're stressed out about taking care of their family, including Food Network magazine, parents.com and Rachael Ray's website.

The idea is that wine is the new Calgon bubble bath, or the new Valium.

Winemakers are marketing heavily to moms partly because a lot of women are moms, and wine is the female drink of choice: 52

percent of women pick it as their favorite alcoholic beverage, compared with 20% of men. (The numbers for beer are almost the exact inverse.) That’s why Francis Ford Coppola Winery sells sparkling wine in a can with a straw attached — no lipstick smudges — and French and Italian wineries sell boxed wine in containers shaped like purses. It also explains why there is so much pinot grigio.

The push to sell wine to moms also reflects changes in how we view motherhood. A proliferating number of mommy blogs portray stay-at-home parenting as a gritty daily struggle. If a factory worker deserves a cold beer after a long day on the floor, then these women deserve their pinot grigio. Chateau Ste. Michelle’s message to moms is that they can remain fun, chardonnay-swilling party girls in their off-hours, which seems fair. I don’t want Cassandra just to be a mom all the time. If that means she has to brown-bottle it at the park with some cheese and crackers, I’m O.K. with that. But personally I don’t think I could have a bad enough day at work to touch something called MommyJuice.