Food allergies require digging to find true source

By Erik Tormoen, Outside

To those on allergy-free diets: A larger number of popular, nutrient-dense foods may be available than you think. Just consider eating a part or variation of your allergenic cuisine.

Instead of abstaining entirely from eggs, for example, you may need only to shear away the egg whites—or whichever part of the egg makes you react allergically, according to a presentation by allergist Sami Bahna last month at the Annual Scientific Meeting of the American College of Allergy, Asthma and Immunology (ACAAI).

Allergist Joyce C. Rabbat confirms, writing, “Certain proteins of a food are more allergenic (i.e., more likely to cause an allergic reaction) than other proteins of the same food.”

To determine which parts of a food are fine to eat and which parts will actually cause a reaction, allergists perform oral food challenges. These involve feeding a patient tiny amounts of the suspected allergenic food in increasing doses.

Read the whole story

Popcorn – a good and bad

snack choice

By Sally Tamarkin, Huffington Post

Popcorn might be the world's most versatile snack. It can be dressed up with cheese, caramel, butter, salt or more exotic flavors. It can be sweet, savory or both, and it's easy to grab by the handful for quick transport to the mouth.

But popcorn is the Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde of snacks – one minute it's the healthiest choice around (Low in calories! Whole grains!), the next it's getting banned for containing trans fats. What the heck is going on?

Here's the deal: Kernels that are simply air-popped (in a brown paper bag in the microwave, for instance) contain no saturated fat and barely any sodium.

But the pre-packaged microwave, store-bought, and movie theater varieties are often heavily processed and packed with additives and lots of salt. Plus, because of the way these varieties are packaged, it's easy to polish off several servings of the stuff in one sitting. (For example, a typical bag of microwave popcorn is 10 cups, and a small movie theater popcorn is about 11 cups.)

Read the whole story

Wine collecting more profitable than stock market

By Walter Hamilton, Los Angeles Times

When Ken Bleifer started collecting wine 50 years ago, he didn’t think of it as an investment.

He simply loved wine and, like many connoisseurs, ended up buying much more than he could ever drink. So about 10 years ago, he began selling a portion of the 4,000 bottles stashed in his wine cellar.

Bleifer, a Venice nephrologist, unloaded a few cases at a time. Two bottles of Burgundy purchased for $80 in 1983 fetched $4,700 in 2006.

Bleifer won’t disclose his total profit other than to estimate it at several hundred thousand dollars.

Read the whole story

Study: People are becoming more carnivorous

By Hannah Hoag, Nature

The fast-growing economies of China and India are driving a global increase in meat consumption, canceling out decreases elsewhere, according to a comprehensive study of global food consumption.

The work, published this month in Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences, takes a detailed look at what people eat, as well as trends from one country to the next. It is also the first time that researchers have calculated humanity’s trophic level, a metric used in ecology to position species in the food chain.

The metric puts plants and algae, which make their own food, at trophic level 1. Rabbits, which eat plants, occupy level 2. Foxes, which eat herbivores, sit at trophic level 3. Cod, a fish that eats other fish, claims level 4. Polar bears and orcas, which have few or no predators and eat other mammals with gusto, hold the top positions – levels up to 5.5.

The study, led by Sylvain Bonhommeau, a fisheries scientist at the French Research Institute for Exploitation of the Sea in Sète, estimates that humanity's global median trophic level was 2.21 in 2009, which puts us on a par with other omnivores, such as pigs and anchovies, in the global food web. "We are closer to herbivore than carnivore," says Bonhommeau. "It changes the preconception of being top predator."

Read the whole story

K's Kitchen: Adult-style brownies

By Kathryn Reed

A few years ago I went on a Port and brownie binge. So much so that it was a long time before I would consume either one, let alone having them together.

Dec. 8 is National Brownie Day. And, really, who doesn't love brownies? They don't have to be made from scratch to be good. Plenty of box brands turn into edible delights.



At Latcham Vineyards in Fair Play tastings are done in an old barn, with cheese and chocolate creations at the far corner. Port is the secret ingredient in Margaret Latcham's brownies.

Port comes from Oporto, Portugal, and unless it's from there, it must be called a port-style wine. However, Ports can be made with grapes other than Port. Ports have more sugar and alcohol content compared to an average bottle of wine.

Paul Bush, winemaker and owner of Madrona Vineyards in Camino, uses about seven Portuguese varietals to come up with his creation.

Vaughn Jodar of Jodar Vineyards uses the uppermost rows of Cabernet Sauvignon grapes for his Port.

I made three pans of brownies. In the process of trying to keep all things equal, I didn't. I only have two 9 x 13 pans, so the third batch in the 8 x 13 pan was thicker. Then I forgot to toss the additional chocolate chips into one batch. I didn't use a frosting because too much chocolate gives me a migraine.

I had about a half dozen people sample all three brownies. All but one liked the extra chocolate – but that person isn't a chocoholic. The other batches were equally well liked. So, I can't say the port makes a huge difference in the brownies, but it did make a difference when Sue and I tasted the three brownies with the three ports.

Sue voted for the Jodar Black Bear 2003 Port.

I like the Latcham 2003 Select Port because it isn't as sweet and didn't taste like a typical Port.

But we both emphatically say "no" to the question: Is there a

Port you wouldn’t drink or a brownie you wouldn’t eat?

The other Port I cooked with was the Granite Springs 2003 Petite Sirah Estate Port. The Latchams also own this winery.

The following is Margaret’s recipe and all the personal comments are hers.

Margaret’s Pass the Port Brownies

2 sticks butter

8 ounces semi-sweet chocolate chips (or coarsely chopped semi-sweet chocolate)

4 large eggs

1¾ C granulated sugar

¼ C Latcham Select Port or Granite Springs Petite Sirah Port

½ tsp salt

½ tsp baking powder

1 C all-purpose flour

¼ C unsweetened cocoa powder

1 C additional semi-sweet chocolate chips

Preheat oven to 350 degrees. Grease and lightly flour two 13 by 9 baking pans. Place the butter and chocolate chips in the top of a double-boiler over hot water. Stir the mixture until the butter and chocolate are completely melted and smooth. Remove the butter and chocolate from the top of the double boiler and allow this mixture to cool.

In the large mixing bowl, beat together the eggs and sugar until well blended, then blend in the port and cooled chocolate mixture. Blend in the flour, salt, baking soda and cocoa, mixing until all the ingredients are well incorporated.

Fold in the additional cup of chocolate chips if desired.

Pour batter into the two prepared pans and bake for 20 to 25 minutes or until a knife inserted into the center of the pans comes out with a few moist crumbs clinging to it. While the brownies are cooling on racks, cover each pan with foil. This will enable the brownies to continue to steam a bit while cooling and ensure their moistness!

Frosting and toppings: Chocolate butter cream frosting, top with chopped nuts, chocolate chips, peanut butter cups, crushed Oreos, or candy bars and drizzle with chocolate syrup! Our motto with the brownies is "More is better – don't hold back!" Of course, any good red wine such as Cabernet Sauvignon, Zinfandel, Barbera, or Petite Sirah is also an excellent substitute for the port in the brownie recipe. Also liqueurs, such as Frangelico, Amaretto, Crème de Cocao, and Kahlua, as well as rum and bourbon are excellent additions to the brownie recipe! This recipe is a work in progress and should be fun – a pleasure to make and even more fun to eat!!

(This recipe makes 2 batches of brownies.)

Cooking Channel wants to make over Tahoe bar

By Kathryn Reed

Which Lake Tahoe bar needs a makeover? The Cooking Channel wants to know.

The casting crew is in search of a bar that needs better ambiance, food people want, and improved customer service.

“We really want local recommendations … what you feel really needs help, and who is save-worthy,” explained Danya Berman, casting director for “Belly Up”. “Who does the community want to see helped?”

The bar can be anywhere in the Lake Tahoe Basin.

The pilot of “Belly Up” aired in late summer. The network then gave the go-ahead for six episodes to be produced. The plan is to make a U-shape of the country when it comes to picking locations. Other areas include Phoenix-Scottsdale, Charleston, S.C., and Albuquerque.

Eddie Russell is the host. He is a chef and consultant who usually charges big bucks for the advice he will be dispensing in what will amount to 30-minutes of television. But it will be worth thousands of dollars in information and improvements.

The actual time the crew will be in town will be a few days, filming for hours, which will include a grand reopening party the community will be invited to.

“We want to help people erase bad reviews, make more money and help owners with their vision. Even dive bars have a vision,” Berman told *Lake Tahoe News*.

It won’t be as aggressive as a show like “Bar Rescue” in part because the Cooking Channel’s emphasis is on food. Berman said food and service would be key elements of the show.

Filming is expected to begin in March or April. When the show airs will be up to network executives.

“America loves the underdog story. We like to see people and businesses made over. People want a happy ending,” Berman said. “It is feel good show. Will there be some drama? I suppose there will be.”

—-

Notes:

• To nominate a bar, email gastromakeover@gmail.com by Dec. 25.

• Bars must be less than 4,000-square-feet, have a working kitchen, have at least four employees, of which one must be a cook.

• Interviews with bar owners will be done via Skype. Those will be submitted to network officials for them choose the bars that will be part of the show.

Study: Wine, beer contain arsenic

By Bahar Gholipour, Huffington Post

White wine, beer and Brussels sprouts can be major sources of the toxic metal arsenic in people's diets, according to a study.

Researchers analyzed the diets of 852 people in New Hampshire, and the levels of arsenic in their toenails, which show long-term exposure to the chemical.

Of the 120 foods the researchers looked at, four turned out to significantly raise people's arsenic levels: beer, white wine (and to a lesser extent, red wine), Brussels sprouts and dark-meat fish such as salmon, tuna and sardines, according to the study, published last month in the Nutrition Journal.

The most significant source of arsenic in most people's diets is drinking water. The new study is the first to take into account the levels of arsenic in the participants' household water when looking at the amount of arsenic coming from foods.

The results suggest that diet can be an important source of people's arsenic exposure over the long term, regardless of arsenic concentrations in their drinking water, the researchers said.

Read the whole story

Leftovers ensure Thanksgiving feast continues

By Jenn Harris, Los Angeles Times

It's the morning after Thanksgiving and you're still in your flannel pajamas. You creep into the kitchen and open the fridge to find what's left of last night's turkey. It's too tempting not to tear off a couple pieces of the leg meat to eat cold before the rest of the family comes down to attack and grab their share to put in sandwiches, pot pies and omelets.

The thought of Thanksgiving leftovers is reason enough to roast a turkey twice the size needed to feed your dinner party. And the possibilities for what to do with that leftover meat are endless.

If you're looking for sandwich ideas, Deputy Food Editor Betty Hallock has some suggestions. She asked three Los Angeles chefs how they would reinvent the turkey sandwich. Ricardo

Zarate of Mo-Chica and Picca came up with a recipe for a roasted turkey sandwich with fried sweet potatoes, jalapeno-cilantro aioli. It comes piled high with avocado on a buttery brioche bun.

Read the whole story

K's Kitchen: Mango salsa worth the effort

By Kathryn Reed

I admit that 99.9 percent of the time I buy salsa. With there being so many choices of tasty fresh salsas to choose from, it is so much easier than making it from scratch.

However, when it comes to fruit salsas, hands-down I would rather have a homemade one.



The recipe below is from Edible Communities, which has publications all over the country.

I just recently stumbled across this recipe again. I remember making it for friends who don't like heat as much as I do. Penny and Sue still say one good-size pepper is all this recipe needs. I put in two. I also used two limes instead of the one it called for. Mangos should be soft like a ripe peach and be more red than green on the outside.

This salsa works well served with fajitas. And chips are

always a good choice for any salsa.

Mango Mint Salsa

2 C mango, diced

3/4 C red onions, minced

1 red bell pepper, seeded and diced

2 jalapeño chile peppers, seeded and diced

1 bunch fresh mint, chopped

1 lime, juiced

In a medium bowl, place all of the ingredients and mix gently.

Chill the salsa in the refrigerator at least one hour before serving.

Study: Calif. kids regularly eat fast food, soda consumption declining

By Cynthia H. Craft, Sacramento Bee

The good news is that overall soda consumption is on the decline among California's young children. The flip side? A new UCLA survey says kids are still being fed fast food meals on a regular basis.

Though kids' fast food meals and sodas usually come packaged together, there's been a sharp decline in kids ages 2 to 5 drinking sugar-sweetened beverages, UCLA researchers said. Ten

years ago, about 40 percent of young children drank soda the previous day of the survey. By 2009, that proportion dropped to 16 percent.

But the decrease in soda drinking, seen as a positive by nutritionists, is offset by a steady rate of fast food meal consumption, the survey found. In both 2007 and 2009, about two-thirds of California children ate at least one fast food meal daily, and about 29 percent ate the meals twice a week or more.

Researchers concerned about children’s health say the fast food habit is a factor in rising obesity rates for children. About one-fourth of California kids ages two to five are overweight or obese.

Read the whole story