USFS community garden idea taking root

By Kathryn Reed

Two or three 4 foot by 10 foot raised beds won't grow enough food to feed many people, but it's the first start to having a community garden on the South Shore.

Dubbed the People's Garden by the Interior Department, the initiative comes out of first lady Michelle Obama's desire to get the country eating healthier. If the White House can create a vegetable garden, why not the Forest Service office in South Lake Tahoe?

A meeting of gardening types on Monday brought forth a ton of ideas about how best to accomplish this.

"There was quite a bit of good local gardening expertise in the room," USFS spokeswoman Cheva Heck said of the June 20 meeting. "We expect the garden to be pretty small scale. This summer we will obtain the resources to build it and maybe next year we will see produce."

Money needs to be secured to build or buy the beds. Volunteers – not just Forest Service employees – will provide the man/womanpower.

It's likely a charity will partner with the Forest Service and then become the beneficiary of the bulk of the produce. Bread & Broth representatives were at the meeting this week.

With the Forest Service office being on leased property from Lake Tahoe Community College, permission had to be granted to do this. At first there was talk of putting the veggie garden by the college's demonstration garden, but that wasn't going to work – especially with the lack of sun at that location.

As the garden takes off, it may grow in terms of size and function. The Tahoe Resource Conservation District envisions it being an education tool for how to garden in high altitude locations.

K's Kitchen: Stuffed bell peppers

By Kathryn Reed

Warm weather and the Tuesday farmers' market have propelled me out of my food funk. I had been in such a rut and uninspired in the kitchen. Not only was I ready for the outdoors to change seasons, but I was ready for what was on my plate to change, too.



The ingredients I found at last week's South Lake Tahoe market inspired the recipe below. (The market is open from 8am-1pm at the American Legion parking lot on Highway 50.)

Though I don't always practice what I preach, I am a firm believer in eating what is in season. Mother Nature tells us what we should be eating. If only we listened better.

Instead, we buy tomatoes and cantaloupe in the winter. Where did it come from? How many miles did it travel? What kinds of chemicals were applied?

Without thinking, most us shop at grocery stores year-round for what we want, not what fruits and vegetables are in

season. This is bad for the environment and more important, bad for our bodies. Our bodies know what they need – they need what is in season. It's up to us to listen to our bodies and not what grocery store marketing types tell us to buy.

For the Tahoe area, most farmers' markets started this month. Those living in more temperate climates get to have markets year-round.

All the ingredients for the peppers were bought at the market last week. As veggies at markets change, just use what appeals to you.

The peppers were bought at Costco. I like buying the six-pack of red, yellow, orange peppers there because of the price. (See, I don't always follow my buy in season, buy local rule. They came from Mexico.)

Peppers will be available at the markets later in the summer.

I prefer not to stuff green bell peppers because they are more bitter than the other colors – which all are much sweeter.

For the quantities like a bunch listed below – it's based on how they sell the produce at the market. And for the onions, I actually used a few small ones. I had olive oil at home, but it, too, is available at the Tuesday market in South Tahoe.

Farmers' Market Stuffed Peppers

4 bell peppers, preferably not green

Olive oil

1 medium red union, chopped

5+ cloves garlic, minced

1 bunch spinach

1 C yellow and green squash, chopped

½ bunch asparagus, chopped in ¼-inch pieces

2 T fresh sage, minced

1½ T fresh rosemary, minced

Cheese, optional

Preheat oven to 350 degrees.

Coat bottom of pan with olive oil. On high heat, sauté onion and garlic until opaque. Add spinach, reducing heat to medium. Stir until spinach is completely wilted.

Add squash. Cook about 2 minutes. Add asparagus. Cook another 2 minutes.

Add herbs.

Add salt and pepper to taste.

Cook until asparagus is done.

Cut off tops of peppers. Try to make a small hole; don't lop off whole top; cut just where the stem is. Rinse peppers to get seeds out.

Stuff peppers with veggie mixture. Bake at 350 degrees for 30 minutes. In the last five minutes add cheese if using it.

Olive oil consumption linked to reduced stroke risk

By Jennifer LaRue Huget, Washington Post

New research suggests that consuming lots of olive oil is

associated with a reduced risk of ischemic stroke.

A study published on-line Wednesday in the journal Neurology looked at olive-oil consumption among more than 7,600 people ages 65 and older in three French cities who had taken part in what's known as the Three-City Study. After controlling for diet, lifestyle and stroke-risk factors, they found that "intensive" olive-oil users (those who used it for cooking and dressing their food) had a 41 percent reduced risk of ischemic (the kind caused by an artery blockage) stroke during the five-year follow-up period than those who reported using no olive oil at all.

The association did not hold true for hemorrhagic stroke (the kind caused by a ruptured blood vessel in the brain), in part because not enough of those strokes occurred among the people in the study to make a statistically valid connection.

Read the whole story

Farmers' markets coupons for needy seniors

Farmers' market coupons are available for people 60 and older who meet certain income guidelines. Coupons are good at all authorized farmers' markets.

Distribution of coupons will be June 21 form 8am-11am at the American Legion Hall parking lot, 2732 Lake Tahoe Blvd., South Lake Tahoe.

For more information, call (530) 621.6369.

Apples No. 1 most-pesticide contaminated fruit

By Janice Lloyd, USA Today

Apples are at the top of the list of produce most contaminated with pesticides in a report published today by the Environmental Working Group (EWG), a public health advocacy group.

Its seventh annual report analyzed government data on 53 fruits and vegetables, identifying which have the most and least pesticides after washing and peeling. For produce found to be highest in pesticides, the group recommends buying organic.



Most apples are full of pesticides, according to a report.
Photo/LTN file

Apples moved up three spots from last year, replacing celery at the top of the most-contaminated list; 92 percent of apples contained two or more pesticides.

“We think what’s happening to apples is more pesticides and fungicides are being applied after the harvest so the fruit can have a longer shelf life,” says EWG analyst Sonya Lunder. “Pesticides might be in small amounts, but we don’t know what the subtle, long-term effects of many of these pesticides are yet.”

The worst offenders also include strawberries (No. 3) and imported grapes (No. 7). Onions top the “clean” list, found to be lowest in pesticides.

Read the whole story

Economy not stopping wineries from opening in Fair Play

By Mike Dunne, Sacramento Bee

California’s wine trade hasn’t been immune from the nation’s lingering recession – witness the deep discounts on high-end wines – but sales nevertheless have remained surprisingly strong.

What’s more, people still see enough hope in the industry to continue to open wineries.

Just take a drive into the Sierra foothills east of Sacramento. Around any bend, you are apt to be startled by the flapping and snapping of bright banners heralding the debut of another winery.

So it was earlier this spring as we wound our way through southwestern El Dorado County. As we approached Fair Play, a newly paved drive and a sign with a winery name we didn’t

recognize caught our eye.

We moseyed up the hill, past a handsome new steel-and-stone winery and on to its neighboring tasting room. The arrangement reminded me of one of the Mother Lode's old gold mines, with a large stamp mill looming over the site and a tiny assay office off to one side.

The pay dirt being exploited here, however, is rows of vines rather than veins of quartz, though a seam of Gold Rush history runs through the property.

The sign high on the winery says "Skinner Native Wine & Brandy." This is a slight alteration of the sign "J. Skinner Native Wine & Brandy" that hung on the winery of one James Skinner in western El Dorado County starting in the 1860s.

Read the whole story

CDC: No progress fighting salmonella in last 15 years

By Linda Shrieves, Orlando Sentinel

Despite attempts to clean up the nation's food supply, the rate of salmonella infections has held steady for the past 15 years, while rates for several other foodborne diseases have dropped dramatically.

In its annual food safety report card, the Centers for Disease Control said this week that the federal government has made little headway in its battle against salmonella, which sickens about one million Americans every year.

While salmonella infections have risen by 10 percent in the past four years, illnesses from the serious Shiga toxin-producing E.coli O157 have been cut nearly in half. And the overall rates of six foodborne infections have been reduced by 23 percent, the report said.

Only the rates of one foodborne disease tracked in the CDC report increased significantly. Researchers said the rates of vibrio infection were 115 percent higher than 15 years ago, and 39 percent higher than four years ago. Most vibrio infections come from eating raw or undercooked shellfish.

Read the whole story

Wine event combines drinking and learning

Winemaker Stephen Tebb from Robert Craig Winery will discuss the science and art of winemaking from the soil to the glass on June 16 at 6pm at the Tahoe Center for Environmental Sciences, 291 Country Club Drive, Incline Village (on the campus of Sierra Nevada College).

With an emphasis on mountain-grown fruit, he will discuss how the geology, geography and climate affect the type and style of wine produced. Tebb will go through the various stages of wine production from harvest parameters to fermentation dynamics to cooperage determinations and ultimately bottling considerations.

Guests will also learn how to taste wine like an expert.

Cost is $30. Seating limited to first 80.

To reserve a seat, call (775) 881.7560, ext. 7474 or email lkburns@ucdavis.edu.

Wine grapes suffering in wet, cold weather

By Anne Gonzales, Sacramento Bee

Bruce Rominger's Yolo County wine grapes are, in a word, immature.

So are his processing tomatoes, languishing in a Winters field.

"We're behind, and things are moving slowly," Rominger said of his crops. "I'm not happy about this rain recently."

Wine grape growers in the Sacramento region, along with those tending other perishable crops like cherries and strawberries, are struggling through a series of fluke frosts and hailstorms. The cool, wet spring – for the second year in a row – has delayed growth, increased the threat of some diseases and snarled the harvest, as well as crushing, packing and shipping schedules.

The zany weather is adding to the California wine industry's headaches, which include depressed prices and a glut of grapes.

Kevin Steward, vineyard manager for Terra d'Oro Winery in Plymouth, is blunt about the effect of frost, snow, hail, rainstorms and cloudy days on some Sierra foothill vineyards.

Read the whole story

Tahoe City walk all about the wine

If you love great wine, tasty food, and spectacular views of the Sierra and Lake Tahoe, the Tahoe City Wine Walk is a great way to enjoy all three.

The sixth annual Tahoe City Wine Walk is June 18 from noon to 4pm. Stroll downtown Tahoe City to 30 tasting locations while visiting retail shops and businesses. Live music will be at three spots.

There's even a "milk bar" for kids. Childcare is available for parents who would like to drop off their children before they stroll.

This event is produced by the partnership of PR/marketing firms SDBX Studios and Wild West Communications Group for the Tahoe City Downtown Association to benefit Tahoe City. Tahoe City Wine Walk is the flagship event of TCDA's the annual Tahoe City Heart and Solstice Festival. This year's festival includes an antique car show and Farmers' Market on June 16, restaurant specials, comedy performance and Photography Show Friday, Saturday is Wine Walk in the afternoon. Then on Sunday, the kick-off of the summer music season with the opening of the popular Concerts at Commons Beach.

Tickets for Tahoe City Wine Walk are $30 in advance, $40 that day. Tickets are available at James-Harold Galleries in the Boatworks, Tahoe Dave's, The Store, Uncorked Wine Bar in the Cobblestone Mall, and the North Lake Tahoe Visitor Center. Or purchase tickets online.