Hagar to share specialty rum at reopening of Cabo Wabo

Rock star Sammy Hagar will be at Harveys Lake Tahoe on May 4 to celebrate the eighth anniversary and grand reopening of his Cabo Wabo Cantina.

During his appearance at the Cantina, between the hours of 4 and 7pm, the Red Rocker will also be announcing his latest venture into the "spirit world," with the launch of his new premium adult beverage, Sammy's Beach Bar Rum. The premium, small-batch rum made in Maui from Hawaiian sugarcane, is just now becoming available outside of Hawaii.

Hagar and his band Chickenfoot will perform over the weekend across the street at Harrah's Lake Tahoe the nights of May 4 and 5.

Remodeled at a cost of more than $200,000, a few of the Cabo Wabo Cantina improvements include:

Entertainment stage twice the size of the old one, with an adjacent VIP area.

Raised ceilings, remodeled and enlarged restaurant area and dance floor.

New and redesigned fixtures, furniture and equipment

Three-panel video wall at the entrance.

All new, state-of-the-art sound and lighting systems.

Revamped and expanded restaurant and drink menus.

McDonald’s French fries can be made at home

By Sarah B. Weir, Yahoo

Even food snobs who shun McDonald’s have to admit that they serve the mother of all French fries. Ray Kroc, one of the chain’s founders wrote in his autobiography that the fry was “almost sacrosanct for me. Its preparation a ritual to be followed religiously.” The end result is a crispy golden-brown baton showered with just the right amount of salt. The exterior’s initial crunch yields to a tender and steaming white center. More, please?

“They are consistent,” says David Myers, chef/owner of Comme Ca in Los Angeles and Las Vegas. “I can’t imagine how many millions of dollars in research and development they have spent in order to achieve a perfect fry around the world.” Myers is no stranger to fried potatoes. His restaurants, which serve classic French brasserie fare, cook hundreds of orders of “pommes frites” (French-fried potatoes) a week.

McDonald’s French fries are shipped to outlets frozen. “We do all of ours fresh everyday,” says Myers who uses the same recipe at his restaurants and at home. Myers also uses the best Idaho russet potatoes, French sea salt, and super fresh cooking oil.

He says the key to making a perfect, consistent, McDonald’s-style fry is in the advance preparation. The cut potatoes need to be soaked for at least two hours before cooking which pulls out excess starch and ensures the crispiest product. Also, Myers recommends that, “you have plenty of paper towels, a lined sheet pan, and have your oil ready to go.”

The beauty of Myers' two-step cooking method is that you can cook your fries ahead of a dinner party and keep them in the fridge until you are ready to finish in hot oil just before serving. This way you get the most delicious, sizzling, salty, golden-brown fries every time.

Read the whole story

K's Kitchen: Yummy sauce to top portabella mushrooms

By Kathryn Reed

As the temps soared last weekend in the Lake Tahoe Basin, it was time for one of my favorite warm weather activities – fire up the barbecue.

While others barbecue year-round, we are definitely fair-weather grillers.



One of my favorite veggies to grill is asparagus. I never get tired of those tasty green stalks.

But then I decided I wanted us to eat the same thing for dinner. Sometimes when Sue is womaning the bbq there is a meat product for her and veggies for me. We started the season with portabella mushrooms for both of our entrées.

To change things up a bit I decided to create a sauce that I would drizzle over the 'shrooms once Sue did her job out back.

It’s definitely a keeper recipe.

For the asparagus, I just cut off the ends of the stalks – the white part – and laid them on a piece of foil. Then I put small chunks of butter on the pile and drizzled fresh lemon juice on them. Wrap them all up and give them to the barbecuer. I think they are best when the foil is a bit charred. Just before serving, once they are on the plate, I drizzle balsamic vinegar on them.

Below is the recipe for the mushroom concoction. I found all of the ingredients for it – as well as the mushrooms and asparagus – at Grocery Outlet. So, not only was it was a good meal, but inexpensive. And there were leftovers.

The other thing served with this was rice pilaf, which I made from scratch.

Portabellas with Red Pepper-Fontina Sauce (serves 4)

4 portabella mushrooms

Olive oil

12 ounce jar red peppers

¾ ounces of basil, or more

5 cloves garlic

1 shallot

¼ pound Fontina cheese, cut into chunks or grated

Brush mushrooms with paper towel to clean. Then brush each one, both sides, lightly with olive oil. Give them to the person stationed at the grill. Sue says they take about 12 minutes to cook.

In blender, mix peppers, basil, garlic and shallot until pureed.

Transfer mixture to small saucepan. On medium heat gradually add cheese, stirring constantly. (Cheese can burn easily and stick to the bottom of the pan.)

Cook until cheese is melted and mixture is hot.

With mushroom on plate, pour some of the red pepper-cheese mixture over the top of each one in an appetizing manner.

U.S. farmers helping China increase food production

By P.J. Huffstutter and Niu Shuping, Reuters

Inside a dimly lit barn in northeast Indiana, where the air smells faintly of corn and earth, the future of China's food supply is squealing for attention.

A farmhand shuffles through the crowd of pigs inside pen 7E3, patting their fleshy pink backs and checking their water trough. The animals here at the Whiteshire Hamroc farm have been bred for one purpose: to be flown halfway around the world, on a journey fueled by China's appetite for food independence.

In a country where pork is a culinary staple, the demand for a protein-rich diet is growing faster than Chinese farmers can keep up. While Americans cut back on meat consumption to the lowest levels seen in two decades, the Chinese now eat nearly 10 percent more meat than they did five years ago.

China's solution: to super-size its supply by snapping up

millions of live animals raised by U.S. farmers as breeding stock – capitalizing on decades of cutting edge agricultural research in America.

By taking this step, say breeders and exporters, China will move from small-scale backyard farms, to the Westernized tradition of large consolidated operations to keep up with demand.

“I liken it to their telephone system,” said Mike Lemmon, co-owner of the Whiteshire Hamroc farm, which specializes in exporting breeding swine to China. “Most of China’s mainland went from having no landlines to everyone having a cell phone. They’re doing the same thing with farming.”

Focus on livestock genetics also represents an emerging economic bonanza for two of the United States’ most powerful industries: technology and agriculture. Worldwide, the United States exported a record $664 million worth of breeding stock and genetic material such as semen in 2011.

But as fortune shines on breeders, concerns are being raised. While U.S. consumption of meat falls, the price of producing a pound of protein rises, meaning meat companies are seeing their margins shrink.

Read the whole story

Food safety impacting wildlife, water quality

By Dan Charles, NPR

We’d probably like to think that clean, safe food goes hand in

hand with pristine nature, with lots of wildlife and clean water. But in the part of California that grows a lot of the country's lettuce and spinach, these two goals have come into conflict.

Environmental advocates say a single-minded focus on food safety has forced growers of salad greens to strip vegetation from around their fields, harming wildlife and polluting streams and rivers.

The heart of this conflict is the Salinas Valley, on California's central coast. And my guide to the valley, on this beautiful spring day, is Daniel Mountjoy, an ecologist with a nonprofit organization called Sustainable Conservation. "I just love the drive down through here," Mountjoy says, as we head southeast from Castroville, the self-proclaimed "Artichoke Center of the World."

We can see mountains to the east and the west, but the valley itself, miles wide, is as flat as high-tech field-leveling machines could make it. The Salinas River meanders down the middle of the valley, visible as a thicket of trees.

But most of what we see, though, is mile after mile of fields. Some are bare, ready for planting, others with rows of green leaves just emerging from brown dirt. This is one of the country's biggest sources of fresh lettuce and spinach. It's often called America's salad bowl.

And for the past 40 years, this valley has been the scene of a struggle to find a balance between some of the most intensive farming in the world and what's left of nature.

When Mountjoy first came here, as a student, almost 40 years ago, farming had already taken over.

"One of my professors brought us out on a field trip," he recalls. This scientist had invented some of the first chemical herbicides that farmers used to kill off weeds. "He

was very proud of the fact that farmers had been able to eliminate and restrict all noncrop vegetation from the farms, and pointed out that you could tell a good farm from a bad farm by that fact that, from fence post to fence post, the only thing that was growing was the crop.”

Mountjoy, though, found it bleak. Ecologically, it was impoverished. There was barely any food or shelter for insects, or the birds that feed on them, or bigger animals that need even more space.

Also, when it rained, soil and fertilizer washed straight into drainage ditches, streams, and the Monterey Bay.

Mountjoy became part of a movement to change that. He went to work for the Natural Resources Conservation Service of the U.S. Department of Agriculture. It’s the arm of the USDA that promotes environmental quality. And for almost 20 years, part of his job was encouraging farmers in this valley to create a greener, more diverse landscape.

Read the whole story

2-day event a lesson in ranching and farming activities

Capital City Farm Days is May 10-11 at Fuji Park Exhibit Hall and Carson City Fairgrounds.

The event organized by University of Nevada Cooperative Extension runs from 8:30am-2pm each day and includes up to 32 presenters providing information and demonstrations on

ranching- and farming-related activities in Nevada.

The event typically draws from 500 to 1,200 students, teachers and parents who learn about composting, organic farming, water issues, noxious weeds, row crops, wildfire, bees and native pollinators, and rangeland. 4-H and Future Farmers of America youth bring their livestock animals and talk to the students about what it takes to raise a market animal.

Presenters also demonstrate spinning, weaving, quilting, and other traditional crafts associated with ranching and farming throughout our country and the world. Antique tractors are on display, and owners discuss the use of these machines in agriculture.

Visitors may also get to view a demonstration of herding dogs working sheep.

Some foods are worse than eating a stick of butter

By Sarah Klein, Huffington Post

You wouldn’t sit down to dinner at your favorite restaurant and order a stick of butter a la carte. You’re too smart for that – you know there’d be lots of calories and little nutrients and, most of all, lots and lots of fat.

But some of the cheesy entrees and meaty meals you’re ordering are packed with just as much fat – or more. There’s a total of

92 grams of fat in a stick of butter, much more than the maximum amount recommended for an entire day on a healthy diet.

The Dietary Guidelines For Americans recommend limiting fat intake to 20 to 35 percent of your daily calories. (A gram of fat provides 9 calories.) For a 2,000-calorie-a-day diet, that means anywhere from 44 to 78 grams of fat a day won't push you over the edge. Most Americans don't have to worry about not getting enough fat; in fact, our diets are too heavy in saturated and trans fats and skimpy on the healthy, unsaturated kind, found in good-for-you foods like fish, olive oil and nuts.

Unfortunately, it's too easy to find foods – especially on the menus of your favorite chain restaurants – that trample those daily fat recommendations in one fell swoop.

Read the whole story

Agriculture institute for teachers in El Dorado-Amador counties

Educators from El Dorado and Amador counties are invited to attend the Teacher's Ag Summer Institute set for June 19-21.

The workshop will bring together classroom teachers, farmers, ranchers, environmental educators and agricultural and natural resource specialists to gain a deeper understanding of agricultural systems and how they sustain the health of people, society, and the natural environment. Teachers will

gain an expanded understanding of what agriculture brings to our local community, while providing students with new opportunities to practice critical thinking skills in the classroom, utilizing resources and experiences provided at the teacher institute.

The Teacher's Ag Summer Institute combines hands-on, field experiences and sample classroom activities to immerse participants in the vital world of agriculture. Daily topics center around sustainable agriculture themes and are tied to California state curriculum standards to ensure ease in incorporating lessons into the classroom.

Topics will include conservation and stewardship practices; land use and zoning issues; ecological services provided by crop, forest and rangelands; water utilization and conservation; production, marketing and distribution systems; economic and business considerations and the historical context of agriculture in the region.

Field activities will be conducted at working ranches, orchards, farms, forest lands and vineyards located throughout El Dorado County. Educators need little or no background in agriculture to attend the institute.

A $75 participation fee covers transportation to the field sites from the workshop base in Coloma, lunches and all resource materials.

Teachers will prepare and present a lesson plan or class activity, developed from resources and experiences gleaned while attending TASI at a "Back to the Farm" event in July.

Optional continuing education credits will be offered for the workshop series.

Registration is available online; space is limited and teachers are encouraged to register as soon as possible.

For more information contact Wendy West, at (530) 621.5533 or wkwest@ucdavis.edu.

Tips for getting kids to have healthy relationship with food

By Casey Seidenberg, Washington Post

My 9-year-old saw a headline in my email that read “10 Foods You Should NEVER Eat!” He grabbed me and said, “Mom, have you read this? I thought there weren’t foods we should never eat. You said all foods were okay once in a while.”

I was so proud.

As a mom who knows too much about our food system and the potential hazards to my children, I struggle to maintain a smile when my kids are handed red food-dyed snacks at soccer practice or served Coke at a birthday party. I was worried I had forever damaged them by cringing around certain food products. So the fact that my son understands that healthful foods are better choices, but that all food is okay in small doses, makes me sigh with relief.

Many children grow up with eating disorders and unhealthy associations to food. So how do we help our kids have a healthy relationship to food?

Read the whole story

Plan to slaughter horses for human consumption met with distaste

By Ted Burnham, NPR

When the ban on slaughtering horses for human consumption was lifted in the U.S. last November, it was only a matter of time before someone applied to start the practice up again.

That person is Rick De Los Santos, a New Mexico rancher and owner of Valley Meat Co. If the USDA approves his application to have a former beef slaughterhouse inspected, it would allow the first slaughter of horses in the U.S. since 2007.

The meat would be exported to Mexico, one of many countries where eating horsemeat is nothing to flick your tail at. Horse is also eaten frequently in Europe and Asia. And the Canadian grocery chain Metro lists 22 recipes for horse meat on its website.

But Americans are historically averse to eating horses. A notable exception is the Harvard Faculty Club, which served chicken-fried horse meat until 1985. Americans have typically turned to horse consumption only in tough times. When beef rations became scarce during World War II, people turned to horse as a serviceable but inferior alternative. Republicans blamed President Truman for the shortage, labeling him "Horsemeat Harry."

Read the whole story