Vineyard water consumption being studied

By Felicia Alvarez, Davis Enterprise

At a time when agriculturists are looking for ways to cut back on water usage, researchers at the UC Davis viticulture and enology department are paving the way for sustainable techniques in winemaking and grape-growing.

To make a gallon of wine, it takes 4 to 6 gallons of water under current production techniques. Researchers such as UCD's David Block, however, are strategizing ways to use a quarter of this amount to create a 1-to-1 ratio of water to wine.

Out in the field, viticulturists are searching for ways to deliver water to plants effectively. Every plant is unique, meaning every vine doesn't need the same amount of water, Block said. If a grower knows exactly how much water needs to be given to each plant, not a single drop of water needs to be wasted.

Read the whole story

Soy lurks in many non-vegetarian foods

By Rachel E. Gross, Slate

Soy, light of my life, temptation of my taste buds. My sin, my soul. You put the bite in my chik'n nuggets, the creaminess in my soy lattes, the chew in my tofu scramble that all but

convinces me that I’m eating something that came out of a chicken. You make it possible for me to enjoy burgers, sausage, chorizo, hot dogs, and chili on a near-daily basis. Thanks to you, not once have I felt left out while my friends chowed down on cow flesh. You are the chameleon of foods, the ultimate imitator, the snack of all trades. For vegetarians like me, you are a culinary miracle.

If you aren’t vegetarian, lactose-intolerant, or a lover of Asian cuisine, you may not share my appreciation for this humble legume. In fact, you may not think soybeans have much of an impact on your life at all. You would be wrong. It turns out soy isn’t just good at making fake meats more meat-like—it’s the secret ingredient making all processed food more, well, food-like.

I found this out a few years ago, when I dipped my toes into the underground world of veganism. As I began paying more attention to ingredient labels, I realized something strange: Soy showed up in a baffling array of foods, from hot dogs to salad oil to Oreos (which are, incidentally, vegan). A quick scan of McDonalds’ ingredients listrevealed soy in more than 200 items—and not just in expected things like French fries and chicken nuggets, but also breakfast sausages, grilled onions, chicken patties, BBQ ranch sauce, sesame buns, liquid margarine, cinnamon melts, hash browns, griddle cakes, chocolate chips, and bagels. (At Taco Bell, it’s the same story.) Forget Dunkin’, I realized: America runs on soy.

The weird thing is, people aren’t the main consumers of soy—not even close. More than 85 percent of soybeans get crushed and milled into animal feed. The result ishighly inefficient: Instead of feeding a high-quality protein to humans, we are first feeding it to our livestock, and then eating the protein in their meat. That means in order to produce 1 kilogram of animal protein, we have to feed livestock almost 6 kilograms of soy or other plant protein. In fact, experts estimate that we could feed at least 800 million

more people if we just fed them the grain we usually feed livestock.

Read the whole story

Study: Food storage linked to consumption patterns

By Angus Chen, NPR

Keeping food out of sight could be a way to keep it out of your mouth. That's the hunch of Charles Emery, a psychologist at Ohio State University, anyway. His latest research suggests that how food is set up around the house could be influencing how much people eat and, ultimately, how heavy they might be.

There are a lot of factors that scientists say explain obesity — defined as a body-mass index over 30 — from genetics to lifestyle changes to socio-economic status.

But Emery says the home environment and how it may influence eating behaviors has largely been left unexamined. So his team decided to "look at every aspect of the home environment related to food," he says.

They also found obese participants tended to keep more food visible in the places they spent the most time compared to non-obese people. If the bedroom was one of their favorite places at home, then snacks were also usually there in plain sight. In other words, food was almost always close at hand for the obese individuals. "It doesn't take a big leap of faith to say if you're spending most of your time where there's more food sitting out to see, that's going to make it

harder not to eat," Emery says.

Read the whole story

Buying the ripest produce isn't always best

By Russ Parsons, Los Angeles Times

We all want to shop for the ripest fruit we can find. Or do we? In some cases, the ripest fruit is not the best buy. In fact, in some cases it should be avoided.

To understand why, we first need to delve into the complexities of ripeness and maturity. And while we're at it, let's think a little about climacteric fruits.

Ripeness and maturity are separate but linked processes. Think of it this way: Maturity is when the fruit has assembled all the building blocks necessary to create flavor; ripeness is the process by which those blocks are assembled into something greater. When fruit is maturing, it's developing sugar as well as all the chemical compounds that will eventually make it delicious.

Read the whole story

Rhone varietals to highlight wine event

Five El Dorado County wineries are bringing out their best during Rocks & Rhones on Memorial Day weekend. The wine and food event celebrates Rhone varietals grown in the rocky soils of El Dorado's Pleasant Valley.

There will food pairings, winemaker demonstrations and vineyard walks.

The wineries are located within a four-mile radius in Pleasant Valley: Auriga, Holly's Hill, Miraflores, Narrow Gate and Sierra Vista.

Tickets are $35 advance, $40 at the door, and $20 for designated drivers. Price includes a commemorative glass. Tickets are available online.

Bill lifts winery ban in Nevada counties

By Associated Press

CARSON CITY – The Nevada Senate has passed a compromise bill that repeals the state's partial ban on wineries.

The Senate voted unanimously on Saturday to approve AB4. It already passed the Assembly.

The bill would repeal a state law prohibiting wineries in Clark and Washoe counties from importing wine from other

states or serving alcoholic beverages on their premises.

A winery in Pahrump initially opposed the bill, saying that changing the law too quickly could harm the state's four existing wineries just as they're gaining strength.

The new version of the bill aims to ensure a significant portion of wine at newcomer wineries is made from Nevada-grown fruit. If a wine isn't made of at least 25 percent Nevada fruit, wineries are limited to serving 1,000 cases of it.

Craft beer contributes $6.5 bil. to Calif. economy

By Allen Young, Sacramento Business Journal

California produces more craft beer than any other state, and the number of in-state breweries grew by over 24 percent last year to 519, according to research from the California Craft Brewers Association.

Total sales last year were $6.5 billion, up 18 percent from 2013.

No single factor can be attributed to why craft beer is exploding across the Golden State. But it's worth noting that California is credited with creating the craft beer movement, and the regulatory climate for entrants to the industry is actually better here than in other states, said Tom McCormick, the association's executive director.

Read the whole story

Truckee to have Sunday farmers market

A new farmers market in Truckee launches June 14.

It will be on Sundays from 10am to 2pm through Sept. 27.

The Truckee Community Farmers Market, organized jointly by Slow Food Lake Tahoe and Gary Romano of Sierra Valley Farms, will be focused on increasing access to local, healthy food for all people in the region.

It will be at 12047 Donner Pass Road – Tri Counties Bank/Sears/Coffeebar Bakery parking lot.

The launch of the new farmers market is the latest move by Slow Food Lake Tahoe to engage the North Tahoe community in the slow food movement. Slow Food Lake Tahoe also runs the Truckee Demonstration Garden at the Truckee River Regional Park, and offers a monthly Skillshare Series with inexpensive classes that teach participants techniques like making fermented foods, homebrewing beer, composting and gardening in our high altitude environment. The Slow Food Lake Tahoe annual farm-to-table event, “Cooking Outside the Box” takes place on June 21 at Plumpjack Inn in Squaw Valley. For more

information, visit www.slowfoodlaketahoe.org.

Slow Food Lake Tahoe’s mission is to reconnect people to the enjoyment of local, seasonal and sustainable food while educating the community about their vital role as participants in our food system. For additional information about Slow Food Lake Tahoe and upcoming events, visit www.slowfoodlaketahoe.org.

Sierra Valley Farms is a 65-acre certified organic farm and native plant nursery situated on the Middle Fork of the Feather River in the majestic Sierra Valley. The family farm is owned and operated by Gary Romano, his father Louis and son Joey. The farm hosts an on-farm farmers market, restaurant CSAs, and a Dinner in the Barn summer series, as well as supporting local nonprofit organizations

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Nev. bill to repeal winery restrictions gains support

By Associated Press

Established wineries and ones that want to expand to Nevada have reached an agreement on repealing the state’s partial winery ban.

Witnesses who testified on opposite sides of AB4 earlier in the session lined up in support of the bill Wednesday in a Senate Commerce and Labor Committee hearing.

The bill would repeal a state law prohibiting wineries in Clark and Washoe counties from importing wine from other states or serving alcoholic beverages on their premises.

A winery in Pahrump initially opposed the bill, saying that changing the law too quickly could harm the state's four existing wineries just as they're gaining strength.

The amended bill aims to ensure a significant portion of wine sold at newcomer wineries is made from fruit grown in Nevada.

Blame warm winter for spike in food prices

By Russ Parsons, Los Angeles Times

The display at the Weiser Family Farms' stand at the Santa Monica farmers market last weekend was sparse, even by early spring standards – potatoes, some green shallots and garlic, a little sprouting broccoli. The lilacs that signal the start of spring for many Southern Californians came and went weeks ago.

But a couple of stalls down, a shopper could find cherries, apricots, and even peaches and nectarines that tasted like midsummer.

That, in a nutshell, is the state of California's nearly $30-billion produce industry, which accounts for more than half of the fresh fruits and vegetables grown in America.

Fruit has been ripening and ready to pick at almost shockingly early dates. At the same time, some vegetables have been in extremely short supply, resulting in much higher than normal prices. Lettuces are selling at wholesale for twice what they

were at this time last year. Cauliflower has doubled just since February.

Read the whole story