U.S. athletes getting an early taste of Russia

By Stephen Wayne Kasica, Outside

Behind the Olympic-caliber athletes scarfing down 5,000-plus daily calories at the Olympic Training Center in Colorado Springs is a hardworking chef creating the food that fuels peak performance.

And with 350 weary, ravenous athletes walking into the dining hall each day, you get a pretty good idea of executive chef Jacque Hamilton's job.

Besides making sure there's enough milk — OTC athletes gulp down about 15,000 gallons of the stuff annually — she keeps meals fresh and nutritious by varying menu items.

Recently, that's meant a variety of Russian-themed cuisine in preparation for the February games in Sochi. Popular items include wild-mushroom stroganoff, a delicious meatless alternative for vegetarian athletes. Other big hits include eggplant caviar served on blini, a Russian-style pancake.

Perhaps the most popular dish is Borscht. Hamilton's take on the traditional beet-based soup includes more beets for extra antioxidants and more meat for a little more muscle-fueling protein.

Read the whole story

Eateries creating special menus for restaurant week

Sixteen restaurants are participating in the inaugural South Shore Restaurant Week, Jan. 10-17.

Participating restaurants will feature specially-priced and prix fixe menus highlighting the theme Made with Altitude.”

No special reservations are needed for this event.

Participating restaurants include: 11th Frame Diner (inside Tahoe Bowl), Apres Wine Co., Basecamp Pizza, Beacon Bar & Grill, Boathouse on the Pier, Edgewood, Getaway Café, Gunbarrel Tavern, Hard Rock Cafe, Jimmy’s, MacDuff’s, Red Hut Café (three South Shore locations) the Riva Grill and Sorensen’s Resort.

For restaurant week menu information, go online.

Study: Livestock decisions should be made locally

By Eliza Barclay, NPR

To feed all 7 billion of us, address climate change and live longer, we all need to eat less meat. From Al Gore to the Meatless Monday movement to Harvard epidemiologists, that’s been the resounding advice offered to consumers lately.

But hold up a minute, says Mario Herrero, the chief research scientist at Australia’s national science agency, the CSIRO.

Writing off food animals as greedy, inefficient polluters of land and water, artery cloggers and robbers of food from the mouths of hungry babes is perhaps a bit brash, he says.

Instead, it’s important to see the global livestock sector as a super diverse system of tiny backyards and massive feedlots that defies generalizations, Herrero tells the Salt. Shifting to this view is becoming more and more important as we plan for a future of 9 billion people on Earth by mid-century.

Read the whole story

Restaurants struggle to be gluten free

By Vanessa Wong, Bloomberg

Cooking a gluten-free meal isn’t as simple as plucking out the croutons.

Even if the ingredients are gluten-free, avoiding cross-contamination from other things in the kitchen means having separate utensils and prep areas, not to mention special training of staff—significant undertakings in restaurant environments whose employees must be reminded to wash their hands.

The problem, in other words, is the preparation.

Perhaps that’s why some chains that make most of their money from wheat-eaters have stopped short of promising that their “gluten-free” foods are actually, well, gluten-free.

As the Wall Street Journal reported, Domino’s and Noodles &

Co. offer “gluten-free” options with disclaimers that they can’t guarantee a total absence of gluten.

“Even with a strict adherence toward maintaining spotless restaurants, we simply have too much wheat and other gluten-containing food products in our kitchens to be able to eliminate the cross contamination on food prep surfaces and even in the air,” warns a message on Noodles’ website.

The U.S. Food and Drug Administration defines “gluten-free” as containing less than 20 parts per million of gluten.

Read the whole story

Metabolism a key to keeping off pounds

By Alessandra Bulow, Epicurious

If you’re already inhaling Christmas cookies like it’s your job this holiday season, take a moment to wipe off the crumbs from your footie pajamas and strategize some meals with foods that are proven to help rev up your metabolism.

“First of all, eating breakfast can make a huge difference in metabolism,” says Sarah-Jane Bedwell, a registered dietician and the author of the upcoming “Schedule Me Skinny”. “Your metabolism is like a fire: If you don’t add wood, your metabolism will die down. If you don’t eat regularly, your body doesn’t have fuel and your metabolism will slow down. Your best bet for breakfast will have carbs, protein, and a fruit or vegetable – like a bowl of oatmeal with Greek yogurt, and berries. After that, make sure to continue to eat every

three to four hours."

"There are somethings we can do in terms of how we eat, plus there are some foods that can speed up metabolism," says Bedwell.

Read the whole story

K's Kitchen: Cauliflower gaining in popularity

By Kathryn Reed

While the holidays are steeped in tradition, there's nothing wrong with starting new ones.

My sister, Jann, is a true believer in doing this. Preparing new sides for Thanksgiving is a tradition unto itself at her house. And this year it was a family affair. It's not unusual for my brother-in-law, Lester, to be in charge of the turkey and dressing. But this was the first time in nine years that my nieces and nephew were home together for Thanksgiving. And, they too, were given jobs to do in the kitchen.



One of the new dishes at the Turkey Day table is the recipe below. For some reason I didn't tear out this recipe from the latest *Bon Appétit* magazine. It was super yummy.

And cauliflower is the new "it" food; seeming to have replaced Brussels sprouts on so many restaurant menus. While I have not actually made the recipe, I'm thinking it might be the side

dish I’m tasked with bringing to a party later this month.

Roasted Cauliflower with Lemon-Parsley Dressing (Serves 4)

1 head cauliflower (about 2 lbs.), cut into florets, including tender leaves

6 T olive oil, divided

Kosher salt, freshly ground pepper

1 C fresh flat-leaf parsley leaves

½ tsp finely grated lemon zest

2 T fresh lemon juice

Preheat oven to 425 degrees. Toss cauliflower and 4 T oil on a rimmed baking sheet; season with salt and pepper. Roast, tossing occasionally, until tender and golden brown, 25-30 minutes.

Meanwhile, pulse parsley, lemon juice, and remaining 2 T oil in a food processor until very finely chopped; season with salt and pepper. Toss cauliflower with lemon-parsley mixture and top with lemon zest.

Lemon-parsley mixture can be made 4 hours ahead. Cover and chill.

Plastic in ocean contaminating seafood

By Eliza Barclay, NPR

We've long known that the fish we eat are exposed to toxic chemicals in the rivers, bays and oceans they inhabit. The substance that's gotten the most attention – because it has shown up at disturbingly high levels in some fish – is mercury.

But mercury is just one of a slew of synthetic and organic pollutants that fish can ingest and absorb into their tissue. Sometimes it's because we're dumping chemicals right into the ocean. But as a study published recently in Nature, Scientific Reports helps illuminate, sometimes fish get chemicals from the plastic debris they ingest.

"The ocean is basically a toilet bowl for all of our chemical pollutants and waste in general," says Chelsea Rochman, a postdoctoral researcher at the University of California, Davis, who authored the study. "Eventually, we start to see those contaminants high up in the food chain, in seafood and wildlife."

Read the whole story

K's Kitchen: A tasty soup that warms the insides

By Kathryn Reed

Only one food warms me up through and through – that's soup.

I could have soup every day and never get tired of it. But I do like trying new recipes.



The one below did not disappoint. It is from the September issue of *Cooking Light* magazine.

Besides being ideal on a cold winter day or night, it's easy to make.

I used veggie broth. And because a carton has 4 cups I used the whole thing. It meant the soup was a little thinner and less green, but the flavor was still outstanding. I also used more garlic, but to me garlic is practically a food group. I made it easy and bought cheese that was already shredded. I also skipped the parsley because it's more of a garnish than anything else. But if you are serving this to guests, the parsley would make it look pretty, as would a few grinds of fresh pepper.

Broccoli-Cheese Soup

3 C unsalted chicken stock

1¾ C broccoli florets, coarsely chopped (about 8 ounces)

1 C diced yellow onion

½ C chopped carrot

3/8 tsp salt

¼ tsp freshly ground black pepper

2 garlic cloves, minced

¾ C half-and-half

4 ounces shredded reduced-fat extra-sharp cheddar cheese, divided

¼ C fresh flat-leaf parsley leaves

Combine first 7 ingredients in a large saucepan; bring to a boil. Reduce heat, and simmer 10 minutes or until broccoli is tender. Pour soup into a blender. Remove center piece of blender lid (to allow steam to escape); secure lid on blender. Place a clean towel over opening in blender lid (to avoid splatters). Blend until smooth. Return soup to pan. Stir in half-and-half and 2 ounces cheese. Top evenly with remaining cheese and parsley.

K’s Kitchen: Crisp a good alternative to pie

By Kathryn Reed

After going to Apple Hill earlier this fall, I had a lot of apples to deal with. Not a bad problem to have. But I also didn’t want them to go bad.

I decided to turn the remaining ones into a crisp instead of pie. In large part this had to do with not wanting to make a crust. Having recently made sugar cookie, the whole rolling out dough thing was very unappealing.



I came across the recipe below from the Food Network website. When I saw it had maple syrup I knew I had to make it. I haven't found a recipe yet with maple syrup that Sue doesn't like. There's something about Vermontners and their syrup.

I didn't use the pecans because I'm not a big fan of nuts in my desserts. I used a mixture of apples. And because I don't have ramekins I baked it all together in a pan. A square pan would be best.

And like all apple desserts, serve it with vanilla ice cream.

Apple Crisp

Filling:

5 Granny Smith apples, peeled, cored, chopped small

1/4 C finely chopped pecans

3 T all-purpose flour

1/2 C brown sugar

2 T maple syrup

1 T lemon juice

Topping:

3/4 C all-purpose flour

1/3 C brown sugar

1/4 tsp ground cinnamon

1/4 tsp salt

6 T chilled butter, cut into pieces

1/4 C coarsely chopped pecans

Preheat oven to 350 degrees.

For the filling:

Mix all the ingredients together. Place into 7 to 8-ounce ramekins.

For topping:

Mix the flour, brown sugar, cinnamon and salt in large bowl. Blend the butter into the mixture until it forms pea size lumps. Stir in pecans and sprinkle over filling.

Bake crisps for 35 to 40 minutes. Cool 10 minutes before serving.

Health concerns lead to drop in diet soda sales

By Mike Esterl, Wall Street Journal

Joanna Stepka is the soda industry's new nightmare.

The 33-year-old Rhode Island resident began drinking Diet Coke in kindergarten, graduating to three cans a day by adulthood. She quit in August after her gym trainer told her artificial sweeteners are unhealthy and make people fat even if they don't have calories.

"I thought it was a win-win, but after learning about the chemicals, definitely not," says Stepka, a parenting lifestyle blogger.

Coca-Cola Co. and rivals hoped zero-calorie recipes would lift the $75 billion U.S. soda industry after Americans began scaling back on full-calorie carbonated soft drinks in the late 1990s amid obesity concerns. For a while they helped: Diet soda's share of consumption rose from 26 percent to 31 percent between 1990 and 2010, according to Beverage Marketing Corp., even as many consumers complained about the taste.

Now diet soda is the industry's weightiest problem. Store sales of zero- and low-calorie soda plunged 6.8 percent in dollar terms in the 52 weeks through Nov. 23, while sales of regular sodas dropped 2.2 percent, according to Wells Fargo, citing Nielsen scanner data. As a category, diet soda has contracted more than regular soda for three straight years.

"We are seeing a fundamental shift in consumer habits and behaviors," PepsiCo Inc. Chairman Indra Nooyi said recently.

PepsiCo gets about a quarter of its U.S. revenue from soda. Coke and Dr Pepper Snapple Group Inc. both derive more than half their U.S. sales from soda.

Read the whole story