Turkey fryers a leading cause of fires at Thanksgiving

By Eric Guevin

You will be thankful if you don’t let fire gobble up your holiday. Cooking fires continue to be the most common type of fires experienced by households in the United States. This is even more apparent during the holidays. There is an increased incidence of cooking fires on Thanksgiving, Christmas Eve Day, and Christmas Day.



Tahoe Douglas Fire Protection District wants to warn residents and guests that cooking fires are the leading cause of fire injuries in homes. These fires are preventable by simply being more attentive to the use of cooking materials and equipment.

A lot of attention has been focused on deep fryers for turkeys. They need to be used with extreme caution. Turkey deep fryers are not given a Underwriters Laboratories safety rating. Flash and explosive fires are common.

Never leave the cooker unattended, use on a stable surface away and outside of any structures. It is advised to thaw the turkey because ice and water can cause a violent reaction with grease and cause a flash fire.

Always pre-measure the oil before you place the bird in the cooker because overflowing oil will also cause a violent flame.

Have an all-purpose ABC type fire extinguisher at hand. Never use water to fight the grease fire.

Remember, all fires start small so be sure and call 911 right

away.

Tahoe Douglas Fire Department wants you and your loved ones to have a happy and safe Thanksgiving and don’t cook your goose.

Learn the facts about cooking fire safety online.

Eric Guevin is acting fire marshal for Tahoe Douglas Fire Protection District.

Restaurant owner gambles on moving to more visible location

By Kathryn Reed

Adapting to change – that’s Dale Dodd’s approach to staying viable in the always unpredictable restaurant business.

Unable to come to an agreement with his landlord on Ski Run Boulevard, Dodd decided to move his 20-year-old Scusa’s restaurant to Highway 50 in the middle of South Lake Tahoe where he had been operating the 2-year-old Tahoe Grille.



Scusa's has

moved to Highway 50. Photos/LTN

If a location can be found that would be suitable for Tahoe Grille, he will revive what he said had been a successful restaurant. After all, he's been in the restaurant business for 35 years, so he knows patience is part of the game.

And buying the property where Scusa's is will eliminate any landlord-tenant squabbles.

Plus, the traffic up Ski Run isn't like it used to be – and it has little to do with the ongoing recession in Lake Tahoe. When the gondola opened in 2000 it meant tourists in particular no longer needed to get to Heavenly Mountain Resort via Ski Run. Then the Marriott properties opened two years later. Since then people staying in the main bed base area of the South Shore have been taking advantage of not needing to start their ski day at the California Lodge, and therefore never driving on Ski Run Boulevard.

"March used to be our biggest month with all the destination skiers," Dodd said. He said it's been much quieter on that street when it comes to skiers looking for a place to eat after a day on the slopes.

He is hoping the move will get him drive-by diners as well as be better for people who got frustrated with the parking situation at the old site. Here he has a 30-car lot.

Dodd also has more tables to fill. He went from 21 to 30. In the summer he'd like to develop the back area into al fresco dining.

Scusa's opened in its new location a week ago. The menu is the same, though some items from the Grille may make their way onto a revised version in the future. Things like Lobster Gnocchi, Oven Roasted Salmon with a Beurre Blanc, and Rosemary

Roasted Chicken with Polenta were favorites with Tahoe Grille customers.

Not one who eats meat or fish, I never went to the Grille. But when Dodd took it over from the owners of the Thai restaurant, he gutted the place. What a pleasant change. It’s clean, inviting and warm.

Dodd said hanging some pictures is about all that needed to be done to have the Grille become Scusa’s.



Frank Benvenuto plays saxaphone for diners.

To the left of the entry is a room that can be shut off for private parties. We opted to dine in that room to be able to hear Frank Benvenuto play sax. A nice change from so many Tahoe restaurants – we could hear the music and still have a conversation.

We started the night with the Frito-Misto Scusa ($7.95). This appetizer is very tasty – with garlic, artichoke hearts, olives and other goodies.

Both of our entrees ended up being lunch as well. Sue loved the spiciness of the Sausage Linguine Bolognese ($18.95). I thoroughly enjoyed the Spinach Pasta Mediterranean ($16.95). They didn’t skimp on the veggies.

Scusa's is open for dinner starting at 5pm every day but Mondays during the shoulder season. From Dec. 15-April 15 it is open seven days a week.

Thankfulness – the No. 1 ingredient in a feast for 300

By Kathryn Reed

Vegetables keep being washed. Knives don't seem to stop. Bread comes and goes from the oven. Cranberries whir in the food processor.

It's Sunday afternoon and the kitchen at Grace Hall in South Lake Tahoe is a bevy of activity in preparation for tonight's annual community Thanksgiving dinner. With 275 people served last year, it's anticipated 325 could come through the doors today from 4-5:30pm.



William Wagener adds veggies to what will become turkey stock. Photos/Kathryn

Reed

While cooking for so many is serious business, everyone in the kitchen is having fun. Laughter fills the air along with aromas from the stove. Some of the crew are regulars on Mondays to help with the weekly Bread & Broth dinners – people like John Mauriello and William Wagener. Others help on special occasions – like Billy Marchetti, Ellen Nadreau and Mark Nadreau.

Diane Weidinger is the maestro in the kitchen, while her right-hand woman is Kathi Olsen.

Everyone on Nov. 20 expresses gratitude for being able to give back – a thankfulness to be part of something special and meaningful.

A woman stops by asking if she can volunteer. Because she has her serve safe certification she's given an apron and put on orange detail. She's in tears when she arrives and tears when she leaves.

"You guys help me way more than I helped you. You made may day," Jennifer says. Out of work, she's been at Bread & Broth the previous two Mondays for the free hot meal.

When it comes to the food for tonight, Weidinger said, "Thanksgiving is always about tradition."

Turkey, stuffing, yams, pumpkin pie – are just some of the items on the menu.

Tips are given – like put some lemon juice or white wine on the mushrooms to keep them fresh. Some volunteers are professionals in the restaurant business, while others just like to be in the kitchen working. The regulars say they are always learning something. At times they are the ones creating the menu Monday nights.

It was the stuffing and fresh cranberries that were being assembled yesterday.

Onions, carrots, celery – all chopped in order to be sautéed. Loaves and loaves of bread cut into (large, by some standards) bite-size pieces for stuffing.

Oranges were zested for the cranberry relish.

The cranberry concoction is one of the first dishes Marchetti learned to cook in culinary school in 1977.

Cranberry Orange Relish

4 C fresh cranberries, rinsed

¾ C sugar

1 whole orange

½ tsp fresh grated ginger

Blanch cranberries for five minutes, chill.

Peel the orange. Reserve the sections, remove the thick white pith and reserve the zest.

Combine the cranberries, sugar, orange zest and ginger. Pulse in a food processor until chunky. Chill and serve.

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Bread & Broth's 23rd annual Thanksgiving feast is today from 4-5:30pm for anyone. St. Theresa Church is located at 1041 Lyons Ave. in South Lake Tahoe.

While Bread & Broth has an arsenal of about 100 volunteers and does not need to expand right now, what it does need is people or businesses to participate in the Adopt A Day program. This is where for $250 a Monday night meal (other than Thanksgiving) is supplied to about 100 people, with four

people from the business helping in the kitchen. For more information, contact Connie Blue at midwest2tahoe@yahoo.com or (530) 544.4945.

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K’s Kitchen: Carrot soup too good to share

By Kathryn Reed

I’ve become addicted to homegrown carrots. But my supplier says I’ve been cut off. The season is over. I’m not sure what I’m supposed to do.



I don’t want to share the soup I made with my last bag of those luscious orange veggies. I had good intentions to do so before I made it. I thought it would be a nice thank you to Pat for being my carrot supplier. You know, a little bribe to keep them coming from Reno next year.

Then I thought I could take some to my friend Joy who is living off soup right now as she deals with some medical issues. Then I thought I could get away with not taking her any because it’s not completely organic.

The recipe came to me via another friend when I told her I had all these carrots to use. Should I share with Kim, too?

It’s so hard to decide which I want to be – nice and share or

selfish and piggish.

Something about soup on a cold day tastes so good. I’m glad to have another recipe in my rotation.

I don’t think I had ever had carrot soup before. Oh, my, is this tasty. And it is so incredibly simple to make. I’m sure the homegrown carrots added to the flavor because they are so much sweeter than any store will ever sell you.

I didn’t bother to peel them. They were so dang small that it would have taken forever. And I didn’t really care to have part of my finger shaved off either. I seasoned mine with course garlic salt.

Carrot Soup, by Alice Waters “The Art of Simple Cooking” (8 servings)

4 T (1/2 stick) butter

2 onions, sliced

1 thyme sprig

2.5 lbs carrots, peeled and sliced (about 6 cups)

6 cups broth

Melt butter in a heavy-bottomed pot.

Add onions. Cook over medium-low heat until tender, about 10 minutes.

Add carrots. Cook for 5 minutes. Cooking the carrots with the onions for a while builds flavor.

Bring to a boil, lower the heat and simmer until the carrots are tender, about 30 minutes. When done, season with salt to taste, and puree.

Serve with chopped fresh herbs and crème fraiche.

Beer & Food Fest at Truckee restaurant

It’s being billed as a Beer & Food Festival – the combination of six Lagunita’s Brewing Company specialty beers paired with food from Dragonfly.

The Dec. 1 event is from 6 to 9pm at the Truckee restaurant. Attendees can stop in anytime during the evening and roam the food and beer stations. Cost is $32.

Beer & Food Fest participants will have a chance to meet the people from the brewery and taste two of Lagunita’s limited specialty beers.

To make reservation or for more info, call (530) 587.0557.

Dragonfly is located upstairs at 10118 Donner Pass Road.

Sierra foothills celebrate mandarin harvest

By Jeff Pelline, Sacramento Bee

When it comes to finding farm-fresh citrus, most people think of Florida or California’s San Joaquin Valley. But the Sierra foothills are home to the crème de la crème of citrus: the mountain mandarin.

The mandarin is a true citrus experience. It has a sweet and tangy scent, is seedless, convenient to eat and healthy. No utensils are needed as you peel back the rind to reveal a fruit that Mother Nature has split into even segments. None of the juice squirts all over you, either.

Mountain mandarins (a variety known as Owari Satsuma) are one of the "super" foods – very high in vitamin C. They also contain significant amounts of synephrine, a natural product that can help relieve cold symptoms.

"Mountain mandarins are a unique crop that combines delicious flavor with easy peeling," says Josh Huntsinger, Placer County's agricultural commissioner. "Their higher-elevation growing conditions contribute to a level of flavor and sweetness that can't be matched by Valley-grown fruit."

The dozens of orchards in Placer County – first planted in the 1880s by Welsh settlers – are spread throughout rural Auburn, Newcastle, Penryn, Loomis and Lincoln. More than 30 growers in the county form the Mountain Mandarin Growers' Association. During harvest season, you can visit their orchards, buy a bag of freshly picked mandarins and meet the farmers.

Read the whole story

Congress: Tomato paste on school pizzas counts as a veggie

By Mary Clare Jalonick, Huffington Post

WASHINGTON – Congress wants to keep pizza and French fries on

school lunch lines, fighting back against an Obama administration proposal to make school lunches healthier.

The final version of a spending bill released late Monday would unravel school lunch standards the Agriculture Department proposed earlier this year, which included limiting the use of potatoes on the lunch line and delaying limits on sodium and delaying a requirement to boost whole grains.

The bill also would allow tomato paste on pizzas to be counted as a vegetable, as it is now. USDA had wanted to prevent that.

Food companies that produce frozen pizzas for schools, the salt industry and potato growers requested the changes, and some conservatives in Congress say the federal government shouldn’t be telling children what to eat.

Republicans on the House Appropriations Committee said the changes would “prevent overly burdensome and costly regulations and to provide greater flexibility for local school districts to improve the nutritional quality of meals.”

School districts had said some of the USDA requirements went too far and cost too much when budgets are extremely tight. Schools have long taken broad instructions from the government on what they can serve in federally subsidized meals that are served free or at reduced price to low-income children. But some schools have balked at government attempts to tell them exactly what foods they can’t serve.

Reacting to that criticism, House Republicans had urged USDA to completely rewrite the standards in their version of the bill passed in June. The Senate last month voted to block the potato limits in their version. Neither version included the language on tomato paste, sodium or whole grains, which was added by House-Senate negotiators on the bill.

Read the whole story

Cookbook doesn’t live up to expectations

By Kathryn Reed

Some people read cookbooks like they are novels. That’s what my friend Toni does. I approach them as books with recipes – not much more.



Now, it’s not quite that simplistic. I often go to cookbooks to try something more, to challenge myself, to make something special, to use an ingredient I have leftover from something else but don’t know what else to do with it, or because I’m tired of making all my regular dishes.

What intrigued me about getting a copy of “Clean Start” by Terry Walters is the approach to eating well. The 100 recipes are vegan and gluten-free.

With a cousin and good friend who have celiac disease, which means they can’t eat gluten, I thought I might find something in here for them.

While there are plenty of recipes, I didn’t find many I would want to make. Part of it was the names – Cabbage Sauté with Tart Cherries and Crisp Apples, Pinto Beans with Stewed Tomatoes and Spinach, and Ginger Shiitake Soup with Cabbage and Edamame Beans. Maybe it’s just me, but none of those sounds good.

I will say the photography makes the food look good.

However, reading the recipes flustered me at times either

because I didn’t know what it was (arrowroot powder or mirin) or figured I wouldn’t be able to find it in South Lake Tahoe (brown rice syrup).

I love the premise of the book. Walters writes, “For one person, eating clean may mean eliminating preservatives and artificial ingredients. For the next, it may mean giving up processed foods altogether. And for yet another, it may mean going directly to the farm. What matters most is not where you are in this continuum, but that you identify opportunities to move closer to the source and are empowered to act on them.”

I embrace what Walters has to say. I’ll just be choosing other recipes.

The one recipe I tried was for baked apples. It’s OK, but way too sweet for me. I felt like I wasted the special pippins a friend had picked up for me in Apple Hill.

Decide for yourself.

Baked Apples with Raisins and Toasted Almonds

4 baking apples of choice

½ C sliced almonds

¼ C raisins

½ C maple syrup

½ C apple cider or juice

2 tsp grated fresh ginger

2 tsp lemon juice

1 T lemon zest

Freshly grated nutmeg

Preheat oven to 350 degrees.

Halve apples and scoop out cores. Halve again and fit apples close together (flesh side up) in an 8 x 8-inch baking dish in one layer. Sprinkle almonds and raisins evenly over apples.

In small saucepan over medium heat, combine maple syrup, apple cider, ginger and lemon juice, and heat briefly. Remove from heat and pour evenly over apples. Sprinkle lemon zest and nutmeg evenly over the top, cover tightly with foil and bake 45 minutes or until apples are soft. Remove from oven and remove foil. Preheat broiler. Broil apples 1 minute to brown tops. Remove from oven, cool slightly and serve apples with extra cooking liquid as desired.

Serves 6.

Variations: Substitute pecans and dried cranberries for almonds and raisins. You can even substitute pears for apples.

Ingredients for traditional Thanksgiving jump 13%

By Kathryn Reed

This is going to be the most expensive Thanksgiving dinner you've ever had.

At least that's what the American Farm Bureau Federation is saying. Each year the organization prices out what a turkey dinner for 10 people will cost. It's gone up 13 percent since 2010 – the largest one-year spike since 1990 – with the total cost being the most since 1986 when the federation first started doing its calculations.



I pooh-poohed the study when I first heard about it because I didn't think anyone could serve a Thanksgiving meal to 10 people for $49.20.

Part of the problem is my menu would be different than the Farm Bureau's. If they invited you for dinner, you would have turkey, frozen green peas, pumpkin pie from a can with real whipped cream, whole milk, stuffing from a bag, store bought rolls, fresh cranberries, and sweet potatoes.

I decided to price a similar meal at Grocery Outlet in South Lake Tahoe this past weekend on the assumption it's the least expensive place to buy groceries on the South Shore.

I found a 12-14 pound turkey selling for $14.99, 2-pound bag of frozen green beans for $2.99, butternut squash $1.99 each, Truckee sourdough baguette $2.39, a bag of granny smith apples $3.99, a 5-pound bag of russet potatoes for $1.99, and a bag of stuffing mix for $1.89.

So, in Tahoe, I would say people are going to be able to make a basic Thanksgiving meal for 10 people for less than $50. And if there are leftovers, one could say you are eating for free.

I'll admit it's been a while since I've hosted a Thanksgiving dinner. For some reason people veer away from a vegetarian's house on this holiday.

But I have had a bird on my table before. I just didn't cook it. That's what mom is for. And my sister brought the meat thermometer. I know we didn't have 10 people and that it cost more than $50. And this was a few years ago. I decided if I were going to serve meat, it was going to be good meat. The turkey came from Overland Meat Co.

I only make homemade apple pie. A friend bought me some

pippins from Apple Hill earlier this month for $1.29 pound. I don't know how many pounds there were, but the bag could have made 1½ 9-inch pies. I didn't know until I saw it at the store on Saturday that apple pie mix is available in a can. It makes me nauseous thinking about it. (I'm a huge apple pie snob.) I read the list of ingredients and couldn't pronounce all of them.

I have no problem, though, with making a pumpkin pie from a can.

My family doesn't do stuffing out of a bag or a box. In fact, mom's is so good that when I visit her we love to have it as a meal or snack – in months other than November.

We don't do frozen veggies as a general rule either – at least not as a side dish. Ironically, though, frozen and canned veggies can be better than the fresh stuff at grocery stores because they are picked at their peak instead of too early – as is often the case for what's in the produce aisle. The other good thing about frozen-canned veggies is you can use them when that particular item is not in season. This can be better than using something imported from another country where who knows what pesticide may have been applied to the field or orchard.

Just watch the salt content, especially on canned products.

Other things that drive up my grocery bill are premium vanilla ice cream for the apple pie, wine (Champagne is good idea to pair with turkey), spices for the various dishes, appetizers, snacks, even napkins and candles.

To lower the price of your holiday grocery bill, coupons are one way. Red Plum is just one of many online coupon sites. Some of the major turkey producers like Butterball and Hormel have discounts on their sites. The Grocery Game has been helping shoppers save money for 10 years.

Nepheles, Silkwood wow crowd at Soroptimist wine tasting

A line at the table was a good indicator Silkwood would end up being the people's choice for best winery Friday night at the annual Soroptimist International South Lake Tahoe wine tasting.

The Modesto winery's Syrah is the only red wine served in first class on JAL.



Hundreds attend the Nov. 11 annual Soroptimist wine tasting. Photo/LTN

They started pouring early, having been in town the night before at a tasting at Blue Angel Café.

Cooking up the best food of the night was Nepheles with their elk and venison ragout.

The crowd of several hundred at Harrah's Lake Tahoe – noticeably larger than a year ago – came attired in all sorts of wardrobe selections. It's a definite people watching event

as well as one with all sorts of food and wine to ingest.

The money raised by Soroptimist through ticket sales, raffle and silent auction goes back into the community via programs directed toward woman and children.

– Lake Tahoe News staff report