Cereal makers lowering the sugar content

By Elena Conis, Los Angeles Times

Want to feed your kids a healthy breakfast without drowning them in sugar? It's a challenge – but it's getting a little easier.

Major cereal makers are rolling out less-sugary versions of some of their sweetest brands. In December, General Mills – maker of Lucky Charms, Trix and many other breakfast staples – announced that it would cut the sugar levels in all of its children's cereals to 9 grams or less per 3/4 cup serving. Last month, Post Foods announced that it had already lowered the sugar in its Fruity Pebbles and Cocoa Pebbles cereals to 9 grams per serving.

Those are big changes: Lucky Charms and Trix used to pack 14 grams of sugar per serving, and Fruity and Cocoa Pebbles used to weigh in at 12 grams of sugar per serving.

Children can still load up on sugar at breakfast time, warns Dr. Wendy Slusser, medical director of the Fit for Healthy Weight Program at UCLA's Mattel Children's Hospital. Just check out the nutrition labels on other popular brands such as Quaker Oats' Cap'n Crunch (12 grams of sugar per serving) or Kellogg's Honey Smacks (15 grams of sugar per serving).

At those levels, a bowl of breakfast cereal could go a long way toward the U.S. Department of Agriculture's recommended limit of 48 grams of added sugar for children consuming 2,200 calories a day. In fact, children with big morning appetites could easily get half their quota before their day really starts.

Read the whole story

Conference connects farmers and consumers

Connecting farmers and consumers to the food we eat is the goal of the 2011 Nevada Small Farm Conference on March 10-12 at Western Nevada College Fallon campus and Fallon Convention Center.

A diverse program will explore topics from bees to beef through the two-day conference, pre-conference workshops, Friday evening reception and Community Education Day on Saturday.

Know Your Farmer, Know Your Food is the conference theme as it builds upon the U.S. Department of Agriculture initiative to connect rural farmers and urban consumers. The vision: to improve the economic and physical health of Nevada's communities. Sessions will focus on small fruit production, viticulture and wine making, marketing local beef, soil fertility and composting, hoop houses, beekeeping and more.

Consumer Education Day on Saturday will feature sessions on urban farming, school and community gardens, farm-to-institution sales and smart water use.

Invited speakers include regional and local experts from across the Western states including Utah, New Mexico, California and Nevada.

Local food and spirits will be served during a casual Friday evening reception at Lattin Farms in Fallon. Beef and lamb from local producers Albaugh Ranch and Churchill Vineyards, plus wine and local seasonal produce will all be featured.

For conference details, registration information and fees, visit WNC's website, or contact Ann Louhela, (775) 351/2551, or louhelaa@wnc.edu.

K's Kitchen: Super Bowl worthy dip

By Kathryn Reed

Something showed up in my kitchen. And it's not a good thing.



That something is a full bag of potato chips.

"The last time we had a bag I completely missed out on those," Sue said when I asked about the unopened bag that just appeared.

You see, I don't often eat potato chips. But I love them. Oh, that crunch, the salt. Sometimes it's the flavored ones like vinegar or the Hawaiian style that keep my jaw in motion.

The problem is I don't know how to eat a handful. I know how to eat a bagful. Yes, really. It's awful. Awfully good, to tell you the truth.

I can pass on the baked kind. Let's be real. If you are going to be bad, be bad. Baked potato chips are as silly as low-fat ice cream. What's the point?

It’s good to identify your compulsions. My way to avoid a spike in my cholesterol count and clogging my arteries is to not buy potato chips except on those rare days when I’m at the grocery store shopping while I’m hungry.

Sometimes the bag doesn’t make it in the house. This is why I received a stern reprimand of sorts from Sue. “They are not to be opened until the weekend.”

Whatever.

Apparently there is some football game on that she wants to watch because she is a Steelers fan. Being a Dolphins fan, it’s been years since I’ve watched football past December.

A dip I like with chips and veggies is an ideal crowd pleaser for things like Super Bowls. It comes from my friend Carol, who is like a second mom to me. It’s best if it’s made the day before so the flavors meld.

Dilly Dip

1 C mayonnaise

1 C sour cream

2¼ tsp dill weed

Onion and garlic salt to taste

Mix all the ingredients. Chill a few hours.

Barrel tasting provides sneak

peak at next wine vintage

By Kathryn Reed

SOMERSET – It was one of those only in El Dorado County days. Schussing through fresh powder in the morning at Sierra-at-Tahoe, drinking from the barrel in the afternoon at foothill wineries.

With 26 wineries to choose from for the annual Bring out the Barrel wine tasting event, we knew we couldn't hit them all in a day – or even two. But the three we managed to visit Sunday we'd go back to without an event to lure us there.



Richard Stading explains what's in the barrel at Auriga. Photos/Kathryn Reed

What makes this weekend special is being able to taste from the barrel to know what is on the horizon. Some of the wineries sell futures. This means paying for the bottles now at usually a reduced rate compared to what it will be once it is released. It can be a gamble, or it can be a great investment.

At Cantiga Wineworks, it was all about education on this last

weekend of January. No futures were even available.

“The education component is key in our wine style,” owner Richard Rorden said. “We are using this to show wine as it ages.”

Plenty of people hovered around the barrels containing samples of the 2008 and 2010 Zinfandel. To some, a full glass or a bottle would have been fine to have right then.

But that’s not what Rorden and his wife, Christine, are about. Their philosophy is to embrace the European-style of winemaking, where the fruit remains in the barrel longer. It takes about five years before they are satisfied and will put their wines in a bottle.

“Wine needs acidity. Without it, it is hard to pair with food,” Rorden said.

Creating wine that goes well with food is more important to Cantiga than having people open a bottle and just drink. Food is such an integral part of their wine that even on non-event occasions there is food out for people to sample with the wine.

On this special barrel tasting weekend, most wineries had something to share with guests besides wine.

At Auriga Wine Cellars, which has moved its tasting facility to Pleasant Valley Road, a pasta dish is being paired with the Tuscan blend that is dominated by Sangiovese.

The Tuscan will be bottled in April and tastes ready now.

“I don’t see it changing much,” owner Richard Stading said of the Tuscan. “A lot of times in the barrel it’s really yummy and then in the bottle (people say) this isn’t what I bought. A couple months from now this will not change.”

The barrel tasting was an opportunity for Richard and Diane

Stading to show off the larger tasting area. This summer they expect to have special events on the grassy lawn out back.

They picked up more than a dozen new club members during the two-day event, so that made it profitable beyond the sound of the cash register ringing.

This is the fourth year of Bring out the Barrel, which is put on by the El Dorado Winery Association. And it’s the first year it has sold out. Last year 1,200 tickets were sold, this year 2,000.

Elliot Graham at Busby Cellars said it was wall-to-wall people at the tasting room Saturday afternoon. He and his wife, Sherrie, and their workers were doing a brisk business Sunday, too.

Overall, he said things have been steady despite the economy, with sales increasing last year. He attributes this partly to people never stop drinking wine, and smaller wineries like Busby that produce 2,000 cases a year don’t have the distribution costs others have.

The next big event in the El Dorado County wine region is Passport Weekend, the last weekend of March and first weekend of April. This, too, can sell out.

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Tahoe City restaurant caters to vegans in love

The Crest Café restaurant in Tahoe City, known for its specialized winemaker dinners, is teaming up with High Sierra

Veggies & Vegans to host a gourmet vegan Valentine's dinner.

Said Crest Café owner Lisa Laliotis, "We are excited to be the first restaurant in the area to do a vegan event, and my co-owner and chef, Kyle Davis and I have created a fantastic menu that will surely please and intrigue diners on this romantic occasion."

The five-course, gourmet menu will be made without animal products or by-products and includes wine pairings and discount wines by the glass or bottle. A winemaker representative will be on hand to facilitate the pairings and interact with diners.

The dinner is Feb. 12th at 6:30pm. The cost is $49 per person, which includes wine tastings. Reservations are required by calling (530) 581.3037.

SNC creates series of dining events

"Tell me what you eat, and I'll tell you who you are," wrote renowned gastronome Jean Anthelme Brillat-Savarin in 1825. Food is a form of communication that is rich with meaning.

Beyond merely nourishing the body, what we eat and with whom we eat can inspire and strengthen the bonds between individuals, communities, and even countries. Sierra Nevada College along with their partners Sodexo, are offering culturally diverse dining experiences, along with some light-hearted holiday meals, beginning Feb. 2 through May.

· Feb. 2 – Chinese New Year dinner; experience the Year of the

Rabbit’s authentic customs and traditions.

· Feb. 14 – Valentine’s Day dinner; treat yourself and a loved one to mouth-watering “Surf & Turf.”

· March 2 – Dr. Seuss dinner; join Sam-I-Am for a yummy dinner jam.

· March 8 – Mardi Gras lunch; enjoy a carnival of Cajun cuisine and flavors.

· March 10 – St. Patrick’s Day lunch; get a lucky Irish lunch.

· April 1 – April Fools’ Day lunch; no shenanigans or tomfoolery guaranteed.

· April 6 – French Cuisine dinner; honoring the Tournées Festival of Contemporary French Cinema.

· April 23 – SNC’s Multicultural Festival; featuring diverse ethnic food, musical entertainment and more.

· May 5 – Cinco de Mayo lunch; come celebrate Mexican heritage and pride.

Each feast is all you can eat and open to the public; community members pay $12.50 for lunch (11:30am-1:30pm) and $14 for dinner (4:30-7:00pm). Cash, credit or checks are accepted and SNC meal cards with standard pricing for students, faculty and staff apply.

Community member reservations are required for the Valentine’s Day dinner and may be made by emailing bbwitzke@sierranevada.edu – put VALENTINE’S DINNER RSVP in subject line, or call (775) 881.7452.

Barbera Festival coming to Amador County

Cooper Ranch in Plymouth (Amador County) is site of the first Barbera Festival on June 11 from 11am-4pm.

This outdoor wine and food festival will host more than 70 wineries from the Sierra foothills, Paso Robles, Napa, Sonoma, Mendocino, Lake County, the Santa Cruz Mountains, Ventura County, Lodi and the Bay Area. Approximately 1,500 people are expected to attend, with top area restaurants and caterers providing the best in cuisine.

Barbera originated in the Piemonte region of northern Italy. In California, about 8,000 acres of Barbera are planted. Louis Martini, a legend in California wine history with a winery in St. Helena was the first to produce a varietal Barbera in 1954. Today, nearly 200 California wineries produce Barbera wines.

Barbera is known for its generous acid structure. There are differing styles of barbera ranging from brighter versions with flavors of tart cherry, raspberry, and spice, to riper styles with flavors of black cherry, blueberry, blackberry, and vanilla.

In addition to tasting wine, guests may enjoy live music, art and artisan crafts.

The Barbera Festival is a Green Event and has taken measures to minimize the environmental impact of the festivities, including waste and transportation. The organizing team is also investigating renewable energy purchases and carbon credits. The Barbera Festival is intended to be an annual event with net proceeds going to charity.

Tickets will be available March 1 and are $30/person in

advance and $40/person at the door.

For more information about the event, a list of participating wineries, map and directions, along with local lodging and tasting tips, click to the official website.

Caliber of food as varied as the choices in Vail

Publisher's note: ***This is the third of four days of stories about issues pertaining to Vail.***

By Kathryn Reed

VAIL – It would be hard to go hungry in this ski town and easy to not have enough cash for a lift ticket the next day.

Although the area has plenty of high-end restaurants, they aren't all that way. A good mix of places to eat and drink exists. On a trip to the area earlier this month I tried to sample a variety of places.

What surprised me is by the end of the week I had more pleasurable experiences on the mountain during the day. But I was alone in this assessment. Perhaps it's the hazards of being a vegetarian.



A snowcat is needed to get to the Game Creek restaurant at Vail. Photos/Kathryn Reed

A nice touch at the Vail Chophouse in Lionshead is at 3:30 each afternoon patrons are poured a glass of Champagne – for free.

Sue asked our waiter J.D. about free refills. He smiled and without missing a bit said, “Ya, right. You are in Vail, remember?”

Prices at this slopeside restaurant are reasonable. Sue and my aunt Linda couldn’t finish the six sliders and fries ($9). We each had a hot drink, with my Café Grand (Grand Marnier, Godiva chocolate liquor, coffee, whip cream and nutmeg) being the most expensive at $8.50.

But this is the type of place my 26-year-old cousin who teaches children’s ski school part time would not venture into. So, off to Bart & Yeti’s we went to meet her and my uncle Tom.

We recommend a pint ($4.75) of the Hazed and Infused from the Boulder Beer Company. The fries are better here, too.

One night the five of us ate at Bully Ranch, which classifies itself as “casual, Western style atmosphere and Southwestern and American menu.” Not sure how they qualify as Southwestern. It definitely is not the place to take a vegetarian, especially when she is buying.

Nonetheless, I was able to get through the evening with soup and salad. The tomato cheddar soup ($6) is quite good. The

beer battered fish and chips ($17) were well received by my dining companions.

A fun place for a beer after a day of skiing is Moe’s Original Barbecue in Lionshead. Definitely a young crowd. The jalapeno corn bread is yummy.

The five us went to Game Creek one night. By day this is a members’ only retreat, while at night it is open to the public. We took the gondola up out of Lionshead. From there a tricked out snowcat took us on a 6-minute ride to the restaurant.

Executive Chef David Clawson said cooking at 10,300 feet is only an issue for baking and pastries.

“One of our goals is to exceed people’s expectations being in that remote location,” Clawson said.

Clawson is going on his third year at Game Creek, having worked at Le Meridien in San Francisco and the Lodge at Vail prior to this job.

The meals are $82 for three courses, $92 for four courses and $102 for five courses.

Tucked back in a corner table presented challenges for the waiters trying to fill water glasses, and serve and retrieve dishes. The room is large and open, without any intimacy. It’s vast and unappealing like a casino banquet room, with little ambiance.

At the end of the evening we had mixed reviews. Yes, it’s fun. Would we do it again? Not me. But Tom’s assessment was, “The experience was totally worth it.” Sue would go back for the food. She liked the crab and corn soup, while Christina thought it a bit watery. Tom said the duck confit was incredible. Three of us had the asparagus starter that was good, but didn’t wow us. Sue raved about the scallops. My

tofu-mushroom dish needed flavor and was cold.

If you go, get the duck confit, scallops and sticky toffee pear for dessert.

A couple nights later it was the cousins on the top of Beaver Creek for a unique dining experience at Beano's Cabin. This time we were hauled up at dusk in a sleigh pulled by a snowcat.

Sam the banjo picker from Tennessee distracted us from the chill in the air as we huddled under heavy blankets.

I had been told Executive Chef Steve Topple was looking forward to creating something special for me – the vegetarian in the group. After the waiter went over the specials I asked what he would recommend for a vegetarian. He said I'd probably have to order off the menu, but would check with the chef. The menu was all I could choose from. So much for creativity.

At $85 for a three-course meal or $105 for five-course, I'd recommend vegetarians not dine here. My first course options were pizza (which I had at lunch), chili or salad. The salad was good. My option for the entrée was beet gnocchi. Fine.

But then I tasted it and winced because of the saltiness. Sue took a bite and said, "Oh, my god, that's a sodium rush."

She and Christina couldn't say enough good things about their first two courses. Christina said the striped bass was seasoned and cooked perfectly, while Sue said the same about her Rocky Mountain trout.

We all enjoyed our desserts – chocolate trio, banana split crème brulee, and Colorado goat cheese crepe.

We also all liked the overall feel of Beano's compared to Game Creek. The open kitchen to watch the food being prepared, the roaring fire, wood beams – it just felt like a mountain cabin.

Go there without a vegetarian in the group.

The recipe below is from David Clawson at Game Creek, though none of us had it the night we were there – it wasn't an option.

Butternut Squash & Apple Soup

½ lb Butter

1 Onion

6 stalk Celery

6 T Ginger fresh

12 Apples (peeled seeded and cored)

6 Butternut Squash (peeled, seeded, large dice and roasted)

3 Bay leaf

½ lb Flour

3 gallons Chicken stock

1 qt Applesauce

To taste Salt & White Pepper

Method:

1. Melt butter and sauté the onion, celery, and ginger

2. Add flour to make a blond roux

3. Add chicken stock, bay leaf, squash and eight apples

4. Taste for salt and white pepper

5. Simmer until vegetables are overcooked and very soft

6. Puree and pass through fine strainer (chinois)

7. Very small dice (brunoise) the other four apples add to finished soup.

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South Tahoe amateur chef a finalist in national cook-off

Stella Ortega of South Lake Tahoe is one of four finalists invited to compete in the Auténtico Challenge Cook-off at Chef Aaron Sánchez's restaurant Centrico in New York City.

Cacique, the largest Hispanic cheese brand in the U.S., and Sanchez have partnered to find the best Latin-inspired recipes featuring Cacique's products.

Finalists are:

• Ortega with her spicy and complex Chicken a la Diabla.

• Leah Lyon of Ada, Okla., with Shrimp Rajas al Carbon Panela Tostaditos.

• Helena Giesea of Monte Rio, Calif., with her recipe for Cactus Frittata. and authentic, mild Panela cheese.

• Susan Ten Pas of Myrtle Creek, Ore., with her recipe for Roast Squash and Pear Soup with Chorizo Meatballs.

Fans may tune in to watch the finalists preparing their dishes in a series of vignettes during the cook-off on the Cooking Channel in February to see who earns bragging rights as the most unique, Latin-inspired recipe using Cacique's products.

The winner of the Go Auténtico Challenge Cook-off receives an

all-expense paid trip for two to Napa Valley and a five-day culinary boot camp at the Culinary Institute of America.

Healthy eating means smaller portions throughout the day

By Kathryn Reed

Bagels the size of hockey pucks and muffins the size of eggs. That's what a single serving is.

Finding out bagels and muffins from coffee houses and restaurants count as several servings did not seem to sit well with some of the women as they ate breakfast.



Nutritionist Amber Wilson talks about smaller portions -- on plates and in glasses. Photo/Laurie Brazil

When registered dietician Amber Wilson told the group of women

last week that filling a smaller wine glass would be a good idea, it was met with chuckles like that suggestion isn't about to happen.

"Most people have an emotional connection to food," Wilson told members of Soroptimist International Tahoe Sierra.

She said it's best to eat when hungry, which is likely to mean having several small meals throughout the day.

Wilson also said no watching TV, no emailing and no reading while eating. This will allow for enjoying the experience of eating.

To demonstrate how better to enjoy food she had each woman put an M&M in her mouth and close her eyes. The idea was to pay attention to the taste, smell, texture – to notice what it felt like swallowing and if while eating it evoked any feelings besides hunger.

"You need to focus on what food tastes like," Wilson said. She added that by doing so it will result in making healthier food choices.

Eating fruits, vegetables and protein are critical, she said.

"A lot of diet related foods have fillers in them. A lot of times they take out the fats and put in other things to make it taste good. Those are usually sugars," Wilson said.

She recommends keeping a food journal to be accountable for what one eats. People tend to avoid bad foods when they know they have to write it down.

Wilson was asked how to get people to eat better.

"You have to have a realistic conversation about their health and the risks. But if they don't want to change, you won't get them to," Wilson said.

In addition to paying attention to what is being consumed, where it’s eaten and how much, Wilson is a big believer is being active for 30 to 60 minutes a day.

“The best kind of exercise is the exercise you like,” Wilson said.

Wilson may be contacted by emailing a.wilson@new-life-nutrition.com.