Drought rushes wine grape harvest in Calif.

By Esther Mobley, San Francisco Chronicle

In Northern California's wine country, the 2015 harvest has arrived shockingly early, amid years of drought that have progressively shifted vines' growing season earlier into the year.

Winemakers are scrambling to keep pace, and many worry about the financial implications of an extremely low-yielding crop.

"I've been making wine for 38 years, and this is the second-earliest harvest I've ever seen," said Eileen Crane, CEO and winemaker of Domaine Carneros, who began picking on July 31.

Not only has the harvest come early, it's progressing more quickly. In many cases, especially for Pinot producers, a picking schedule that would stretch over a month is being condensed into about a week.

Read the whole story

How the U.S. military helped invent Cheetos

By Anastacia Marx de Salcedo, Wired

Cheese purists the world over exalt their mummified milk. Their silken Goudas and savory Emmentalers. Their fetid fetas and squeaky queso frescos. Their moldy Roqueforts and runny

Camemberts. These disks of rotted dairy are the pinnacle of thousands of years of experimentation that began when a herdsman carrying a ruminant’s stomach brimming with milk found that by journey’s end, he had a bag full of curds and whey.

Modern cheese making is a little more complicated, but the same principles apply. Fresh milk is allowed to ferment, with either wild or cultured bacteria. Then, when they have raised the acidity enough, rennet—enzymes from calves’ stomachs (these have now been replaced with laboratory-produced enzymes)—is added. This coagulates the caseins, which make up about 80 percent of the total milk protein, so that they form a gel.

Then there’s a lot of manipulation—cutting, stirring, and heating—that removes fluid, or whey, leaving behind solid curds. The curds are put into molds, salted or brined, and pressed, which expels more whey and turns the cheese into a solid mass. Mold may be added, either at the beginning or later in the process. Then, depending on the variety, the cheeses are matured for anywhere from two weeks to two years, allowing enzymes, both those from microbes and those from the rennet, to turn fats and proteins into tasty new substances.

Cheese is one of the bedrocks on which the Western diet is founded – a long-term storage method for excess milk, especially when cool storerooms and caves were available. But the food didn’t fare so well during summer or in hot climates. With heat, animal fat softens or even liquefies, oozing out and creating an oily and unappealing mess.

Read the whole story

Food available for those in need

The Food Bank of El Dorado County will be in South Lake Tahoe on Aug. 26 from 10-11am to host a free farmers market and mobile food pantry distribution.

It will be at the American Legion Hall, 2748 Lake Tahoe Blvd.

One allocation per household is allowed.

Program income guidelines are **online**.

Truckee food fest celebrates 30th year

The Autumn Food and Wine Festival will return to Truckee for its 30th anniversary Sept. 11-13.

Events are at the Village at Northstar and Ritz-Carlton Lake Tahoe.

Renowned regional chefs will compete head-to-head for the coveted first place award during the Culinary Competition and Grand Tasting which will be on the final day of the festival. Leading up to the grand finale are special events and seminars including a Vintner-Inspired Painting Class, the Farm to Tahoe Dinner, a Progressive Picnic, and the Blazing Pans Mountain Cook Off featuring executive chefs Robb Wyss of Sunnyside and Jason Friendy of the Resort at Squaw Creek.

For more info and to purchase tickets, go **online**.

Spicy foods may be answer to longer life

By Ariana Eunjung Cha, Washington Post

There’s probably no food quite as baffling as the chili pepper.

A bite of a habanero, jalapeño or cayenne can pack such an ouch that all logic says they should repel those who attempt to consume them. Yet for centuries humans have not only eaten such spicy foods — but enjoyed them. In recent years, worldwide consumption of hot spices has grown dramatically, fueled by the popularity of Mexican salsas, Thai and Indian curries and the like.

Scientists seeking to better understand the alluring properties of hot foods have found evidence that we may be so drawn to them because they are good for us. While the research is still preliminary, it suggests spicy food may have all kinds of health benefits ranging from boosting metabolism and preventing gastric damage to reducing the risk of heart disease and cancer.

Read the whole story

Surge in egg prices affecting restaurants

By BloombergBusiness

Record-high egg prices in the U.S. are forcing restaurants to get creative with their advertisements.

Denny’s Corp. is pushing burgers instead of omelets, while Dunkin’ Donuts is advertising smoothies and iced coffees. Panda Express has swapped in corn for the eggs in its fried rice.

Blame bird flu for the changes. The worst U.S. outbreak of the disease killed more than 48 million fowl in the six months through mid-June. That sent prices surging 31 percent to a record $2.57 for a dozen large eggs in June, according to the Bureau of Labor Statistics. Consumers paid just $1.96 in May.

Read the whole story

An athlete’s guide to superfood seeds

By Emily Payne, Outside

Yeah, superfoods come in and out of favor like fashion trends. A few years ago, we were all about acai, as this Hopes&Fears article points out, and now we’re really into kale and quinoa.

It makes sense, when you consider the word “superfood” is simply a marketing term with no scientific definition behind

it.

Trendy or not, however, certain foods will always be nutrient powerhouses. As such, those foods can help promote recovery after a tough workout, and scavenge cell-damaging free radicals. That’s where these five seeds come in.

Read the whole story

Congress having a food fight over GMO labeling

By Tony Dokoupil, MSNBC

There’s a food fight exploding in Congress.

The House of Representatives passed a hotly contested bill last week that would block states from requiring labels identifying food made with genetically modified ingredients. Now a similar bill is expected in the Senate, where North Dakota Republican Sen. John Hoeven is currently looking for a co-sponsor.

The measure would preempt a GMO labeling movement that has already helped establish laws in Maine and Connecticut. In Vermont, the first to pass such a law, the labels are scheduled to appear by next summer. And the Congressional effort to block these measures has lit a flame beneath culinary crusaders.

Read the whole story

Bill would allow USPS to ship alcohol

By Bay City News Service

Rep. Jackie Speier, D-Hillsborough, introduced a bill last week to lift a ban on shipping alcohol through the U.S. Postal Service.

Speier's office said the bill would end a Prohibition-era ban.

"Prohibition is history, and this ban should be too," Speier said in a statement. "It's ridiculous that we're allowing UPS, FedEx and other companies to ship spirits, wine and beer to consumers, while banning the U.S. Postal Service from doing the exact same thing."

Speier's office said the ban puts the USPS at a disadvantage competitively.

Read the whole story

Wine industry takes root in Nevada

By Margo Bartlett Pesek, Las Vegas Review-Journal

Nevada's emerging wine industry is expanding into new areas, offering winery visitors different experiences and

opportunities for agritourism.

The Silver State joins a national trend toward proliferating vineyards and wineries. In the drought-prone Southwest, vineyards are rapidly replacing traditional crops that use much more water.

Just 60 miles from Las Vegas, Pahrump Valley Winery is Nevada’s first and largest winemaker. Follow state Route 160 over Mountain Springs Pass into Pahrump Valley. As you enter the town of Pahrump, turn right at the first stoplight onto Winery Road. The entrance to the winery is about a half mile from the highway. Developing since the 1990s, the Pahrump facility offers year-round wine tours, a tasting room, a gift shop and Symphony, a “white-linen” restaurant open for lunch and dinner.

Read the whole story