Does eating at night make you fat?

By Alex Johnstone and Peter Morgan, The Conversation

Some media reports say that eating at night makes you gain weight, others say that it has no effect on body weight. So who is right?

First, it’s important to remember that a gain in body weight only occurs when there is a change in calories consumed or calories burned. A calorie is a calorie, but there are conditions where food calories could influence your tendency to gain weight or lose it. For example, it is known that different foods have a different ability to make you feel full, which can influence your food choices later in the day and ultimately influence your total calorie intake.

If you feel full, you are less likely to snack. High protein meals for breakfast have been shown to reduce food cravings and help reduce snacking later in the day. A high protein meal kick-starts a release of dopamine, a neurotransmitter that stimulates feelings of reward. The reward response is an important part of eating because it helps to regulate how much food you eat.

Also, when you eat may influence your drive to be physically active. If you have a large dinner, you might feel weighed down and less motivated to be active, so your chances of burning calories are reduced.

Eating late in the evening is linked to weight gain and obesity, whereas research shows that eating breakfast is linked to a lower risk of obesity. This supports the theory that it’s better to eat your main meal earlier rather than later. But is not true for all types of breakfast. In one study, people who ate meat or eggs for breakfast (or both)

were significantly more likely to have a higher body mass index than people who ate cereal or bread for breakfast. Not all breakfasts are created equal.

Different cultures have different approaches to patterns of eating, for example in Spain, a larger midday meal is common, followed by an afternoon siesta and evening tapas (small plates of food). Research by the University of Murcia in Spain shows that overweight women who consumed more at lunchtime lost more weight than those who consumed a larger evening meal, highlighting that changes in meal timing can influence obesity and success of weight loss therapy.

Is breakfast a coffee on the go or a sit down full English – or do you skip it altogether? If you don't usually eat breakfast, just adding it in won't necessarily lead to spontaneous weight loss. Research in obese adults, shows that some people even gain weight when they do this. We need more research to understand whether breakfasts of specific composition (high fibre or high protein) could improve weight management, and to understand the mechanisms that would best allow this.

For the moment, the idea that eating breakfast is associated with a lower risk of obesity and that eating late is linked with obesity is not conclusive as the evidence comes from observational studies, which can't show cause and effect. So, for breakfast eaters, it is possible that lifestyle factors that may not have been accounted for in these studies, such as physical activity or smoking status, could explain the results. We need more evidence before we can support or reject the idea that timing of eating is important for body weight and health.

Lark or owl?

So how can we assess these claims about when to eat? Actually, the truth is that one diet message does not fit all people.

Some people will be able to control body weight better with a big breakfast and some with a large evening meal. You can assess your own biological bias.

Are you an owl or a lark? Knowing your own tendency to feel alert and energetic – your "chronotype" – can help you plan your eating, work and sleep patterns. There are online quizzes to find out if you an early bird or night owl.

As we understand this interaction of time of day and metabolism better, we will be able to give more accurate dietary advice to the individual that is not only related to nutritional composition, but also time of eating. But first, we need more chrono-nutrition research (time of eating linked to circadian rythm) to fill in some of the gaps in our knowledge.

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Climate change affecting nutritional value of food

By Kristie Ebi, The Conversation

Rice is the primary food source for more than 3 billion people around the world. Many are unable to afford a diverse and nutritious diet that includes complete protein, grains, fruits and vegetables. They rely heavily on more affordable cereal crops, including rice, for most of their calories.

My research focuses on health risks associated with climate

variability and change. In a recently published study, I worked with scientists from China, Japan, Australia and the United States to assess how the rising carbon dioxide concentrations that are fueling climate change could alter the nutritional value of rice. We conducted field studies in Asia for multiple genetically diverse rice lines, analyzing how rising concentrations of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere altered levels of protein, micronutrients and B vitamins.

Our data showed for the first time that rice grown at the concentrations of atmospheric carbon dioxide scientists expect the world to reach by 2100 has lower levels of four key B vitamins. These findings also support research from other field studies showing rice grown under such conditions contains less protein, iron and zinc, which are important in fetal and early child development. These changes could have a disproportionate impact on maternal and child health in the poorest rice-dependent countries, including Bangladesh and Cambodia.

Carbon dioxide and plant growth

Plants obtain the carbon they need to grow primarily from carbon dioxide in the atmosphere, and draw other required nutrients from the soil. Human activities – mainly fossil fuel combustion and deforestation – raised atmospheric CO2 concentrations from about 280 parts per million during pre-industrial times to 410 parts per million today. If global emission rates continue on their current path, atmospheric CO2 concentrations could reach over 1,200 parts per million by 2100 (including methane and other greenhouse gas emissions).

Higher concentrations of CO2 are generally acknowledged to stimulate plant photosynthesis and growth. This effect could make the cereal crops that remain the world’s most important sources of food, such as rice, wheat and corn, more productive, although recent research suggests that predicting impacts on plant growth is complex.

Concentrations of minerals critical for human health, particularly iron and zinc, do not change in unison with CO_2 concentrations. Current understanding of plant physiology suggests that major cereal crops – particularly rice and wheat – respond to higher CO_2 concentrations by synthesizing more carbohydrates (starches and sugars) and less protein, and by reducing the quantity of minerals in their grains.

The importance of micronutrients

Worldwide, approximately 815 million people worldwide are food-insecure, meaning that they do not have reliable access to sufficient quantities of safe, nutritious and affordable food. Even more people – approximately 2 billion – have deficiencies of important micronutrients such as iron, iodine and zinc.

Insufficient dietary iron can lead to iron deficiency anemia, a condition in which there are too few red blood cells in the body to carry oxygen. This is the most common type of anemia. It can cause fatigue, shortness of breath or chest pain, and can lead to serious complications, such as heart failure and developmental delays in children.

Zinc deficiencies are characterized by loss of appetite and diminished sense of smell, impaired wound healing, and weakened immune function. Zinc also supports growth and development, so sufficient dietary intake is important for pregnant women and growing children.

Higher carbon concentrations in plants reduce nitrogen amounts in plant tissue, which is critical for the formation of B vitamins. Different B vitamins are required for key functions in the body, such as regulating the nervous system, turning food into energy and fighting infections. Folate, a B vitamin, reduces the risk of birth defects when consumed by pregnant women.

Significant nutrition losses

We carried out our field studies in China and Japan, where we grew different strains of rice outdoors. To simulate higher atmospheric CO2 concentrations, we used Free-Air CO2 Enrichment, which blows CO2 over fields to maintain concentrations that are expected later in the century. Control fields experience similar conditions except for the higher CO2 concentrations.

On average, the rice that we grew in air with elevated CO2 concentrations contained 17 percent less vitamin B1 (thiamine) than rice grown under current CO2 concentrations; 17 percent less vitamin B2 (riboflavin); 13 percent less vitamin B5 (pantothenic acid); and 30 percent less vitamin B9 (folate). Our study is the first to identify that concentrations of B vitamins in rice are reduced with higher CO2.

We also found average reductions of 10 percent in protein, 8 percent in iron and 5 percent in zinc. We found no change in levels of vitamin B6 or calcium. The only increase we found was in vitamin E levels for most strains.

Worsening micronutrient deficiencies

At present, about 600 million people – mostly in Southeast Asia – get more than half of their daily calories and protein directly from rice. If nothing is done, the declines we found would likely worsen the overall burden of undernutrition. They also could affect early childhood development through impacts that include worsened effects from diarrheal disease and malaria.

The potential health risks associated with CO2-induced nutritional deficits are directly correlated to the lowest overall gross domestic product per capita. This suggests that such changes would have serious potential consequences for countries already struggling with poverty and undernutrition. Few people would associate fossil fuel combustion and deforestation with the nutritional content of rice, but our

research clearly shows one way in which emitting fossil fuels could worsen world hunger challenges.

How could climate change affect other key plants?

Unfortunately, today there is no entity at the federal, state or business level that provides long-term funding to evaluate how rising CO2 levels could affect plant chemistry and nutritional quality. But CO2-induced changes have significant implications, ranging from medicinal plants to nutrition, food safety and food allergies. Given the potential impacts, which may already be occurring, there is a clear and urgent need to invest in this research.

It is also critical to identify options for avoiding or lessening these risks, from traditional plant breeding to genetic modification to supplements. Rising CO2 concentrations are driving climate change. What role these emissions will play in altering all aspects of plant biology, including the nutritional quality of the crops that we use for food, feed, fiber and fuel, remains to be determined.

Kristie Ebi is a professor of global health and environmental and occupational health sciences, University of Washington.

Ketchup is more than a condiment

By Amy Bentley

Ketchup is arguably the United States' most ubiquitous condiment. Ninety-seven percent of Americans have a ketchup bottle in the fridge, usually Heinz, and we buy about 10

billion ounces of the red stuff annually—almost three bottles per person per year. We purportedly spend more money on salsa, but in terms of sheer volume ketchup comes out on top.

Bright red in color, tangy, sweet, salty, and replete with a "meaty," tomato-ey umami hit, ketchup provides accents of color and flavoring, as well as a smell and texture that is familiar and comforting. It's the perfect complement to the American diet: contrasting with salty and fatty flavors while enhancing the sweet notes in our most popular foods. And while we think of it as "merely" a condiment on what we're really eating, it has helped to revolutionize the way food is grown, processed, and regulated.

We slather ketchup on French fries, hamburgers, and hot dogs (though ketchup with the latter is, for many, anathema). We pour it on eggs, mac and cheese, breaded and fried clam strips, and chicken fingers. We use it as an ingredient in sauces and casseroles. Back in the 1980s, politicians and activists even debated its questionable status as a vegetable in school lunches, though in later decades ketchup's distant cousin salsa made the cut, as did tomato sauce on pizza.

Ketchup is an exemplar of New World-style industrialized food, its distinctive sweet-and-tangy flavor borne of the rigors of mass production. Quintessentially American, ketchup is seamlessly standardized and mass-produced—qualities, along with cleanliness and low cost, that Americans have traditionally valued in their food, often at the expense of taste. Shelf stability, in essence, created what we call "American flavor."

Ketchup was not invented in the United States. It began as a fermented fish sauce—sans tomatoes—in early China. British sailors bought the sauce, called *ke-tsiap* or *ke-tchup* by 17th-century Chinese and Indonesian traders, to provide relief from the dry and mundane hardtack and salt pork they ate aboard ship. Over the next couple of centuries, ketchup spread

throughout the British Empire, traveling around the world with the navy. When they returned home to England, sailors and others sought to reproduce ketchup to liven up standard, stodgy meat-and-potato dishes or stewed fish, or to add flavor to gravies and broths. Recipe writers and small manufacturers experimented to recreate the complex flavors of the sauce, substituting nuts, mushrooms, or shallots for the fish. Most cookbooks of the early 19th century included a few recipes for various kinds of ketchup.

But ketchup became truly American once it was wed with the tomato and bottled industrially. While an early ketchup recipe with tomatoes appeared in Britain in 1817, calling for "a gallon of fine, red, and full ripe tomatas [sic]," and also anchovies, shallots, salt, and a variety of spices, it was Americans who really invented tomato ketchup.

The American tomato, with its origins in what is now Mexico and South America, was introduced to Europeans and North Americans by the Spanish conquistadors, and by the 19th century had become a ubiquitous garden plant. (Earlier it had been considered unhealthy and even poisonous.) Tomatoes became the base of many a sauce or stew, and before long were bottled as concentrated, fermented ketchups, preserved with vinegar and spices much the same way housewives would make a mushroom ketchup.

But as historian Andrew Smith notes, tomato ketchup became wildly popular, its use spreading rapidly to all regions of the United States. American meals during the 19th century, much like the British diet of the time, consisted of stews, soups, rough cuts of meat, vegetables and fruits when in season, and bread, bread, and more bread. Tomato ketchup's flavor and color literally spiced up some rather monotonous protein and grain combinations.

U.S. manufacturers began mass-producing tomato ketchup in the late 19th century—and that processing shaped the condiment's

particular flavor profile. Early bottled ketchups fermented or spoiled relatively quickly, but industrial producers found that adding extra vinegar helped preserve them. Over time, they added more and more vinegar, and then they started adding sugar, too, to balance the vinegar's sourness. Ketchup became more sweet and more sour than it originally had been. Americans became acclimated to this particular flavor profile of commercial ketchup—which was different from the ketchups produced by home cooks. It was thicker in texture, made with more sugar, and had a brighter, more pleasing red color (thanks to additives and preserving methods) than homemade. Industrialized ketchup began influencing other American foods. As U.S. cities grew, so did the number of diners, hamburger joints, and chicken shacks—purveyors of often greasy meals that paired very well with tomato ketchup.

Food scientists at Pittsburgh-based H.J. Heinz Company eventually hit upon the perfect balance of sweet, salty, sour, and umami, creating a precisely calibrated product that was difficult for others to replicate—a "platonic ideal of ketchup," as writer Malcolm Gladwell has noted. The Heinz Company displayed its wares at international expositions, spreading the gospel of ketchup throughout North America, the British Isles, and beyond.

On the strength of its just-right recipe, as well as its manufacturing reach and global aspirations, Heinz quickly became the leading American ketchup producer, selling 5 million bottles per year by the early 1900s.

In addition to its industrial recipes, Heinz also was instrumental in developing, perfecting, and promoting sanitary production methods, not only for its ketchup but for the dozens of products it manufactured. The company helped standardize bottle and can sterilization, insisted that workers abide by strict rules of cleanliness, and even pushed for sanitary food processing legislation. Other big food processors followed Heinz's lead. The company made ketchup,

and then ketchup influenced the way everything else was processed.

It might not be too far-fetched to argue that later in the century, after altering the way American food tasted and was regulated, ketchup also helped change the way it was grown. Innovations in tomato breeding and mechanical harvester technologies, driven in part by demand for the condiment, helped define modern industrial agriculture. In the 1960s UC Davis scientists developed a mechanical tomato harvester. Around the same time, plant geneticists perfected a tomato with a thick skin and round shape that could withstand machine harvesting and truck transport. This new tomato was arguably short on taste, but the perfect storm of breeding and harvesting technology from which it emerged allowed for a steady supply of tomatoes that kept bottlers and canners in business. Nearly all of the tomatoes produced for sauces and ketchup are products of this moment—as are many other fruits and vegetables produced in the U.S.

Early on, ketchup functioned as a great equalizer, with a "special and unprecedented ability to provide something for everyone." Tomato ketchup became "entrenched as the primary and most popular of condimental sauces, its appeal to Americans deep and widespread," wrote food historian Elizabeth Rozin, who called it the "Esperanto of cuisine." Ketchup functioned as a class leveler. Regardless of income or education, Americans could drop into a roadside diner or barbeque joint. Affordable to most, a burger and fries spiked with ketchup was a democratic, delicious lowest common denominator meal. Today ketchup's appeal is in part because it embodies principles that Americans prize including consistency, value, and cleanliness. More over ketchup's use, noted Rozin, was shaped by foods and meals that are perceived as "American" in their preparation and presentation: think hamburgers and fries, "ball park" foods, fast food in general.

The rest of the world, for better or worse, regards ketchup as

emblematic of U.S. cuisine, too—and the condiment continues to shape food everywhere it goes. In Japan, people love a cuisine known as yoshoku, which they also sometimes call “Western Food.” Yoshoku restaurants use a lot of ketchup. They serve a dish called naporitan, made of cooked spaghetti that is rinsed in cold water, then stir-fried with vegetables in ketchup. Omu rice is an omelet lying over a mound of ketchup-flavored rice. The hambaagu is a Japanese version of a hamburger patty, usually served bunless. Swedes love “Depression spaghetti”—ketchup poured over pasta as a sauce, as many Americans did during the 1930s and probably still do.

Today we’re seeing the growth of artisanal ketchups that may eventually erode some of Heinz’s market share, part of the larger trend toward specialized products that feature organic ingredients, fewer artificial additives, or lower sugar levels. But industrial ketchup, with its bright red color, its vinegary and sweet flavor, and its thick texture that pairs perfectly with starches and proteins, will remain a beloved and ubiquitous condiment, influencing American eating—and increasingly, food and cooking in the rest of the world, too.

Amy Bentley teaches food history at New York University. She’s the author of “Inventing Baby Food: Taste, Health and the Industrialization of the American Diet.”

Why everyone loves macaroni and cheese

By Gordon Edgar

Being a judge at a macaroni and cheese competition in San Francisco taught me a lot about American food. The competitors

were mostly chefs, and the audience—the online tickets sold out in minutes—was soaking up the chance to be at a “Top Chef” kind of event, but more urban and cool. The judges included a food writer, an award-winning grilled-cheese-maker, and me, a cheesemonger.

We awarded the win to a chef who made mac and cheese with an aged Vermont cheddar. The audience, however, chose another contestant. When he arrived at the winner’s circle, he made a stunning announcement: His main ingredient was Velveeta.

Amazement! Shock! Betrayal! The audience clutched their ironic canned beer but didn’t quite know how to react. Was it a hoax? A working-class prank against elitism in food? Was this contest somehow rigged by Kraft? In the end it turned out to just be a financial decision by the chef: In great American tradition, he bought the cheapest protein possible.

To understand the evolution of macaroni and cheese is to realize that pursuit of the “cheapest protein possible” has been a longstanding quest of the American food system. At times, cheese itself has shared a similar trajectory. Cheesemaking, which began 10,000 years ago, was originally about survival for a farm family or community: taking a very perishable protein (milk) and transforming it into something less perishable (cheese) so that there would be something to eat at a later date. Many of us today think of cheese in the context of tradition, flavor, or saving family farms, but a basic goal—whether a producer is making farm-made cheddar or concocting the cheeseless dairy product Velveeta—has always been getting as much edible food from a gallon of milk as possible. Cheesemakers weren’t always successful at this. Cheese is vulnerable to mold, rot, and maggots, not to mention pitfalls like excess salt. Many generations of cheesemakers have tossed countless bad batches, which meant feeding a lot of precious protein to their farm animals instead of their families.

The first cheese factory in the U.S. was built in 1851, making cheddar one of the first foods affected by the Industrial Revolution. Before that, all cheese made in the United States was made on a farm, usually by the farm wife or—on prosperous farms—a cheese maid or an enslaved woman. As foods industrialize, they often go from being made by women to being made by men, and so it was with cheese: Women were mostly absent from the make rooms of these new cheese factories, and didn't return to cheesemaking until the artisanal cheese revolution of the past few decades.

Processed cheese, which was invented 107 years ago, is basically cheese that is emulsified and cooked, rendering it much less perishable (but also no longer a "living food" because, unlike natural cheese, processed cheese's flavor will no longer alter with age). The advent of processed cheese has led over the years to innovations like Kraft Singles, Easy Cheese, powdered "sauce" for boxed mac and cheese, and Velveeta—a type of processed cheese when it was invented in 1918, and now a dairy-based processed food, with 22 ingredients, that is no longer regulated as a cheese.

Processing cheese was a good way to make food for soldiers at war, to turn safe but not-as-good-as-standard cheese into edible food, and to save producers when there was a glut in the market and too much cheese to sell. It was also a good way to get nutrients to people who didn't have refrigeration. Ironically, perhaps, it was the culmination of the age-old cheesemakers' goal: producing as much edible food as possible from the original protein.

Although processed cheese was invented in Switzerland, big American cheese producers—as part of our factory-scale, get-big-or-get-out philosophy of food production—bought into processed cheese so heavily that the very definition of "American cheese" has come to be a processed product. Many Americans may never have had a macaroni and cheese made with real cheese, and many who grew up on mac and cheese may never

have had a version that wasn't made with a powdered mix. While the most popular brand of boxed mac only just recently quietly removed artificial colors and preservatives from their "cheese sauce," it seems, from a traditional roux-making perspective, still far removed from the original recipe.

Macaroni and cheese has been served as long as there has been a United States of America, but in a 20th-century economy driven by convenience packaging and industrialization, it was elevated to an ideal American food: Pasta and processed cheese are very cheap to make and easy to ship and store, and they certainly fill up a belly. It's no wonder a hot gooey Velveeta mac and cheese tastes like a winner to so many Americans, even those attending a fancy contest in San Francisco.

As with many foods, white culture and African-American culture diverge on the make and use of macaroni and cheese. Food historian Adrian Miller points out that while Thomas Jefferson often gets credit for popularizing macaroni and cheese in the United States, it was of course his enslaved black chef James Hemmings who learned to cook it. In the Antebellum South, mac and cheese was a weekend and celebration food. Many African Americans have continued this tradition to this day.

I have a collection of quotes I post above my computer for writing inspiration and as a reminder to examine my own historical assumptions. One is from Miller from the Charlotte Observer on Nov. 15, 2017: "They [older black people interviewed by Miller for his book] were convinced mac & cheese was something white people stole from us. I thought they were kidding, but they were like, 'No, it's like rock 'n' roll—we started that.' They were serious."

This is the conundrum and beauty of mac and cheese. It is one person's survival food, another person's staple main course, and yet another person's food of culture and celebration. Divided, as America is, along class and race lines, when you bring up mac and cheese you have to be careful or you may be

talking about a different mac and cheese altogether.

The one thing that does seem to unify people who eat macaroni and cheese is that everyone views it as “comfort food”: Whichever form of mac and cheese people grew up with, it provides them with something visceral that they want to recreate as adults. In my experience selling food, I’ve seen many folks who eschew one of the major components of the dish, due to allergies or politics, yet expend great effort trying to find or create gluten-free or vegan simulacra. It’s just that important to them.

I truly grasped how macaroni and cheese works as comfort food while visiting cheesemakers in Maine and Vermont in 2006 to meet some of the artisans whose food I sold and to learn more about the cheeses of the Northeast. That year was an amazing time for cheese. Decades of work by back-to-the-landers and multigenerational cheesemakers were finally coming to fruition and an appreciation for the beauty of inefficiency had provided an opportunity for American cheesemakers to start creating new cheeses, and to reinvigorate old-fashioned ones that had never industrialized or had gone extinct in this country altogether.

At that time, all of this cheesy activity was new, and because of that, these artisan cheesemakers often welcomed us with spare beds and home-cooked meals.

They gave us so much cheese that we had to put out the word to friends and friends of friends, who met up with us in convenient parking lots as we drove through small-town New England. We handed them cheeses out of our rental car trunk—brainy-looking goat cheeses, clothbound cheddar, oozy rice-flour-rinded Teleme, pungent blues. That many of these cheeses were just a few years away from being recognized as some of the best in America made it an especially sweet contribution to our extended community. To passersby, it must have seemed like the oddest smelling drug deal ever.

Unfortunately, one of the cheese-making couples we had been looking forward to visiting had begun breaking up by the time we arrived. As we pulled up, one half of the couple had moved out temporarily, while the other half and the kids were packing their things to move out permanently. We stayed in that house to be supportive, surrounded by all the emotions that go along with a breakup, especially a sudden one: anger, blame, despair, doubting of self-worth, fear of the unknown … all of 'em.

I don't remember whose idea it was to cook a big dinner, but it gave us something to do during the time we thought we'd be talking cheese and frolicking with the farm animals. What does one cook as an antidote to despair? Especially when one is staying at a farmstead dairy and loaded down with the best cheese the Northeast has to offer? Mac and cheese, of course.

Someone was dispatched to raid the farmstand shop. I brought out our collection of cheese from the farms we had visited. If we had actually paid retail, our meal might have been the most expensive per-serving mac and cheese in history.

But that wasn't why it was so great.

Our mac and cheese elevated us emotionally because it brought everyone together for the common tasks. There was cheese grating, roux making, onion chopping, vegetable prepping, side dish making. Soon, while despair was not entirely gone, it wasn't quite as thick. The rehashed jokes of shared cooking inevitably came. The anticipation of something-that-was-not-misery came. When the meal was prepared, we all sat down to eat—and drink—and create the possibility of new community in the very location where the past configuration had been destroyed. That is what comfort food does.

Gordon Edgar has been a cheesemonger since 1994 and eaten macaroni and cheese his whole life. Edgar's latest book is "Cheddar: A Journey to the Heart of America's Most Iconic

Cheese.”

Scientists trying to save beer from climate change

By AC Shilton, Outside
A warmer, drier future is coming for our hops. Luckily, these folks have developed a nice little workaround, thanks to a gene-editing tool that could help create a hop-free beer.

This shouldn’t come as a surprise, but climate change is going to mess with some of our most beloved foods. Prolonged drought, hotter temperatures, and stronger storms will deliver punch after punch to farmers around the globe. In fact, we’re already seeing the effects on some crops: a 2011 Stanford study found that corn yields around the world were down about 5 percent because of hotter temperatures fueled by climate change.

Before you shrug and say, “I can live without corn,” know this: Hops are one of the crops most likely to be affected.

Read the whole story

Farmers’ market vouchers

available for seniors

The El Dorado County Area Agency on Aging has a limited supply of senior farmers' market check booklets available for qualified El Dorado County seniors.

Each eligible senior will receive one booklet that includes five checks redeemable for $4 each to be used at certified farmers' markets for the purchase of fresh, unprepared, locally grown fruits, vegetables, cut herbs and raw unprocessed honey.

Distribution of the check booklets will take place as follows:

- July 11, from 8am-noon at the Burke's Junction Farmers' Market, Coach Lane at Strolling Hills Road, located in Cameron Park.
- July 14, from 9am-noon at the People's Mountain Market, Garden Valley Park, located at Garden Valley Road and Marshall Road in Garden Valley.
- July 17, 2018, from 8am-1pm at the South Lake Tahoe Farmers' Market, American Legion Parking Area, located at 2748 Lake Tahoe Blvd (Hwy. 50) in South Lake Tahoe.
- July 25, 4pm to dusk at the Main Street Farmers' Market, near the Bell Tower, located at 385 Main St. in Placerville.

Farmers' Market check booklets will be distributed to seniors who are at least 60 years of age and meet income guidelines (one person household with annual income less than $22,459 or $1,872 per month or two person household with income less than $30,451 or $2,538 per month). Checks are good for all certified farmers' markets in California.

Quantities of the booklets are limited and will be distributed on a first come, first served basis. Seniors may designate an individual (proxy) to receive their booklet and make purchases at the farmers' market on their behalf. A proxy form must be

completed by the eligible senior in advance so the proxy can pick up the booklet during the booklet distribution. For more information, or to request a proxy form, call 530.621.6251.

Intriguing wines in full bloom at foothill wineries

By Mike Dunne, Sacramento Bee

More than spring flowers are blooming along the slopes of the Sierra foothills. New, bright and intriguing wines also are unfolding, as we discovered during a recent swing through the backroads of El Dorado and Amador counties.

Gordon and Chris Pack are from England, where Champagne has been appreciated long and passionately. Little wonder, then, that they are pursuing sparkling wines with uncommon ambition at their Gwinllan Estate Vineyard and Winery at Somerset in El Dorado County.

Read the whole story

Food tourism something Tahoe

could cultivate

Erik Wolf talks about how food tourism can be a bigger draw for Lake Tahoe. Photo/Kathryn Reed

By Kathryn Reed

STATELINE – Food. It's what matters to many travelers. But it's not a reason to visit the South Shore – not yet, any way.

The importance of being a culinary destination was illustrated during a presentation last week by Erik Wolf. He is the executive director and founder of the World Food Travel Association. Besides being a keynote speaker during the annual tourism forum hosted by the Lake Tahoe South Shore Chamber of Commerce and Lake Tahoe Visitors Authority, he then led a break-out session just about food service.

Lake Tahoe, especially the south end of the lake, as a whole has nothing to brag about when it comes to cuisine. Wolf said this is a shame considering 25 percent of visitor spending is on food and beverage. He lumps libations – which doesn't mean

it’s alcoholic – into the overall food component.

Food tourism, Wolf told the audience at the Hard Rock on May 10, is like an attraction, it has the ability to get people to share with others and then inspire those people to experience it.

“Food tourism is something that is unique and memorable. People take home memories and then their stories are told,” Wolf said. “People want to experience what’s local.”

He said it’s about selling a lifestyle.

People think just serving a good meal is food tourism. Wolf said that is so wrong. In the break-out session he showed a picture of two hamburgers with the question – Is it a meal or a memory? One was rather an ordinary burger on a plate. The other was a burger loaded with toppings well beyond lettuce and tomato, along with onion rings in a separate container that was artistic in its presentation, along with a beer.

The group agreed the second photo was memorable.

No matter what a destination’s primary attraction is, there is no arguing everyone has to eat and drink. That is why food tourism should be part of the equation – especially in a place like Tahoe where tourism is the No. 1 industry.

Tourism is also a huge part of California’s tourism. According to stats released this month by Visit California, “California’s robust tourism economy expanded in 2017, fueling more than $132 million in travel spending, $10.9 billion in tax revenue, and 1.1 million jobs in communities across the Golden State. The report’s findings show tourism spending jumped 4.8 percent in 2017, signaling the industry’s eighth consecutive year of growth.”

Wolf’s assessment of the South Shore is that it is an emerging food destination, with work still needed before it registers

on the radar of food travelers.

“You have opportunity,” Wolf told the group.

What he liked when driving through the area is that there are not a lot of chain restaurants. While they have their place, Wolf said, they are not a reason someone will choose one locale over another.

Wolf’s company has created 13 food profiles of the food tourist. Most (46 percent) want an authentic experience. “Don’t artificially fabricate experiences.”

Destinations can distinguish themselves by touting locally grown, offering something unique, being creative, featuring chefs, having a unique product and so much more. It could be as simple as experiencing a **traditional afternoon tea** as is common in London or taking a **cooking lesson while in Beijing**.

Service is part of that memorable experience. Tahoe has plenty of room for improvement in that category.

Most people don’t make all of their food/beverage decisions before they leave. That is why it is important for local outlets to have a rapport with frontline staff visitors might be interacting with to get recommendations.

Wolf said the No. 1 complaint of Europeans is the breakfast served at hotels – powdered eggs, a lot of sugary items – including boxed cereal, and bruised fruit.

Millennials are who the food industry needs to be focusing on because by 2020 they are expected to account for 50 percent of all travel spending. They are sharing their experiences before they even leave the bar/restaurant. Word of mouth is how people decide where to eat and drink.

“Every visitor to Tahoe can be a future ambassador,” Wolf said.

Tahoe farmers’ market season about to open

Bright Lights chard will be one of the early offerings at the Tuesday market in South Lake Tahoe. Photo/Jim Coalwell

By Susan Wood

Farmers’ markets sprout summer like no other symbol of outdoor living.

At Lake Tahoe, it’s almost an emotional tie to Mother Earth’s bounty after enduring the harsh nature of winter. It’s also a time to connect with neighbors – whether here permanently or part time.

The South Shore kicks off the season with the Ski Run (Boulevard) Farmers Market on Fridays from 3-8pm starting June 1. Four days later, the El Dorado County Certified Farmers Market will begin its pilgrimage at the American Legion Hall parking lot from 8am to 1pm.

Tahoe-area farmers' markets:

• El Dorado County Certified Farmers Market
American Legion off Highway 50, South Lake Tahoe
Tuesdays 8am-1pm; starting June 5

• Ski Run Farmers Market
1132 Ski Run Blvd.; South Lake Tahoe
Fridays 3-8pm; starting June 1

• Incline Village Farmers Market
Library at 845 Alder Ave.; Incline Village
Thursdays 4-7pm; starting May 24

• Tahoe City Farmers Market

Commons Beach at 280 N. Lake Blvd., Tahoe City
Thursdays 8am-1pm; starting May 17
• Truckee Community Farmers Market
12047 Donner Pass Road; Truckee
Sundays 9am-1pm; starting June 10

This year, there's none scheduled at Kahle Community Center as "it lacked community support," markets manager Steve Rozier explained. Instead, he will focus on the Incline Village Farmers Market slated for Thursdays from 4 to 7pm – with a new home at the library at 845 Alder Ave.

Rozier will also provide South Shore representation with his produce available at www.laketahoemarkets.com through the market box. This program offers the complimentary services to those in the city of South Lake Tahoe, Stateline, Zephyr Cove and Glenbrook. Meyers residents pay $3 per delivery.

"We keep our eye on the markets," Rozier said, referring to the potential of both his own and other Tahoe-area markets.

In a day and age where almost weekly bulletins announce contamination of some type of food, farmers' markets get to tout the freshness of their produce.

"We pride ourselves on fresh produce. We get our romaine lettuce from Watsonville," Rozier told *Lake Tahoe News,* pointing to a recent outbreak of those sickened by lettuce.

EDC Markets manager Jim Coalwell agrees.

"You know personally who's selling (the produce) to you, know it's locally grown and know (the grower will) be back there next week," he said.

Despite an overall price increase of about 20 percent, markets customers seem to buy into that justification as they return year after year.

Through time, much of the farmers' and growers' fears focus on the unpredictable nature of weather.

"It was a strange spring," Coalwell noted.

He said the West Slope witnessed "a false spring" in February, then the trees froze in March. Coalwell, who grows stone fruit and greens, sighed while considering how climate disruption all evened out in the end in time for this season.

"Our orchard looks really good. It has a nice set of peaches and should start out with a good bang," he told *Lake Tahoe News.*

And as always, don't expect tomatoes anytime soon – unless they come from Manteca. Others should hit the crates come July.

The Ski Run market in South Lake Tahoe is more than just produce. Photo/Provided

It’s a soup-to-nuts type of display anticipated on Ski Run Boulevard in front Blue Angel Café to launch summer weekends on the South Shore.

Market customers will see more fresh meats, hot food vendors, popcorn and nuts mixed with local art and homegrown bands to entertain the crowds, market manager Mollie Mason said.

Mason has noticed more entrepreneurs in Tahoe showing up to sell their wares among the 40 vendors.

“The market is a great way to get their (business) feet wet,” she said.

This setting – which has been around for eight years – is all about the experience. Picnic tables are set up to urge families to stay a while.

Tuesday’s longtime mainstay at the Legion on Lake Tahoe Boulevard has evolved with a little diversity of its own. It’s always been known as attracting growers bringing fruits and veggies from as far away as Fresno in California’s lush Central Valley. Through the years, farmers have shared the parking lot with other products – with the one stipulation of being locally made.

Some of the food can even be pre-made for the customers.

“It’s turned out to be quite lucrative,” Tahoe private chef Eunie Lyle said of Tuesday’s market. She’s set up a booth for her party catering business for eight years.

“It’s important to put a face to a business,” she said. The face becomes more welcoming when the person attached to it hands you professionally-prepared food. Lyle enjoys handing out samples of dishes.

The markets have worked out so well, she plans to hit Ski Run’s on Fridays and will consider Incline Village’s.

Her big goal is to introduce people to great tasting meals that don’t have to be complex.

“I feel sorry for people who don’t know just to add a little lemon juice and pepper,” she said.

A social animal herself, Lyle admitted that’s one of the aspects of the farmers markets she relishes. It can be a party in itself.

“I get to speak to all kinds of people I don’t usually meet,”

she said.

As it turns out, she’s not alone.

Agreeing is Lisa Hori, who has brought out her husband Dirk Yuricich’s photography to the Tuesday market since 2009.

“It’s the social event of the summer,” she said.

The couple sells many of the photographs to tourists, second homeowners or anyone remembering they have that “empty wall.”

No concern of empty slots at the markets. An abundance of vendors is on hand every week.

K’s Kitchen: Caprese bowl tastes like summer

By Kathryn Reed

After being out of town for a week last month, I was craving vegetables. I don’t always get enough veggies when I eat out – all depends on the restaurant.

The combo of tomato, mozzarella and basil is one of my favorites – usually in summer when tomatoes are fresh. This recipe used canned tomatoes; which offer plenty of flavor – especially if they are fire roasted, but they don’t have to be.

There is the potential for a lot of versatility with this dish by using different vegetables. The next time I make this I might add a can of garbanzo beans. This would add a different texture as well as some protein.

This could be an entrée or side.

Veggie Caprese Bowl

1 medium zucchini

¾ tsp kosher salt, divided

2 T olive oil

1 yellow onion, chopped

3 garlic gloves, chopped

16 ounces cremini mushrooms, sliced

1 T tomato paste

28 ounces diced tomatoes, undrained

1 tsp ground pepper

5 ounces spinach

4 ounces part-skim ricotta cheese

3 ounces part-skim mozzarella cheese, shredded

¼ C loosely packed fresh basil

Use a vegetable peeler to create strips of zucchini. Toss those with one-quarter teaspoon salt in a colander. Let stand.

Over medium-high heat, cook onion and garlic in oil. Stir

until tender. Add mushrooms; cook until browned. Add tomato paste; cook about a minute. Stir in tomatoes, pepper, and remaining salt. Bring to a simmer, stirring often. Reduce heat to medium low, and simmer about 8 minutes. Stir in spinach; cover until it wilts. Remove from heat. Stir in zucchini strips.

Blend ricotta and mozzarella, then microwave for 30 seconds.

Spoon vegetable mixture into individual bowls, dot with cheese mixture, then sprinkle with basil.