Light beer losing market share to other beverages

By Duane D. Stanford, Bloomberg

At a beer industry summit last month, Ed McBrien, distribution chief for MillerCoors, compared himself to a typewriter salesman in an iPad age.

McBrien was sketching out plans to resurrect light beer, a $50 billion market battling to stay relevant as makers of craft beer, wine and spirits increasingly steal customers from Molson Coors Brewing Co., SABMiller Plc and Anheuser-Busch Inbev NV.

Light beer is ceding ground as cabernet-loving Baby Boomers and Millennials weened on exotic cocktails seek more complex flavors in their brews. High unemployment among light beer drinkers also has prompted some to drink less or switch to cheaper brews. In a bid to return the froth to light beer, the U.S. joint venture between Molson Coors and SABMiller last week unveiled new advertising for a key brand, Miller Lite.

If the companies can’t revive the brand, “we’ve got big trouble ahead of us,” said Bump Williams, whose BWC Co. advises more than 100 beer retailers and distributors. “Light beer has become a commodity.”

Read the whole story

Caffeine from mom not a problem for babies

By Nancy Shute, NPR

Mothers of new babies might be forgiven for turning to caffeine to get through those sleep-deprived months. And they might worry that drinking coffee interferes with the sleep of breast-fed babies – the Web is full of such questions. But a new study says it's not so.

Instead, researchers in Brazil found that the babies of heavy coffee drinkers were no more likely to wake up than were babies whose moms didn't have a serious espresso habit.

Crying and colic at 3 months old, as well as frequent night waking at 12 months, were not affected by a mom's caffeine intake.

"When we planned the study, we worked with the hypothesis of association between heavy maternal consumption of caffeine and higher infant awakenings at night," Marlos Rodrigues Domingues, a researcher at the Universidade Federal de Pelotas, and co-author of the study, tells Shots in an email.

It's not clear why the infants' sleep wasn't affected. The babies might have developed a tolerance to caffeine while in the womb, Rodrigues says. But other studies have found no caffeine metabolites in the urine of babies whose mothers drink coffee, suggesting that the babies don't absorb caffeine the way older children and adults do. The results were published in the journal Pediatrics.

The researchers tracked 885 babies born in 2004. All but one of the mothers consumed caffeine, either in coffee or in the herbal drink mate, which is popular in South America. And 20 percent of those women drank a lot of coffee – more than 300

mg a day of caffeine, or about six espressos.

Read the whole story

Not all bottled beers are the same

By Josh Noel, Chicago Tribune

If you spend more than a few minutes picking out your beer, you've probably seen the words on a label or two: bottle-conditioned.

But what is it? And why do some well-loved breweries swear by the practice (Sierra Nevada) while others don't touch it (Lagunitas)?

First of all, bottle-conditioning – also known as refermentation – is quite simple. It amounts to bottling beer while still flat with a last-minute addition of yeast and sugar. In the bottle, the yeast eats the sugar, creating carbon dioxide – better known as bubbles. (The process can also take place in a can, but is less common and more difficult to pull off.)

Read the whole story

K’s Kitchen: Asparagus will make you feel like you’re royalty

By Kathryn Reed

Oh, if only I were royalty, then I could eat fresh asparagus year-round.



“In the 16th century, asparagus gained popularity in France and England, and early colonists brought it to America. King Louis XIV of France so enjoyed this delicacy that he ordered special greenhouses built for a year-round supply. Hence the reference to asparagus as ‘Food of the Kings’,” according to the California Asparagus Commission website.

We common folk are relegated to eating these nutritious green spears seasonally – which means now – and for the next couple months. Seventy-five percent of the asparagus grown in the U.S. comes from California soil.

Here are some facts about asparagus:

Serving Size	93 grams/5 spears
Calories	25
Calories from fat	0
Fat	0 grams
Saturated Fat	0 grams
Cholesterol	0 milligrams
Sodium	0 milligrams

Potassium	230 mg
Carbohydrates	4 grams
Dietary Fiber	2 grams
Protein	2 grams
	% of USRDA
Vitamin C	15%
Vitamin A	10%
Calcium	2%
Iron	*

Source: *California Asparagus Commission*

There are so many wonderful ways to cook asparagus. One of my favorites is to steam them and then drizzle balsamic vinegar over them, sometimes adding a squeeze of fresh lemon.

For a snack, I will steam the spears, then let them cool to room temperature. I spread either cream cheese or a light ranch dressing on a flour tortilla. I place a few spears on the tortilla – depends how thick the spears are – then roll up the tortilla. I cut them into about 1-inch segments, put them on a plate, cover them with plastic wrap, refrigerate them, and snack on them like candy.

Wanting a side dish of more than just asparagus, I came up with the following recipe last weekend. You could use oil instead of butter to make it vegan. The butter added a little more richness, plus some salt. I don't often cook with salt, so having it added other places works for me.

Asparagus, Mushroom, Spinach Medley (serves 3)

1½ C asparagus, chopped into bite size pieces or smaller

1½ C mushrooms, rough chop

2½ ounces fresh spinach

1½ T butter

2 tsp garlic, minced

¼ C Madeira

Pepper, to taste

Melt butter over medium-high heat. Add mushrooms, stir so they are coated with butter and begin to slightly change color. Then add asparagus. Cook for a couple minutes. Add spinach. As spinach is halfway wilted, add garlic and Madeira. Once spinach is cooked, add pepper, stir and serve.

Company abruptly stops marketing controversial crop fumigant

By Steve Chawkins and Diana Marcum, Los Angeles Times

A years-long environmental battle ended abruptly when the company producing a fumigant for strawberries and other crops yanked it from U.S. distribution, bringing relief to activists and raising concern among growers.

Methyl iodide, meant to replace an ozone-depleting fumigant

being phased out by an international treaty, was believed to have little effect on air quality. But some scientists say it can cause cancer, brain damage and miscarriages among workers who handle it and can be a threat to ground water.

In California, which produces 90% of the nation's strawberries, environmental advocates reacted enthusiastically Wednesday to the announcement by Tokyo-based Arysta LifeScience Inc.

"This way is more powerful than a court victory. It's a concession. It's them walking," said Greg Loarie, lead attorney in a lawsuit attacking the process California used to approve the chemical in 2010.

"Today I'm really happy," said 19-year-old Gabriela Rincon, who joined marches against the chemical and told her parents, both pickers in the Salinas area, about the risk. "It feels like someone finally listened to us about something really important."

An Arysta spokeswoman said the decision late Tuesday to abandon U.S. production and marketing of the company's trademarked Midas fumigant was financial. Arysta will continue to market the chemical outside the U.S.

In 2011, the first full year it was available as a replacement for methyl bromide, only one strawberry grower used it, on a small plot outside Santa Maria, according to the California Strawberry Commission.

Several pepper farmers in the Central Valley also reportedly applied the chemical. Its chilly reception among growers contrasted sharply with the urgency expressed by state officials in 2010, when then-Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger deemed its approval an "emergency."

For some growers, the legal risk of using a compound that had generated intense notoriety proved too great.

Read the whole story

Safeway eliminating ‘pink slime’ from ground beef

By Eve Mitchell, Contra Costa Times

Bowing to public pressure, Safeway said Wednesday it will no longer use a controversial filler called “pink slime” in its hamburger meat.

Safeway, the nation’s second-largest supermarket chain, joins several other stores, including Whole Foods, Costco and Nob Hill Foods, in rejecting hamburger with the filler, called lean finely textured beef by retailers, the meat industry and the U.S. Department of Agriculture. Whole Foods and Costco say their hamburger has never contained the filler.

“Safeway is committed to providing our customers with the highest-quality products. While the USDA and food industry experts agree that lean finely textured beef is safe and wholesome, recent news stories have caused considerable consumer concern about this product. Safeway will no longer purchase ground beef containing lean finely textured beef,” the Pleasanton-based grocery chain said in a statement.

The filler is a meat product made from fat trimmings that are heated so that small traces of lean meat can be separated and added back to the ground beef.

Walmart and Sam’s Club also announced Wednesday they will begin offering fresh ground beef products that don’t contain the filler.

Read the whole story

California lawmakers looking at rewriting food policies

By Torey Van Oot, Sacramento Bee

From artisanal breads and homemade jams to gluten-free goods, some of the year's most buzzworthy food movements are sprouting under the Capitol dome.

State lawmakers are set to consider a handful of food policy proposals that could shape what goods Californians keep in their pantries and what they know about what's on their plates.

California is no stranger to major food policy measures, including a ban on foie gras that is set to go into effect later this year. But heightened interest in food issues, including the farm-to-table movement and demands for increased disclosure, are driving more proposed changes.

"I think in recent years, there's been an awareness that buying local is good for you and also good for the environment," said Assemblyman Mike Gatto, who is carrying a bill that would lift restrictions on selling homemade prepared foods. "I think that as families have realized that, certainly the Legislature has heard from our constituents."

The Los Angeles Democrat has introduced one of two bills that would allow the sale of "cottage food products," such as mixed nuts, granolas, roasted coffee, baking mixes, baked goods and preserves made out of the home.

Read the whole story

Study finds more bad news about red meat

By Mary Elizabeth Williams, Salon

It’s a great day to be a cow.



One serving of red meat a day significantly increases risk of heart disease, according to new study.

Researchers from the Harvard School of Public Health announced that just a single serving of red meat per day dramatically increases your risk of death — by 13 percent. The odds of developing cancer or heart disease start around 14 percent — and they climb even higher for people who eat processed meats like hot dogs and bacon. As MedSNBC summed it up, “Americans’ love of meat likely accounts for about 1.5 million excess deaths every decade.” Damn you, bacon.

It’s just another blow for an industry with a reputation

that’s only slightly worse than Lindsay Lohan’s. Despite the continued, relentless urgings that beef is “what’s for dinner” and the shudderings of manly men like Herman Cain (remember him?) at the thought of a pizza piled with vegetables, meat consumption in America is on the decline. In fact, meat’s had an image problem ever since Oprah declared she was through with burgers after the mad cow disease outbreak of the 1990s. The problem continues with the latest controversy over “pink slime” (beef scraps treated with ammonia) being served in our children’s school lunches.

Read the whole story

Are cockroaches the next lobster of the food world?

By Rene Lynch, Los Angeles Times

Take a good long look at these hissing cockroaches. What words come to mind? Meaty? Juicy? Downright succulent?

That’s what chef Gene Rurka thinks. And he’d like you to give them a try.

Rurka is serving hissing cockroaches at the annual dinner held at the famed Explorers Club in New York City. The black-tie dinner at the Waldorf-Astoria will draw an eclectic mix of modern-day adventurers and their wealthy patrons. Members have walked on the surface of the moon, as well as explored the ocean’s deepest trenches, Rurka told the *Times*.

If you were to randomly throw a pebble across the dining room, there’s a good chance you’d hit someone who has scaled Mount

Everest once, if not twice.

That kind of crowd puts a lot of pressure on a chef. But Rurka – who raises his own livestock outside Manhattan and is dedicated to finding fare that is both sustainably raised as well as suitably exotic – loves the challenge.

That night's diners would enjoy python patties with applewood smoked bacon in addition to dishes that highlight stir-fried jellyfish, scorpions, alligator and kangaroo.

Read the whole story

Savvy coupon users can save a bundle on groceries

By Toni House

More people than ever are clipping coupons for their supermarket trips, but they're often not saving as much as they could.

You can easily shave $5 to $20 off your weekly grocery budget with a minimal investment of time. Cutting your bill just $10 a week will save you $520 over the course of a year.

Taking a couple of extra steps to ensure you can use all the coupons you clip will save you more money – and protect your investment of time in clipping them.

Here are ways consumers can take advantage of coupons without becoming consumed by them:

• Learn different stores' rules. Call the grocery stores that

are convenient to you (near home or work), ask these questions and write down the answers: Do you have double or triple coupon days? (If so, what are they?) Do you accept other stores' coupons? Do you allow "stacking" coupons – using them on sale items?

• Seek coupons far and wide. Most households also get coupons through direct mail. And you can find coupon deals at SaveYourMoneySaveYourFamily.com, Coupon-Lady.com and a host of other sites. If there are brand-name products you just have to have, try Googling the name and "coupon."

• Plan meals around your coupons. Say you have coupons for 30 cents off a box of pasta, half-off spaghetti sauce (a type you normally buy – not a pricey splurge), buy-one, get-one canned mushrooms and $1 off a pound of ground chuck. Can you smell dinner simmering? For less than $4?

• Organize your coupons. An expandable folder, like you might use for taxes, is a convenient place to store coupons at home. You might organize it by product – frozen foods, snacks, meats, or by expiration date. If you're going to do some meal planning around coupons, you might want a section for those. As you clip, sort the coupons immediately so you don't end up with a big pile that never gets sorted or used. Clip the meal coupons together and drop them in either the meals section or, if you're organizing by date, the date the first one is set to expire

• Save up to 30 percent to 50 percent with "shopping club" cards. Many supermarkets now offer "shopping clubs" that provide members with special in-store discounts. These are no-clipping-required coupons that never expire! Sign up for free and get a "membership" card that clips to your key ring. When the cashier swipes it, the discounts are applied to your grocery bill. Some stores have an associated website where you can log in while you're planning your shopping list and see what discounts are available that week.

• Upload coupons directly onto your shopping club card. Stores that have a shopping club website may also post manufacturer and brand coupons there. Log into the site with your card ID number, then click on the coupons you want and they'll load right onto your card! Instead of carrying coupons to the grocery story, you get your discounts when the cashier swipes your card.

• Organize your shopping club cards and coupons with your smart phone. If you shop at a lot of stores, you may be carrying around a lot of shopping club cards.

Planning ahead is the most effective way to use coupons. Since we know you would never dream of heading to the supermarket without a list – because that's a huge money waster – just match your coupons to your shopping list before you head out the door.

Be sure to check expiration dates, brand names and quantities on the coupon (if it says "8-ounce tub of lard," don't grab the 24-ounce tub of lard!)

Imagine, if you save just $1 a week with coupons, you'll have $52 extra at the end of the year. And then you can get that splurge spaghetti sauce – and the 24-ounce tub of lard.

Toni House has a bachelor's in accounting and a master's in business administration and was most recently the senior consultant and owner of an accounting firm. "How to Reduce Your Grocery Bill" is her second "Savvy Shopping" book.