Americans increase produce consumption

By Tim Carman, Washington Post

As Congress debates whether to trim the food stamps budget as part of the massive Farm Bill reauthorization, lawmakers might want to consider this striking statistic from a new W.K. Kellogg Foundation survey: Three-quarters of Americans say they support a national program that would double Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (or food stamp) benefits at farmers markets.

“It’s a wonderful sign of the increasing level of empathy,” says Gail Christopher, vice president for program strategy for the W.K. Kellogg Foundation. It’s an acknowledgment, she adds, that “the health of others could have an impact on their lives as well.”



Seasonal farmers markets help Tahoe-ites eat more fresh veggies-fruit. Photo/LTN file

The Kellogg survey of 800 American adults unearthed some other, arguably, surprising statistics about the country’s attitudes about fresh fruits and vegetables – and the people

who harvest them. Approximately 88 percent of respondents would strongly or partly agree to pay $1.50 more per month if it guaranteed that farm workers would be paid a fair wage.

What's more, 70 percent of respondents said they have purchased fresh produce from a farmers market or stand in the past year (although only 14 percent use this source as their regular outlet for fruits and vegetables). And more than 68 percent of those surveyed say they eat more whole grains, fruits and vegetables than they did five years ago.

These findings would appear to underscore the success of various organizations, progressive school districts, environmentalists, activist chefs, good food advocates and writers, and first lady Michelle Obama's Let's Move! campaign in spreading the gospel about local produce, fresh fruits and vegetables and more healthful diets. The message is clearly sinking in with the American public.

Read the whole story

Former Lake Valley fire chief becomes winemaker in retirement

By Lance Sparks, Eugene Weekly

The Broadleys' home, a dark, beveled-cedar single-story, sits near the top of the hill above their vineyards. From the front deck, the south Willamette Valley is revealed to the east – lush, green with farms, fields and stands of oaks and firs. On clear days, snow-capped peaks of the Cascades gleam in the

sunlight, from Mt. Hood in the north to the Three Sisters in the south.

In front of the house, the Broadley Vineyards are just beginning to flush with new growth; especially enticing is the set of north-facing vines that produce the grapes for Claudia's Choice, Broadleys' premier bottling, their prize-winner.

The Broadleys pioneered this area, displacing Christmas-tree farms and goat ranching (Morgan Broadley has brought back goats) and proving that wine grapes, vinis vinifera, could thrive here and yield world-class wines. Thirty years of successful growing blazed a trail to Monroe, and others have followed.

Now, just downslope from the Broadley homestead and southerly around the hill along Orchard Tract Road, a handsome wrought-iron gate, painted a shade of celadon, marks the entry to Whybra Vineyards. Nothing here invites visitors, especially not the slinking German shepherd who tracks the car just outside the driver's door. At the end of the steeply sloping crushed-basalt driveway sits a trailer under trees, a few sheds and outbuildings nearby.

Christi Alvarez – in broad-brimmed hat and blue rubber gloves – stays here with her two watchful hounds. She actually lives in Sun River and comes over to carefully tend her 11.5 acres of pinot noir. The vineyard was planted in 1992, but wines wearing the Whybra label didn't appear until 2007. Whybra 2009 Pinot Noir is not widely distributed but can be found at the Longbranch Saloon, just across the highway from the Broadley tasting room in Monroe.

Downslope, around the bend and up another crude driveway, we find the pole building that Brian and Therese Schafer converted to an apartment for themselves and a winery for their newly established TeBri Vineyards. They've just released

their 2009 pinot noir, a palpable hit.

Before he retired, Brian had been fire chief in Lake Tahoe but concluded “firefighting at age 60 is not a good idea.” How good an idea was it to start a vineyard?

Read the whole story

Coffee linked to lower risk of death

By Amina Khan, Los Angeles Times

Researchers have some reassuring news for the legions of coffee drinkers who can’t get through the day without a latte, cappuccino, iced mocha, double-shot of espresso or a plain old cuppa joe: That coffee habit may help you live longer.

A new study that tracked the health and coffee consumption of more than 400,000 older adults for nearly 14 years found that java drinkers were less likely to die during the study than their counterparts who eschewed the brew. In fact, men and women who averaged four or five cups of coffee per day had the lowest risk of death, according to a report in Thursday’s edition of the New England Journal of Medicine.

The research doesn’t prove that coffee deserves the credit for helping people live longer. But it is the largest analysis to date to suggest that the beverage’s reputation for being a liquid vice may be undeserved.

“There’s been concerns for a long time that coffee might be a risky behavior,” said study leader Neal Freedman, an epidemiologist with the National Cancer Institute who drinks

coffee “here and there.” “The results offer some reassurance that it’s not a risk factor for future disease.”

Coffee originated in Ethiopia more than 500 years ago. As it spread through the Middle East, Europe and the Americas, its popularity was tempered by concerns about its supposed ill effects. A 1674 petition by aggrieved women in London complained that coffee left men impotent, “with nothing moist but their snotty noses, nothing stiff but their joints, nor standing but their ears,” according to the book “Uncommon Grounds: The History of Coffee and How It Transformed Our World.”

Read the whole story

Nevada dairy industry could grow with manufacturing facility

By Yun Long, Reno Gazette-Journal

The dairy industry in Nevada is getting a boost with a new dry dairy ingredient-manufacturing facility under construction in Fallon.

Dairy Farmers of America Inc., a national cooperative of about 15,000 dairy farmers, is building the $70 million state-of-the-art facility that will be able to produce dried dairy ingredients, such as whole milk powder.

“It going to be a great thing for Nevada export products,”

said Bob Shriver, an economic development consultant for the city of Fallon. “It’s got long-range benefits for the area. Because of this, it could attract a lot of other potential industries and enhance the community of Fallon in general.”

The plant is scheduled to be completed in summer 2013 and employ at least 40 people full-time, mostly in the production area.

The 150,000-square-foot facility will be able to process 2 million pounds of raw milk and make about 250,000 pounds of dried dairy ingredients daily for domestic and global customers. The facility is located on a 31.5-acre parcel in Fallon’s New River Business Park.

“We chose to build an ingredient facility in Fallon because the area is already home to a vibrant dairy industry,” Glenn Wallace, chief operating officer for the company’s ingredient division, said in an email. “We are confident this is a good opportunity for us to put a facility in a place where we can be successful.”

Several factors contributed to the plant’s location, including proximity to major international ports, a dedicated dairy supply and opportunities for expansion.

Twenty-two dairies are in the Fallon area, but with the completion of the plant, Shriver sees an increase in the number of dairy cattle and more dairymen to fulfill the increasing needs of the plant.

Read the whole story

LTCC students offering 3-course lunches

Students participating in the Intermediate Food Preparation Class in the culinary program of Lake Tahoe Community College will be planning and creating a three course sit-down luncheon for the public.

The four groups – Team Sierra, Team Kokanee, Team El Dorado, and Team Washoe – will be preparing the meals May 24, May 31, June 7 and June 14; with seating times at noon and 12:20pm.

The price is $10 per person.

Reservations are being taken now (530) 541.4660, ext. 334 or email fernald@ltcc.edu. Space is limited.

There is a set menu, but a vegetarian meal will be offered if ordered when making the reservation.

Menus for each lunch will be available one week in advance.

Farmers market season about to begin in Lake Tahoe

By Kathryn Reed

A true sign winter really is history is when seasonal farmers markets open.

Placerville's market opened last Saturday; Tahoe City's opens

later this month; and the two South Lake Tahoe markets start in June.

While fresh produce is the thrust of the markets, it is a growing business venture, too. According to the U.S. Department of Agriculture, there are 7,175 farmers markets in the country. There were half that many less than 10 years ago.



Lots of greens are expected when the South Lake Tahoe Tuesday farmers market opens June 5. Photos/LTN file

The USDA estimates farmers markets are a $1 billion a year business. However, that represents just 2 percent of retail farm sales in the U.S.

Jim Coalwell, who runs the Tuesday certified market in South Lake Tahoe, partly attributes the success of markets to people wanting to know where their food comes from.

He said the markets have weathered the recession well. One thing that hurts the Tahoe market is the dwindling population.

Coalwell, with wife Lois, run five markets – most in El Dorado County.

The market at the American Legion parking lot off Highway 50

will open June 5. Like past years, it will run from 8am-1pm each Tuesday until the weather says it’s time to fold up the tables for the season.

The other South Shore market returns to Ski Run Boulevard on June 22. New this year is that it will be on Fridays from 3-8pm. The boulevard is closed between Birch and Larch streets.

This will be the third year for the Ski Run market, but its second full year.

Alex Mellon, who runs this market, told *Lake Tahoe News* it will be like a brand new market.

“It will be more like street festival atmosphere,” Mellon said. “It is a certified farmers market, so you have to have more farmers than crafts.”

Still, he is working on bringing in a number of artist-type booths. He’s also in discussions with Blue Angel Café for the restaurant to provide a beer garden.

“It will be a unique dynamic,” Mellon said of what is planned. Food, crafts and music are expected to be part of the mix.

While the Tuesday market is more traditional, Coalwell said what would be most noticeable on day one is the number of vendors.



Asparagus was a big seller in June last year.

“Everything looks really good. We should see cherries the first day and peaches, and a lot of greens,” Coalwell told *Lake Tahoe News*.

A blueberry grower from Orland should be at the first few markets before more regional blueberries ripen.

Early season peaches will be from the Modesto area before the foothill trees start producing.

Coalwell said on May 5 at the Placerville market he tasted the cherries from a Stockton grower – and then went on to rave about them. Those growers will be in Tahoe in a matter of weeks.

With a good winter, consumers should expect to see more fruit available compared to a year ago.

Coalwell said the late rains were a good omen for this year’s harvest. The lack of hard frosts also is good for farmers.

A couple new vendors will be someone selling tablecloths and a local chef who is expected to cook with some of the products available at the market.

Other regional farmers markets:

Tuesdays:

• Truckee: Truckee River Regional Park

10500 Brockway Road off Highway 267

June-October, 8am–1pm

• Kings Beach: Kings Beach SRA

Highway 28 at Bear Street

June 8-Sept. 7, 9am-1pm

• Minden

Esmeralda Avenue

June 1-September, 4-8pm

Wednesdays:

• Carson City: Pony Express Pavilion in Mills Park

Highway 50 East and Saliman Road

June 8-Aug. 31, 3-7pm

• Gardnerville: Lampe Park Farmer’s Market

Waterloo Drive, one block west of Highway 395

June 2-Sept. 15, 8am-1pm

Thursdays:

• Truckee: Donner Pass near the train station

June-August, 4-6pm

• Tahoe City: Commons Beach

Commons Beach Road and North Lake Boulevard

May 27-Sept. 30, 8am-1pm

Saturdays:

• Carson City: Saturday Morning Farmer’s Market

Third and Curry streets

June 11, 8:30am-1:30pm.

Must schools throwout leftovers?

By Mark Robison, Reno Gazette-Journal

The claim

Federal law requires school districts to throw out food that could feed the hungry.

The background

Silvia Fascio of Gerlach wrote in a recent letter to the editor, “Media reports that one in six Americans are hungry. Meanwhile, each and every public school across this land, including Level One schools (four feeds per day), throw away unconscionable amounts of food, daily. Not scraps, but ‘hermetically’ sealed individual portioned bags of unopened foods …

“Can’t we give this unopened food to soup kitchens, senior citizen centers, tent cities or sell to the local pig farmer; it must by law go to the landfill to feed the rats!”

Fascio blames the “grandly inefficient federal government” for usurping states’ rights on this issue.

Kathy Kubly of Reno was upset at the “lunacy” Fascio described, writing in her own letter to the editor:

“Unopened food that sat on a meal tray for less than an hour

can neither be used or donated and is required, by law, to be opened and thrown away? Please, someone, tell me this isn't true. And this is happening across the country in all of our public and private schools?"

She too blames politicians and says, "Do we just accept or (do we) take action?"

She urges everyone to contact lawmakers about this outrage.

As it turns out, not only doesn't the federal government outlaw schools from donating food, it actively encourages the distribution of leftover food.

Read the whole story

Pack your knives for a foodie vacation

By Christine Muhlke, Bon Appetit

For those who travel to eat, visits to farmers' markets, butchers, and cheese stores are part of the grand tour. But at a certain point, it's masochistic: You can look, but you can only snack. So after years of envying the residents of San Francisco, Paris, Venice, and even Madison, Wisconsin, who get to actually make things with all that gorgeous stuff I could never put in my carry-on, I was ready to travel to cook.

Rent-to-eat vacations are possible around the world. The right destination offers access not only to great produce, bread, wine, and staples but to terrific restaurants, too. (After all, who wants to cook every meal, every day?) There should be enough daytime activities to entertain friends and

family—hiking and antiquing a plus. And, of course, a beautiful house or apartment with a well-equipped kitchen.

Thinking about where you want to cook is easy—Sicily! Provence! Mexico? Finding the right house with a great kitchen requires sleuthing. My mother-in-law once rented a breathtaking place in Big Sur. But when it came time to make her birthday dinner, there were two eager cooks, but just one dull knife and not much else. To make garlic-scape pesto, I had to improvise a mortar and pestle using a mug and a bowl.

The food tasted better for our MacGyver teamwork, but when my husband, Oliver, and I were looking for a place to stay with friends last spring, I scoured the photos on rental sites for signs of cooks' kitchens (a dozen wineglasses is a nice decorating touch, but I'd prefer a dozen stainless-steel bowls) and made a list of essential tools to pack just in case.

The ideal spot and the ideal house came together by chance. Oliver and I love the area around Tomales Bay in Marin County, an hour or so north of San Francisco. After several unforgettable stays (and meals) at Manka's Inverness Lodge, we decided we wanted to grill the meat of the cows that graze on the surrounding hills, and try making our own version of the Marshall Store's oysters Rockefeller using the just-harvested bivalves from Hog Island Oyster Company. Then one day, Quince chef Michael Tusk was in the Bon Appetit Test Kitchen, talking about a weekend he'd spent cooking in a rental house on the bay in Marshall, right next to Hog Island. The phrase "most perfect house in the world" was used. Sold.

Read the whole story

Eating organic foods is good for the body and planet

By Mandy Kendall

I don’t know about you, but I can’t wait for the farmers’ markets to start up again. I love this time of year with all the fresh local fruits and veggies coming back into season. Buying food that I know has been grown locally satisfies a bit of my “I want to be as green as possible” side.

I know the carbon footprint of the produce is pretty small and it’s about as fresh as you can get. I can also ask how the food has been grown and what pesticides, etc. have been used on them.



Mandy Kendall

Why worry about pesticides? Well, there is growing agreement in the scientific community that prolonged exposure to even small amounts of pesticides can have adverse effects on health, especially during fetal, and childhood development. Pesticides also contaminate groundwater and are believed to be a factor in the “colony collapse disorder”, the mysterious, and serious, decline in the pollinating honeybee population that threatens our food supply. The miraculous work of the honeybee is essential to the complex ecosystem of our natural world and responsible for 40 percent of our food production. The honeybee is vital to our survival, but pesticides are slowly eradicating them.

So, we might want to support our local farmers, protect our family's health and the health of our planet, which leads us to organic produce. The issue is that organic produce prices can be substantially higher than regular produce and it can get mighty expensive to go "totally green". So I looked into what I should be spending my organic budget on for maximum benefit.

There is an organization called the Environmental Working Group who do a study each year that is a Shoppers Guide to Pesticides in Produce. The 2011 version is based on federal research into pesticides tests on produce between 2000 and 2009.

It turns out that there is a group of foods they have dubbed the Dirty Dozen – foods that have the highest pesticide load, making them the most important to consider first when buying organic.

The Dirty Dozen:

• Apples

• Celery

• Strawberries

• Peaches

• Spinach

• Nectarines (imported)

• Grapes (imported)

• Sweet bell peppers

• Potatoes

• Blueberries (domestic)

• Lettuce

• Kale/collard greens

Fortunately there is also a list of foods called the Clean 15, which had the lowest pesticide load when tested and are therefore considered the safest, conventionally grown, crops to eat from a pesticide point of view.

The Clean 15:

• Onions

• Sweet corn

• Pineapples

• Avocado

• Asparagus

• Sweet peas

• Mangoes

• Eggplant

• Cantaloupe (domestic)

• Kiwi

• Cabbage

• Watermelon

• Sweet potatoes

• Grapefruit

• Mushrooms

So, if you find the cost of purchasing all your fruits and vegetables from the organic section prohibitive, maybe just

concentrate on the Clean 15.

There is, however, one caveat I would like to add: Although the peeled foods listed above may limit how much pesticide is ingested by the consumer, it does not mean that the farm they were grown on used any less pesticides in the growing process than other farms. Therefore, to help promote the health of you and yours, as well as that of the planet, it is still best to buy organic whenever possible.

Until next time.

Mandy Kendall operates Health Connective in South Lake Tahoe. If you have any questions, would like some advice, or would like to request some Qwik-e tips on any health and wellbeing topic, please feel free to drop me an email at healthconnective@gmail.com, visit us on Facebook, or keep an eye out on Lake Tahoe News for regular Qwik-e tips on how to make healthy changes one Quick and Easy step at a time.

Tickets on sale for Fair Play Wine Festival

The annual Fair Play Wine Festival is the weekend of June 2-3, 11am-5pm each day.

Sixteen wineries are participating.

Tickets are $20.

Go online for more information.