

Drought changes kitchen habits

By Kim Severson, New York Times

SANTA CRUZ – Andrea Nguyen, who writes cookbooks for a living, knows that making pho in a pressure cooker is not the solution to California’s drought. Still, developing a reasonable version of the Vietnamese noodle soup that can be made in less than an hour, with half the water, matters to her these days.

“We’re all trying to do what we can,” she said. “It’s all about consciousness.”

Across California, home cooks and restaurant chefs are adjusting to a new reality in kitchens where water once flowed freely over sinks full of vegetables, and no one thought twice about firing up a big pot of water for pasta.

The state is in the fourth year of a severe drought, but the reality of living with less water began hitting hard in the spring. For the first time, state officials ordered residents of every city and town to conserve water or face consequences.

Some residents had already taken the punishment into their own hands with drought shaming, using social media to call out people with well-watered lawns or other outward signs of excessive water consumption.

A culinary equivalent has yet to pop up, probably because running a kitchen is not as water-intensive as maintaining a yard or using the bathroom, where a bucket to collect water as the shower heats up has become an accepted part of home décor.

Yet the drought’s impact is being keenly felt in culinary matters, from how Californians cook and clean, to how they shop and even what foods they can find at the market.

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