Opinion: The lessons of gluttony

By Sara Jenkins

As I write this, I'm still full.

I just returned from an extravagant Sunday lunch at my neighbors' house here in this small Tuscan town, where my parents first bought a tumbledown farmhouse in 1971. We feasted to celebrate my successful olive harvest. First we fired up their 300-year-old wood oven and cooked flatbreads. Then, as the oven cooled, we piled in traditional dishes like lasagna, roasted farm chickens, and potatoes coated with olive oil and aromatic herbs from the garden. We sat at a table laid for 15 people and covered with bottles of wine, baskets of bread, and trays of crostini and house-cured salumi. We struggled mightily not to overeat, knowing all the delicious courses that were to follow.

My neighbors and I had not enjoyed a meal this gluttonous together for many years. Harvest traditions have died as this remote hamlet moves into the 21st century. These are the traditions I discovered when I first met my neighbors, the Antolinis, in the early 1970s.

I was 8. My family had arrived for the summer just as the wheat harvest was getting underway, and we were quickly invited over to participate in the *trebbiatura*, or threshing of the wheat—no doubt because it was just assumed that every able-bodied adult in the community would join in the day's labor during the harvest.

Back then, my neighbors seemed to straddle the 19th and the 20th centuries. The old sharecropping system called *mezzadria*, which dated to the Middle Ages, was finally dying off. My neighbors owned their property; the patriarch Agostino bought

it with his World War I mustering-out pay. But many people in the village were still tenant farmers who did all the work on the farm and paid half their agricultural production to the landowner.

When my family arrived, we didn't understand what profound changes, good and bad, the demise of *mezzadria* would have on the lifestyles of our neighbors. They went from living without electricity or indoor plumbing—as basically slaves to the land, whether they owned the property or not—to owning cars, watching TV, and growing cash crops like tobacco to pay for it all.

The Antolinis had three children—the youngest of whom, Arnaldo, was 17 when we first met them. He was the first child to complete high school and remembered a childhood of abject poverty and struggle. Perhaps because they lived so frugally most of the time, feast days were celebrated without restraint.

We ate more food on a harvest day in a single meal then we ever consumed otherwise. There was wine and music and dance, shared freely and with joy, as though the experience cancelled out all the sober times.

Gluttony is about excess, taking more than what one needs or can comfortably consume. Yet excess can be intoxicatingly pleasurable. As a sensualist who believes in pleasure for its own sake, I don't consider it wrong to enjoy gorging on a fine Sunday afternoon after the harvest has been reaped and stored.

Gluttony has its place in a balanced life. It's really just enjoying to excess—and why is that wrong? Is it wrong to enjoy the sweet perfume of a summer's day on a fresh-cut lawn or field? Must we deny ourselves an apex of joy, since we have no ability to control the nadir of misery? Isn't the occasional indulgence in anything—including food—to be respected and enjoyed as part of living?

To me, the idea of self-induced sober deprivation is a sour vestige of puritanical thinking, a remnant of a time when people were expected to suffer the miseries of human existence by consoling themselves with the promise of a hereafter filled with glorious pleasure. We shouldn't deny ourselves the pleasures of the table in this life. We also probably shouldn't have gluttonous meals like the one I just enjoyed every day. But we can relish them on occasion and enjoy a feast like that for what it is—a sensual pleasure followed through to the extreme.

Sara Jenkins is a chef and the owner of two Italian restaurants in New York City, Porsena and Porchetta. She grew up all over the Mediterranean, mostly in Italy, and still returns to the family home in Tuscany every October to pick and press her family's 150 olive trees.

This essay is part of Why We Feast, a project of Zócalo Public Square.

Opinion: We need to stop drinking bottled water

By Annie Leonard, EcoWatch

Thursday was Use Less Stuff Day. It was created to inspire us to rethink the stuff we use. All our stuff—cell phones, clothes, cars, disposable chopsticks, and on and on—comes from somewhere and has to go somewhere when we throw it out. That takes a big toll on the planet, so thinking about how to use less is an excellent idea.

I’ve written a bunch about the real need to re-think our approach to the holidays and the mad shopping frenzy that comes with them.

When it comes to how we do spend our dollars, the product that jumps immediately to mind as obscenely wasteful, expensive and easily preventable is bottled water.

Let’s dig a bit deeper into this. It’s true that in some parts of the world the water quality is so poor that it’s unsafe for people to drink. There are definitely some places in the U.S. where fracking or petrochemical plants have ruined the local water supply, but even then there are better solutions than forcing the community to buy bottled water. For the most part, tap water in the U.S. is clean, readily available and thousands of times cheaper than the bottled stuff.

Read the whole story

Opinion: Calif. schools falling short on accountability

By George Miller, Sacramento Bee

We live in a progressive and forward-thinking state with a constitution that guarantees equity in our public education system. We have a lot to be proud of – successfully implementing the Common Core standards, expanding services for students in foster care and investing in early childhood education.

But we also should be striving every day to more fully deliver

on that constitutional promise of an equal education for every California child. Critical to that promise is a system rooted in accountability and transparency, and on that front, we are falling short.

On the same day this month that the State Board of Education agreed to a historic settlement agreement in Cruz v. California – a class-action lawsuit filed by 22 students who were being placed in fake classes – the board also considered rolling back key accountability measures.

Read the whole story

Opinion: Using cannabis to beat cancer

By Steve Kubby

Back in February 2012, I began preparing and using a cryogenic extract from fresh green cannabis plants. Not just any plants, but a medical strain that I have been breeding for the past 10 years that clearly had powerful medicinal benefits for me.

I had read a paper by Raphael Mechoulam, the discoverer of the most active ingredient in cannabis, tetrahydrocannabinol. In his paper, Mechoulam said that important cannabinoids are lost whenever cannabis is dried. That gave me the idea to make a full spectrum extract, using a cryogenic procedure I invented and my special strain of cannabis. I then took the resulting extract, kept it frozen, and then treated myself with a quarter teaspoon once each day.



Steve Kubby

On May 16, 2012, I suffered a mysterious and traumatic onset of violent vomiting. The attack lasted for four days and left me with severe ribcage pains and an inability to take more than a half breath. At the time I thought it was food poisoning, but since that event, all my cancer symptoms have ceased and it appears that this may have actually been the result of tumor necrosis, brought on by my use of this new form of cryogenically extracted cannabis medicine.

Apparently, the cartilage in my rib cage had been badly stretched by all the vomiting, creating an extraordinary level of discomfort. I could not sleep more than an hour and only then in a special position that did not push against my rib cage.

I conferred with my doctor, who diagnosed my issue as chondritis, an inflammation of the ribs' junctions to the breastbone or sternum that causes chest pain. No broken ribs, but because it was cartilage, I was told it would take much longer than a fractured rib to heal. Even worse, he diagnosed me with first stage pneumonia as a result of the restricted breathing in my left lung. I've had pneumonia three times in my life and each time I had to be hospitalized, so this new development really disturbed me. Worst of all, my cannabis had zero effect upon the illness and I had to endure constant pain and nausea the entire time.

Then, I remembered the non-psychoactive CBD lozenges being patented and developed by my biotech research company, KPAL, and decided to give them a try. I had no idea if they would

work since smoked cannabis had already failed me.

Within a few hours my pain level went from intense to mild. I could actually sleep in a bed. My lungs, kidneys and bowels quickly returned to normal function. Since then, I've been steadily improving on one lozenge a day.

I was so impressed with the relief I obtained from the CBD lozenges, that I wrote an article for ***Lake Tahoe News.***

Once I began to improve, I went back to my doctor and asked him, "who vomits for four days nonstop?" It seemed strange to me because in the past whenever I vomited it brought relief. This was very different. Then I asked my doctor, "Why had all my cancer symptoms abruptly ceased after this event?" When I told him I thought my tumor had died off, he was skeptical, but the absence of any symptoms since then was clearly something that could not be ignored.

Of course I realized that extraordinary claims require extraordinary proof, so I decided to wait a year and see if my symptoms returned. They did not and I began to experience excellent health. It's now been 3.5 years since this event and my health continues to improve. Recently, I took a lab test and was stunned to find out that my catecholamines in my blood have dropped from 10 times normal to normal. To the best of my knowledge, this is the first time in medical history that someone with adrenal cancer (malignant pheochromocytoma) has ever recovered from this terrible disease.

Steve Kubby is a resident of South Lake Tahoe.

Letter: Kirkwood workers make a difference

To the community,

Dan Deemer, a member of Kirkwood Mountain Resort's guest services team, was one of the sponsor crew volunteers who came to help at Bread & Broth's dinner on Nov. 2. After spending time on the serving line dishing out generous portions of chili and pizza, he took a moment to jot down his views on his time spent at Kirkwood's Adopt A Day dinner.

"The opportunity to directly give back to the local community is extremely rewarding," he wrote. "The appreciation of those who are in need can be seen in their smiling faces."

If you have ever attended a B&B evening meal at either St. Theresa Church Grace Hall on Monday or Lake Tahoe Community Church on Friday, the outpouring of thankfulness and the enjoyment of a hot, nutritious meal are difficult to overlook. For many who attend the meals, it may be their first hot meal in days or the give away bags filled with canned good, vegetables, fruit, dairy products and bread-pastries may be their only food for the next few days.

This dinner experience would not happened without the financial support of Kirkwood Mountain Resort via the Vail EpicPromise Grant program and the consistently great Kirkwood team members who volunteer their time to help at the dinners. Joining Deemer that evening from Kirkwood were product, sales and services supervisor Christina Nevill and manager Jarrett Morgan, and Wade Kriletick from guest services. These five volunteers worked really hard to make sure that all the guests that night went away happy with their dinner experience. Bread & Broth is very grateful for our Kirkwood partnership and always look forward to their sponsorship evenings.

Carol Gerard, Bread & Broth

Opinion: Transportation a conundrum in Tahoe

By Joanne Marchetta

This past summer was Lake Tahoe's busiest tourist season in recent memory. With the economy rebounding and major population growth projected for nearby metropolitan areas, this summer is also a harbinger of change. We must be prepared to meet the challenges of increased visitation in the future.

Lake Tahoe has growth caps. But Reno, Sacramento, the Bay Area, and other nearby cities are all expected to continue growing over the next 20 years, putting millions more people within a day's drive of Lake Tahoe. If those projections prove accurate, we can expect to see many more people visiting Lake Tahoe for its world-class scenery and recreation.



Joann
Marchetta

Tourism sustains Lake Tahoe's businesses, economy, and communities. But visitation to our rural area also poses challenges for our environment, limited infrastructure, and

public services.

Residents know that every tourism season the highways around Lake Tahoe become congested with vehicles. As hundreds of thousands of people travel here, we see increased demand for access to our favorite recreation sites, creating challenges for parking, travel, and, ultimately, the well-being of our treasured natural resources.

We must continuously confront the question of how to keep people from loving Lake Tahoe to death, ensuring that it remains healthy while also ensuring it remains available for people to enjoy, particularly since approximately 90 percent of the Tahoe basin is publicly-owned land.

More than a century ago, the federal government decided not to make Lake Tahoe a national park, so we cannot simply put up a gate and limit entry to the Tahoe basin. It is imperative for us to be prepared to meet the challenges of increased tourism, and improving our transportation system is a critical part of that work.

A water quality improvement project Caltrans completed this autumn illustrates some of the competing needs we must balance to improve our highway corridors. This important project reduces erosion and stormwater pollution along seven miles of Highway 89. But the improvements also eliminated some roadside dirt parking areas that people have long used to access popular backcountry skiing on the West Shore.

That loss of parking created an outcry among backcountry skiers. The Tahoe basin offers world-class backcountry skiing, but while the sport has grown, parking and access to popular peaks have become increasingly challenging.

To make up for the lost parking, Caltrans and TRPA approved a project revision to create a 25-by-180 foot paved pullout. California State Parks announced it will plow the visitor center parking lot at D.L. Bliss State Park to provide winter

parking. For longer-term solutions, TRPA, skiers, and land management agencies are partnering to have a comprehensive conversation about ways to improve access to skiing locations.

Reducing stormwater pollution is and will remain a top priority because fine sediment from roads and developed areas is the leading cause of the decline in Lake Tahoe's famed clarity. But we believe that by working together those needs can be better balanced with the needs for summer and winter recreation access.

Fortunately, as we face these challenges, we are again updating our Regional Transportation Plan and taking steps to improve our transportation system.

The 2012 Regional Plan lays out the vision and incentives to make our community centers walkable and bikeable so people can get to work, school, stores, transit centers, and recreation areas without getting in a car. We're seeing progress on that front with new multi-use trails and new sidewalks and bike lanes on roads in our communities.

This summer, El Dorado County completed a shared use trail linking South Lake Tahoe and Meyers. And California recently awarded nearly $9 million in active transportation grant funding for the South Tahoe Greenway Shared Use Trail, Al Tahoe Boulevard Safety and Mobility Enhancement Project, and Fanny Bridge/State Route 89 Community Revitalization Project – projects that will make our communities more pedestrian and bicycle friendly.

Our ongoing highway corridor planning process is identifying projects and strategies to improve transit service and recreation access around Lake Tahoe so more people can get where they want to go without getting in a car.

We won't solve Lake Tahoe's transportation needs and environmental challenges by building bigger roads to handle more traffic. To maintain quality of life and recreation

experiences at Lake Tahoe, we need a comprehensive transportation system with vastly improved travel options: More options to and from the Tahoe Basin, regular transit service between our communities and recreation destinations, and walkable and bikeable town centers. That's just the sort of system we're working hard to develop. While we are making progress, it is time to double-down and come together around comprehensive funding and transit solutions to manage our growing number of visitors. Please join us in the effort and support transportation and transit funding in your community.

Joanne Marchetta is executive director of the Tahoe Regional Planning Agency.

Opinion: Why ISIS declared war on soccer

By Andrés Martinez

It's not surprising that the crazed "Soldiers of the Caliphate" terrorists selected the France-Germany soccer match at the Stade de France as the central target in their assault on Paris. For starters, the match was a high-profile attraction bringing together 80,000 fans, including French President Francois Hollande. As American moviegoers across generations can tell you (see "Black Sunday" or "The Sum of All Fears"), televised sports events present dramatic, desirable targets for terrorists.

Indeed, the Stade de France was the one target in Paris last Friday night where the terrorists must have known they'd encounter a level of security they might not (and ultimately did not, thankfully) overcome. Still they deemed it a

worthwhile attempt. At least one and possibly up to three suicide bombers sought to enter the stadium. The first bomber detonated his vest upon being stopped at a security perimeter. Two other suicide bombers blew themselves up outside the stadium; the thwarted bombers only took the life of one victim. The gruesome plan probably entailed sequencing the explosions inside the stadium in such a way that would have killed not only people seated nearby, but also thousands more in an ensuing panicked stampede.

There is another reason why Islamist fanatics intent on a war between civilizations would target a major soccer match: the sport's singular role in bridging western culture and Muslim youth.

Soccer is one form of global pop culture not driven by the United States, but it's still a potent Western influence. If terrorists in the Middle East spend any time fantasizing about attacking an NFL or NBA game, it'd only be because they know Americans care about those games. But soccer – the global sport centered on Europe's major leagues but drawing in players, fans, and business interests from most of the planet – is an obsession throughout the Muslim world.

The game also offers the most prominent example of successful cross-cultural assimilation within Europe. Some of the most prominent French and German stars in recent years – Germany's Mesmut Özil and Sami Khedira; France's Karim Benzema and Bacary Sagna – are Muslim celebrities of immigrant backgrounds.

The impressive diversity of Europe's soccer leagues and national teams has long been a potent force for disarming xenophobic anti-immigrant sentiment and racism across Europe. North African immigrants have never felt more welcome in France than when the entire nation rallied around Zinedine Zidane, the captain of the 1998 World Cup winning French squad. And it is no small cultural milestone for Turkish

immigrants in Germany to have millions of German fans wearing jerseys bearing the name of midfield artist Özil.

But the converse often gets overlooked: the impact of immigrant players on the mindsets of soccer fans across the Middle East and North Africa – and of crazed terrorists who thrive on the narrative that there is no compatibility between degenerate infidel societies and righteous Muslims.

The sport is a seductress of Muslim youth much to the chagrin of those eager to fend off Western influences. Across the Middle East, soccer has been a galvanizing force in the debates over whether girls should be allowed to play sports. Just look at any photos of large crowds milling about anywhere in the region – whether at a Syrian refugee camp in Jordan or an upscale mall in Dubai or Saudi Arabia – and you will invariably see some people sporting Real Madrid, Barcelona, Bayern Munich, or Manchester United jerseys.

European games are avidly watched across the region, courtesy of Qatari-owned beIN Sports, the same TV network broadcasting Spanish and French games to U.S. audiences. The success of so many Muslim and immigrant players in the English, Spanish, French, and German leagues provides a constant counter-narrative to tales of immutable estrangement and alienation between West and East. And it isn't just about players – business interests from Muslim countries (most prominently the airlines from the Gulf states) brand themselves through the sport, to a point where people in the Middle East (and as far away as Malaysia, in the case of some teams) proudly feel that certain fabled European clubs belong to them.

In some cases, they literally do. Paris' own iconic team, Paris Saint-Germain F.C., is now owned by Qataris.

The targeting of soccer by jihadists fighting modernity should only intensify as the game's influence continues to expand in the Muslim world. And when you look at the calendar of

upcoming major tournaments—with the next two World Cups slated for Russia and Qatar, and next summer's Euro Championship hosted by France, kicking off in the targeted Stade de France—security forces everywhere, not to mention lovers of the game, should consider last Friday night a declaration of war by the terrorists against the world's most beloved sport.

Andrés Martinez writes the Trade Winds column for Zócalo Public Square, where he is editorial director. He is also professor at the Walter Cronkite School of Journalism at Arizona State University.

Letter: Harrah's-Harveys workers help Bread & Broth

To the community,

The HEROs from Harrah's and Harveys lived up to their name and mission by hosting a Bread & Broth dinner on Oct. 26. HEROs, a Caesar Entertainment employee organization, is committed to having members volunteer at charitable causes and give back to their community. Through their generosity they are heroes to those who benefit from their support and concern.

Representing the casinos and their fellow HEROs members at their Adopt A Day dinner were Steve Campbell, Pat Frega, Debbie Neall, Nathan Scott and Darlene Winkelman. These five HEROs were a vibrant and helpful group. From packing the give-away bags to cleaning up after the dinner, the HERO volunteers were there for the benefit of the evening's dinner guests.

"It warms my heart to serve our community," said Winkelman. "I really enjoy being a part of the Bread & Broth experience."

The HEROs have been longtime supporters of the B&B program and generally sponsor two Adopt A Day of Nourishments dinners annually. Bread & Broth truly appreciates the HEROs commitment to our program and their help in continuing B&B's role of providing nutritious and well-balanced meals to those on the South Shore who struggle with filling just the basic needs in their lives.

For more B&B information, go **online** or find us on Facebook.

Carol Gerard, Bread & Broth

Opinion: Vet pleads for coddling to stop

By Richard Allen Smith, Esquire

For the last 14 years, uniformed Americans have been in some of the most challenging conditions imaginable. We've parachuted into Iraq, marched wearily through the mountains of Tora Bora, and slept in s– at Musa Qala. We've toppled dictators, trained counterterrorism forces in Africa, and killed the most dangerous terrorist in the world. And then, too many of us have come home and whined about every minuscule slight, offense, or lapse in judgment perpetrated against us while indulging in some of the most decadent of accommodations.

We've got to stop.

It's not entirely the fault of 21st century veterans that we demand to have our egos coddled. The desire early on to suppress dissent for the poorly justified conflicts in Iraq

and Afghanistan, plus a sense of collective guilt for the shameful treatment of Vietnam veterans, forced our nation to open its proverbial arms and wrap us veterans in soft, star-spangled blankets.

That is how we arrived at a place in American society where the roughest men and women our country can produce are babysat. Our supermarkets have reserved veteran parking spaces, despite handicapped spaces already existing for any veteran who actually needs accommodation. We grandstand for veteran employment programs without considering that the veteran unemployment rate is actually less than that of the general population. We rant about the broken promise of disability compensation while the Department of Veterans Affairs is awarding disability claims at the fastest rate in history. Even with all these faux controversies, we still manage to find time for manufactured outrage about gym wear and TV ratings gambits.

Read the whole story

Editorial: High-speed rail plan needs more transparency

Publisher's note: ***This editorial is from the Nov. 13, 2015, San Jose Mercury News.***

If a sunny outlook and the ability to ignore bad news were the only attributes needed to run a huge enterprise, California's high-speed rail project would be rolling along.

Because there's no doubt that Dan Richard, the California High-Speed Rail Authority's chairman, and Jeff Morales, the

authority’s chief executive, excel on both counts.

Richard’s irrational exuberance was on full display when the bullet train bosses solicited companies worldwide to form a partnership with the authority and got no takers – at least none willing to risk any of their own money.

Read the whole story