Proponents of potatoes in school lunches make a stand

By Phil Galewitz, NPR

When the potato lobby speaks, it always puts its best spuds forward. Tuesday at a National Press Club lunchtime briefing to promote the nutritional value of the vegetable, that meant a full bar of baked potatoes, french fries (baked, not fried), sour cream, cheddar cheese, chopped tomatoes, spinach and broccoli. Yes, according to sources close to the food, it was scrumptious.



The group, which has been fighting the U.S. Department of Agriculture's proposed school nutrition guidelines to limit white potatoes and other starchy vegetables to 1 cup a week, rolled out some big guns today, in the form of lunch ladies, to butter up the press.

The National Potato Council released a survey of 245 school food service directors showing how most think the new rules would lead to higher costs, more wasted food, and lower participation in the school lunch program.

Schools are looking for healthier ways to prepare food. "Today's school lunch is not your school lunch you remember," Dayle Hayes, a registered dietician, said at the briefing.

Read the whole story

Ways to celebrate October being World Vegetarian Awareness Month

By Toby Amidor, Food Network

Meat, dairy and high-fat ingredients are often used to add texture and flavor to recipes. Problem is, you might also be adding artery-clogging saturated fat and cholesterol. But eating a plant-based meal doesn't mean a tasteless one – make these ingredient swaps to create flavorful, filling meals with less (or no) meat and dairy.

Instead of: Beef

Try: Mushrooms

Mushrooms have a firm texture a ton of rich flavor, so they're a perfect substitute for meat. Use finely chopped porcini mushrooms for a meat-free bolognese sauce, add sliced mushrooms to chili or stew or use Portabello mushroom as a hamburger substitute.

Instead of: Chicken

Try: Tofu

Firm tofu absorbs whatever flavor you add to the dish and maintains a meat-like texture when cooked in a stir-fry, stew, chili and pasta dishes.

Instead of: Cream Sauce

Try: Homemade Plant-Based Sauces and Chunteys

Creamy sauces are a delicious once-in-awhile treat, but choosing more healthful ones for everyday meals will save you a boatload of calories and fat! Try making your own tomato,

miso or barbecue sauce. Or, top your main course with a homemade fruit or veggie chutney.

Read the whole story

IHOP in Halloween spirit with ‘scary face pancake’

IHOP’s Scary Face Pancake Giveaway returns to participating IHOP restaurants nationwide Oct. 28.

Kids 12 and under may design and dine on their own Free Scary Face Pancake creations from 7am to 10pm.

The pre-Halloween giveaway launched last year as a playful take on IHOP’s popular Funny Face Pancake. The Scary Face Pancake is an oversized signature buttermilk pancake with a whipped topping mouth and strawberry nose, and two mini Oreo cookies and candy corn on the side to allow kids to create their Halloween hotcake.

The Scary Face Pancake will also be available for purchase throughout October.

Wine making musician brings

his blend to S. Tahoe

By Jennifer Eddy

On a day off from skiing in Lake Tahoe, Paul Cullen discovered a wine he wanted to make his own. On Oct. 5 Cullen will be at Après Wine Company in South Lake Tahoe where there will be a tasting of his Sonata wines and performing his signature jazzy, cool acoustic guitar.

Cullen discovered his love of wine while he was touring as a bassist for the band Bad Company.



Paul Cullen will be at Apres Wine in South Tahoe on Oct. 5. Photo/Provided

“My intro to wine was Mick Ralphs, our guitar player. He turned me on to Chateneauf-de-Pape, it was my first taste of really good red wine,” Cullen told *Lake Tahoe News*. “We were on the back of the bus, pulling an overnighter and sharing a couple of bottles together and from that point on I’ve been a huge fan of wine.”

Many years later he came to Tahoe and discovered a winery in the Sierra foothills.

“It was our first time skiing in 16 years, so our bodies were

a mess," Cullen said. "We decided to take a day off to go wining and we found some of the best wineries going toward Placerville. That's when we found Drytown Cellars."

After discovering Drytown Cellars, Cullen contacted his Italian wine distributor and all his contacts on the East Coast. He held a comprehensive wine tasting that included a combination of aficionados and friends.

"We did three tastings of 30 wines each and Drytown Cellars was consistently voted the best," Cullen said of the Amador County winery.

His Italian mother and grandmother first introduced Cullen to wine and food's intrinsic relationship.

"I learned how to cook from my mom and grandma. I was making pasta, gnocchi and sauces at 8- or 9-years-old," Cullen said. "It was a combination of two things, they wanted to teach me and they wanted to sit down together and drink wine."

Two years ago he was able to go to Italy to see his mother and grandmother's principles in action.

"My mom and my grandma would make something fresh everyday, we never had a salad on the table with tomatoes on it if tomatoes weren't in season," Cullen said. "In Italy everything is based around the seasons and the regions. Every region has its own style of cooking based off local ingredients, and it just so happens that the wines within that region go with the food because they all come from the same soil."

Cullen's love for Italian wines also influenced why he chose Drytown Cellars to produce his Sonata wines.

"Its amazing, half of their varietals are Italian and I understand why," Cullen said. "Their growing area is like being in Piemonte, Italy; hilly, with a perfect microclimate."

There are three Sonata wines; the Sonata Rosso: a rich red

fusion made from Cab Franc, Zinfandel and Syrah grapes; Sonata Bianco: a clean, full bodied Pinot Grigio with a honeysuckle bouquet and his new Sonata Rosé combines the Petit Syrah and Giano grape that Cullen claims is unlike any Rosé.

The Après Wine Co. event begins Wednesday at 6pm. It is free. The wine venue is at the corner of Highway 50 and Ski Run Boulevard in the Red Hut center.

More information about Cullen and his wines is on his website.

Apple season means time to make a pie

Publisher's note: ***Apples are being sold at the Tuesday farmers' market in South Lake Tahoe, which runs through Oct. 11.***

By Debbie Arrington, Sacramento Bee

It's our favorite fruit and American as, well, its most popular baked good.

A new apple season is here, offering a crisp, sweet edge to fall meals plus the promise of lots of pie – and pie-inspired dishes.

What makes apples and apple pie so all-American?

"It brings people together," said Ken Haedrich, author of "Apple Pie: 100 Delicious and Decidedly Different Recipes for America's Favorite Pie" (Harvard Common Press, 250 pages, $14.95). "It's the closest thing we have, food-wise, to a universal symbol of goodness and contentment.

“It manages to do this with unabashed honesty and not an ounce of pretense. It’s an edible reflection of America’s best character traits.”

And, lucky us, a bountiful apple supply is close by and ready for the picking on Apple Hill near Placerville.

“Right now, we’ve got the early varieties: Gala, Red Delicious and Golden Delicious,” said Scott Larsen of Larsen Apple Barn in Camino. “We’re starting to see the Jonathans and Braeburns, then it will be one after another.”

With 20 varieties in cultivation, the Larsen family has grown apples on its Sierra foothill ranch since the 1870s, making it the longest continually family-run operation on Apple Hill.

Read the whole story

K’s Kitchen: Peach pie extends the flavors of summer

By Kathryn Reed

One advantage to a late harvest is being able to buy peaches in September. Normally those sweet nectars of summer are long gone from farmers’ markets by this time of year.



Fortunately, I was able to buy about a dozen from the Perez Red Shack table at last week’s Tuesday market in South Lake Tahoe. (The market will be at the American Legion parking lot through Oct. 11 from 8am-1pm.) However, I was told it’s iffy if they’ll have more today.

Just like the harvest, I continue to be slow in making my usual summer foods. Thursday was the first peach pie of the season. Shame on me. I'll be regretting that decision until next summer.

I invited friends over so Sue and I wouldn't eat the whole thing – that, and it's always nice to spend time with friends.

Kim did the research to know what the best beverage would be. Prosecco was what she wanted to buy, but Raley's didn't cooperate, so ended up with another sparkling wine. We all agreed bubbly is a good choice for peach pie.

The peach pie recipe is one my sister, Pam, shared with me years ago. It is originally from *Bon Appetite* magazine. Although it calls for a crust from scratch, I'm sure store bought would suffice – I would just be disowned by family if I ever bought a crust.

And for whatever, this crust never works well for me. I'm guessing whatever crust you normally use for pie would work fine.

Open-Face Peach Pie

1¾ C all purpose flour

2 tsp sugar

½ tsp salt

½ C (1 stick) chilled unsalted butter, cut into small pieces (salted works fine)

2-3 T ice water (Tahoe tap is cold enough)

3 pounds unpeeled peaches, pitted and sliced

¾ C sugar

½ C all purpose flour

2 T butter, cut into small pieces

1 tsp fresh lemon juice

Combine flour, sugar and salt in processor. (The food processor is not necessary. I use a pastry blender – one of those wire things with a handle.) Cut in butter until mixture resembles coarse meal. With machine running (or arm whirling), add enough water through feed tube drop by drop until dough just holds together; do not form ball. Turn dough out onto plastic wrap. Press into disc. Wrap and chill at least 1 hour. (Can be prepared three days ahead.)

Coat 10-inch (I always use a 9-inch) pie pan generously with nonstick vegetable oil spray, or butter pan. Roll dough out on lightly floured surface to 1/8 inch thickness. Fit dough into pan. Trim, leaving 1-inch overhang. Fold overhang back into pie pan. Press edges with fork. Refrigerate shell 1 hour.

Preheat oven to 425 degrees. Line shell with foil or parchment; fill with pie weights or dried beans. Bake 10 minutes. Remove foil and weights. Bake until golden brown, about 5 minutes. Reduce oven temp to 400 degrees.

Arrange peaches in crust. Mix sugar and flour. Sprinkle over peaches. Dot with butter. Drizzle with lemon juice. Bake until peaches are tender, about 45 minutes. Serve with vanilla ice cream.

Should make 6-8 servings unless you cut a pie like I do, in which case there are fewer servings.

Study: Price of wines to stay flat

By Dale Kasler, Sacramento Bee

Despite grape shortages in California, consumers can count on another year of wine discounts, according to a UC Davis survey released Monday.

The university's 10th annual survey of top California wine executives shows an industry slowly emerging from the recession. Weather and financial concerns have created crop shortages, but consumers won't be quick to surrender the price breaks they've enjoyed the past few years.

"The great bulk of people are being driven by deals," said survey author Robert Smiley, a professor emeritus and director of wine programs at the University of California, Davis. "The discounting is going to end, but it's not going to end until a year from now."

Read the whole story

Tahoe chefs ready to dazzle Restaurant Week diners

By Kathryn Reed

Twenty-seven restaurants and only eight days. It's going to make the decision about where to eat difficult.

The second annual Lake Tahoe Restaurant Week, which includes

Truckee, is Oct. 2-9.

To give locals an added incentive to eat out and visitors a reason to come to the basin, the event was moved from early September to early October. September is often a busy month, while October it slows down in the basin.

“Lake Tahoe Restaurant Week is a celebration of the scrumptious and culinary talent that has made the Lake Tahoe region the best mountain dining destination in the country. It’s also designed to generate overnight visitors and increase the number of diners during a slower time of year,” organizer Pettit Gilwee told *Lake Tahoe News*. “I started Restaurant Week because I’m a lover of all things food and wine and I wanted to showcase what Lake Tahoe has to offer. My goal is have the event pay for itself by year five.”

It’s a money saver for those eating and money generator for those fixing the food.



Three-course lunch and dinner options are offered at $20, $30 and $40 – with each restaurant able to choose what amount to charge and what the menu is.

“It’s tough to track where people are from, but after polling restaurants that participated last year, they reported an average 23 percent increase in the number of guests and a 20 percent increase in revenue, compared to the same time period last year, Labor Day week of 2009,” Gilwee said.

With most of the people in 2010 being new customers, this added to Edgewood restaurant’s desire to be part of the event again.

Soule Domain in Kings Beach did more business in 2010 during Labor Day week than this year – which is when Restaurant Week

was last year.

Organizers said it’s near impossible for them to track where people are from, so it’s up to the restaurants if they want to.

Beyond the economics of the whole event, the food is the focus.

“It’s nice to give our chef an opportunity to create something different,” said Bryan Davis of Edgewood restaurant in Stateline. (The difference this year is the restaurant is closed Mondays and Tuesdays in October, so Restaurant Week diners won’t be able to go to Edgewood those days.)

Chef-owner Charlie Soule of Soule Domain in Kings Beach likes being able to do something different in the kitchen during this week.

“It’s not just an increase in traffic, but it also exposes them to special menus,” Soule said. “We get to offer stuff that is a little over and beyond what we normally do.”

He plans to focus on what will be in season for fall, using more earthy flavors like shitake mushrooms and figs, while incorporating the last hints of summer produce such as tomatoes and basil.

For those dining out, there are no tickets to buy or coupons to redeem. It’s just a matter of making a reservation – or reservations. Most of the menus for the event have been posted online so you know what you’ll be served. That’s also the place to see which restaurants are participating.

Food available for Nevada residents in need

A USDA food distribution for Nevada residents will be Sept. 22 at the Tahoe Douglas Senior Center, 885 Highway 50, Zephyr Cove.

There are only four nonperishable items to be given away this month. The next distribution will be Nov. 17. More commodities will be available then.

Items will be distributed from 9-10am.

Preference will be given to residents who have participated in past months. Nevada identification to prove residency is needed to receive food.

For more information, call (775) 586.8330.

Truckee event highlights wine, food, shopping

Event organizers have added a host of shops, galleries and restaurants to the line up for this year’s Downtown Truckee Wine, Walk & Shop, set for Oct. 1 from noon to 4pm.

The Downtown Truckee Wine, Walk & Shop showcases some of the region’s finest restaurants and wineries, offering attendees the opportunity to wander the wonderful shops and galleries of historic downtown Truckee while sampling creations by area chefs, paired with wines from throughout California (with one Nevada winery).

A pre-event activity is the Stomp Out Hunger Grape Stomp on Sept. 30 at the Truckee River Winery Tasting Room, 11467 Brockway Road in Truckee. Doors open and music starts at 4pm. Stomping begins at 5pm. Each four-member team will vie to produce the most juice in two minutes. A fundraiser for Sierra Senior Services, the cost is $150 for each four-member team and there are 16 team slots available. Spectator tickets, which include wine tastings and appetizers, are $15 per person. For more information, call Sierra Senior Services at (530) 550.7600

Tickets for the eighth annual Downtown Truckee Wine, Walk and Shop are $30 in advance and $40 the day of the event and are available online or at the Truckee Donner Chamber of Commerce Visitors Center, The Pour House and Avec Wine + Food and in Reno at the West Street Wine Bar. A portion of the proceeds will benefit the Girls on the Run – Sierras.

For more information, call (530) 550.2252.