Food swap in Truckee

Truckee River Winery with Slow Food Lake Tahoe is hosting a food swap Oct. 30 from 2-4pm.

A food swap is where your homemade, homegrown, and foraged creations become your own personal currency for use in trading. All swap items must be homemade, homegrown or foraged by you.

Jams, pickled anything, honey, olive oil, backyard eggs, baked good, fruits, pasta – get creative. This is an opportunity to bring in a large amount of something you love to create, and leave with an array of new items from your neighbors. You can bring as little or as much as you like.

Feel free to bring a combination of items (loaves of bread and spice blends).

If possible, bring a few samples for participants to try.

Make sure to package well. We encourage earth-friendly packaging whenever possible.

Also, leaving an email address on a label is a great way to stay in contact with anyone you may meet throughout the trade.

This event is open to everyone, however you must register for the event. To register, click here.

The winery is at 11467 Brockway Road, Truckee.

Hunters prowling the woods for late King Bolete harvest

By Kathryn Reed

A secret handshake isn't part of the initiation process, but being sworn to secrecy and the threat of bodily harm if the secret is betrayed were all part of the indoctrination process.

Welcome to the world of King Bolete.

As with all edibles this year, the harvest is late – even for these mushrooms. Better known as porcini, especially in their dried form, these shrooms are still being plucked from the forest floor in the Lake Tahoe Basin.



A basket of King Bolete found in Tahoe in October. Photos/Kathryn Reed

So secretive is this foraging business, I'm neither allowed to say who I was with nor where we went. I can say she is a teacher in Lake Tahoe Unified and that we were near a body of water on the South Shore that wasn't Lake Tahoe.

Different theories abound regarding where they grow and the

best time to find them. My teacher likes going out at the break of day before school. I don't do mornings well so we went after school.

These mushrooms, which look nothing like the morels I was introduced to in May, are much larger, found in different areas and are not cooked the same.

King Bolete tend to grow near water, in the woods. Some say they will be near where snow plants have been. Some say the best hunting is near a full moon. I'm a believer in that scenario having gone out this month during the week of the full moon.

Most everyone, though, says moisture is key. It had just snowed, so the ground was still wet as we traipsed in the woods near a creek. When Tahoe gets thunderstorms in the summer the King Bolete are apt to show themselves shortly afterward.

They often hide. The tops blend into the terrain. Sometimes they are hidden in tufts of pine needles.

Once one is found, start walking in a line from there in all directions because they grow in a line – sometimes several feet apart.



Smaller, younger King Bolete are best to saute.

I’ve been told not to take ones that are near a rusted can or a poisonous mushroom.

A single Bolete can weigh several pounds. Dried, they can cost about $8 for a couple ounces in a store. It can take 10 pounds of fresh mushrooms to get a half-pound of dried, according to Gary Ottoboni.

Ottoboni, his brother and parents are part-time neighbors of my friend who is introducing me to the King Bolete. They are the ones who taught her to be a shroom hunter and how to “put them up”.

June Ottoboni uses a combination of boiled vinegar, cloves, peppers, cinnamon, and garlic to give them a pickled flavor.

Many people sauté them. Others grill them with olive oil and a little pepper.

Drying is the most common form so they can be used throughout the winter in soups, risottos and various Italian dishes.

Just before I called, Gary Ottoboni had sautéed some King Bolete to add to pesto.

“You have to sauté the young ones. The big ones you can only dry,” Ottoboni instructed this rookie. “You sauté them in olive oil and very little butter so the pan doesn’t get too hot. Add garlic and parsley. The secret is you squeeze a little lemon.”

There were other secrets to cooking the King this way, something about when to put the lid on, but I’m afraid of telling too many secrets.

The word “cult” comes to mind after talking to long-time shroomers.

Because mushrooms don’t have seeds – they have spores – they can’t be a row crop. Instead, they grow in the wild. This is

why they are so expensive.

Truckee police chief taking a turn in local kitchen

From running the police department to advocating for global causes, Truckee Police Chief Nick Sensley has another talent up his sleeve.

Sensley will connect with his New Orleans roots while whipping up Mardi-Gras style culinary creations when he takes to the Dragonfly kitchen as guest chef Nov. 11. This event coincides with Sensley's last day serving the town in his official role as chief of police. Sensley is leaving to be a consultant with Humanity United, a global peace building organization based in Washington, D.C.

Reservations for guest chef evenings are strongly recommended – (530) 587.0557. It will be a $48 prix fixe menu.

National Food Day celebration in Reno

The River School Farm is celebrating National Food Day at its farm, 7777 White Fir St. in Reno, on Oct. 24 from 5:30-8pm.

Community members can join the farm for a potluck dinner, networking and brainstorming. Group discussions will be on

different topics related to community food issues. The event is sponsored by the Local Food Network of the Truckee Meadows whose goal is to increase local food purchases to 20 percent by 2020.

A $5 donation is suggested, and participants should bring a potluck dish to share.

National Food Day is an initiative sponsored by the Center for Science in the Public Interest, a nonprofit group that has lobbied for food labeling, better nutrition and food safety since 1971. The center encourages local communities to participate by organizing local food events. The goal is to address food issues and to create healthier communities through better nutrition.

For more information or to RSVP for the local Northern Nevada Food Day, contact Phillip at (775) 224.1877 or email LocalFoodSystem Network@gmail.com.

Apple Hill bursting with flavors of the season

By Carlos Alcalá, Sacramento Bee

World Apple Day will have its 21st anniversary on the 21st (Friday), and apple experts – nutritionists, markets and producers – from Sonoma to Camino are all telling us the same thing: They never heard of it.

Californians haven’t exactly adopted World Apple Day – a British idea – but that doesn’t mean apples aren’t getting a lot of attention lately.



Apple Hill has all kinds of apples. Photo/LTN file

Apple Hill just finished its busiest weekend of the year, said Ann Wofford, director of the Apple Hill Growers Association, a collection of 55 orchards and other agricultural businesses in El Dorado County.

Liz Applegate, a nutritionist at UC Davis, is promoting the apple as vigorously as she does all year.

“It does more than keep a doctor away,” she said, alluding to its weight-control benefits.

October is also National Apple Month, according to the U.S. Apple Association.

Read the whole story

USDA puts chill on consumers getting local meat

By Carlos Alcalá, Sacramento Bee

The demand for locally grown food is ballooning, but it turns

out that local meat is almost a misnomer.

Small ranchers in El Dorado County gathered at a Local Meat Summit in Placerville last week to beef, if you will, about how hard it is to sell to local consumers.

Ranchers who want to sell an individual tri-tip or tenderloin at a farmers market or store have to have it harvested – the current word for slaughtered – at a facility approved by the U.S. Department of Agriculture.

There aren't many of those.

Consequently, that can mean a 500-mile journey, round trip, for locally raised meats, said Fred Hunt, who organized last week's summit on behalf of the Resource Conservation Districts of El Dorado County and the Georgetown Divide.

Read the whole story

Workshop helps farmers bring food to consumers

Challenged by today's industrial food system, many small farms are looking for new and creative ways to sell their products directly to consumers.

Western Nevada College Specialty Crop Institute offers a workshop on "Direct Marketing for Small Farms" on Nov. 5, 9am-5pm, at WNC Carson City campus, 2201 West College Pkwy.

Cost is $35 when registering by Oct. 27 and $45 after Oct. 27. Lunch is included.

Participants will learn how to develop and execute a simple, effective marketing plan to fit their small farm enterprise. Industry experts will present sessions that include branding and authentic messaging, media relations, effective signs and displays, Facebook and social media, and more. They will discuss sales options including farmers markets and farm stands, restaurants, subscription farms, u-pick, and other direct-marketing opportunities.

Featured speaker Vance Corum of Farmers' Markets America is a direct marketing specialist who has assisted small farm entrepreneurs and farmers markets for more than 30 years. He is coauthor of the book "The New Farmers Market".

Jonathan Wright, food and drink editor for the Reno Gazette-Journal and RENO Magazine, will present ideas on how to make friends with the media, learn interview skills and get pertinent messages to the public.

The WNC Specialty Crop Institute is an innovative program that teaches alternative farming methods. Funding for this project is provided by the Washington State University Western Center for Risk Management Education and the USDA National Institute of Food and Agriculture.

For information/registration, contact Ann Louhela at (775) 351.2551 or louhelaa@wnc.edu.

Wine grapes take a pounding with latest rain

By Anne Gonzales, Sacramento Bee

Local wine grape growers were dealt a double whammy Monday when an unexpected rain doused harvest plans for the second time in days, lowering sugars in fruit and jamming area wineries. If rain continues this week, growers could lose grapes to deterioration in the vineyards.

The unseasonable showers also hurt regional tomato and rice growers.

Grape growers in the foothills and Delta area were hoping for sun and breezes this week to erase the effects of back-to-back, early rains. While much of the fruit for white wines has been picked and sent to the wineries, a rainstorm last Wednesday and Thursday stalled harvest of red varieties, including cabernet sauvignon, syrah and merlot.

The rain also lowered sugar content in grapes in the vineyards, the result of water dilution in fruit. Growers opted to leave fruit on the vines for a few days to build up sugar content, but were taken aback to see raindrops in their vineyards Monday morning.

Read the whole story

Stadium food undergoes healthy dose of inspections

By Chris Murray, Reno Gazette-Journal

Wolf Pack football fans consumed almost 13,000 hot dogs and more than 3,200 plates of nachos and sucked down nearly 27,000 sodas and waters last season at Mackay Stadium.

But just how sanitary is that food?

Almost one-third of professional sports arenas had “critical” or “major” health violations in at least half of their concession stands in 2009, according to a recent national report.

Local sports fans can breathe – or eat – easy. The Wolf Pack’s Mackay Stadium and Lawlor Events Center; the Triple-A Reno Aces Ballpark; and the Reno Events Center, where the NBA D-League Reno Bighorns play, all earned good grades from food safety agencies.

Through open record requests, the Reno Gazette-Journal obtained the past two years of health inspections conducted by the Nevada State Health Division and Washoe County Health District, which found only one “critical” violation at the more than 40 individual concession stands at Wolf Pack, Aces and Bighorns facilities. The majority of concessions received scores of 100 and no operation scored lower than 90 (on a 0-100 scale).

The largest violation in that two-year span occurred when an inspector observed an employee handle paper money with a gloved hand, then proceed to prepare a hot dog at Aces Ballpark. That, combined with a non-working hand sink, led to a temporary closing of the concession.

Other minor violations included: hot dogs being cooked at 112 degrees rather than the mandatory 140 degrees (Bighorns); a dirty deflector plate on an ice machine (Bighorns); missing thermometers in holding units (Aces); lack of running water at a hand sink (Aces); observing an employee eating while operating a concession stand (Wolf Pack); and not properly labelling items stored near a concession stand (Wolf Pack).

Read the whole story

Tightening grape supply alters winery strategies

By Rudy Ruitenberg, Bloomberg News

U.S. wineries producing lower-cost wines face shrinking profit margins as a tightening supply of domestic grapes lifts prices for the fruit, Rabobank International said.

Rising grape costs are prompting some large U.S. wine companies to rethink supply strategies, Rabobank analysts Stephen Rannekleiv, Marc Soccio and Valeria Mutis wrote in a report published Wednesday. That may help vineyard prices "in the near future," they wrote.

U.S. wine consumption has risen for the past 17 years, while grape area has been "fairly flat," Rabobank said. Spot prices for Chardonnay grapes in the Napa Valley rose to between $1,300 and $2,000 a metric ton this year from $700 to $1,300 in 2010, San Rafael wine and grape broker Ciatti Co. said in a July presentation.

"Wineries that are more exposed to the spot market are most affected," the analysts wrote, adding that wine-merchant brands will be under "significant margin pressure. Estate-driven wineries that own their own production are currently in an enviable position."

Vineyard profits in California have been too low to attract more planting as imported wine created a ceiling on prices for the state's growers, Rabobank said. At the same time, bulk imports helped keep costs in check for Californian wineries, according to the report.

Read the whole story