

Beer & Food Fest at Truckee restaurant

Dragonfly's first Beer & Food Festival is slated for Jan. 27 from 6 to 9pm at the Truckee restaurant.

Attendees may stop in anytime during the evening and roam the food and beer stations, tasting menu items paired with six Mammoth Brewing Company specialty beers.

Advanced tickets are on sale now for \$28 per person, which provides access to this interactive beer and food tasting event.

While tasting the malts, smelling the hops and sampling the Dragonfly eats, Beer & Food Fest participants can also meet Mammoth Brewing Company brew master Sean Turner, enjoy live music and enter a raffle to win free growlers.

Tickets are available at Dragonfly; advanced ticket purchase is recommended as these types of events often sell out. For tickets or more info, call (530) 587.0557.

Dragonfly is located upstairs at 10118 Donner Pass Road, right in the heart of downtown Truckee.

PlacerGROWN Food & Farm Conference

Holly George will be the keynote speaker for the 2011 PlacerGROWN Food & Farm Conference at Lincoln High School, 790 J. St. in Lincoln on Feb. 5.

George is the UC Livestock and Natural Resources advisor for Plumas and Sierra counties. Her talk is titled “The Power of Personal Stories.”

George spearheaded a collaborative effort to develop the Passion for the Land project that includes UC Davis Art of Regional Change, UC Cooperative Extension and farmers and ranchers in Sierra Valley. Passion for the Land consists of 12 personal stories that explore the interconnections between our environment, agriculture, the people and local communities.

Following the keynote speech, Holly and Jesikah Maria Ross of the Art of Regional Change will conduct two workshops: Digital Storytelling 101 and Digital Storytelling: Getting Started.

The conference will feature a trade show, workshops and lunch prepared by the Lincoln Future Farmers of America (FFA). For more information, see PlacerGROWN.

Seeds for a community garden beginning to sprout

By Garry Bowen

On Dec. 14, upon the first seating of South Lake Tahoe’s newly-elected City Council, a quiet anniversary one day shy of a year was commemorated by a rather quiet submission, that of a project proposal regarding a Community Garden for South Shore.

As there was quite a lot of commotion that day, what with employment anniversaries of 5, 10, 20 years or more, a retiring police lieutenant, and swearing in ceremonies of all

sorts, a quiet submission, especially when submitted during the Public Comment period [additionally obscured by being the only portion not televised], needs further comment.

In mid-December 2009, a meeting was convened at Embassy Suites among a few key folks in town, in which agreement was reached within an hour-and-a-half to begin a pilot composting program [technically known as food waste diversion] with Embassy Suites, South Tahoe Refuse, both Marriotts, and later, Aramark, on board. The “silent” partner in that endeavor was Full Circle Compost over the hill in Minden, as a repository for nearly 5-plus cubic yards accumulated per week, “percolating” into compost on a large scale to benefit South Shore culinary interests, and the health and well-being of constituents.



Garry Bowen

Diverting food waste from a lengthy trip to the landfill is a commendable thing to do in any event, but the quiet submission of the above mentioned proposal will mean much more to the city’s future if enough attention is paid, as there was always to be a second, more substantial stage – that of creating fresh, vibrant, and natural produce.

After almost a year-and-a-half of due diligence, a plan has evolved that is readily capable of growing significant amounts of fresh and natural produce for the South Shore populace, using a moderately priced facility designed for high altitude, low temperature climates like ours. In addition, as it is a geodesic dome designed as a passive solar structure, there is

a good possibility we will not have to engage any public utility, as all resources are in effect “renewable”. This makes it a totally sustainable project, which includes “paying its’ own way” counter to the usual Tahoe bane, operation and maintenance.

Lastly, it is the opening “salvo” of a facilitated project of the City’s Sustainable Action Plan, in this case Item No. 9, Healthy Food Systems, a worthy place to start implementing necessary change. As nutritional energy is the most important ingredient to most any endeavor that people do, any function that allows all inhabitants, whether residing or visiting, to benefit, is comprehensive. Adding additional components of education, companionship, and use as a “community gathering place”, all of which can be done “year-round” [the latter two are requisite to the dictates of Item No. 9], is the best that can be offered for less than six figures.

Benefiting all layers of the community at once is the best introduction to sustainability, and need not involve any impediments to “normal” progress, stilted as it sometimes seems to be. The community only needs to know that this project is ready, willing, and able to perform in a relatively short time-span, given the now year-old “ramp-up”.

At the beginning of the year and the decade, we can only hope that this is but one comprehensive example of a proactive, self-sustaining civic entrepreneurial project, the success of which will lead to many others in the realm of sustainability. South Shore, the region, and the Earth will all be better off.

If there is an interest in either the Primer submitted to council, or the impending Strategic Business Plan, use the contact information below to comment or request an electronic copy.

Garry Bowen has a 50-year connection to the South Shore, with an immediate past devoted to global sustainability, on most of

its current fronts: green building, energy and water efficiencies, and public health. He's also in the process of planning with his classmates their 50-year South Tahoe High reunion. He may be reached at tahoefuture@gmail.com or (775) 690.6900.

Wine tasting now allowed in California grocery stores

By Jim Sanders, Sacramento Bee

Want a free nip of booze before you lug those grocery bags home?

Happy New Year!

Cookies, crackers and other food tastings have been common at supermarkets for years, but a new state law expands the concept to wine, beer and hard liquor began Saturday.

Alcohol samples are expected to be offered sporadically, at best, but manufacturers hope that Californians will be more likely to buy their product if they can try it.

"There are some great Scotches out there that maybe cost \$20 or \$30 a bottle, or great tequilas, and you're reluctant to spend that kind of money, it's only human, until you've had the chance to taste it," said Mike Falasco of the Wine Institute.

Opponents of the new law contend that adult consumption of alcohol in grocery stores will send a message to kids that drinking is no big deal, and that communities will be hurt by increased alcohol sales spawned by the new marketing tool.

K's Kitchen: Moroccan Lentil Soup

By Kathryn Reed

My sister, Pam, rolled her eyes and shook her head when I said I was going to try another new soup out on her. The last time I did this I nearly had to order out for pizza.

Things went better this time, but still not perfect. The recipe I'm printing is exactly as I made it, but not how I would make it again. As I wrote in the cookbook – add more spices. I would also let it simmer longer before serving. That probably can be said for most soups.



The flavors and heartiness of the soup called out to me. It seemed like the perfect concoction for the holidays – or any cold, winter night.

“Fields of Greens” by Annie Somerville is one cookbook I use over and over again. Usually, though, I’m turning to the pages I’m familiar with.

Somerville is the chef at Greens Restaurant in San Francisco. It’s my favorite. To be able to order off the entire menu is such a rare opportunity as a vegetarian, and something that never happens in Lake Tahoe.

But I digress.

Below is everything Somerville has to say about her recipe.

Moroccan Lentil Soup

The rich, complex flavor of this soup are satisfying on all levels – they become very full and round as the ginger, the pungent spices, and the vegetables slowly simmer with the lentils. The cilantro adds a fresh, light touch.

1 C lentils, about 6 ounces

6 C cold water

1 T extra virgin olive oil

1 medium-size yellow onion, diced, about 2 cups

Salt

Cayenne pepper

1 small carrot, diced, about $\frac{1}{2}$ cup

1 celery rib, diced, about $\frac{1}{2}$ cup

1 small red or yellow bell pepper, diced, about $\frac{1}{2}$ cup

1 tsp cumin seed, toasted and ground

$\frac{1}{2}$ tsp ground coriander

$\frac{1}{8}$ tsp turmeric

4 garlic cloves, finely chopped

1 T grated fresh ginger

$\frac{1}{2}$ lb. fresh tomatoes, peeled, seeded, and chopped, about 1 cup, or 1 8-ounce can tomatoes with juice, chopped

2T chopped cilantro

Sort and rinse the lentils and place them in a soup pot with

the cold water. Bring to a boil, then reduce the heat and simmer, uncovered, until tender about 20 minutes.

While the lentils are cooking, heat the olive oil in a medium-size sauté pan and add the onions, $\frac{1}{2}$ tsp salt, a few pinches of cayenne. Cook over medium heat until the onions are soft, 7 to 8 minutes, then add the vegetables, another $\frac{1}{2}$ tsp salt, and the spices. Cook for 5 minutes, then stir in the garlic and ginger and cook for another minute or two. Add the vegetable and tomatoes to the lentils and their broth. Cover and cook for 30 minutes, allowing the flavors to blend and deepen. Season to taste with salt and cayenne. Garnish each serving with a sprinkle of cilantro.

Makes 8-9 cups.

Workshop about how to build a hoop house

Northern Nevada farmers have discovered that hoop houses can extend the growing season and increase profitability for their operations. However, little training has been available locally for this innovative method.

In response, Western Nevada College Specialty Crop Institute will offer a low-cost hoop house construction workshop. The daylong event is Jan. 14 from 9am-5pm at 171 Campbell Lane, at the Yerington Paiute Indian Reservation.

Cost is \$35 if registered by Jan. 7 or \$45 if registered after Jan. 7. Lunch is included, and seating is limited.



A hoop house.
Photo/Provided

The workshop will feature classroom instruction and physical construction of a hoop house, using a popular design developed by Utah State University Extension. The USU hoop house, also known as a high tunnel, is constructed primarily of PVC tubing, precut rebar, greenhouse plastic and 2-by-4s.

Featured speaker is Dan Drost, USU Extension vegetable specialist and a leading researcher/educator on high tunnel production. He co-authored the construction manual for the USU hoop house and has built dozens of hoop houses at workshops in Utah and other western states.

The Yerington Paiute Tribe will host the workshop and provide construction materials for the structure, which will be used as a pilot project to show farmers and residents how hoop houses extend the growing season and protect crops. Cooperative Extension Indian Programs will provide resources and follow-up assistance on hoop house production as needed.

For workshop registration or details, contact Ann Louhela at (775) 351.2551 or email louhelaa@wnc.edu.

Weekend of barrel tasting at El Dorado County wineries

Be among the first to discover the nuances of a new vintage by joining El Dorado's award winning winemakers in their cellars for a weekend of barrel tasting.

More than 20 El Dorado wineries offering samples straight from the barrel. The weekend features sales on wine futures, light food pairings, demonstrations and other activities.

Bring out the Barrel is from 11am–5pm, Jan. 29-30.

Details on participating wineries, and a printer-friendly map is at www.ElDoradoWines.org.

A weekend pass is \$20 at www.ElDoradoWines.org in advance; \$25 thereafter. Buy four tickets for the price of three. Sunday only is \$15 advance; \$20 thereafter. Designated drivers are \$5.

K's Kitchen: Portabella fajitas – perfect for a group

By Kathryn Reed

Flexibility in the dinner menu is critical when guests are arriving at various times and the weather is sketchy enough that travel time might be longer than usual.



On occasions like these I like to make portabella fajitas. They are easy to make and don't take much time.

Another nice thing is that not knowing what your guests have eaten earlier in the day, fajitas allow them to eat as much or little as they like by serving themselves.

I first had portabella fajitas at a restaurant in Alexandria, Va., several years ago. Unfortunately, I have not found them on a menu anywhere else.

To make the dish even simpler I "cheat" by using packaged fajita spices. Yes, they would probably taste better if I were to blend the spices myself, but sometimes simplicity wins out.

Another thing that saves time is buying the mushrooms pre-sliced.

The amount of veggies you will need depends on how many you are serving and how big of eaters they are.

I put the toppings (which I label below as optional) in individual bowls on the table. Sometimes I make Spanish rice – which can go in the tortilla or be served on the side.

Portabella Fajitas – Serves 6

2 packages sliced portabellas, cut slices in half

1 large red pepper, cut into 1-inch matchsticks

1 large red onion, cut in rounds or something resembling matchsticks

2 packages fajita seasoning

Tortillas (minimum 2 per person)

Avocado (chopped) or guacamole, optional

Sour cream, optional

Salsa, optional

Cilantro (chopped), optional

Cheese (grated), optional

Sauté onion until opaque, add pepper until just tender. Add mushrooms. Keep stirring. Add seasoning and follow directions on package. (Extra water may be needed to have a sauce.) Cook until mushrooms are hot all the way through.

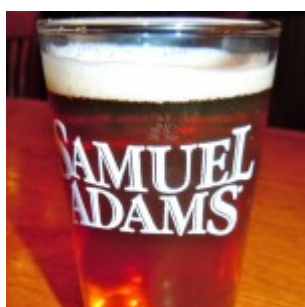
Heat tortillas.

Fill tortillas with fajita mixture and the rest of the fixings.

Sam Adams crafts beer that drinks like Champagne

By Debbie Arrington, Sacramento Bee

Champagne of bottled beers? A new brew fits that description with bubbles to spare.



After two years of research and experimentation, Samuel Adams rolled out its much-anticipated Infinium in time for New Year's celebrations. This is no ordinary ale; according to Sam Adams founder Jim Koch, Infinium is the first new beer style created under German Reinheitsgebot standards in a

century.

Koch and Josef Schradler, managing director of Germany's Weihenstephan Brewery, collaborated on inventing Infinium, which looks and drinks more like champagne than beer.

As a special winter release, it comes packaged in a heavy 750-ml bottle with a wire-caged cork, just like sparkling wine. It's priced like champagne, too, at a suggested \$19.95 per bottle.

Poured into a champagne flute, amber-hued Infinium offers a frothy head and pinpoint bubbles. It smells fruity – a mix of apple, apricot and vanilla – and much more like wine than beer.

Read the whole story

Cow 'car wash' designed to improve food safety

By Robert Rodriguez, Fresno Bee

It might look like a carwash, but that's where the similarities end.

Cargill – one of the world's leading beef processors – has installed a \$4.2 million cow-cleaning system designed to improve food safety at its sprawling 60-acre plant in southwest Fresno.

Every day, cow carcasses are brought into the factory, dangling by their back legs, as large, spinning bristles scrub the animals' hides. At the same time, high-pressure nozzles

blast the carcasses with an anti-microbial solution.

The idea is to remove dirt, debris and feces from the cow before the hide is removed – rather than after. Even some critics of the meat-processing industry say it could help prevent contamination.

“This really is the next generation in this process, and we will keep working to make it better,” said John Niemann, general manager of Cargill’s Fresno plant. “We want to be a leader in food safety because it is critical to our business.”

Read the whole story