K’s Kitchen: Asian inspired marinade for barbecued veggies

By Kathryn Reed

We have gotten in more barbecue days this summer (and it’s not even really summer) than we usually do by the end of June. The warm nights of this past weekend were ideal for being on the back deck and aromas coming from outside instead of from the kitchen.



I rarely measure ingredients for a marinade and seldom blend them together. Usually I just throw marinade ingredients on the veggies that are cut up in a glass dish. But because I knew I might want to write about this (and remember it for the future) I started documenting what I was doing.

But the mixing separately part, well, that was because of using a spice blend that required it be well incorporated with all the other marinade ingredients. Had I just dumped it right on the vegetables, it’s likely not everything would have been evenly coated.

As with so many of my grilled vegetable medleys, the combo had to do with what was in the refrigerator, instead of some well thought out meal. Whenever possible I like for the ensemble to have a mix of colors so it looks good to eat.

Sometimes I decide on the marinade based on the vegetables being used. Certain items on the grill go better with some flavors more than others.

I bought the Chinese spice, soy sauces and rice wine vinegar

in San Francisco’s Chinatown. However, since then I have learned the Chinese market in the Town and Country Center (think Whiskey Dick’s) in South Lake Tahoe has them, too.

The marinade is bound to be good on things other than vegetables – but someone will have to let the rest of us know because I don’t do meat.

I had a 9 x 13 glass pan filled with cut up bok choy, mushrooms, red pepper, carrots and tofu.

Chinese Inspired Vegetable Marinade

1/8 C pure Vermont maple syrup

¼ C Dijon mustard

1/8 C rice wine vinegar

¼ C dark soy sauce

¼ C light soy sauce

2 tsp (or less) 5 spices (Chinese) powder

Mix all ingredients together until powder is dissolved. Pour over cut up vegetables and tofu. Mix vegetables so all are covered. Refrigerate until ready to grill.

Bitter cold temps don’t keep

farmers from Tahoe



Fresh produce at the June 5 farmers market in South Tahoe. Photo/Kathryn Reed

Despite the cold temps and needing to be bundled up, farmers braved the cold drive up to Tahoe and patrons made their way to the American Legion for the first farmers' market of the season in South Lake Tahoe.

As more produce ripens, more vendors will be at the Tuesday market. The market is open form 8am-1pm each Tuesday through early October.

Peaches, cherries, blueberries, lettuce, herbs, squash, onions, asparagus, garlic and other produce were all available June 5.

For those needing lunch on the go, different food vendors were also on hand and will be back each week.

– Kathryn Reed

Mojito contest at West Shore Cafe

The West Shore Cafe in Homewood is looking for mixologists.

Recipes for the new signature Moonlight Mojito cocktail recipe are being accepted online through June 5.

The top 10 cocktails will be voted on during a contest June 9, 2-5pm. Cost is $20.

For more info, call (530) 525.5200.

Timber Cove Best Western under new ownership

By Kathryn Reed

The Best Western at Timber Cove changed hands this week and a new restaurant on the pier is open.

Bob Maloff, who died a year ago, had left the South Lake Tahoe hotel, including the pier that juts far into Lake Tahoe, to his estate. Urbana Holdings based in Georgia is now the owner.

Hotel General Manager Peter Evenhuis told *Lake Tahoe News* no changes will be made to the hotel in the immediate future.



Pulled pork sliders at Bistro on the Pier in South Lake Tahoe are filling, but not the best. Photo/LTN

However, Urbana Holdings is likely to make some substantial changes to the property based on the company's description on its website: "Urbana's mission is to acquire, develop and operate investment caliber real estate projects and redevelop and renovate projects with the potential to become investment caliber. Targeted investments include office, multi-family, hotel and mixed-use projects. Urbana emphasizes the renovation and redevelopment of real estate properties that are not typically the focus of institutional or local entrepreneurial buyers. Once Urbana has completed the development or redevelopment process, the projects are better suited for a more passive investor such as a pension fund, REIT or insurance company."

Evenhuis invited *Lake Tahoe News* to dine at Bistro on the Pier this week knowing this reporter is a vegetarian. (The dining was on *LTN's* expense.)

When the waitress was asked what the chef would fix for a vegetarian, she asked, "Do you eat chicken?"

The Caesar salad ($8) was swimming in dressing; the pulled pork sliders ($9) were drenched in barbecue sauce. The quantities of both, though, were ample – making the price reasonable.

Sue said, “That’s the worst menu I’ve ever seen.”

Three salads are on the menu and four entrees. The beer and wine choices are limited, though there is a full bar.

One couple came in, looked at the menu, saw that it in no way resembled Blue Water Bistro – the independent restaurant the estate shutdown to open this one – and left.

While no one could mess with the view of Lake Tahoe from this location, especially on a warm night with not a ripple on the water, it’s not enough to get *Lake Tahoe News* to return to this bistro.

No sign on Highway 50 or the pier lets people know the bistro exists.

Evenhuis said the old Mama’s Red Tomato restaurant that had been out front and that is now used to serve hotel guests breakfast is likely to become a café for the public. He didn’t say when. However, a waiter on Wednesday night told other patrons a restaurant will open in that spot in two weeks.

Crayfish harvest at Lake Tahoe to begin this month

By Jeff Delong, Reno Gazette-Journal

Pursuing a vision to make a buck while helping to improve Lake

Tahoe’s clarity, a Nevada man hopes to begin harvesting crayfish from the lake’s waters within this month.

With all but one key permit expected to be in hand this week, Fred Jackson and Tahoe Lobster Co. Inc. are ready to get to work. Chefs across the Reno-Tahoe area are lined up to receive a savory product they expect to be well received by customers.

“I’m ready to go. It’s time to make the move,” Jackson said.

Jackson plans the first commercial operation to sell live crayfish trapped from Tahoe’s waters, a venture he said could aid the lake. His company’s motto: “Clarity by cuisine.”

Crayfish don’t belong in Lake Tahoe, but they love the place. Introduced in the area in the late 1800s, Tahoe’s crayfish population is now estimated in the range of 200 million to 300 million.

They’re causing problems and could be associated with a dramatic decline in the lake’s native invertebrates, said Sudeep Chandra, a freshwater science expert at University of Nevada, Reno.

Crayfish could also be linked to algae blooms diminishing Tahoe’s famed clarity.

“When they poop, they stimulate algae growth,” said Chandra, who is working with Tahoe Lobster Co. to track potential ecological benefits in parts of the lake through removal of crayfish.

Read the whole story

LTCC students create temporary campus restaurant

By Kathryn Reed

It isn't quite like the Food Network's "Restaurant Impossible," but the challenge is probably the most difficult culinary test these budding chefs have had to execute.

Students in Steve Fernald's Food Preparation class at Lake Tahoe Community College are tasked with planning a three-course lunch menu that includes a beverage, make enough food for about 30 people, and have a vegetarian main dish available.

Two of the four teams have their work behind them. Now they are the servers and helpers for the remaining teams.

It was two years ago that Fernald last had students put on these types of lunches.

"It is based upon the fact that we have a great group of students this year who have proven to work hard and do good jobs at nearly every task that has been given to them. I am really proud of the effort, creativity and energy the students are putting into planning and executing their own lunches," Fernald told *Lake Tahoe News* why he brought the lunches back.



Spinach salad starts the three-course meal May 31 at Lake Tahoe Community College. Photo/Kathryn Reed

Anita Kasch, who is part of Team El Dorado, said her group brainstormed a couple times before coming up with their menu.

“When we decided on a Mexican theme, we searched for recipes and ideas online as well as in a couple of cookbooks. For the rice dish, for example, we had three or four recipes that we made in class as a team. We sampled them and decided which we liked and which we didn’t,” Kasch told *Lake Tahoe News.* “The one we liked the best we tweaked a little to make it our own and to make it better to fit on our plate. We went through this process with nearly every menu item, using trial and error to find what worked the best. It was all a real team effort.”

On May 31 it was Team Sierra’s turn to wow the crowd gathered at the college. They had about 3½ hours that morning to get the food ready.

Dressed in their white chef coats, two students greet Becca and I who check off our reservation and take our money. We are seated at a table that has a carafe of water on it. While Tahoe water is already delicious, this water has fresh limes, lemons and oranges in it to make it taste even more flavorful – and perhaps healthy.

Pull apart rosemary Parmesan bread is quickly brought to the table with olive oil-balsamic vinegar for dipping. Being able to pull it apart made it fun, and definitely different than just having slices of bread. Having it be light, airy and small pieces made it so we didn’t just fill up on bread and water.

Out comes the first course – spinach salad. It has red onions,

feta cheese, candied almonds, craisins and finely diced tomatoes. The presentation is superb and the amount perfect.

The flavor, though, well, we both thought it needed something more. The dressing tasted only like oil had been put on the greens and nothing more. Nuts in a salad like this are great, but the candied aspect made it too sweet.

While we had different entrees, our sides were the same – spaghetti squash, zucchini and asparagus. Mixing the spaghetti squash and zucchini together gave it the right flavor, while on their own they were just OK.

Becca had the steak rouladen – stuffed with collard greens, bacon and goat cheese, topped with a demi-glace wine reduction sauce.

I had the eggplant stuffed with herbed ricotta cheese, breaded and pan-fried.

Unfortunately, neither of us was thrilled with our entrée. Becca's meat was dry, and the bulk of my eggplant was left on the plate.

The dessert, a peanut butter custard with a chocolate crust topped with flambé bananas could have lost the bananas for better a presentation and less competing flavors.

The caramel on the dessert tasted like it could have been made from scratch. It was yummy.

"It is definitely an empowering form of education that has lit a fire under this group," Fernald said of all of the students.

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Note: To sign up for the June 7 or June 14 lunches, email fernald@ltcc.edu. Seatings are at noon and 12:20pm. Cost is $10. This includes a three-course lunch and creative drink. There is a set menu, but a vegetarian option can be ordered

when making the reservation.

Barbecue sauces evolving from store-brand bland

By Jim Shahin, Washington Post

For some time now, commercial barbecue sauce has been progressing from its Dark Ages, when slow-smoked meats were tortured with bland, sweet, corporate slathers, to a more enlightened era of complex boutique sauces flavored with everything from habaneros to peaches. The homemade sauces in our second annual Smoke Signals barbecue sauce recipe contest reflect that evolution.

We received sauces that contained a pantry full of ingredients: cocoa powder, cider jelly, fresh plums, mangoes, apricots, chipotle peppers, tamarind paste, smoked beer, Asian pear, Mexican chocolate and more.

Such enlightenment – better than the bad old days, to be sure – has its own problems. It was tough sometimes to determine whether something could be considered a barbecue sauce, per se, or a different kind of sauce entirely.

The sauces seem to exemplify a paradoxical trend in contemporary barbecue. On the one hand, the craft sauce makers create flavors for niche tastes. On the other, taken as a whole, the anything-goes sauces speak to the homogenizing of this once fiercely regional cuisine.

This year, we changed up things. Rather than awarding the top

three vote-getters from among all entries, we selected a tomato-based sauce winner, a mustard-based sauce winner and an alternative sauce winner.

Read the whole story

Restaurant owners feeling fleeced by online review sites

By Timothy Sandoval, Sacramento Bee

Restaurant owner Sonny Mayugba was given an offer he almost could not refuse two weeks ago.

Not by a local gangster, but by a user of a popular online review site, Yelp.com.

Mayugba said the user threatened to blast the Red Rabbit Kitchen and Bar at 2718 J St., which Mayugba co-owns, on Yelp because he believed he and his party got food poisoning from their meals.

Mayugba said it was impossible to prove whether the man got food poisoning from the restaurant but offered to give him a $60 gift card to a restaurant of his choice. The man said he deserved $100. If the restaurant did not pay up, he said he would write a bad Yelp review and report him to health authorities.

Is what happened to the Red Rabbit Kitchen an isolated case? Or has the growth in popularity of restaurant review websites – which allow anyone to write and rate restaurants from one to

five stars – created a new way for some people to get preferential treatment.

Restaurant owners say online websites have changed consumer behavior as many people rely more on citizen reviews than on reviews of professional critics or advertisements. Yelp had a monthly average of more than 71 million unique visitors and 27 million reviews worldwide this year from January to the end of March, the company said.

Read the whole story

Battle heats up over labeling of genetically modified food

By Amy Harmon and Andrew Pollack, New York Times

GREAT BARRINGTON, Mass. – On a recent sunny morning at the Big Y grocery here, Cynthia LaPier parked her cart in the cereal aisle. With a glance over her shoulder and a quick check of the ingredients, she plastered several boxes with hand-designed stickers from a roll in her purse. “Warning,” they read. “May Contain GMO’s (Genetically Modified Organisms).”

For more than a decade, almost all processed foods in the United States – cereals, snack foods, salad dressings – have contained ingredients from plants whose DNA was manipulated in a laboratory. Regulators and many scientists say these pose no danger. But as Americans ask more pointed questions about what they are eating, popular suspicions about the health and environmental effects of biotechnology are fueling a movement to require that food from genetically modified crops be labeled, if not eliminated.

Labeling bills have been proposed in more than a dozen states over the last year, and an appeal to the Food and Drug Administration last fall to mandate labels nationally drew more than a million signatures. There is an iPhone app: ShopNoGMO.

The most closely watched labeling effort is a proposed ballot initiative in California that cleared a crucial hurdle this month, setting the stage for a probable November vote that could influence not just food packaging but the future of American agriculture.

Tens of millions of dollars are expected to be spent on the election showdown. It pits consumer groups and the organic food industry, both of which support mandatory labeling, against more conventional farmers, agricultural biotechnology companies like Monsanto and many of the nation's best-known food brands like Kellogg's and Kraft.

Read the whole story

Creating ice cream flavors with a lasting impression

By Nancy Lindahl, Enterprise Record

Hanna and I got to witness the birth of a new business Sunday as Oliver Wong rolled his pristine blue and white cart out of its trailer, installed light posts and hung out a ladder of flavor signs for his new ice cream business, Spoons.

The cart is small, but the flavors are fresh, and big – like Holy S'Mochas – a mocha ice cream with s'mores thrown in,

inspired by the good flavors from summer camping.



Ice cream entrepreneur making a stir in Chico. Photo/Spoons

Wong, a Chico native, attended Chico State University, McAllister College in Minnesota, and Columbia University in New York before he realized college was not where he wanted to go. He returned to Chico and found work at Red Tavern and Bacio where he could pursue his interest in all things food related. In his spare time he studied web design at Chico State and started experimenting with homemade ice cream.

Raised in a family of noteworthy cooks, Wong is the son of Jann Reed and Lester Wong. (He is the nephew of *Lake Tahoe News* Publisher Kathryn Reed.) He had always enjoyed being in the kitchen, and remembered making ice cream with rock salt and a hand-crank machine as a kid. Ice cream seemed simple, creative and a blank canvas for experimenting with flavors; a food category he could play with a long time before it got boring.

While researching the particulars of ice cream making, he discovered Penn State's Ice Cream Short Course and Penn State Berkey Creamery, the largest university creamery in the nation. The Ice Cream Short Course teaches ice cream science from "cow to cone" and has been educating generations of ice cream professionals since 1892. About 120 students take the

class every year, (Wong graduated fifth in his class of 120), and the student roster includes representatives from the big names in ice cream: Haagen-Dazs, Ben & Jerry’s, and Dairy Queen as well as a few young start-up entrepreneurs like Wong.

Returning to Chico, Wong upgraded from the family White Mountain handcrank ice cream maker to an Emory Thompson made-in-the-U.S.A. batch machine that can produce six quarts of ice cream every seven to eight minutes by pressing a button. In-between test batches of ice cream, Wong found an ice cream cart on Craig’s List, a trailer for the cart and a freezer. He chose Straus Family Creamery from Tomales Bay for his cream, created his Spoons website and recruited his sister, Jacquelyn, to make signs for his ice cream flavors. In all, he’s worked for about a year towards his goal of scooping premier gourmet ice cream for the citizens of Chico. Wong’s long-term goal is to open a cafe called Spoons that serves food you can eat with a spoon; comfort food like soups, ice creams, puddings, risottos, but for now his focus is on ice cream and getting started.

Read the whole story