White House meal rewards kids for eating their veggies

By April Fulton, NPR

No one said it would be easy to sell kids on quinoa and kale, but an invitation to the White House's first Kids State Dinner today, complete with fresh fruit topiaries and balloon animals, turned out to be just the ticket for some.

The dinner – really, a luncheon – was the brainchild of first lady Michelle Obama and her partners in the "Let's Move" initiative to get kids to fight the fat by cooking and eating foods that meet U.S. Department of Agriculture guidelines.

"We're so proud of you," Obama told the 54 kids and parents whose recipes were chosen in a healthy recipe contest – one from each state and territory.

Not to be outshined, POTUS himself made an appearance, praising the first lady and waxing a bit nostalgic about his pre-White House efforts to cook toast, omelets and chili. Then he warned guests not to feed Bo – the family dog is apparently on a diet.

North Carolina's Marshall Reid, 12, who got to introduce the first lady, proudly announced that he loves quinoa. He also admitted he couldn't spell it, further endearing himself to the families eager to dig in to goodies created by some of the guests.

Read the whole story

Jet pack launches new beverage at Lake Tahoe

By Chris Buckley, KOLO-TV

SAND HARBOR – Beachgoers at Lake Tahoe's Sand Harbor got quite a surprise Friday afternoon. It was part of a new business venture that's making appearances all over the west coast.

A water-powered jet pack that has been hitting oceans, lakes and rivers to promote a new drink called Air is in Tahoe.

"Air is the first ever sparkling water with alcohol," said marketing rep Jack Cookson. "It tastes exactly like sparkling water but has 4% alcohol and berry and citrus flavors, only 95 calories all natural flavorings."

The drink hit shelves this summer and a company official says the jet pack is what their product is all about. Pilot Wes Dawson took the jet pack for its first voyage on Lake Tahoe.

"It's an awesome exhilarating feeling we think our product's pretty awesome so it tied in pretty good. We feel our product makes water more exciting and we feel this product makes water more exciting also. We thought they went together pretty good," said Dawson.

It certainly got the crowd's attention.

"That thing's pretty cool," said spectator Jon Debay. "I've seen it online but never in person and that thing is literally amazing. I want one."

You need a special certification to fly it but no one is really sure what kind of certification you need to use it on Lake Tahoe. Park officials cut Friday's flight short.

"We've had some mishaps with rangers and patrols but generally

once we talk to them they’re fine with it. They’re just shocked at first.”

Promoters are not not giving up, so keep your eyes open on Tahoe shores this weekend.

The “Air” line has created jobs all over the west coast, and you can find it on the shelves in Reno right now and in the Tahoe area by the end of the month. They’re hoping to fly the jet pack at Zephyr Cove on today.

Unconventional ice cream flavors all the rage

By Josh Sanburn, Time

Vanilla is still by far the most popular ice cream flavor in America. That’s a testament not only to its use in sundaes and on pies but also to its ability to compete with the 32 bazillion other flavors that are vying for our attention. Partly as a response to the trendiness of artisanal foods, ice cream has been moving into more adventurous territory.

Weird flavors—or at least the idea of them—have become so mainstream that customers expect a good ice cream shop to offer something unusual even if no one ever orders it. At Sweet Republic in Scottsdale, Ariz., the summer lineup includes chocolate orange Sichuan peppercorn, honey blue cheese and sweet corn, which contains whole kernels of locally grown corn.

“They either love it or tell us that it was a fun flavor—and then get their usual favorite,” says co-owner Helen Yung. “But

they’ll still tell their friends about it.”

Owners are generally happy to crank out the experimental stuff, since it’s often what gets folks in the door. At Salt & Straw in Portland, Ore., chef Tyler Malek uses goat cheese to make a marionberry-and-habanero-jam ice cream. He recently began work on a tempura-battered-bacon flavor, but his cousin (and the store’s co-owner) Kim Malek nixed it. It was too labor-intensive, for one thing, and in terms of flavor, she says, “it was too far out for me.”

Contrast that with Manhattan’s Il Laboratorio del Gelato, where in-store customers can get scoops of such oddities as black sesame, Earl Grey tea and cheddar cheese. Although the street traffic is great, about 75 percent of its business comes from restaurants, many of which request new, specially designed flavors. In 10 years, owner Jon Snyder has rejected only one ingredient request — caviar — but not because of the ick factor, he says. “I just didn’t want to contaminate my machinery with it.”

Passport to Dining in Kings Beach

North Lake Tahoe’s most affordable, all-you-can-eat/drink event, Passport to Dining, will take place Oct. 4.

It features food and beverage samples from more than 25 restaurants, breweries, and wineries, pluse live music, a raffle and auction.

The event is from 6-9pm at the North Tahoe Event Center in Kings Beach (8318 N. Lake Blvd.).

Tickets are $30 – call (530) 546.9000.

Veggie sausage a reason to stay at Haven Cottage

By Kathryn Reed

AMBLESIDE, England – I have long said I don't like sausage. Didn't even like it when I ate meat. And I'm not one of those vegetarians who likes the flavor of fake meat products found in the frozen food section (except for burgers).

Then I went to Haven Cottage and my sausage world was turned upside down.



Tim Hall caters to meat and non-meat eaters at Haven Cottage in England's Lake District. Photo/Kathryn Reed

Tim Hall said he wanted to offer his vegetarian guests something to complement the meat version others were served.

Sue took a bite of mine and thought it was so good that she ordered the veggie version the next morning.

Besides the rich flavor, what makes this sausage so wonderful is Hall uses the freshest ingredients that are available locally.

His entire breakfast is yummy – but the veggie sausage is a must-have.

While I haven't made the recipe, I can tell you the end result is scrumptious. I'm waiting for Hall to market these so I can shop in the frozen food section.

(All the notes in the recipe are from Tim Hall.)

Haven Cottage Veggie Sausage

This makes 16 to 18, but they freeze really well and I defrost them overnight in the fridge.

300 grams of white bread. Make into breadcrumbs in a chopper or whatever they are called. Tip into large mixing bowl.

2 good size leeks. Cut into 10mm bits and then put in blender – see above.

2 shallots – in with leeks

75 grams walnuts – in with leeks

I prefer not to smash them too much as it allows the different flavors to remain separate. Mix all together in a large mixing bowl with fairly large wooden spoon.

250 grams local cheese of your choice and grate into mix

2 tsp chopped parsley

2 tsp chopped sage

2 tsp mustard powder

2 tsp lemon juice

Mix all in.

4 eggs, whisked

Mix all in.

120 grams goat cheese, not crumbly and not too soft as you want it in small square chunks.

Mix in.

Add a bit of salt and black pepper to your taste.

Using the spoon, scoop up enough to make a sausage in your other hand and roll and squeeze until you have the acquired shape.

I then place all on a tray and put in fridge for a couple hours to allow the flavors to develop. Then you either freeze them on the tray and then when frozen bag them for future use or cook them.

When ready to cook, just roll them in white flour to just give them a coating – shake off excess and then lightly fry in hot shallow oil-butter until gold brown (about 20 minutes) over a medium to low heat.

All the measurements are not rigid and I do vary them slightly each time, but then you might prefer to experiment. Shallots are a recent addition to the recipe and I think add a tiny bit of sweetness.

K’s Kitchen: Simple tips for dealing with summer’s harvest

By Kathryn Reed

Beets keep arriving in the harvest basket. Luckily this past week’s came with some suggestions with what to do with them.

But what surprised me is the folks at the Natural Trading Co. said the greens should not be thrown away.



“A quick sauté of beet greens provides a delicious dish that contains vitamins A and C. Chop the greens, sauté them in 1 tablespoon olive oil for 10 minutes over medium heat and you’ll have a delicious side dish for grilled fish or chicken,” the farmers wrote in their weekly newsletter.

I’ll have to try this one day. Mine keep ending up in the garbage.

I’m in the habit now of taking off the greens of anything. This is because Joy, whose box this really is, told me that’s the way to make sure carrots stay fresh. She’s right. They were going limp with the greens on them.

Another thing I’ve started doing after reading about it multiple places is not putting basil in the fridge. Instead, I set it at room temperature in a glass of cold water. It stays much longer.

I’ve already started making batches of pesto to freeze for winter and spring use. This summer I’m using walnuts because pine nuts are so dang expensive. I put the green stuff in a

freezer bag, lay it flat in the freezer and then have fresh pesto when basil is harder to come by or it tastes less than ideal. And homemade pesto is always better than store bought.

Never put tomatoes in the fridge. It just zaps the flavor from them. Store them on the counter and don’t stack them.

When choosing tomatoes and you know you will be cooking them, don’t worry about how they look. Flavor is what counts.

Consider buying cherry or grape tomatoes as a snack. Put a bunch in a bowl and eat them like candy.

To test if your knives are sharp try slicing through the skin of a tomato. It should be easy.

What tips do you have to share?

Fuzzy thin skin makes peaches super seasonal

By Jessica Stoller-Conrad, NPR

If lately you’ve noticed the farmers’ market flooded with signs that say “donut,” “cling,” “whiteflesh” and “freestone,” you won’t be surprised to learn that August is National Peach Month. Though the juicy fruits pack the produce aisles now, in a few short months a good peach might be hard to find.



Many fruits, though harvested in other parts of the world, are available in the United States all year long. So why are peaches so seasonal, and in the winter, either difficult to find or hard as a rock?

To clear up our “fuzzy” understanding, The Salt turned to Will McClatchey, vice president and director of research at the Botanical Research Institute of Texas. McClatchey says that peaches are easy to find in the late summer and early fall because they tend to ripen all at once. Though the plant’s “limited-time only” strategy is annoying to consumers, biologically, it makes them very efficient reproducers.

“If you’re a fruit tree, the best way to get your fruit dispersed is to have a whole bunch of fruit [at once] so then the animals come and go crazy eating fruit, which helps secure the next generation of trees,” says McClatchey. Although nowadays we’re the animals going crazy over peaches, the trees originated in Central Asia, their fruits initially feeding large mammals like bears, camels, and elephants, he says.

Read the whole story

Vodka stories could be worth 2 tickets to cocktail event

Ten bartenders will compete next month for the best drink of the night as a fundraiser for Barton Health Foundation.

Lake Tahoe News is giving away two tickets to the Sept. 13, 5:30-8pm event at Riva Grill in South Lake Tahoe.

If you don’t win, tickets are $25 each in advance or $30 at the door.



A concoction from 2011. Photo/LTN

Jesse Kalin volunteers as the entertainment and Dreu Murin volunteers as the emcee. Tahoe Blue Vodka is the vodka sponsor.

Participating bars-restaurants are Cantina, Capisce, Edgewood, Embassy, Heavenly, Lakeside, LewMarNels, Naked Fish, Riva and Steamers.

To win the tickets, you must either submit a recipe (via a comment) using vodka or tell us about your favorite vodka drink. The other criterion is that you must be part of *Lake Tahoe News’* special NEWS team. To be a team member, fill out the paid subscriber form. The winner must be willing to have their full name published. Winners will be announced the week of the event.

To get you thirsty, here is the first cocktail entry from Sue Wood.

Sue’s Twist on a French Martini

2 ounces vodka

½ ounce Chambord raspberry liqueur

3 ounces pineapple juice

Splash of club soda

Mix all the ingredients over ice. Serve on a hot Tahoe day.

Some restaurants skirting California's foie gras ban

By Norimitsu Onishi, New York Times

SACRAMENTO – Seemingly an afterthought, the last appetizer listed on the menu at Restaurant Thir13en is a brioche that, at $21, may sound overpriced even if it is "house made" and comes with strawberry rhubarb purée and a bacon chip. Accompanying it, though, are "complimentary seared foie gras and foie panna cotta."

This restaurant, not far from the State Capitol here, is one of the few in California still offering foie gras since a ban on its sale went into effect on July 1. Though some restaurants are finding clever ways to serve the fattened duck or goose liver – the law bans sales, but says nothing about giving it away – most of the 340 to 400 establishments that served it before the ban have taken it off their menus, according to restaurant owners, industry experts and animal rights supporters.

Suppliers of foie gras to California, the biggest market for the product in the United States, have halted shipments to the state. So staunch defenders of foie gras like Adam Pechal, Thir13en's owner and chef, are considering new ways to replenish their supplies.

"I'm still working off my treasury," Mr. Pechal said, explaining that he and other restaurateurs in Sacramento "stocked up big time" before the ban. "Foie freezes fantastically. That's the beauty of it. The foie gras liver, it's a beautiful product. Worst-case scenario for me, I'll just go to Tahoe and spend the week and find somebody in Nevada. It's as simple as that. I can drive an hour and a half and buy it in another state."

Read the whole story

Campbell reinventing soups to attract younger consumer

By David Welch, Bloomberg

Campbell Soup's iconic red-and-white cans dominate nearly half the domestic market. That's a problem.

For the last several years, U.S. soup sales have been sliding. As a percentage of all frozen, canned and perishable food sales, the staple has shrunk by one-ninth since 2007, from 3.6 percent to 3.2 percent.

While Campbell sells V8 vegetable juice, Prego pasta sauce and a bevy of Pepperidge Farm snacks, soup remains its most important product line. Last year its U.S. Simple Meals unit,

which relies heavily on soup products, accounted for 48 percent of its $7.7 billion in sales and 64 percent of its $1.3 billion in operating income. Those sales figures have fallen every year since 2007, and Campbell's North American soup business has lost market share since 2008.

Company executives cite a generational shift in tastes. Campbell's research shows that young consumers ages 18 to 29 are 15 percent less likely than the average consumer, and far less likely than middle-aged boomers, to buy soup. They eat out twice as often as their grandparents, and when they cook, they value easy preparation and fresher, more exotic ingredients over canned staples.

"They're more experimental," says Charles Vila, Campbell's vice president for consumer insights, who began inviting young consumers into the company's test kitchens last year to analyze their preferences. "They love to sample."

Vila's research squared with Trouble in Aisle 5, a recent study of young consumers' shopping habits by the research firm Jefferies and the consulting firm Alix Partners. The ideal product, the study concludes, would be both high-end and simple.

Campbell's answer: Go! Soup, a ready-to-eat meals line coming this month in varieties that include chorizo, pulled chicken with black beans, and golden lentils with Madras curry. To provide fresher ingredients and speed preparation time, the new soup line eschews the traditional cans in favor of plastic pouches in colors such as fuchsia. Campbell is using similar pouches in its skillet sauces, another new line that includes flavors such as creamy chipotle.

The company will charge $2.99 per pouch, or about three times the price of a can of one of its traditional soups. The question is whether a population grappling with higher-than-average unemployment will spend that kind of money for food in

a pouch, says Ken Harris, a consultant who has worked for Campbell.

“If they sold it for 99 cents, they would have a runaway success,” Harris says. “But for that buyer group, paying extra for an accompaniment to a meal may be a stretch.”

ConAgra Foods sells its Healthy Choice entrees for less than $2.40 each, and Amy’s Kitchen of Petaluma, a privately held maker of organic soup, sells its offerings for less than $2.30 a can.

Still, this wouldn’t be Campbell’s first success with soups at a higher price point. Its line of Slow Kettle Style soups sells well for $3.99 a cup. Those recipes, which include burgundy beef stew, target an older audience.

Darren Serrao, vice president for innovation for Campbell’s North American business, says Go! Soup can bridge the generation gap. Just as Starbucks has persuaded consumers to pay a premium for once-plebeian coffee, he says, “consumers are savvy enough to understand the value proposition.”