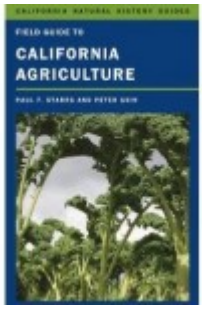
Guidebook takes new approach to Calif. agriculture

By Carlos Alcalá, Sacramento Bee

The authors of the first-ever “Field Guide to California Agriculture” want people to think about where their food is coming from – and to think about it in new ways.



The guide, recently published by the University of California Press, opens with something that looks little like a field guide and nothing like agriculture.

A two-page spread shortly after the table of contents looks like nothing so much as an array of paint chips.

The grid of 160 little colored squares begins with what looks like an amethyst purple and ends with school-bus yellow.

Read the whole story

Baccarat does not succumb to pressures of recession

By Liz Benston, Las Vegas Sun

No casino game may be more intimidating than baccarat, typically played at high limits in elegant, sequestered rooms with tuxedoed dealers, attentive casino managers and

waitresses quick to appear with fine cocktails.



It was played by European royalty in the 13th century and by James Bond in the 20th, memorialized in such stylish films as “Dr. No” and “Casino Royale.”

And yet, for a game wrapped in mystique, baccarat is one of the simplest games in a casino. Were it repackaged as a carnival game at a county fair, its aristocratic trappings stripped away, it could be called “Count to Nine.”

The baccarat played in the United States and many other countries requires no skill. Moves are forced by the cards players are dealt. Simply put, the two- or three-card hand closest to the value of nine wins, excluding face cards and “10” cards that are worth zero.

Read the whole story

Book delves into Cash’s lyric about Reno

By Susan Skorupa, Reno Gazette-Journal

The reaction usually started with the opening notes of the song, eight dark tones leading up to the first line of lyric.

Johnny Cash’s audiences waited for it – the second verse of “Folsom Prison Blues,” the line “but I shot a man in Reno just to watch him die.” He’d sing it, they’d hoot or bay like coyotes and clap until their hands hurt.



Johnny Cash

Northern Nevada audiences took it very personally. They'd wait. They'd hold their breath. He'd sing the line. They'd just go nuts, stomping and shouting. In 1995, Cash told a Reno Gazette-Journal reporter that on the stage he could feel the audience anticipation, feel it build from the opening chords.

Caleb Cage has taken the line personally, too.

Cage was a child in Reno when he first heard "Folsom Prison Blues" and was enraptured by the song's Reno connection – the "Reno line."

Read the whole story

Christmas tree lot wouldn't be the same without Benny

By Kathryn Reed

Choosing the perfect Christmas tree is important. Sometimes it takes the right person to find the right tree.

For many people, Benny Kunibe is that person.

Kunibe, who turned 93 this month, is the man behind the Optimist's annual Christmas tree lot near El Dorado Beach.



Benny Kunibe

“People will come to the tree lot and only want to talk to Benny to get the best tree,” said Terry Powers, a fellow Optimist.

The tree lot has been an institution in South Lake Tahoe since 1963. The club had to find some way to raise money after taking a huge financial loss with a car race that was supposed to raise money but instead created a deficit of thousands of dollars and required lawyers to get out of the mess.

The lot was first at the old Nevada Lumber Company, where CVS at the Y is. Only local trees were sold. Many came from the Wrights Lake area. At the time it was the only tree lot in town.

The Optimist has sold trees up and down Highway 50, including in Nevada, and inside the Fremont Center when it was a dance hall. The lot has been in its current location since the early 1990s.

Although there are other places to buy trees on the South Shore that are less expensive, the Optimist lot is the only one to give money back to the community.

“This is the only big money maker we have. It’s how we give money to the kids,” Kunibe said.

The Optimist Club is all about raising money for various youth groups in the area. At the club’s meeting on Nov. 17 there is discussion about a request from the Pop Warner Cheer group needing money. (It’s mostly men in attendance upstairs at

Steamers.) They talk about how at times there are as many young girls cheering on the sidelines as there are boys playing football. The cheerleaders are getting their money.

It’s a business meeting with levity. Kunibe has what looks like a Clorox bottle turned into a decorated pig where fines are paid into the back end. He is getting people to put in money for infractions that aren’t entirely evident to the uninitiated.

“The guys keep me young,” Kunibe said.

But the guys wonder what they would do without their senior most member – in terms of age and membership.

“Benny remembers all the supplies we need,” Powers said.

This means shopping after the holidays for deals on things like tree stands that will be used the following year. It means knowing how many hot dogs or packets of hot cocoa to have for various events.

Kunibe has had an interesting life, though not always easy. During World War II he was placed in an internment camp in Colorado. In 1955, he moved to Lake Tahoe from Sacramento.

He started off working at George’s Basque restaurant. He worked for a time at the old Lampson Store. Kunibe lived behind the store in a 600-square-foot house with his wife and four kids.

When Fritz Wenck joined Optimist in 1970, Kunibe was still sprinting around the bases for the club’s softball team.

Baseball is very much a love of Kunibe’s to this day. He’s wearing a San Francisco Giants hat and lights up when questioned about this year’s team.

“They made history,” he says of the World Series champs. Still, though, it’s Willie Mays who he has a soft spot for.

When Kunibe isn’t doing something for the Optimist Club he can be found fishing on Fallen Leaf or Topaz lakes.

“Age doesn’t mean a thing. I don’t sit around,” Kunibe said.

He definitely won’t be sitting much for the next few weeks as the Optimist Club sells Christmas trees. The lot opened Friday. It is open weekdays noon-8pm and weekends 10am-8pm. Snow can change the hours up a bit.

“Benny enjoys life and he wants to make sure everyone else does,” Powers said.

Experiment turns olive oil into soaps, lotions

By Bill Lindelof, Sacramento Bee

A graduate of UC Davis is helping her alma mater produce soaps and lotions made with olive oil from campus trees.

The olive oil based body-care products – lotion, soap, body butter and lip balm – are now on sale at the UC Davis bookstore. Proceeds will support the UC Davis Olive Center’s research and education program.

The olive oil used in the products, which range in price from $4 to $12.95 each, would otherwise have gone to waste.

Read the whole story

Even the wealthy looking for deals on ski lodging

By Scott Condon, Aspen Times

Even the rich want a bargain on a ski vacation – and they're getting them at high-end resorts across the West this year.

An increasing supply of four- and five-star hotel rooms and stagnant demand from travelers is forcing properties to drop prices or add value to try to entice guests, according to tourism officials.



Ritz-Carlton
at Northstar

Aspen's premiere property, The Little Nell hotel, isn't immune to the trend. The five-star hotel owned by the Aspen Skiing Co. is offering free lift tickets and extra nights for customers throughout the ski season, with blackout dates only during Christmas and Presidents Day weekend. High rollers can get two free lift tickets for each full day they are at the hotel, or they can book four nights and get a fifth night free.

The deals are being offered to guests who can afford to stay in a hotel where a standard, town-view room goes for $840 per night in March.

"I think everybody is out there looking for a deal, even those

that don’t need a deal,” said John Speers, Little Nell general manager.

The St. Regis Aspen also touts an Aspen ski package that includes two adult lift tickets per day, as well as $50 food and beverage credit, to customers who book at least two nights.

Read the whole story

National Auto Museum honors Bill Harrah’s centennial

By Mel Shields, Sacramento Bee

As we near the centennial of the birth of William Fisk Harrah (1911-1978), Reno should be the site of several commemorative celebrations.



Nothing yet out of his first hotel, Harrah’s Reno, but the National Automobile Museum is honoring him with a “Bill Harrah Legendary Collection” exhibition through Dec. 11, 2011.

In fact, the entire museum is based on the Harrah Automobile Collection, which was broken up and mostly sold off after his death. Harrah owned 1,400 automobiles in what has been called the largest and most historically significant collection in history.

These days, most visitors pay little attention to the museum’s subtitle, The Bill Harrah Collection, and it’s about time to

remind them, or educate them, as to the man himself.

This exhibit hardly does him justice – a few showcases of memorabilia, some explanatory and educational posters, some showgirl outfits, and a stunning centerpiece, a 1933 Duesenberg originally owned by Tahoe's George Whittell – but it is a good introduction to Harrah and his legacy, as is the film, running on the hour, which accompanies it.

Read the whole story

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2 locations for Barton's Tree of Remembrance

The annual Tree of Remembrance Interfaith Ceremony hosted by Barton Hospice and the Barton Foundation is Dec. 8 in South Lake Tahoe and Dec. 10 in Carson Valley. Attendees have the opportunity to reflect on the memories they share and celebrate the lives of those they have lost.

Attendees will be able to say the name of the person in remembrance and light a candle in their honor.

Music and song will be performed by OneVoice of Unity at the Lake at both locations.

Handmade porcelain ornaments, glazed with iridescent mother-of-pearl, will be available for $25. All proceeds benefit Barton Hospice, a specialty program providing comfort and relief of symptoms to those who are terminally ill.

South Tahoe:

Dec. 8

5:30 to 6:30pm

Lake Tahoe Community Presbyterian Church

(2733 Lake Tahoe Blvd.)

Gardnerville:

Dec. 10

5:30 to 6:30pm

United Methodist Church

(1375 Centerville Lane)

For questions or information, call (530) 543.5909.

Hundreds gather to break bread at early Thankgiving

By Kathryn Reed

Oh, the aromas. There is something so incredibly distinctive about the flavors of Thanksgiving dinner melding together. It should be bottled to be experienced more than once a year.

Spilling onto the sidewalk was a line Monday night to get this meal.

With expectations of serving more than 300 people, the Bread & Broth crew arrived at the kitchen of St. Theresa Church in South Lake Tahoe at 10am Nov. 22. About 25 hours of prep time had gone into the meal before the nearly four-dozen volunteers started work Monday.



Richard Carpenter says a lot of people are in dire need, but pride doesn't allow them to admit it. Photos/Kathryn Reed

This was Michael Giordano's first year in the kitchen. Friday was all about spending seven hours chopping 47 loaves of bread for stuffing. (See recipe below.) He wanted to help make a difference in the lives of people who don't necessarily know where their next meal will come from.

"You see it in their face, they say thank you," Giordano said from the kitchen as he watched the line of people fill their plates with all the traditional fixings.

Richard Carpenter can't say enough good things about his first Thanksgiving dinner at Bread & Broth.

"This was awesome," he said scraping leftovers into a container to take home to those who couldn't make it to the meal. "It couldn't have gotten better if you made it yourself at home."

Carpenter has been coming to the Monday night dinners for about six months. He's out of work. He's being evicted. He has no money to put gas in his truck. And yet, his brown eyes are

warm and soft, seeming to contradict the harsh reality of his current state of affairs.

He’s lived in South Lake Tahoe for 22 years, first coming here from San Jose to help build Embassy Suites.

Carpenter is sitting with friends – a father with his 18-year-old son. They are quiet. The teen wants to work but can’t find any. The father needs meds from having had hernia surgery. He doesn’t have the $40 for the pills.

But their stomachs are full. At least this one night.

John Tussey has been in the area for 16 years. He comes every Monday for this hot meal that is served free by this nonprofit that relies on food and monetary donations from the community to keep it going.

Last year about 250 people came for the Thanksgiving meal. The need keeps growing. Not just this night, but most Mondays.

“We are seeing some new faces and some familiar faces,” said Diane Weidinger, ringleader of Bread & Broth and head chef.

Dinner rolls donated from Sugar Pine Bakery sit on a baking sheet next to a massive container of homemade cranberries. Apple and pumpkin pies have arrived at a bargain price from the Barton Café. Lake Tahoe Wildlife Care has donated fruit and vegetables. Raley’s had a big delivery Monday.

Weidinger only has one complaint about the dinner – the use of instant mashed potatoes.

Still, those seated at the long dining tables don’t mind. Not a morsel is left on their plates.

The following is from Diane Weidinger, the force behind Bread & Broth.

I make stuffing once a year, for 300 people. This recipe is

for 12 cups, a normal size amount for a family meal. Naturally, I use my Heart Rock Herb & Spice Poultry/Dressing spice blend.

Classic American Bread Stuffing Bread & Broth Style

24 slices of bread (white, wheat, multi grain mixture is the best)

1 lb. sweet Italian or sage pork sausage (a combo is nice) cooked

2 C celery ribs, finely chopped

1 C large onion, finely chopped

½ C carrots, finely chopped

½ C chopped fresh parsley

1½ T poultry seasoning

1 tsp salt

½ tsp pepper

½ C dried cranberries

2 large eggs, beaten

¼ lb. (1 stick) unsalted butter, melted

½ C warm chicken broth and water

Cut bread into 1-inch pieces (it cuts easier if slightly frozen), toast on a cookie sheet pan in a 300 degree until dry, take care not to burn them. Sauté, using some of the sausage fat along with butter, the onions, celery and carrots until soft, starting with the celery and carrots first as they take a bit longer than the onions. Mix the bread, cooked sausage and vegetables, poultry seasoning, salt/pepper, and cranberries in a large bowl. Tossing with clean hands works

the best. Drizzle the eggs over the bread mixture and toss again. Mix the butter and chicken broth together and drizzle over the bread mixture. Continue to add warm water, a little at a time, until the stuffing is moist and just holds together when lightly pressed between the palms of your hands. Turn into a buttered baking dish, cover and bake for 45 minutes or until hot through (325 degree oven). Take off foil the last five minutes for a slightly crusty top.

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Tahoe Tails – Adoptable Pets in South Lake Tahoe

Duchess is a sweet, affectionate shorthaired cat, about 1 year old. She likes other cats. And look at those beautiful eyes.



Duchess is at the El Dorado County Animal Services shelter in Meyers, along with many other dogs, cats, and rabbits who are waiting for their new homes.

Call (530) 573.7925 for directions, hours, and other information on adopting a pet.

For spay-neuter assistance for South Tahoe residents, go to the website.

– Karen Kuentz