South Dakota buffalo ranchers serving up what people want

By Charles Michael Ray, NPR

2011 wasn't a banner year for the stock market, and anyone heavily invested in the Euro zone might be biting their nails right now. But if your business is buffalo, you may be looking at some very happy holidays.

The buffalo market is booming. Look no further than the buffalo ambling across the wide open South Dakota prairie munching on grass as they go. Bison raised on grass don't require corn or grains to fatten up. That's part of why they're seen by many as better for the environment.

Dan O'Brien is the founder of the Wild Idea Buffalo Company. He raises free range, grass-fed bison near the South Dakota Badlands. O'Brien says the market for buffalo is exploding. "We've put 10 people to work during this recession – this horrible recession we're going through – and that makes me feel like we're moving the ball a little bit up the field here," says O'Brien.

This year O'Brien opened a new processing plant to package and ship buffalo meat. His company hopes to hit the $1 million mark, double last year's revenue.

One of the buyers of O'Brien's buffalo meat is Tally's restaurant in downtown Rapid City – where Kevin Weiland chowed down on a buffalo burger. Besides being a lover of buffalo meat, Weiland is a medical doctor who wrote the book Dakota Diet. It touts the health benefits of buffalo.

Read the whole story

Zephyr Lodge – bring an appetite, wallet, camera

By Kathryn Reed

TRUCKEE – No snow at a ski resort can be a good thing – at least when your business is construction.

With winter delayed in the Sierra, it meant the team of builders from SMC Contractors could complete the Zephyr Lodge at Northstar in five months. No days off also allowed the 17,000-square-foot facility to open this week.



Zephyr Lodge increases seating at Northstar by 50 percent. Photos/Kathryn Reed

Joe Stewart of SMC was at the resort Tuesday to see firsthand what it looks like with people using the multimillion-dollar lodge.

While building at nearly 7,000 feet presents an array of challenges, Stewart and his team had a head start on this

project with having completed the Tamarack Lodge at Heavenly Mountain Resort a year ago. Zephyr's design is based on her sister resort's lodge.

"This has a lot of character," Stewart told *Lake Tahoe News* as he looked at the reclaimed wood on the exterior.

While the interior of the two lodges feels similar, the exterior does not even though the design is much the same. Much of the difference is the initial look of the lodge from Zephyr chairlift and then skiing to it.

The gray of the wood seems to blend in to the backdrop of the Sierra Crest.

With the entrance on what could be called the side wall, the building does not appear as large as it is.

This addition to Northstar could mean the era of long food lines and little room to sit is over. The 500 indoor chairs and more than 200 outdoor seats increased the overall mountain seating by 50 percent.

On a sunny day like Dec. 20, sitting outside with views of the snowcapped mountains was inviting. But the ambiance and energy of the warm indoors kept most people inside. Plus, the massive windows provide stunning views.

While the lack of snow was good for SMC, with the snowmaking guns going full tilt, the white stuff eventually presented a few challenges.

"They've been delivering furniture by snowcat the past couple weeks," Northstar COO Bill Rock said.

Noting California's dismal economy, state Sen. Ted Gaines, R-Roseville, spoke of how the $30 million infusion of cash into Northstar for this season by owner Vail Resorts is good for the local and state economies. He also presented Rock with a proclamation from the state Senate.

Food and drink

Building on the success of their Colorado resorts, the more upscale food court is what Zephyr and Tamarack lodges offer. Often eating at a ski resort is a less than desirable experience for a vegetarian. Not at Zephyr.

The veggie burger ($10.25) is made on site. It's tasty and a bit messy. But what a nice change from the usual cardboard restaurants often pass off as a veggie burger.

The tomato bisque ($7.75) comes in a decent size bowl. Definitely worth having. Christine, who manages the lodge, says sharing recipes is something that's being talked about. This would be a soup worth making at home.

The veggie pizza is good, but at $8.50 a slice, not worth it.

For some reason, the fries at Northstar, Heavenly, Vail and Beaver Creek are all lacking and can be skipped.

The Asian bowls are said to be one of the "must haves" – and based on flavor we agree. You get to choose a variety of items. Brown rice, tofu, veggies, water chestnuts and Kung Pao sauce filled my bowl. Sue's had snow peas, squash, sticky rice, shrimp and a green curry coconut sauce. Each bowl is $14.75.

Of the seven drinks we tried (samplers, not full glasses), we placed the same in the top four, just a different order. My favorite was the African Winter – dark rum, hot African tea, peach liqueur, lemon, orange bitters. Hot and refreshing – though not often two words that go together – they do with this drink.

Sue's favorite was the Zinger – Hangar One Kaffir lime vodka, ginger beer, lime juice, orange liqueur. It was a perfect complement for her Asian bowl.

Rounding out our top four were the Pimm's Royale (sparkling

wine, Pimm’s No. 1, cucumber spear) and S’more Snow (Firelit coffee liqueur, Absolute vanilla, hot cocoa, whipped cream).

The Z Bar inside Zephyr Lodge has 13 specialty drinks not served anywhere else on the mountain. All are $12.

All the juices in the drinks are fresh squeezed at the lodge.

The easiest way to get to Zephyr Lodge is via the Zephyr lift from mid-mountain. It’s to the right at the top. But the lodge will be a convenient gathering spot for people skiing the Back Side, including The Promised Land lift that opened this week, too. And even if you aren’t eating or drinking, the setting is gorgeous and worth stopping to have a look.

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Skiing, eating raises money for Winter Discovery Program

Full moon yurt dinners benefit the Tahoe Cross Country Ski Education Association. The adventure starts with a moonlit ski from the Tahoe Cross Country Ski Area across gentle terrain.

Limited tickets are available at $65 per person. This price includes meal, a beverage, ski or snowshoe equipment and trail pass.

All money raised benefits the Winter Discovery Program at

Tahoe Cross Country.

The Jan. 6 and Jan. 7 dinners will be prepared by Chef Doug Baehr of Uncommon Kitchen. The Feb. 4 and Feb. 5 meals will be cooked by Chef Douglas Dale of Wolfdale's. The skiing-dining adventures are from 6-9pm.

Reservations can be made by calling (530) 583.5475.

K's Kitchen: Soup worth making every week

By Kathryn Reed

Some soups I can have night after night, week after week, winter after winter.



The one below that I got from my sister, Tami, is one of those soups. It's the splash of balsamic vinegar that makes this soup's flavor a bit unique. You would not want to serve it without the balsamic vinegar.

Tami got the recipe from the "Cooking Light Cookbook 1996" and apparently shared it with mom in Christmas 1998. I know this because my copy of it has mom's handwriting saying "Tami Christmas '98".

It was a good thing I had to call Tami to see where it originally came from because we started talking about other soup recipes. A new one will be in the mail to me soon.

Although the original recipe calls for chicken broth, I use vegetable broth for all my soups. I'm also trying to use more organic products. My friend Joy is the inspiration for that change in my eating habits. So, to that end, I could not find organic tortellini so I used ravioli. It worked, but my preference would be tortellini, right after my preference for organic.

"There is no doubt that organic food is better for the environment, but it's also better for your physique," says Cynthia Sass in the January-February 2012 issue of *Tennis* magazine. "Organic foods contain more antioxidants, which not only protect your cells from aging, inflammation and disease, but may also make you leaner. In a recent study, University of Florida researchers found that people who consume more antioxidants had lower body mass indices, smaller waistlines, and lower body fat percentages than those with lower intakes, even though both groups consumed about the same number of daily calories. In addition, research shows that pesticide residues from conventionally grown foods may be a factor in rising obesity rates. If you can't go 100 percent, buy organic versions of the staple foods you eat most often, particularly such animal based foods as milk, eggs and meat."

I don't like store bought tomatoes this time of year so I thawed a packet of tomatoes. These were from the summer farmers' market that I had stewed in a crock pot and then froze for occasions like this.

Tami can't always get fresh basil in the tiny Minnesota town she lives in, so she uses dried when she has to.

I tend to double the recipe because we like it so much.

Tortellini-Basil Soup

4 C canned low-sodium chicken broth, undiluted

1 (9 oz.) package fresh cheese-filled tortellini, uncooked

1 (15-oz.) can cannellini beans, drained

1 C chopped tomato

½ C shredded fresh basil

2 T balsamic vinegar

¼ tsp salt

1/3 C freshly grated Parmesan cheese

1½ tsp freshly ground pepper

Bring broth to a boil. Add tortellini, and cook 6 minutes or until tender. Stir in beans and tomato. Reduce heat, and simmer 5 minutes or until thoroughly heated.

Remove from heat; stir in basil, vinegar, and slat.

Ladle soup into individual bowls; sprinkle evenly with cheese and pepper.

Bring Out the Barrel wine event tickets on sale

El Dorado Winery Association’s is having people hunt for their next favorite wine during the annual Bring Out the Barrel event Jan. 28-29.

Bring Out the Barrel is a self-guided tour of 27 wineries in El Dorado County. Wines can be tasted straight from the barrel before they are blended or bottled.

Each winery will be offering wine tastings, light hors d'oeuvres, and the opportunity to learn more about wine and wine making.

For the Good Wine Hunting-Treasure Hunt, a drawing will be conducted after the event, and five winners will be selected to receive Passport event tickets and other prizes.

To purchase tickets, go online. They are $35 for the weekend if bought before Jan. 1.

Cookbook features recipes from dead celebrities

By Larry Cox, Tucson Citizen

Frank Decaro, the flamboyant movie critic of "The Daily Show" with Jon Stewart and host of a national call-in program on Sirius XM Satellite Radio, got the inspiration for his new cookbook while attending a Dead Celebrity Party.

As he mingled dressed as the late Euell Gibbons, he realized the only thing missing from the event was the favorite culinary dishes of the departed.

With that in mind, Decaro began scouring flea markets, yard sales and eBay in search of out-of-print celebrity cookbooks. The result is a collection of recipes that the stars are dying

for you to make. Best of all, this cookbook is outrageous and fun.

“The Dead Celebrity Cookbook: A Resurrection of Recipes from More Than 145 Stars of Stage and Screen” costs $19.95.

The recipes are divided into 25 sections including I Lunch Lucy, recipes from TV’s favorite redhead; an All-Night Oscar Buffet dishing up Joan Crawford’s Poached Salmon and Claudette Colbert’s Cheese and Olive Puffs; a Psycho Shower, Anthony Perkin’s Tuna Salad and Alfred Hitchcock’s Quiche Lorraine; a Gay Bash, Truman Capote’s Fettuccine and Christine Jorgensen’s Pineapple-Apricot Preserves; and Pool Party on Sunset Boulevard with Potassium Broth, a specialty from Gloria Swanson.

Packed with celebrity profiles and tidbits of pop culture, this cookbook also features party menus and much, much more, all from the recipe files of the departed stars of television, radio, and Broadway. With this book in hand, you can whip up such delights as Mae West’s Fruit Compote, Katharine Hepburn’s Brownies, Farrah Fawcett’s Sausage and Peppers Supreme, and even test Liberace’s Sticky Buns (I’m not making this up!).

Read the whole story

Crustaceans to be commercially harvested from

Lake Tahoe

By Jeff Delong, Reno Gazette-Journal

A Nevada man could begin pulling crayfish out of Lake Tahoe's waters by next spring following action by state wildlife officials.

On Saturday, the Nevada Wildlife Commission unanimously approved regulations authorizing the commercial harvest of crayfish from Tahoe's Nevada waters.

While approval from other agencies is required, the action should clear the way for Fred Jackson of Yerington to pursue his plan to harvest crayfish in 2012. Others could also apply for permits to do so at a cost of $500.

"I think it's great for everybody," Jackson said. "It's a win for the lake and a win for the economy."

Millions of crayfish skitter along Tahoe's bottom in what Jackson views as an untapped, tasty resource. Crayfish, also known as crawdads, are not native to the lake and were first introduced there in the late 1800s, according to research conducted by scientists at UNR and UC Davis.

By 1932, crayfish were "thriving in the lake and its tributaries" and numbered about 55 million in 1967, scientists estimate. Today their numbers are put at 220 million or more.

Crayfish may be associated with algae blooms at Tahoe and could also be linked to a 72 percent decline in the population of mayflies, stoneflies and other native invertebrates in the lake, said Sudeep Chandra, a freshwater science expert at UNR.

Read the whole story

Ideas for how not to go broke at the grocery store

By Toni House

This year, our holiday feasts will cost more than ever, says the U.S. Department of Agriculture. Food prices jumped a whopping 4 to 5 percent in 2011 and are expected to continue climbing next year.

But you can have your fruitcake and eat it, too, without breaking the bank. My book, “Savvy Shopping: How to Reduce Your Weekly Grocery Bill to $85 Per Week – or Less!” is a start. As a mom with executive-level experience in accounting and the restaurant industry, I pared the monthly grocery bill for my family of four to $250. And nobody complained.

It takes savvy shopping. Worried about going broke serving big holiday meals? Forget it. You can save on the Christmas trimmings and trim the 2012 household budget with planning, patience and grocery shopping “guardrails” to keep your cart in line.

Follow these tips:

• Be patient – wait for good deals. Save pricier purchases for double coupon days, and with the holidays coming up, save now so you can splurge a bit on the holiday meal. The more you rush, the less you save.

• Be detail-oriented. There is a lot of fine print involved in being a savvy shopper, from expiration dates to special offers to asterisks. Know exactly when a coupon expires, how much it’s for, how much more it will be worth on double coupon days

and whether or not it’s worth the price in the first place.

• Plan ahead. Plan a menu for at least three meals in advance; combined with leftovers; that should give you five days or more of meals, depending on the meal. This puts you in control of your shopping list; and not the other way around. Instead of always playing catch-up, replacing what you’ve run out of, you buy only when it’s on the menu. Same goes for cereal, yogurt, bananas, fresh herbs and spices, etc.

• Instead of making expensive foods (meat) the centerpiece of each meal, design menus that use the most expensive foods less often. For instance, from now on at least twice a week, try using meat as more of a filler than a main dish. Instead of making spaghetti with meat balls, or sausage, or chicken breasts, make spaghetti with a meat sauce of ground turkey, ground sausage or ground chicken breakfast sausage.

• At the grocery store, buy only what you can eat. That means no paper plates, toilet paper, plastic cups, Army men, toothbrushes, jar candles, greeting cards. Grocery store prices for non-food items are higher than you’ll pay almost anywhere else, so make a hard-and-fast rule and stick to it.

• Do use coupons, but only for products you actually need. Let’s say you just bought twice as many hot dog buns as you needed last week and now you’ve run across a two-for-one coupon for more hot dog buns? Do you really have room in your freezer for all those buns?

My $85-a-week budget does require tossing out some pricey products your family may have grown accustomed to (brand-name cereals, pre-packaged snack cakes) and changing the way you plan meals. But there are plenty of delicious, often healthier, and less expensive substitutes.

You are the leader of your family unit, not just at home but at the grocery store. Your new quest to become a savvy shopper might meet with some resistance at first. Take the bull by the

horns and lead the family in the right direction.

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.

Horse meat may soon be sold in U.S. grocery stores

By Steve Timko, Reno Gazette-Journal

The slaughter of horses for food, stopped in the U.S. in 2006, could resume again under action approved by Congress and signed by the president.

Congress agreed to start paying again for inspections of facilities that slaughter horses.

The Bureau of Land Management has no plans to change its policy that forbids using captured wild horses for meat.

Wild horse advocates call the action bad news.

BLM spokeswoman JoLynn Worley said if a buyer is known to sell horses for slaughter, the BLM can refuse to sell to them. Or if a buyer tries to sell a wild horse for meat, the BLM can refuse to sell to them in the future.

Wild horses have a freeze brand and slaughterhouses are instructed to call the BLM before killing them, Worley said.

Read the whole story

K’s Kitchen: Leek and potato soup

By Kathryn Reed

It’s been a while since I subscribed to *Bon Appetite* magazine. Eventually I didn’t find enough recipes for a vegetarian so I stopped paying the annual subscription.

Ironically, I was sent an offer for a year for what I think was $10. I signed up. I can afford that gamble. Then a few days after that a friend sent me a soup recipe (see below) from the May 1996 *Bon Appetite*. The food gods must be in alignment.



The recipe actually comes via Epicurious. The tagline to this website is: For People Who Love to Eat. It has a slew of categories ranging from Top Rated Recipes to Holidays to Drinks to International Cooking.

It’s one of those sites that is worth bookmarking. They probably have an app, too, which could come in handy when you’re grocery shopping and nothing sounds goods.

On the recipes online is a button to click to have a grocery list made that can then be printed or emailed. It even offers wine pairings. (Sauvignon Blanc is recommended for the soup below.) Under their preparation notes is a place to add your notes to personalize the recipe.

I doubled the recipe below because I like big bowls of soup, wanted to share it, and wanted to eat it more than just one

day. And I’m glad I made so much because it is super good. It tastes like a cream soup but doesn’t have all that fat.

Leek and Potato Soup (Serves 4)

3 T butter

3 large leeks (white and pale green parts only), halved lengthwise, thinly sliced (about 4½ cups)

2 large russet potatoes (about 18 ounces total), peeled, diced

4½ C (or more) chicken stock or canned low-salt broth

2 T chopped fresh chives

Melt butter in heavy large saucepan over medium heat. Add leeks; stir to coat with butter. Cover saucepan; cook until leeks are tender, stirring often, about 10 minutes. Add potatoes. Cover and cook until potatoes begin to soften but do not brown, stirring often, about 10 minutes. Add stock. Bring to boil. Reduce heat, cover and simmer until vegetables are very tender, about 30 minutes.

Puree soup in batches in processor until smooth. Return to saucepan. Thin with additional stock if soup is too thick. Season with salt and pepper.

(Can be prepared 1 day ahead. Cover and refrigerate.)

Bring soup to simmer. Ladle into bowls. Garnish with chives and serve.