Coffee bean glut driving down prices

By Marvin G. Perez and Luzi Ann Javier, Bloomberg

Like many coffee growers, Nils Solorzano Villareal figured it made sense to expand output as prices surged to a 14-year high in 2011. Now, the 71-year-old Costa Rican farmer is harvesting at a loss.

Record crops from Brazil to Vietnam are compounding a global surplus that drove prices down 26 percent this year, heading for a third annual decline and the longest slump in two decades. Solorzano, who added trees and fertilizer to expand his farm to 9.9 acres from 3, said he is spending $140 to produce each 132-pound bag of arabica-coffee beans that sells for about $132.

“We increased investments in the last few years because we thought prices will stay high,” Solorzano said by telephone from Montes de Oro, where he has been farming for three decades on Costa Rica’s Pacific slopes about 81 miles north of the capital, San Jose. “We’re still hopeful that prices will rebound at some point. We can’t do anything else because the land around us is very hilly.”

Global output will exceed consumption for a fourth season in 2014, the longest glut in 11 years, the U.S government estimates. The price of arabica traded in New York will drop 11 percent to 95 cents a pound by March, the lowest since July 2006, based on the median of 13 forecasts in a Bloomberg survey of traders. Lower costs improved profit margins for Green Mountain Coffee Roasters Inc., while Starbucks Corp. and Kraft Foods Group cut the retail cost of packaged beans.

Read the whole story

Study: Environment affects how much you eat

By Amanda L. Chan, Huffington Post

If you're trying to resist the mashed potatoes, macaroni and cheese and bacon at the buffet, you might want to try filling your plate with fruits and vegetables first, a study suggests.

Researchers at Cornell University found that when people ate healthy foods first at a buffet, they consumed fewer high-calorie foods later on in the meal.

"The first three food items a person encountered in the buffet comprised 66 percent of their total plate, regardless of whether the items were high or low-calorie foods," study researcher Brian Wansink, a behavioral economist and professor at the University, said in a statement.

The study, published in the journal PLOS ONE, included 124 people who were eating at one of two breakfast buffets. In the first buffet, healthy foods like low-fat yogurt, low-fat granola and fruit were presented first. In the second, unhealthier foods such as cheesy eggs, bacon and fried potatoes were presented first. All the diners were told they could only make one trip to the buffet.

Researchers found that nearly all the participants offered the fruit first – 86 percent – took it. But when the fruit was offered last, only about half – 54 percent – took it.

Read the whole story

Food needed for Bread & Broth’s Turkey Day dinner

Thanksgiving dinner – always the Monday of the holiday week – marks Bread & Broth’s 25th year of serving the community meal.

The Nov. 25 feast at St. Theresa Catholic Church in South Lake Tahoe is from 4-5:30pm in Grace Hall. Everyone is welcome.

Food donations are being sought. Needed items include: celery, carrots, onions, oranges, fresh cranberries, fried onion topping, sausage, canned sweet potatoes, marshmallows, and butter.

Cash donations are also accepted.

Arrange to drop off contributions by Nov. 22 by calling Kathi at (530) 541.2551 or leaving donations at the church office on weekdays between 9am-noon and 1-4pm. More than 300 are expected at the Thanksgiving meal.

For more info, contact Diane Weidinger at (775) 588.3993 or dianeweidinger@yahoo.com.

‘Natural’ disappearing from

food labels

By Mike Esterl, Wall Street Journal

Now you see them. Now you don’t. Food products labeled as “natural” are starting to disappear.

A growing number of food and drink companies are quietly removing “all natural” claims from packages amid lawsuits challenging the “naturalness” of everything. Mike Esterl reports on the News Hub. Photo: Naked Juice.

“Natural” Goldfish crackers will soon be just Goldfish. “All Natural” Naked juice is going stark Naked. “All Natural” Puffins cereal is turning into plain old Puffins.

A growing number of food and drink companies including PepsiCo Inc. are quietly removing these claims from packages amid lawsuits challenging the “naturalness” of everything from potato chips to ice cream to granola bars.

Food labeled “natural” raked in more than $40 billion in U.S. retail sales over the past 12 months. That is second only to food claiming to be low in fat, according to Nielsen. A survey last year by Mintel, another market research company, found 51% of Americans seek out “all natural” when food shopping.

The problem is, “natural” has no clear meaning.

Read the whole story

Food stamps not enough for healthy diet

By Eli Saslow, Washington Post

McALLEN, Texas – They were already running late for a doctor's appointment, but first the Salas family hurried into their kitchen for another breakfast paid for by the federal government. The 4-year-old grabbed a bag of cheddar-flavored potato chips and a granola bar. The 9-year-old filled a bowl with sugary cereal and then gulped down chocolate milk. Their mother, Blanca, arrived at the refrigerator and reached into the drawer where she stored the insulin needed to treat her diabetes. She filled a needle with fluid and injected it into her stomach with a practiced jab.

"Let's go," she told the children, rushing them out of the kitchen and into the car. "We can stop for snacks on our way home."

The family checkup had been scheduled at the insistence of a school nurse, who wanted the Salas family to address two concerns: They were suffering from both a shortage of nutritious food and a diet of excess – paradoxical problems that have become increasingly interconnected in the United States, and especially in South Texas.

For almost a decade, Blanca had supported her five children by stretching $430 in monthly food stamp benefits, adding lard to thicken her refried beans and buying instant soup by the case at a nearby dollar store. She shopped for "quantity over quality," she said, aiming to fill a grocery cart for $100 or less.

But the cheap foods she could afford on the standard government allotment of about $1.50 per meal also tended to be among the least nutritious – heavy in preservatives, fats,

salt and refined sugar. Now Clarissa, her 13-year-old daughter, had a darkening ring around her neck that suggested early-onset diabetes from too much sugar. Now Antonio, 9, was sharing dosages of his mother's cholesterol medication. Now Blanca herself was too sick to work, receiving disability payments at age 40 and testing her blood-sugar level twice each day to guard against the stroke doctors warned was forthcoming as a result of her diet.

Read the whole story

Mancuso shares food strategies for winning gold

By Access Hollywood

Olympic champ Julia Mancuso is going for gold at the upcoming Winter Olympics in Sochi.

"I can feel the difference between winning silver and gold. I really want to win gold, so I put a lot of pressure on myself to do that. I'm in a better position [than the last Winter Olympics]. I'm healthier. I'm skiing faster and more consistent. I feel better prepared," Mancuso reveals to Healthy Hollywood.

The 29-year-old is getting ready to hit the slopes and begin her last push before Sochi. She tells me the most competitive time of the year is right after Thanksgiving through the Olympics. So, the next three weeks are crucial.

"I'm pretty busy it is my last opportunity to get my equipment dialed in and then I get a quick break for a week and then I

won’t be home until springtime. For me, I need to get all those days on the snow and in the gym and feel really healthy,” Mancuso adds.

Read the whole story

Impossible not to be wowed by Chef Irvine



Chef Robert Irvine proves he has a soft side at the South Lake Tahoe Food and Wine Festival. Photos/Jessie Marchesseau

By Jessie Marchesseau

STATELINE – Chef Robert Irvine’s down-to-business attitude on “Restaurant: Impossible” can make him seem intimidating and

unapproachable. In person, he is just the opposite.

An intimate dinner of less than 150 people gave guests an opportunity to interact personally with the chef. Irvine called the experience “bonding time” as he made it a point to stop at every table to chat, answer questions, take photos and sign copies of his cookbook.

At the various events, dressed in his signature jeans and T-shirt, Irvine took time to sign hundreds of autographs and have his photo taken with just as many fans.

Eating and drinking were the main activities at the 4th annual South Lake Tahoe Food and Wine Festival Nov. 9-10 at Harrah’s and Harveys casinos. The sold-out two-day festival offered guests a variety of experiences to choose from. Seven events allowed attendees a chance to learn something, taste something, drink something and/or rub elbows with a celebrity chef.

This year’s star was Irvine, host of the Food Network television show “Restaurant: Impossible”. Each year the festival highlights a different celebrity chef. Past years have brought names such as Martin Yan and Anthony Bourdain.



A chocolate sculpture

by pastry chef Cathy Haynes featured at the Grand Market.

Saturday evening's Chef in the Kitchen event was a chance for diners to enjoy a three-course meal created by Irvine. He said he wanted the menu to be simple and classic.

"Doing the simplest thing and doing it well always wows people," Irvine said.

Harrah's pastry chef Cathy Haynes said Irvine came into the kitchens to introduce himself and shake hands with the rest of the staff, something that does not always happen when the celebrity chefs come to town.

"Robert Irvine was incredible. He went way above and beyond what we asked him to," said John Packer, director of entertainment and public relations for Harrah's and Harveys, told Lake Tahoe News. "He's just really a great performer."

At Saturday night's Chef on Stage, Irvine on multiple occasions wandered through the audience of more than 700. He answered cooking questions, personal inquiries, business questions and spent time joking with audience members. One heckler was asked to join him on stage and stand there holding a fire extinguisher for several minutes. Another he brought up and asked to do an ape impression, but not before Irvine did one himself.

When he wasn't mingling with the guests, Irvine was on stage cooking. Chef on Stage was an hourlong cooking demonstration. The night's lesson was seared halibut with haricot verts potato salad. Steam rose from his saucepans as the smell of sautéing garlic and onions wafted through the South Shore Room. The fish, on the other hand, did not smell. Irvine even walked around asking people to smell the raw halibut fillet in his hand to emphasize his point: fresh fish does not smell

fishy.

The finished product was what Irvine called “sexy food.” Just the smell in the room could make you salivate.

“Food is supposed to be fun and fictional, or factual, or just good,” he told the audience.

Irvine said he chose halibut for the Chef on Stage demonstration because he gets more questions on how to cook good fish than any other cooking inquiry.

“I tried to show everyone something simple and how to do it well,” he said.



Braised veal breast with balsamic fig conserve and candied bacon by chef Eric Vaughn.

Irvine calls himself a simple cook, with comfort foods being his favorite things to cook, and eat.

But Irvine was not the only chef serving up delectable delights during the festival. While he may have been the headliner, Saturday’s Grand Market is the anchor event for the

entire weekend. More than a thousand people filed into the Harrah's special events center for a chance to sample the selection of gourmet food, wines and liquors.

The market is a chance for Caesars Entertainment, the company that owns Harrah's and Harveys, to showcase chefs from various properties. Small booths lined the walls of the event center, each one offering a different tapas-sized treat or tasting-sized beverage.

Chefs from Caesars properties in Las Vegas, Reno and Tahoe demonstrated their creative talents with dishes specially invented for the event. More than one person, including my companion, declared the braised veal breast with balsamic fig conserve and candied bacon the best food there. Prepared by Eric Vaughn, executive chef for Paris, Bally's and Planet Hollywood casino-hotels in Las Vegas, the dish is something he described as incredibly labor-intensive. Even though it had rave reviews from tasters, will never make it onto the menu at any of his restaurants.

By far the most popular food station of the market, and my personal favorite, was Haynes'. It was the only one offering sweets, and unlike most tasting stations which only offered one dish, she and her staff prepared more than half a dozen bite-sized options for guests to try. In this case, Haynes said some of the more popular ones might actually make their way onto menus.

Also on her table were two chocolate showpieces created by Haynes and her pastry staff: a crate of "South Lake Tahoe Wine" bottles surrounded by fall leaves and a tall steam punk-esque sculpture with various gears and parts, both made entirely of chocolate.

"This is such a fun event," she said of the festival. "It's the one time of year we get to be creative."

In between tastings, visitors were entertained by cooking

demonstrations with Andy LoRusso, “The Singing Chef,” and an appearance and photo opportunities with Irvine. The aroma of LoRusso’s Bellini’s Pasta Norma filled the air, as did the sounds of him singing Italian songs while he cooked.

We spent nearly two hours tasting gourmet delights and mouth-watering wines, and though the Grand Market is just the kickoff event for an entire weekend of culinary affairs, we left feeling satisfied and humming the old-world Italian tunes of The Singing Chef.

FDA banning most artificial trans fats

By Sabrina Tavernise, New York Times

The Food and Drug Administration last week proposed measures that would all but eliminate artificial trans fats, the artery clogging substance that is a major contributor to heart disease in the United States, from the food supply.

Under the proposal, which is open for public comment for 60 days, the agency would declare that partially hydrogenated oils, the source of trans fats, were no longer “generally recognized as safe,” a legal category that permits the use of salt and caffeine, for example.

That means companies would have to prove scientifically that partially hydrogenated oils are safe to eat, a very high hurdle given that scientific literature overwhelmingly shows the contrary. The Institute of Medicine has concluded that there is no safe level for consumption of artificial trans fats.

“That will make it a challenge, to be honest,” said Michael R. Taylor, deputy commissioner for foods at the FDA.

Dr. Margaret A. Hamburg, the agency’s commissioner, said the rules could prevent 20,000 heart attacks and 7,000 deaths from heart disease each year.

Read the whole story

Mediterranean diet boosts mind and body

By Allison Aubrey, NPR

For all of us nearing middle age, or slogging through it, yes, there is a benefit in eating a Mediterranean-style diet rich in fish, nuts, vegetables and fruit.

A new study published in the Annals of Internal Medicine finds that women who followed this pattern of eating in their 50s were about 40 percent more likely to reach the later decades without developing chronic diseases and memory or physical problems, compared to women who didn’t eat as well.

Researchers tracked the dietary habits and lifestyles of more than 10,000 women, beginning in late middle age. Every two years, the women filled out detailed surveys describing their diets.

Over the next 15 years, researchers kept tabs on who among the women developed a whole host of chronic diseases including Parkinson’s, cancer, lung and pulmonary disease. The women were also given a battery of memory tests, and researchers also evaluated physical function, meaning the women’s

abilities to move around and stay active.

“This really suggests that a healthy diet can help improve multiple aspects of your health and your ability to function when you’re older,” says Fran Grodstein researcher of Harvard School of Public Health.

Meir Stampfer, co-author of the new paper, says he was “surprised by the magnitude of the effects” in the study, given what we already know about the heart benefits of a Mediterranean style diet.

Read the whole story

Free meal on Sundays in South Tahoe

Tahoe Wellness Center and Hot Gossip are teaming together to offer a free community meal to everyone.

Donations will be accepted.

The meals are every Sunday from 1:30-3pm at 3445 Lake Tahoe Blvd., South Lake Tahoe.