

K's Kitchen: Flavorful butternut squash lasagna

By Kathryn Reed

Cooking might be the last thing you want to do after Thanksgiving, but at some point turkey isn't going to sound wonderful no matter how many different ways you reinvent it.

This recipe has a few moving parts, but it's not difficult. What it is is delicious.

It's one of those dishes that is perfect on a cold night. It would be ideal to serve to a group or if you want leftovers. This is one of those rare dishes where I thought it tasted best the night it was cooked instead of the next day.

The Gruyère cheese gives it a rich flavor. It complements the squash perfectly.



Butternut Squash Lasagna

3 C butternut squash, peeled and cubed

1 C plus 1 T vegetable broth, divided

8 garlic cloves, minced

$\frac{1}{2}$ tsp kosher salt

$\frac{1}{4}$ tsp freshly ground black pepper

Dash of ground nutmeg

$\frac{3}{4}$ C Gruyère cheese, shredded

$\frac{3}{4}$ C part-skim mozzarella cheese, shredded

1 T olive oil

1 small onion, chopped

1 pound cremini mushrooms, sliced

1 bunch Swiss chard, trimmed and thinly sliced

3 T pine nuts, toasted and chopped

Cooking spray

6 lasagna noodles, cooked

$\frac{3}{4}$ C part-skim ricotta cheese

$\frac{1}{4}$ C finely grated fresh Parmigiano-Reggiano cheese

Preheat oven to 375 degrees. Cook lasagna noodles according to directions on package.

Combine squash, 1 cup broth, and garlic in a medium saucepan; bring to a boil. Reduce heat to medium; simmer until squash is tender. Remove from heat.

Place squash mixture in a blender or use an emulsion blender. Add salt, pepper, and nutmeg. Blend until smooth. Place blended squash mixture in a bowl; add Gruyère cheese and half of the mozzarella cheese, stirring until cheese melts and mixture is smooth.

Add oil to a large skillet over medium heat. Add onion and mushrooms until browned and liquid evaporates. Add chard and remaining broth. Cover until chard wilts. Place chard mixture

in a bowl. Add pine nuts.

Spread half cup squash sauce in bottom of a broiler-safe 9 by 13-inch glass or ceramic baking dish coated with cooking spray. Arrange 3 noodles over sauce; top with half of chard mixture. Dollop ricotta cheese on top of chard. Spread half of remaining sauce over top. Arrange 3 noodles over sauce. Top with remaining chard mixture; top with remaining sauce. Sprinkle evenly with remaining mozzarella cheese and Parmigiano-Reggiano cheese. Cover with foil. Bake for 35 minutes. Uncover and bake an additional 10 minutes or until bubbly. Broil lasagna until cheese is golden brown. Remove from oven; let stand 10 minutes.

New restaurant for Community Soup Night

Slow Food Lake Tahoe and Tahoe Food Hub are partnering with a new venue for Community Soup Night.

Mellow Fellow in Truckee will be serving up the soup for the second event of the fall series on Nov. 30 from 6-7:30pm.

“Soup Night taps into the very heart of what Mellow Fellow is all about...community,” owner Ryan Eller said in a press release. “We are excited to showcase the talents of Chef Clint Jolly with Great Thyme Catering in Reno, who will be making a satisfying bowl of mulligatawny soup for all to enjoy.”

Soup Night is a family friendly event. All are welcome to attend and no RSVP is required. The cost is \$5 at the door for soup and bread. Kale salad can be added for \$2. A vegetarian soup option will also be available).

Mellow Fellow will be offering drink specials and other food items from its bar menu. Live music will be presented by Truckee's Aaron Oropeza.

Heavenly going all out with Thanksgiving feast

By Kathryn Reed

One ingredient not on most Thanksgiving menus is fresh powder. With Mother Nature looking like she will be delivering an ample serving of the white stuff this week to Lake Tahoe ski resorts, it might be a tough choice for some people – powder day or being in the kitchen all day.

The chefs at Heavenly Mountain Resort have 2,200 pounds of turkey ready to cook on Thursday so you don't have to.

This is the first year the resort will prepare a traditional Thanksgiving dinner for guests. In the past the meal was reserved for employees working that day. (They will still get to eat for free this Thanksgiving.)



Chef Pete Brinckerhoff is responsible for Heavenly's Thanksgiving menu. Photo/Heavenly Mountain Resort

Pete Brinckerhoff is new to the Heavenly team, coming from the Riva Grill-Caliente group in the basin. He will be the one with the chef's hat on at Tamarack Lodge. Claude Goode is the executive chef who roams between the various food outlets on the mountain. Steve Turner is the bigwig overseeing all of the food and beverage operations at the resort.

"We have listened to our guests and were adding more for the restrictive diets," Turner told *Lake Tahoe News*. "On the Thanksgiving holiday we get a great crowd from the Bay Area, scenic riders, different ethnic groups. And they want more vegetarian options."



The Thanksgiving menu at Heavenly:

- Slow roasted Tom turkey
- Mashed potatoes (lacto vegetarian)
- Turkey gravy
- Sautéed green beans (vegan)
- Cornbread stuffing with sun dried cranberries and candied Walnuts (vegan, contains wheat)
- Sweet potato pie with Oreo crust and marshmallow topping (lacto vegetarian)
- Cranberry dressing (vegan)
- Pumpkin Pie with whipped cream (lacto vegetarian)
- Vegetarian option – Heavenly Crispy Thanksgiving Tofu

While burgers are the No. 1 seller no matter the day, the culinary team has done its research to know how much food to have for the holiday. They factor in weather, hotels share occupancy numbers, and historical numbers all play a part in knowing just how much of each side to prepare.

The dinner will be served starting at 10:30am at all of the

lodges that are open. For sure this means Tamarack. East Peak is a possibility. With the resort not opening until Wednesday, not all of the decisions have been finalized – including the cost of this special meal.

Mixologists are coming up with specialty drinks for the occasion – maybe something with Wild Turkey.

“Chef Claud knows one of my pet peeves is to not run out of food,” Turner said.

This means there’s a good chance that those who don’t make it to Heavenly on Thanksgiving could get some leftovers the next day.

“I love the turkey sandwich the next day,” Brinckerhoff told *Lake Tahoe News*. But he added, “The way we are cooking there probably won’t be a lot of leftovers.”

This is because the 25-pound turkeys are being cut apart and cooked separately instead of as a whole bird. This dramatically speeds up the cooking time, while also allowing for food to be coming out of the oven more frequently instead of hours apart. Plus, it’s a way to cut down on having a lot of extras.

“With the Tamarack Lodge we have the latest, greatest equipment. We have chill blasters so it would be like fresh again the next day. It’s not held in a warmer,” Goode said.

At Tamarack there is also a CVap oven. It’s cooking with steam, which helps food stay moister.

East Peak’s kitchen isn’t conducive to preparing the whole Thanksgiving meal so it will be transported there from Tamarack.

Brinckerhoff has been tasked with coming up with the menu – which is fairly traditional.

“One of the unique sides I’ve done in the past is a family recipe. My grandmother used to make a sweet potato casserole with marshmallows on top. It was one of my favorites,” Brinckerhoff said. “I did a twist on that by putting in an Oreo crust, then the sweet potato, and marshmallow on top.”

Brinckerhoff is sharing the recipe with *Lake Tahoe News* readers:

Brinckerhoff Family’s Sweet Potato Pie

5 pounds sweet potatoes

1 pound butter

3 C Oreo crumbles

1 bag marshmallows

1 tsp cinnamon

$\frac{1}{2}$ tsp nutmeg

The crust

Soften a quarter pound of the butter to 80 degrees. Place the butter and cookie crumbs in a mixing bowl and mix until the cookie crumbs holds together when compressed.

Place the cookie crust evenly in the bottom of a 9 x 9 baking dish. Make sure the crust is spread evenly.

Sweet Potato Pie

Peel the sweet potatoes and cut them into large chunks. Place the sweet potatoes in a large pot of water. Put the pot over high heat and cook until soft.

Remove the potatoes from the water and place in a large mixing bowl. Add the cinnamon, nutmeg and the rest of the butter. Mash the sweet potatoes until smooth, do not over whip.

Place the mashed sweet potatoes on top of the cookie crust. Spread the potato evenly, then top with the marshmallows

Bake the sweet potato pie until the marshmallows are golden brown.

Drink whiskey with your Thanksgiving turkey

By Jenn Harris, Los Angeles Times

A nice Pinot Noir, or even a Beaujolais Blanc Chardonnay may seem like the obvious, civilized options to serve for Thanksgiving dinner – and they are. But something from the whiskey family may work even better at cutting through the holiday meal's richness, and at soothing uncomfortable family exchanges across the table. Because if we're being honest, most everything is made better by bourbon, including turkey and yes, even politics.

The smoke, spice and even vanilla found in many bourbons offers a nice balance to all that roasted poultry, hearty root vegetables and those repeating slices of pie.

And a drink with some bite, such as a bourbon with heavy spice notes, can offer some relief from the often monotonous textures of stuffing, mashed potatoes and green bean casserole.

Read the whole story

Study: Biodynamic, organic vineyards produce better wine

By Thomas Ulrich, Sierra

For decades, vineyard managers and wine aficionados have wondered whether growing organic and biodynamic grapes is worth the trouble. Last summer, the *Journal of Wine Economics* may have unveiled the answer via a report from researchers out of UCLA's Institute of the Environment and Sustainability. For the study, environmental economists evaluated the results of 74,148 wines reviewed by Wine Spectator, Wine Advocate, or Wine Enthusiast, accounting for the variation in region, vintage, and variety. They discovered that wine made from biodynamic and organic grapes on average scored four points higher on a 100-point scale than wine made from conventionally grown grapes.

"We found that organic or biodynamic farming made a significant difference in wine quality," says lead author Magali Delmas, an environmental economist and professor at the UCLA Anderson School of Management.

Dozens of eco-certified California vineyards are embracing dry, no-till, and biodynamic farming. Vignerons cultivate the land organically, tend farm animals across a varied landscape, blend their own compost, mix and apply their own soil preparations, and harvest grapes according to a celestial calendar. To find out exactly how regenerative vineyard practices are enhancing the quality of grapes, enriching the soil, and reducing greenhouse gas emissions, I ventured onto two such leading vignerons' vineyards—one of whom farms biodynamically and the other organically.

K's Kitchen: No fuss black bean chili

By Kathryn Reed

My house seems to smell better as the days and nights get cooler. This is because I'm more apt to be making comfort foods that linger in the oven or cook all day in the crockpot.

There is something wonderful about throwing ingredients together in the crockpot, letting them simmer and then having a meal ready in the evening. When I'm at home during this ritual I love the intensity of the aroma as it gets stronger. If I've been out all day, to come home to a house that smells like someone has been cooking all day is delightful.

This recipe is super easy – as are most crockpot concoctions.

The flavors will meld as the day goes on, so don't adjust the seasonings right away.

Using the yogurt instead of sour cream keeps it healthier. None of the toppings is necessary, but they do make the bowl look prettier.

This can easily be made on the stove. Just use a little oil to sauté the vegetables before adding the other ingredients.



Black Bean Crockpot Chili

1 medium onion, diced

1 medium red bell pepper, diced

6 garlic cloves, minced

2 T tomato paste

1 T chile powder

2 tsp ground cumin

1 tsp dried oregano

$\frac{1}{2}$ tsp cayenne

Kosher salt

Pepper

1 15-ounce can crushed tomatoes

3 15-ounce cans black beans, drained

1 T honey

1 tsp finely grated orange zest, plus 2 T fresh orange juice

Cilantro leaves, optional

Greek yogurt, optional

Cheese, optional

Put all the ingredients except the cilantro, yogurt and cheese into the crockpot. Let cook all day on low.

Add a dollop of yogurt and few pinches of cilantro and cheese to each serving, or let guests add their own.

West Shore Café creating a wine mecca



Wine service at West Shore Cafe in Homewood is under the direction of two sommeliers. Photos/Kathryn Reed

By Kathryn Reed

HOMewood – It's one thing for a restaurant to have an exceptional wine list, it's quite another to employ two sommeliers – especially in Lake Tahoe.

West Shore Café earned the 2016 Award of Excellence from Wine Spectator. This is given to restaurants that have at least 90 wines to choose from, as well as a thematic match to the menu in terms of price and style.

While other Tahoe restaurants earned this award, what distinguishes the Homewood eatery is that it is the only one in the basin to have two level two sommeliers. Most don't even have one sommelier.



West Shore Café facts:

- It will reopen Nov. 23
- Every season there is a new menu
- In winter it is open for dinner Friday-Monday
- Lunch is served Saturday-Sunday
- It has been owned by JMA, the owners of Homewood Ski Resort, since 2010
- Seats 150
- Located in Homewood on the other

side of Highway 89 from the ski resort.

The overly simplistic definition of a sommelier is someone who is an expert in wine and is able to assist diners with which wine to pair with their meal. There are four sommelier classifications, with Lisa Small and Rob Dubben at West Shore both at level two.

Together Small and Dubben create the wine list.

“When it comes to our list at West Shore Café, we look at a number of things. First, we look at what our competitors have and how it is selling. Second, we think about the balance of the list, how to make it functional but also have the right choices so guests can be happy with their selection,” Dubben told *Lake Tahoe News*. “Beyond that, we really try to look at classic styles from all regions of the world. I often ask myself questions like, what is interesting about this wine? What can I find that is off the beaten path that has great value and quality? What is something I know our clients will love?”

Looking at environmental practices is another component, as in organic farming. Last summer the menu was revamped to tell guests if a winery is certified organic, biodynamic or uses green practices.



Special chef-sommelier pairing:

Appetizer: King crab with a pepper crusted orange relish

Wine: Leeuwin Estate, Dry Riesling, Margaret River, Australia

Salad: Strawberry salad with a white balsamic dressing and arugula

Wine: Chateau Gassier, "Epritgassier", Rose, Provence, France

Entrée: Red wine braised short ribs with salted roasted potatoes

Wine: Robert Craig "Affinity", Cabernet Sauvignon, Napa Valley

Dessert: Mascarpone crusted cheese cake with chocolate dipped Madeline

Wine: Saracco, Moscato d'Asti, Piedmont, Italy.

To make the list more approachable it highlights flavor profiles. A Chardonnay might indicate if it has a big, buttery taste or is more oaky.

The menu also balances classic favorites with small case productions.

It's not all about the sommeliers' favorites, but what guests want and what will sell.

The sommeliers also work closely with Chef Ben Deinken so they have an understanding of what will be coming out of the kitchen. Based on a sampling of food and wines prepared for *Lake Tahoe News*, the trio is clearly in sync.

The guidance of a sommelier will often lead people to trying wines they have not heard of, but could be similar to what they are used to. The wine experts ask diners what they regularly drink, what they like in a wine – that's more important than what they are ordering.

"I'm less of traditionalist in finding the right wine for the right food. It's what they like," Small told *Lake Tahoe News*.

Dubben said, "When guests ask for your opinion this can open up dialogue about which direction they want to go. Generally, I follow up in asking if they are feeling adventurous or if they are interested in trying something that they cannot get everywhere. Reading the guest isn't always easy, but another way I sometimes go about it is to just bring up a wine that I love and tell the story about the wine, winemakers and the location of the winery. It paints a picture for the guest about what they are about to enjoy and it is my favorite way to talk about wine."



West Shore Cafe Sommeliers Lisa Small and Rob Dubben

Becoming a sommelier is no easy task. Tests are rigorous, involve blind tastings, written exams, knowing varietals, where in the world the wine came from and more complexities.

A few years ago at a different restaurant Small was called out by a diner for her lack of wine knowledge. That got her interested in learning, and now making a career out of her expertise.

Dubben took a bit more traditional route, starting in the restaurant business at age 14. Eventually he attended the International Culinary Center in Campbell where he spent three months studying under five master sommeliers.

Dubben is studying to take the exam for the next level, called advanced. The top level is master sommelier.

Doubts about bounty of genetically modified crops

By Danny Hakim, *New York Times*

LONDON – The controversy over genetically modified crops has long focused on largely unsubstantiated fears that they are unsafe to eat.

But an extensive examination by the *New York Times* indicates that the debate has missed a more basic problem – genetic modification in the United States and Canada has not accelerated increases in crop yields or led to an overall reduction in the use of chemical pesticides.

The promise of genetic modification was twofold: By making crops immune to the effects of weedkillers and inherently resistant to many pests, they would grow so robustly that they would become indispensable to feeding the world's growing population, while also requiring fewer applications of sprayed pesticides.

Read the whole story

K's Kitchen: Caesar salad – only better

By Kathryn Reed

Even though Caesar salad is one of my favorites, so often restaurants provide more dressing than greens. No wonder people order dressing on the side.

This recipe below is not a traditional Caesar dressing, but it tastes like it. It doesn't have raw eggs or anchovies.

I used Veganaise instead of mayonnaise. They do the same thing.

It would also be fine not to fry the chickpeas. Doing so added a little different flavor and texture that I welcomed.

These days it's possible to buy kale in a variety of forms. I bought a bag that was chopped already. I just took off some of the larger stems.

It would be easy to add other things to this salad. I had some raisins I wanted to get rid of, so I threw those in the mix. Nuts would work too. So, really, what makes this a Caesar is that the dressing is Caesar-ish.



Untraditional Caesar Salad

Canola oil, for frying

1 15 ounce can chickpeas, drained

Salt

Pepper

$\frac{1}{2}$ C Veganaise

2 T fresh lemon juice

2 tsp Dijon mustard

4 garlic cloves, finely grated

$\frac{1}{4}$ C shredded Parmesan, plus more for serving

10 ounces curly kale, stemmed

Craisins, optional

Lightly coat frying pan with canola oil. Add the chickpeas and fry over moderately high heat. Stir. Remove after browned and crisp. Using a slotted spoon, transfer the chickpeas to paper towels. Season with salt and pepper.

In a bowl, whisk the Veganaise, lemon juice, mustard, garlic and $\frac{1}{4}$ cup of cheese. Add the kale and toss. Add chickpea, toss. Add remaining cheese or allow people to add it at the table.

Community soup nights returning to Truckee

Slow Food Lake Tahoe and Tahoe Food Hub's sixth series of Community Soup Nights will be Nov. 16 and Nov. 30, 6-7:30pm.

The restaurants donates their space and time for community building and helping further a more sustainable food community.

The first one is at Red Truck Cafe at the Truckee Tahoe Airport and the second is at Mellow Fellow in downtown Truckee.

Everyone is welcome. The cost is \$5 at the door for soup and

bread. A vegetarian option will be available. Other food and drink will be available for purchase from the host restaurant.

Slow Food Lake Tahoe and Tahoe Food Hub work with local organizations like Project Mana and the Family Resource Center to provide their customers with tokens so they too may participate.