Inmates win slew of awards at El Dorado County Fair

Every year inmates – yes, people in jail – test their culinary abilities by entering the El Dorado County Fair's Baking and Fiery Fair categories.

Since 2007 the inmates have amassed more than 50 first, second, and third place ribbons.

This year was no exception. The inmates in the culinary arts program earned 18 ribbons: five first place, six second place, and seven third place ribbons. In addition, the inmates earned several fourth place awards and numerous honorable mentions.

The inmates develop not only cooking and baking skills, but develop pride and life skills as well, which leads to an improved chance of not returning to jail.

Some of the inmate county fair winners for 2012 are:

Marcus Tillman, First Place yeast rolls, Second Place Cinnamon Rolls, Third Place Peanut Butter Cookies.

Jose Avina – First Place Bar Cookies, Third Place White Chocolate Lime Cookies

Rodney Glover – Second Place Chocolate Chip Cookies and Florentine Cookies, Third Place Cup Cakes

Heather Halversa – Second Place Snickers, Third Place Lemon Rasp Drops

Adrianana Garcia – Third Place Macadamia Nut Cookies

Brandi Day – Third Place Fiery Fair Cookies

Katy Manoff – Second Place Cranberry Orange Cookies and Oatmeal Cookies

Symbria Smite – Third Place Sugar Cookies

Alan Gooley – Second Place Coffee Cake.

Farm is more than a market – it's a lifestyle, a destination

By Kathryn Reed

BECKWOURTH – Even iceberg lettuce doesn't like 22-degree weather.

Two days after losing 80 percent of his lettuce, Gary Romano shrugs it off. That's what a farmer has to do as he accepts Mother Nature as his boss.

"In 15 years, I never got hit like that. So, I'm not much ahead of last year," Romano tells *Lake Tahoe News*.



Greenhouses at Sierra Valley Farms help protect produce from the elements.

Photos/Kathryn Reed

Last year it took forever for the fields to dry out after the winter that would never end. Last Wednesday it was a freak cold system that turned his greens black.

Even so, Romano was wandering around his farmers' market on June 15 looking and sounding like a man confident in what the season will bring going forward.

This is his 17th year farming in Plumas County. His family has had the land since 1938. Sierra Valley Farms is the only certified farmers' market in California that is actually on a farm.

"It's become like a destination farmers' market," Romano says.

He only allows one vendor of each type of product so they can all make money.

"I select the closest farmer with the most diversity," Romano explains.

It's like a community between the vendors.

Cody Poole of Longboards Bar and Grill in Graeagle is selling scrumptious, soft melt-in-your-mouth peanut butter cookies. A delicious, you won't want to share cherry croissant has fruit from K&J Orchards from Winters, which is a couple stalls away.

Kalayada Ammatya boasts of having the best apricots in the world. They must be because until that day this reporter didn't like apricots and more than one was consumed on the premise.



“I select the closest farmer with the most diversity.”

– Gary Romano

Out of the 14 markets where K&J sells its fruit, Sierra Valley Farms is No. 3 on that list when it comes to the amount of produce it moves. And one of the markets they go to is the Ferry Building in San Francisco.

Meat, fish, beer and wine are also usually available so patrons can leave with enough food for several meals – maybe a week’s worth until they need to return.

A bonus is lunch can be had for free if one shows up at the correct time. This is because each Friday there is a cooking demonstration. Adam Williams with Smile Dog Catering said the beef he was cooking came from a cow that was slaughtered earlier in the day. That’s how fresh this food is.

The greens and warm potato salad he assembled were stellar – if only he would have brought recipes to share.

Tables are scattered about so people can watch the demo and then sample the finished fare.

With it taking some effort to get to Sierra Valley Farms, it’s definitely a place to linger.

It’s a great place for friends to meet. Cathy Churchill and Becky Hardy are neighbors in Clio, but neither knew the other would be at Friday’s market. Besides picking up a bottle of Grant Eddie wine (after sampling a few varietals), they moved onto Alfred Cominotto who imports his cheese from the Netherlands.

“I try to get here as often as I can. I like fresh food and

organic food," Churchill says.

Despite Romano's bad luck with the weather last week, what is still in the ground on this 65-acre farm makes it look like it would be fun to sit in the dirt and have a feast of greens in the field.

Other edibles are in green houses.

"My specialty is growing winter vegetables in summer," Romano says.

While he has pounds of lettuce for sale, along with carrots, cucumbers and herbs throughout the season, Romano is not one to sell just the original product.

He turns wasabi into paste, horseradish into mustard and fruits into cocktail mixes.

Romano has several stories to tell about the trials and tribulations of farming. He wants to share his experiences with others. Bona Fide Books of Meyers will be publishing his book in spring 2013.

Until then, the public is welcome to his farmers' market each Friday as well as to the barn dinners that feature a vegan starter course, then fish, meat and dessert courses. The dinners are served in the old barn, whose slats are just wide enough for owls to come and go.

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Notes:

• Sierra Valley Farms is online.

• Farmers' markets are Fridays through Sept. 21 from 10am-2:30pm.

• Dinners in the Barn are July 14, July 15, Aug. 25, Aug. 26, Sept. 22, Sept. 23. Reservations necessary – (530) 587.8688.

Getting there:

From South Lake Tahoe, get to Truckee going around either side of the lake. Take Highway 89 north toward Sierraville.

In Sierraville, at the Y, go left onto Highway 49.

Turn right on county road A23.

Pass Calpine Road on left.

Continue on until you see the sign for Sierra Valley Farms on the right.

If you hit Highway 70, turn around.

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Seasonal cocktails inspire what’s on the plate

By Melissa Clark, New York Times

Drinking seasonal cocktails used to mean manhattans in the winter and gin and tonics in the summer.

Then a decade ago, mixologists started infusing the likes of lemon verbena and butternut squash into spirits, taking the notion of seasonal cocktails to a more literal level. Now, you’re just as likely to encounter an heirloom tomato in the glass as on the plate.

And some restaurants have been creating tasting menus with cocktail pairings that highlight the season’s best, from the aperitif through dessert, seasonal dining from coupe to nuts.

These pairings work really well at home, too. I spent the past weeks letting seasonal cocktails inspire the snacks that I served with them.

I found that the rules for matching cocktails with food are a lot more lax than with wine. Really, anything goes, though the more complicated and layered the ingredients are in the glass, the more involved your accompanying hors d'oeuvres can be, and vice versa. For simpler cocktails, simple foods work best.

To greet our first warm night, my husband and I sipped Emperor's Gardens, rhubarb and gin cocktails spiked with Thai basil and seasoned rice vinegar (a condiment used to make sushi rice, flavored with sugar and salt).

Alongside, I echoed the vinegar and basil in a quick shrimp salad garnished with roasted peanuts for crunch. We ate the shrimp on cucumber rounds, but mounding them on crisp lettuce leaves would have been a slightly fancier presentation.

Read the whole story

K's Kitchen: Finding a new use for radishes

By Kathryn Reed

Cooked radishes?

Yes.



Really?

Yes.

OK.

I decided to take Joy’s suggestion. After all, she had seen it done on the Food Network, so it must be a good idea.

To me, radishes are to eat as part of a relish tray or in a salad. It had never crossed my mind to cook them.

Joy said to roast them. She said the beets she was giving me from her community supported agriculture (CSA) box would be good roasted, too. I had never cooked a beet. Never used them in anything.

I didn’t bother to tell Sue I had no idea if what was going to come out of the oven was going to be good or if we might need to order pizza. Not too long into the process the house started smelling fabulous. My confidence was rising.

Now I’m looking forward to leftovers.

Everything but the olive oil in this dish came either from the CSA box or the farmers’ market. However, oil is sold at the South Lake Tahoe Tuesday market.

Cooking the radishes made them much less pungent. I would try them on the barbecue and maybe in other ways, too, in the future.

All the veggies were chopped in big chunks. The amount you need depends on how many people you are serving. I had about a handful of chopped basil.

Roasted Seasonal Veggies

Radishes

Beets

Zucchini

Crookneck squash

Spring garlic, bulb

Basil, rough chop

Olive oil

Preheat oven to 400 degrees.

Cut vegetables into large chunks – larger than bite size. Separate garlic bulb into cloves.

Put veggies into 9 x 13 glass dish. Sprinkle the garlic cloves throughout the dish. Evenly distribute basil on veggies. Pour olive oil over veggies. (A heavy drizzle.) Stir all together.

Cook in oven for between 30 and 40 minutes. (Test veggies as you go along because depending on what you use, some will take longer than others.)

California chefs attempt to

repeal foie gras ban

By Jesse McKinley, New York Times

PEBBLE BEACH — The countdown to foie-mageddon has begun.

With less than a month until California's first-in-the nation ban on foie gras takes effect, fans of the fattened duck and goose liver are buying out stocks of the delicacy, searching for legal loopholes and sating themselves at a series of foie-heavy goodbyes.

"We want to get our fill before it's gone," said Terrance L. Stinnett, a lawyer from Alamo, who attended a farewell lunch here recently. "This is a wake."

July 1 is the start date of the hotly debated and divisive ban, which prohibits the sale of any product derived from the force-feeding of birds to enlarge their livers — the only way to mass-produce foie gras. (The law was passed in 2004, but included a seven-and-a-half-year grace period.)

As the deadline approaches, some of the best-known chefs in California — including Thomas Keller, Gary Danko and Michael Mina — have been mounting a repeal effort and promising new ethical standards. But they are also making practical preparations for the likelihood that they won't be able to overturn the law before it takes effect. Even opponents of the ban say going to bat for high-priced foie gras, after all, isn't exactly an easy political stance in an age of animal rights and fiscal austerity.

So how will chefs replace foie gras, with its butter-soft texture and rich, subtle taste? The short answer, they say, is that they can't, and the sense of loss is palpable.

Read the whole story

Small-scale slaughterhouses put local back in ‘local meat’

By Beth Hoffman, NPR

It’s hard to go a day without hearing people brag about how they eat local. In-the-know consumers wax poetic about their local farmers’ markets, and some even make pilgrimages to meet their rancher, visit cows grazing and see pigs playing happily in the mud.

But the dirty little secret is, while that steak those “locavores” just bought at the farmers’ market may have come from a cow that grazed in nearby pastures, it probably wasn’t processed anywhere nearby. In fact, many local meat products are sent to slaughterhouses hundreds of miles away, across state lines.

So some small-scale cattle producers are taking matters into their own hands in an effort to keep money, jobs and something “local” on dinner plates.

In Washington state for example, most grass-fed beef raised on the eastern plains journeys some 400 to 600 miles to Oregon or Idaho for processing before arriving back in Seattle. That means not only a larger carbon footprint for each hamburger served, but processing animals out of state also sucks money out of the state’s rural communities and makes locally produced beef more expensive.

So the Cattle Producers of Washington (CpoW), like several other innovative groups around the country, are breaking

ground this summer on a new slaughterhouse in Odessa (Lincoln County) that will cater exclusively to small eastern Washington ranches.

“We don’t want to be the next Tyson or Cargill, processing large numbers of animals for national distribution,” says Willard Wolf, President of CPoW. “We are not interested in competing on that level. The whole idea is to have quality control and humane processing for local cattle, hogs, sheep and goats that provides consumers in the state with [the] locally produced products they are demanding. Having a producer-owned plan will help keep dollars, ranchers and farmers in our communities.”

Forty years ago, when Wolf started working as a rancher in Eastern Oregon, there were seven slaughterhouses in the region able to process and package meat from small scale producers. Today there are none.

Read the whole story

K’s Kitchen: Spicy concoction comes with mixed reactions

By Kathryn Reed

A warning came with the food – *have a glass of water nearby*. The warning was not heeded. Next time Sue will know I’m serious.

And to think she only tasted one green bean.



I’m the one in the household who likes hot and spicy and this dish had my nose running. But for whatever reason the next day it was not as hot. Good thing for everyone.

One way to lessen the fire would be to use a mix of chili oil and some other oil.

I used veggies from Tuesday’s farmers’ market in South Lake Tahoe. Eating what’s in season is the healthiest way to eat. It means the product has not been trucked or shipped in from some foreign country. Even our bodies work better when we eat foods in season.

The carrots are so sweet I’m lucky any ended up in the stir fry. They are almost like candy. I did manage to save a couple to add to a green salad. (The greens were also bought at the market and the cherry tomatoes for the salad came from my friend’s CSA box.)

The veggies I used were carrots, green beans and red onion. But use what you have. Garlic is also available at the farmers’ market.

Super Hot Stir Fry

3 T hot chili oil

4 garlic cloves, minced

¼ tsp kosher salt

1 T sesame seeds

2 T soy sauce

Coat wok or other appropriate pan that is on high heat with oil. Add vegetables. Stir. Add next four ingredients in order.

Keep stirring. Sample a veggie or two to know it’s done.

Serve with rice (and water).

Interactive foodie event benefits Slow Food Lake Tahoe

Dragonfly Restaurant and Sushi Bar’s second annual Cooking Outside the Box benefit dinner is June 13 from 6-8pm.

All proceeds from this fun, informative event will go directly to Slow Food Lake Tahoe. The evening will feature locally grown produce, locally raised meat and sustainably produced bio-dynamic and organic wine pairings.

Attendees will get to solve the mysteries contained in CSA veggie boxes by visiting food demo stations, trying their hand at rolling rice paper spring rolls and enjoying food and wine pairings. Guests will go home with all the recipes used for the evening.

Representatives from Mountain Bounty Farm in Nevada City and Sobon Winery in Plymouth will talk about what it’s like to be a local producer. Truckee River Winery will also be participating. Meats provided by Trimmer Outpost Valley of Genoa will round out the evening’s menu options.

Slow Food is a global grassroots movement that links the pleasures of food with a commitment to community and the environment.

Community Supported Agriculture consists of a community of

individuals who support a farming operation where growers and consumers share the benefits of locally grown food production.

Dinner for the Cooking Outside the Box benefit is $35 for Slow Food members and $40 for non-members. Call (530) 587.0557 to make reservations.

Dragonfly is located upstairs at 10118 Donner Pass Road, in the heart of downtown Truckee.

Tahoe Creamery expanding into larger facility in Minden

By Northern Nevada Business Weekly

The owners of High Sierra Ice Cream Inc., parent of Tahoe Creamery brand ice cream, faced a daunting decision near the end of 2010.

Tahoe Creamery had shut down in September 2010 because it ran out of working capital, and the investor group, headed by lawyer Garrett Sutton of Sutton Law Center, pondered whether to fire-sale the company's assets, sell the business, or restructure management and try to bring the brand back.

They chose the latter, resurfacing Tahoe Creamery in February 2011. It wasn't easy resurrecting the brand, Sutton says. Currently, High Sierra Ice Cream has placed pints in northern Nevada Scolari's stores, and the ice cream also is served at Grand Sierra Resort, Tahoe Valley Campground at South Lake Tahoe, the Gear and Grind Café in Tahoe City, Susie's Scoops in Incline Village, and certain 7-Elevens.

Tahoe Creamery has three full-time employees and is in the

process of moving into a new 2,200-square-foot location in Minden. The company had been located in a small 800-square-foot space in Minden. The company uses Model Dairy as a distribution partner for the ice cream.

Sutton says Tahoe Creamery plans on releasing several new flavors by the end of the summer, as well as new packaging for the pints.

Craft beer makers turning to cans

By Rick Armon, Akron Beacon Journal

Many craft beer drinkers hold their nose when it comes to canned beer.

Rick Vernon doesn't understand that attitude.

As the owner of the West Point Market in Akron, Ohio, he has watched as more brewers put their well-respected craft beers in cans.

Sierra Nevada Pale Ale – considered the definitive American pale ale – now comes in a can. So does Brooklyn Lager, New Belgium Fat Tire, Breckenridge Avalanche Ale and a host of others.

Even Ohio brewers Fat Head's and Jackie O's have announced plans to can when they open new production breweries this year.

"They've really kicked it up a notch as far as what they are putting in cans," Vernon said.

The Brewers Association, a Boulder, Colo., trade group representing craft brewers, estimates 179 craft breweries are offering beer in cans today.

Read the whole story