El Dorado County farmers challenge food regulations

By Carlos Alcalá, Sacramento Bee

Pattie Chelseth thinks she has the right to sell you a fraction of a cow.

Chelseth, operator of My Sisters' Farm in Shingle Springs, keeps two cows owned by 15 people.

A cow's owner can legally drink its milk filtered but unpasteurized, so she believes each of those 15 owners is entitled to a share of the raw milk.

California's Department of Food and Agriculture sees it otherwise.

"We consider that a commercial transaction and subject to the dairy food safety laws," said Steve Lyle, the agency's public affairs director.

A battle in a milk bottle is brewing, as small farmers challenge state and federal regulations.

Chelseth is trying to land the latest blow, floating an ordinance for El Dorado County that she thinks would give small producers the right to sell unregulated goods – milk, cheese, home-baked pies and more – directly to the person who consumes them.

She will hold a local meeting at her farm on Friday.

Read the whole story

USFS expands offerings at Lake Tahoe recreation sites

By Kathryn Reed

Hunger pangs in the outdoors are never a good thing, but especially when the cooler is empty or one was never packed.

Tahoe Treats, a division of California Land Management, is operating nine concessions throughout the Lake Tahoe Basin for the U.S. Forest Service.

“The limit is when you change the character of the National Forest,” Don Lane, UFSF recreation forester, said as to what will be offered. “We think there is so much demand in the basin for these kinds of little amenities.”



Tahoe Treats trailer at Pope Beach is steps from the sand. Photo/Kathryn Reed

Lane said it’s a careful balance between giving people what they want and not overdeveloping recreation sites, even if the structures are temporary.

“We want to make sure when people go (to the beaches) with

their families that they don’t have an overwhelming sense of commercialism,” Lane said.

Getting into the powerboat or personal watercraft business is not something Lane foresees happening; instead, letting the marinas around the lake handle that aspect of recreation.

Larry Chapman has his Tahoe Treats trailers at Pope Beach and Inspiration Point on the South Shore. He’s working on getting one in at Nevada Beach, but is having to muddle through red taped because the state doesn’t allow food trailers for extended periods of time. The plan is for it to be operating in mid-August.

Pizza is what people are ordering most often, though nachos are a big seller, too, Chapman said.

For people wanting to cool down, an array of drinks is available. So are ice cream bars and shaved ice.

One thing the Inspiration Point cart has that the other doesn’t is chili cheese dogs because it has warmers inside. And with no other food options between Camp Richardson and Tahoma, this cart can often have a line in the parking lot.

Because it took so long for summer to arrive in Lake Tahoe, workers were selling coffee, hot chocolate and tea at the start of the season.

While these are called carts, they are really trailers that hook up to the back of a vehicle.

Besides food offerings that have cropped up in the last couple years and that are expanding, kayak rentals are another convenience on Forest Service beaches.

Chapman is having Steve Lannoy with Kayak Tahoe operate the water sport concessionaire. Rentals are available at Pope, Baldwin and Nevada beaches.

Lannoy pays Chapman a fee and Chapman pays the Forest Service a percentage of his sales.

Lane said it’s easier to hire a concessionaire to operate facilities because they have the expertise as well as the manpower.

California Land Management has been working in the basin since 1985. The company has been running the Forest Service owned campsite at Fallen Leaf Lake for years. They also run the William Kent Campground in Tahoe City and Meeks Bay on the West Shore for the Forest Service.

Calif. dairies shut as milk prices stay below production costs

By Anne Gonzales, Sacramento Bee

Case Van Steyn, a Galt dairyman, has two sons. One works with him on the dairy farm started by his father in 1956, while the other found a job off the farm. These days, Van Steyn wonders if he should even keep one son working with him.

“I’m not sure I should counsel him to stay on the farm,” he said. “This has been a very, very volatile marketplace, it’s very unpredictable and we’re facing serious challenges. It’s kind of like we’re waiting to see the last man standing. If enough dairies go broke, prices will come up high enough to cover our costs of production.”

Milk is touted as a healthy food that promotes strong bones, but the California dairy industry itself has been weakened by

the recession, ethanol subsidies and high feed prices. Like a calf with wobbly legs, dairy farming is struggling to rise above tough times with lean profit margins.

In three years, the state lost 250 independent dairies, many of them family-operated for generations.

The winter may bring more hardship to dairy operators, as they buy up feed to nurture their herds, and heat and drought in the south could dry up crops and drive up feed prices.

The price farmers are paid for their milk is up from last year, but production costs have escalated, too, negating some of the gains, Van Steyn said.

Read the whole story

State fair food is more than cotton candy and corn dogs

By Cynthia Hubert, Sacramento Bee

Back in the 1950s, we had hot dogs on sticks. Later, fair vendors impaled and cooked offerings such as alligator sausage and walleye.

The deep fryer began to dominate fair food about a decade ago, introducing us to fried Snickers bars and Twinkies and butter balls.

This year at the California State Fair, diners are sampling maggot sandwiches and grilled raccoon, fried scorpions and dried crickets.

The increasingly exotic offerings at fairs around the country are more than just marketing gimmicks, according to culinary specialists. The trend is a reflection of an evolving American palate, popular TV shows that highlight unusual cuisine, and the innate desire to sample the latest thing.

“American people are getting more adventurous, and food TV has a lot to do with it,” said Sacramento restaurateur Randall Selland, whose establishments include the elegant Ella and The Kitchen.

“I think it’s neat that the fair is offering more than just deep-fried Twinkies and Cinnabons. It is opening up people’s minds to new things.”

Read the whole story

Barton Foundation collecting wine for annual auction

Barton Foundation’s 8th Annual Wine Tasting Auction is Aug. 17 at 5:30pm at Edgewood Tahoe Clubhouse, 100 Lake Parkway, Stateline.

Admission to the auction is a donation of a bottle of wine (valued at $75 or more) or $85. All proceeds help build Barton Foundation’s Community Health Endowment. The auction will include the donated wine and wine-related gifts, such as wine tasting excursions, over night stays at exclusive wineries, wine tours, gift baskets and much more.

To RSVP or become a sponsor of the event, email foundation@bartonhealth.org or call (530) 543.5614.

K’s Kitchen: How to celebrate National Ice Cream Day

By Kathryn Reed

When Ronald Regan in 1984 created July as National Ice Cream Month and the third Sunday of the month as National Ice Cream Day, he said the dessert was fun and nutritious.



Well, having just made some ice cream last night, I can attest to the fun part. But, nutritious? That’s as logical as me claiming an order of French fries qualifies as a vegetable serving for the day.

Some foods are to be enjoyed and the healthy or unhealthy aspects should be ignored.

I joke the reason I’m not a vegan is because I refuse to give up real ice cream. There’s more truth than fiction to that statement.

I’ve been eating ice cream for as long as I can remember. Each birthday all of us kids as well as my parents had homemade chocolate chip ice cream on the menu. The maker came out on other occasions, too. I think it’s best when it’s first made – before it’s hardened up in the freezer.

Chocolate chip is one of the top flavors in the United States. The most popular flavors are vanilla (27.8 percent of people), followed by chocolate (14.3 percent), strawberry (3.3 percent), chocolate chip (3.3 percent) and butter pecan (2.8 percent), according to NPD Group, a market research firm.

No one knows where ice cream first came from, though the International Ice Cream Association says frozen desserts have been reported as far back as the second century B.C.

Here are some other stats from the IICA:

• The first official account of ice cream in America was recorded in 1700 from a letter written by a guest of Maryland Gov. William Bladen.

• In 1812, Dolley Madison served a strawberry ice cream creation at President James Madison's second inaugural banquet at the White House.

• Italo Marchiony produced the first ice cream cone in 1896. Marchinoy, who emigrated from Italy in the late 1800s, invented his ice cream cone in New York City.

Last night I pulled out a recipe I've had since junior high. I took home ec (aka food) from Mrs. Eng. (Back then teachers didn't have first names other than Mr. or Mrs.)

Instead of using the chocolate chips, we grated a large semi-sweet chocolate bar. What makes this recipe different from the family chocolate chip one is that it is cooked. With mint chip being my store bought favorite and Sue's favorite, I thought I would see what she thought of the homemade version. It looks like she will be requesting homemade ice cream for her birthdays from now on.

Mrs. Eng's Pine Hollow Intermediate School Mint Chocolate Chip Ice Cream

1½ C sugar

¼ C flour

dash salt

2 C whipping cream

4 eggs slightly beaten

1 quart half and half

¾ tsp green food coloring

3 tsp peppermint extract

6 ounces chocolate chips, chopped

Combine first four ingredients in medium sized saucepan, adding whipping cream gradually. Stir constantly until mixture thickens and bubbles. Remove from heat.

Slowly stir half the mixture into beaten eggs, then stir back into saucepan. Cook for another minute, still stirring.

Chill.

Add cream, coloring and extract.

Poor into ice cream freezer. Add chips when ice cream is partially frozen.

Summer libations keep the season lively

By Kathryn Reed

Relaxing poolside, lakeside, on a patio or on a friends' deck – summer cocktails make the occasion even more festive.

To pretend winter wasn't taking over spring, a few of us started ordering what could be considered summer drinks even when hot cocoa may have been better to take off the chill from

the outdoors.

In the process of trying so many different concoctions, as well old standbys, we learned a bit. Just like beer and wine, which I have more knowledge of, no two vodkas or tequilas are alike. Perhaps this is obvious to others, but some of us are still learning things.



Sue Wood and her pitcher of mojitos at Brooks Bar & Deck. Photos/Kathryn Reed

Besides doing a taste test to tell the difference, many bars and restaurants are listing on the menu the specific brand of alcohol that is used in drinks.

While flavor is the ultimate decider if a drink will ever be ordered again, the size of glass and quantity of alcohol play a roll in deciding if the price was worth it.

My favorite drinks in this three-month process were at Brenda’s house – creative, flavorful and free. She graciously is allowing her creations to be published. (See below.)

But for those who are not invited to Brenda’s, I recommend Voodoo on Your Woody at Riva Grill in South Lake Tahoe; Sue says order the mojito at Brooks Bar & Deck at Stateline; Brenda wants another Fleur D’Lis from the Chart House in

Stateline; Linda says the Picon Punch is a must-have at Louis' Basque Corner in Reno.

The tastings begin

It's a warm afternoon in April and we're on the deck at Riva Grill at Ski Run Marina. No prices on the drink menu. I still have a problem with any bar that does that. The impression it gives is a fluctuating price scale.

At first I thought the drinks were overpriced at $11.75 each. Then I kept drinking and seeing what other places had to offer. Size does matter, and that Woody stands up to all the other libations I ingested.

Riva Grill is known for its Wet Woody. I had the Voodoo on Your Woody and Sue had the Malibu Beach Wet Woody. We both say get the Voodoo.

The original Wet Woody is $10.25, with the price dropping to $5.25 on Wednesdays.

It's Easter weekend – I'm at SolBar in Calistoga with my three sisters and mom. We decide to share three cocktails between the five of us – all are unique to this restaurant on the northern edge of the Silverado Trail. We would order each one again.

The mixologist at SolBar knows what he is doing.

"All are really good, with good complex flavors," Jann said.

"They are all very refreshing," Tami said.

We all agreed the flavors came through instead of a heavy alcohol taste.

They are pricy, but so fun and different that forking over $13 or $14 per drink seemed like a reasonable thing to do. And a girls' weekend is about not worrying about the credit card

bill that’s a month away.

We recommend the Le Djinn du Vin en Orange (g’vine nouaison gin, house-made vin d’orange, ginger-honey syrup, lemon, house-made fennel bitters, grains of paradise and egg whites), Pink Slip (Plymouth gin, house-made ginger-rhubarb cordial, lime juice and rose water), and Terra Nostra (distillery 209 gin, house-made vin d’orange, fusion N.V. verjus, citrus blossom honey syrup, tincure of Solage lavender, citrus foam, foraged herbs).

The next girls’ weekend had us in San Francisco for Bay to Breakers in May. We figured a cocktail with our dinner at Perbacco the night before the race would make us walk faster. Jann, Pam and mom had the Fragolino (Prosecco, strawberry puree and aperol). Sue had the Mandarino (Absolut mandarin vodka, pomegranate, cointreau and lime.) I had the Perbacco (Ketel One Citron, Amaretto di Saronno, Meyer lemon).

All the cocktails on the menu are $10 – and worth it.

Of them all, I liked the one I ordered the best. Refreshing is the word that kept coming to mind. Sue liked it so much she had it as her second drink. The Fragolino came with good reviews from Pam and mom – saying it was a nice change from straight Prosecco, while Jann thought the puree was too heavy for the sparkling wine

Circling the South Shore

While the Rum Runner at the Beacon at Camp Rich has long been one of my favorite summer drinks, things have gone down hill in the last couple years. To confirm my opinion, I brought Sue and Brenda to the bar. We all agreed – don’t need to order that again.

The flavor just isn’t what is used to be. The color is not the vibrant orange of days gone by. It tastes more icy than slushy. And by the time it sat in the glass a while the flavor

was horrible. The aftertaste is nasty.

We wonder with the restaurant now selling the concoction in bottles if the recipe had to change. It would be nice if is changed back to what it was, because what it is is not worth a fraction of the $8 they charge.

Letting the bartender pick out a fun drink for the night turned out to be the right decision at McDuff's Public House on Fremont Street in South Lake Tahoe. While the Rum Punch was not exceptional, the price ($6) and quantity made up for the flavor.

And had I not been in between school board meetings, I probably would have appreciated that the drink had more rum than fruit juice. It was just one of those nights where less alcohol would have been more appropriate.

But Sue and I would go back again. We liked that there were two kinds of rum, fresh OJ, cranberry and pineapple juice in the drink.

In a previous lifetime (my first stint in South Lake Tahoe in my 20s) I had three bars I frequented regularly, getting a different drink at each one and where the bartender knew what to bring without my asking.

The Cantina was one of them. At the time it was a blended strawberry-banana margarita. (I could walk to my apartment on 13th Street from there.)

On this particular night I order the French Margarita. While it's made with Cuervo Gold, it's really the Grand Marnier that matters. It's almost $9, but hit the spot that night.

Sue had the $8 Tahoe Tropics, their version of the Blue Hawaiian.

"I forgot how sweet they are," she said, indicating perhaps she's outgrown this drink.

Sue’s favorite drink is across the state line at Edgewood Golf Course – at the sports bar. The original mojito is what she wants. It’s the bar’s specialty drink.

Check out this video of bartender Jimmy Kelso making one at Brooks Bar & Deck.

The best deal is a pitcher (and these are the old-style large pitchers) for $24. Individual glasses are $8.

“It’s the perfect blend of simple things,” Sue said.

Sitting on the Timber Cove Pier enjoying summer in Tahoe – it’s hard to beat Blue Water Bistro’s location. And the Juicy Peach ($10) is tasty, but comes in a super small martini glass. Same goes for the $10 Pama Tini.

While the Chart House in Stateline is nowhere close to being right on the water, it does have one of the best views of Lake Tahoe. Sunsets from this mountain perch are spectacular.

Drink during happy hour to get the best deals. Although not all drinks are discounted, enough are to at least satisfy the three of us.

The overall favorite of the night was the Fleur D’Lis (Malibu coconut rum, Midori melon liqueur, with a splash of DeKuyper peachtree schnapps, and orange and pineapple juice.)

“It just tastes like summer,” Brenda said.

I ordered the blueberry mojito. Don’t need to do that again. It tasted like syrup and was way too sweet.

The second round had Sue getting the Tuaca Lemon Drop (Tuaca liqueur, Stoli citrus vodka, fresh squeezed lime juice). We all agreed the Tuaca ruined the drink. Save that for hot drinks.

The second round favorite was the Pomegranate Martini (Pearl

Pomegranate vodka, DeKuyper pomegranate, splash cranberry juice) that Brenda ordered. But it didn't come close to the Fleur D'Lis.

I had the Agave Necta-Zita (Milagro Silver tequila, agave nectar). It was a good margarita, but nothing that wowed any of us.

Moving around and beyond the lake

Chart House's margarita couldn't compare to what I had had the day before at Caliente in Kings Beach, where margaritas are their specialty. They range in price from $8-$14, but are $3.95 during happy hour.

Ted, Caliente's bartender, is that perfect mix of being helpful, conversing with guests, but leaving them alone. He talked a bit out how tequila is the fastest growing spirit – in terms of consumption. And how they all taste different based on soil, aged oak and other factors.

With Sue not drinking tequila, Ted was great with ideas about which margaritas on the menu would be good to substitute vodka. She started off with the Heart-on, which is basically a pomegranate margarita. I had the Strawberry-Basil Margarita.

Definitely liked mine better. The ice is crushed, which is a nice change. It was super refreshing.

We shared the El Matador Margarita. The blood orange in this is a unique flavor that would be worth having again.

We had a taste of the Chupacubra – a combo of rum, peach schnapps, tequila and other stuff. The consistency is like a wet woody, which makes since because Caliente and Riva Grill have the same owner. This was the best by far.

"The margaritas at Caliente are made with pure Agave Nectar and fresh lime juice along with 2 ounces of 100 percent blue Agave, Reposado tequila. Most places use sweet and sour and

Mixto tequila. Mixto tequila is the tequila that gave tequila a bad name," explains Scott Craig.

On a recent trip to Reno, Linda and Frank made a pilgrimage to one of their favorite watering holes (and dinner houses), Louis' Basque Corner.

"Our favorite drink there is Picon Punch, of course, the national drink of the Basques. Although we've sampled Picon at most of the Basque restaurants throughout Nevada, where they're a bar staple, we think Louis' version is somehow more crisp and smooth," Linda said. "Have more than a couple and you'll know how punch became part of the name!"

The stemmed glass instead of a squat, old-fashion glass added to the experience.

According to Louis' new owner, Brian Elcano, 28, who, with his partner Chris Shanks, 26, purchased the restaurant in March from Louis and Lorraine Erreguible, there are many variations of the recipe, but not all call for the grenadine. Picons make up 50 percent of their bar sales.

Here's how to make Picon Punch a la Louis':

• A splash of grenadine

• 1½ ounces of Torani Amer liqueur

• Soda water

• Stir, then float with brandy

• Finish with a twist of lemon

Topa! (That's cheers in Basque.)

I'm ready to go back to the River Ranch Patio at the entrance road to Alpine Meadows on the North Shore. The Tiki Torch ($8) is Bacardi 7, Tiki rum, tropical juices, fresh squeezed lime and touch of blackberry brandy. It was so good and the setting

along the Truckee River such a delight, I really wanted another. But I cut myself off because the car keys were in my pocket.

Sue had the CoCo Mai Tai ($9) and would order it again.

Back in San Francisco for Fourth of July weekend, this time we are drinking at The View – the bar on the 18th floor of the Marriott on Fourth Street. While the view is worth checking out and drinks acceptable, the price ($14 each) for a cosmo and a raspbatini made us stop for the night.

The Slanted Door inside the Ferry Building, though, was a different story. Each cocktail is $11. Mine was so good I didn't want to share even a sip – though I did. I had the French 75 – Dudognon Reserve Cognac, and Prosecco, lemon; served on the rocks.

Sue's cocktail was yummy, too, just not quite as enticing. She had Ginger Limeade – Hangar One Kaffir Lime vodka, ginger, lime; served on the rocks.

What to make at home

The following drinks are ones Brenda Knox created in her Tahoe Paradise kitchen. I may be a little biased in liking the one named after me, but it really is my favorite of the three.

Publisher's Punch

Served martini style with pineapple juice, orange-mango juice, a hint of lime, Ketel One vodka and a splash of Grand Marnier.

Sue's Magic Margarita

Served on the rocks after a vigorous shaking of Ketel One, margarita mix, lime and splash of Grand Marnier.

Creative Cosmo

A cold refreshing cosmos with Ketel One, cranberry juice, lime

and two splashes of Grand Marnier. A touch of homemade pomegranate liqueur adds the exclamation point.

Susan Wood, Brenda Knox and Linda Fine Conaboy contributed.

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Grocery store tours provide healthy eating tips

By Geralda Miller, Reno Gazette-Journal

Most people who go grocery shopping are baffled about what to buy for healthy living.

Karen Bain, a registered dietician and certified health and wellness coach for Saint Mary's Health Plans, is trying to make the grocery shopping experience an educated one.

She leads monthly grocery store tours at Scolari's locations in Reno and Sparks.

"We want to make sure that they sift through all the marketing hype and determine what's valid and evidence based," she said. "Is that the best choice? Are there better options? They are so confused."

On a recent weekday, Bain led a small group around the store, providing helpful tips along the way.

The No. 1 rule for healthy shopping is to try to stay on the perimeter, which is where fresh produce, dairy, meats and fish are located. That's where Bain spent most of the hourlong tour.

Read the whole story

Tournament pairs golf with plenty of food for players, fans

By Kathryn Reed

Oh, to dine like a celebrity.

It's possible at the American Century Celebrity Golf Tournament.

Although not everything that is available to the players is available to their admirers, some of it is.



The American Century credentialed-only tent two days before the start of the 2011 tournament. Photos/Kathryn Reed

During the six-day event that begins today at Edgewood Tahoe in Stateline, a lot of food is consumed. In stock at the golf course for just this event are:

• 2,400 hamburgers

• 4,000 hot dogs

• 1,200 pounds of chicken

• 400 pounds of tomatoes

• 250 pounds of onions

• 400 pounds of a variety of seafood

• 50 kegs of beer.

The Edgewood restaurant is closed during the tournament, but Brooks' Bar & Deck is open to the public.

"We always get one midweek Michael Jordan visit," Bryan Davis of Edgewood told *Lake Tahoe News*. "He comes in for an hour or two. It's a nice surprise for the guests."

Other players come by the sports bar as well.

Players mostly dine in the clubhouse – which is off-limits to the public. Each day something different is served. It could be fajitas one day, burgers the next and usually a more elaborate seafood spread on the final day.



Views of Lake Tahoe and the

links can be had from Brooks'.

Most of the players are eating at the American Century tent the first three days because the clubhouse is not open until Thursday.

The public can get a taste of what the celebs are chowing on by going to the Soroptimist International South Lake Tahoe booth. Edgewood provides the burgers, dogs and sandwiches, while the women provide the labor. Proceeds are split 50-50.

The snack bar between the 9th green and 10th tee is open. It has a grill, but not the caliber of food of Brooks'.

New this year is a concession on the 17th hole, where the party crowd tends to gather along the sandy beach. Food and alcohol will be served there.

Guy Fieri is coming back – but just for a few hours on Saturday. The Food Network star was creating pork sandwiches in 2009. Pizza is what he will be assembling this year on the 17th hole.

If eating at the golf course is on your itinerary, be warned Thursday and Saturday are usually the two most crowded days. Thursday because of the family and friends tagging along during the celebrity-amateur event; Saturday with the public out en masse.

Over at Harveys and Harrah's, the host hotels for the 22-year-old tournament for the past handful of years, various events involving food are geared toward the celebs with no one from the public invited.

A big dinner is put on Thursday to recognize the celebrity-amateur winners. NBC and American Century Investments, which own and sponsor the tournament, respectively, also put on a

pairings dinner for everyone.

These events are elaborate buffets with food stations featuring cuisine from around the world.

John Packer, spokesman for the casinos, would not divulge names of players who request gluten-free food, vegetarian fare or other dietary requests.

There is no mandate they must stay in the casino corridor, but many do because of the convenience.

“A lot of times celebrities like to go out on their own. For instance, Marcus Allen likes 19 (Kitchen-Bar),” Packer said.

For the players partaking in casino games, food is always available in the Diamond Lounge.

“I don’t think any of them are underfed. There is plenty of opportunity for them to have great food,” Packer said.

Wine, BBQ tasting part of Valhalla Festival

Join Best Barbeque Catering Co. and select Sierra foothill wineries this summer at one or more events featuring specialty BBQ food and wine pairings, with live entertainment. Story Winery is featured July 20.

All events are at the Grand Hall on the Tallac Site on the South Shore from 6-9pm.

Cost is $35 at the door.

Aug. 24 is Bella Grace Winery.

Sept. 21 is Mount Aukum Winery.