

Striking foodie gold

By Keven Ann Willey, Dallas Morning News

MURPHYS -â€“ It’s not as well known as Napa or Sonoma, but the Mother Lode region of Northern California along the western side of the Sierra Nevada is just as rich in scenery, food and wine.

The natural beauty of this area stretching from Lake Tahoe south to Yosemite National Park is unsurpassed. And there are accommodations of all types, from comfortable campsites and budget hotels to quaint B&Bs and splashy resorts.

Read the whole story

Wines enhance nuances of PlumpJack’s cuisine

By Kathryn Reed

OLYMPIC VILLAGE – Don’t try this at home – having a different wine with each course. Do try it at PlumpJack at Squaw Valley, especially if you just have to walk down the hall to your room.

With the winter winemaker series about to get under way, the North Shore restaurant previewed the six wineries that will start arriving in January. Diners ordered off the regular menu, which will not be the case when the Napa Valley winemakers show up.



Grimaud Farms
Duckling at
PlumpJack.
Photo/Kathryn
Reed

Special meals will be prepared to complement the wines being showcased in the series. A representative from the winery will be at the Thursday events to dispense information about the wine – almost acting like a sommelier.

This way diners are not having to listen to a sermon from the winemaker or having to sit with strangers. Guests can sit with friends who aren't taking part in the winemaker event, but instead choose to order off the regular menu.

Executive Chef Rick Edge has been overseeing the kitchen since March. His desire is to make sure the food offerings reflect the season, with more hearty comfort foods to choose from this time of year.

A mix of regulars and tourists frequent the bar and restaurant. Olympian Jonny Moseley is a regular patron. The Crockett's Breeze (Grey Goose, lime, cranberry, Odwalla lemonade – \$10) is named after local Syd Crockett.

This particular night the first bottle to be uncorked is Champagne from Morlet Family. The sparkling wine has a sweet finish, but with little fizz at the end.

Next was the 2007 Viognier from Whetsone Wine Cellars.

Sue thought this was a perfect complement to her Caramelized

Day Boat Scallops (\$16).

“Oh my gosh, this is outrageous,” she said, barely putting her fork down in between bites.

My Roasted Winter Squash Soup (\$9) was a bit on the sweet side – almost like it had been artificially sweetened because it didn’t have a naturally sweet taste.

We both enjoyed the white wine.

Sue’s glass was then filled with a 2005 Pinot Noir from Nicholson Ranch while I had a 2003 Cabernet from Venge Vineyards. We each liked our own choice for the main course better than the other person – which meant we didn’t have to share.

Sue had the Grimaud Farms Duckling (\$33) with wild rice, dried strawberries and bittersweet orange sauce.

“It’s too yummy for words,” Sue said, trying to use her hands to help her describe her meal.

My Risotto Di Tre Formaggio (\$21) was incredibly rich and decadent. This mushroom ragout was buttery. The Cabernet was an excellent choice to pair with it.

Dessert was PlumpJack’s version of s’mores – which is worth saving room for. The same goes for the dessert wines.

For information about the winemaker dinners, call (530) 583.1578 or go to www.plumpjackcafe.com.

PlumpJack Winemaker Series:

Jan. 14 Venge Vineyards, Kirk Venge

Jan. 28 Whetstone Wine Cellars, Jamey Whetstone

Feb. 11 Dogwood Cellars, Doug Hackett

Feb. 25 Far Niente/Nickel & Nickel, Craig Norris

March 11 Morlet Family, Luc Morlet

March 25 Nicholson Ranch, Ramona Nicholson

North Shore eateries – the place for apres ski fun

Apres-ski activities can be just as memorable as the time spent on the slopes and North Lake Tahoe is keeping things lively with a fresh influx of eateries and watering holes and longtime favorites, offering even more options for posh cocktails, cold brews and unforgettable flavors.

The area's most anticipated opening is Manzanita at The Ritz-Carlton Highlands, Lake Tahoe. Located mid-mountain at Northstar-at-Tahoe, Manzanita will be helmed by Traci Des Jardins, the James Beard award-winning chef behind San Francisco's Jardiniere and Mijita Cocina Mexicana. Skiers and snowboarders can end their day with Des Jardins' signature French-inspired cuisine infused with mountain flavors created with organic ingredients and sustainable, locally grown meat and produce. Bound-to-be favorites include Liberty Farms duck meatballs with mission figs and Lucques olives and Dungeness crab sliders. Manzanita opens Dec. 9.

Tahoe City recently got a taste of Thai when Thai Kitchen opened this fall. The city's Cobblestone Center is also home to a new wine bar, Corkscrews Wine & Cheese Bar, with a sleek, modern look, boasting an impressive selection of boutique wine labels and cheese, including Cowgirl Creamery's Mt. Tam goat cheese.

Also new this winter is Squaw Valley's Cornice Cantina. Located in the old Red Dog at Squaw Valley USA, the Cantina serves authentic Mexican food and margaritas till midnight. The Village at Squaw's Twenty-Two Bistro & Bar celebrates its one-year anniversary this December and basks in the glow of KT-22. The eatery serves up small plates of New American cuisine as well as substantial entrees for skied-up appetites. The owner of the Village's Uncorked opened Soupa last year, which features affordable, house-made comfort foods from organic, sustainable ingredients.

Fat Cat Cafe in Tahoe City re-opened its doors last May after an extensive remodel. Guests can pick their poison from an extensive martini and cocktail menu at the cherry-wood bar and enjoy "share plates" with friends. Popular items include the Alley Cat, a dirty martini with blue cheese-stuffed olives; along with Thai lettuce wraps; and Fat Cat Mac, a four-cheese macaroni and cheese with smoked bacon, crimini mushrooms and truffle oil. Live music is featured Friday and Saturday evenings.

The masterminds behind Moody's Bistro will also be celebrating the one-year anniversary of Baxter's Bistro and Lounge in the Village at Northstar. Chef Mark Estee and JJ Morgan welcome hungry skiers and riders with live jazz and comfort food created with farm-to-table ingredients in a hip atmosphere. New this winter is an outdoor patio with fire pit and couches where revelers can keep warm with seasonal cocktails, such as the Naughty Cider.

Incline Village welcomed Bite in December 2007. The lounge-style bar and restaurant boasts a chic and dramatic atmosphere, specializing in small plate and American tapas. The bar creates artisan cocktails from scratch, using premium spirits, house-made infused syrups and fresh herbs and fruit. Locals swear by the Lemon Ginger Zinger and the Lime Basil Gimlet, as well as the Ahi Sliders with Arugula, Pickled Ginger and Wasabi Aioli. Truckee's FiftyFifty Brewing Company

also opened in 2007 and is the place to head for an authentic taste of Sierra-brewed beer. Local favorites include pints of Rockslide IPA, preferably served with huge plates of nachos, Belgian mussels and frites or bourbon-grilled shrimp over sweet potato fries.

Famous fixtures such as the Lone Eagle Grille, Gar Woods Grill and Pier, Moody's Bistro and Lounge and Big Water Grille still serve as beacons for post-slope revelers. It's Old Tahoe ambiance overlooking the waters of Lake Tahoe at the Hyatt Regency's Lone Eagle Grille in Incline Village, where winter enthusiasts rest their weary limbs next to stone fireplaces. The food is hearty and includes seared elk chop and rosemary grilled quail. Gar Woods in Carnelian Bay offers expansive lake views and Warm Woodys (the winter counterpart to their renowned slushy Wet Woody, which is available throughout the year). Moody's stylish setting exudes warmth while boasting one of the area's coolest atmospheres and menus. Located in the Truckee Hotel, Moody's is known for live music (including impromptu performances by Sir Paul McCartney), the Aviation Cocktail and the "Big Ass Pork Chop." Big Water Grille provides spectacular, panoramic lake views and a wine list with 200 different wines from around the world.

Winter enthusiasts have also long flocked to PlumpJack Cafe, Sunnyside and Caliente. Situated at the base of Squaw, PlumpJack remains an energetic scene where high-end city folk and local ski bums mingle over Crockett's Cool Breezes. Sunnyside Lodge's location right on the water continues to pique the interest of visitors, but it's the fish tacos and crispy zucchini sticks that keep them coming back. It's always animated at Caliente in Kings Beach, especially at their monthly tequila tastings hosted by distillery representatives.

Gizzies – perfect holiday, football snack

Publisher's note: *Reprinted with permission from the December 2008 Tahoe Mountain News.*

By Kathryn Reed

I call them gizzies because my Mom does. I called her last month to ask where the name came from. "That's what Gram Frances called them." My grandma isn't around anymore to be able to continue the name game.

I searched the Internet well past my bedtime trying to figure out the origin of gizzies because the dictionary I've had since high school graduation failed me. Dictionary.com failed me. I was led to a website about dogs. I was reading websites I really would rather never revisit.

Finally, one blog had a reference to the gizzies I was in search of. I'm letting this validate that my family is not alone in calling homemade Chex cereal party mix gizzies.

Mom's original recipe was cut off from a box of Chex cereal before I was born. "I've had it forever. We can easily say 45 to 50 years," Mom told me. The original calls for a carton of Chex-mates. I've never heard of that and Mom doesn't know if they still exist.

That recipe doesn't use pretzels, but Mom can't remember a time not having pretzel sticks in her gizzies. Nuts were optional way back when. Mom has always opted to skip them.

Gizzies are a great snack. The problem I have is they tend to turn into a meal because I get a bit repetitive with my "just one more handful" mantra.

The store bought stuff is icky, according to me and Mom. A

homemade batch is the way to go. It's great to have around during the holidays as an alternative to all the sweets, works well at Super Bowl parties and was a crowd pleaser Election Night.

Yes, gizzies are salty. Using unsalted butter would be one way to cutback sodium. In the future mine should be less salty. I'm not going to admit what I had written on my recipe card. Suffice it to say, it's been changed since last talking to Mom.

Gizzies keep for quite a while (in other people's houses) in an airtight container. Mom just shared a secret – warm the cereal before pouring on the butter mixture. This helps the butter better stick to the cereal.

Oh, and this is not a vegetarian snack. Regular Worcestershire sauce has anchovies. Vegan and vegetarian sauces are available on the Internet. I haven't looked locally, but I'd start with Grass Roots.

I use a pan like the one people use to cook a turkey in.

If you can't find each variety of cereal, just make sure you have 16 cups.

We've always used Lowry's Seasoned Salt.

Below is the current recipe my family uses. Happy Holidays!

Gizzies

4 C each corn, bran, wheat, rice Chex cereal

2 sticks butter

3 T Worcestershire sauce

2½ tsp seasoning salt

1 package pretzel sticks

Melt butter, stir in Worcestershire sauce and seasoning salt. Mix well. Pour mixture over warmed cereal that is in a roasting pan. Bake at 250 degrees for 45 minutes. Stir every 15 minutes.

Winemaker dinner at the Ketch

Winemaker's Dinner returns by popular demand on Dec. 9 at 6:30pm at the Fresh Ketch in South Lake Tahoe.

Enjoy a five-course menu permeated with signature seafood and paired with choice wines from Steele Vineyards. Tickets are \$65 per person or \$120 a couple.

With limited space, reservations are recommended at (530)541.5683.

Ben & Jerry's names flavor after snowboarder

Hannah Teter – Olympic snowboarding gold medalist from Sierra-at-Tahoe – has teamed up with Ben & Jerry's from her native Vermont. Maple Blondie is the ice cream maker's newest flavor in honor of Teter. It will be available for a limited time.

Feast fit for a kindergartner

By Kathryn Reed

Gobble, gobble, gobble might be what turkeys do, but it was what kindergartners at Sierra House were doing, too.

With Indian and turkey hats made of construction paper, and faces showing determination not to spill, the youngsters went from room to room filling their plates with turkey, corn bread, mashed potatoes, cranberry sauce and pumpkin pie.



Sierra House students load up their plates.

Photo/Kathryn Reed

This progressive feast has been going on for a few years at this South Lake Tahoe elementary school. Each of the Preppie K and kindergarten classes cook a dish that day at school. Only the turkey is cooked off-site by adults. When the feast is ready, they go from room to room loading up on edibles before returning to their classroom to indulge in the feast.

“I don’t want any of that,” one boy said. The adult in the room said saying, “No, thank you” is the proper way to respond to not wanting something. He corrected himself.

Manners were a large part of the lesson on this Thursday

before the real Thanksgiving“ even if the kids didn’t know it.

Pam Matteucci made sure none of her kids started eating until everyone was seated. Those seated first were to sit quietly with their hands in their laps. Before digging in they had to say “Happy Thanksgiving” to the person seated next to them.



Brandon
Leavens enjoys
his
Thanksgiving
feast.
Photo/Kathryn
Reed

“I like the turkey and popcorn. I like the popcorn because it’s salted,” Holly McLaughlin said. “I like the turkey because it’s meaty and juicy and I like meat.”

Brandon Leavens had no problem finishing his pie. He said it was really good and that his mom doesn’t make pumpkin pie. Max Szajner had his pie done before anything else on his plate

And like many adult Thanksgiving plates, some of the cranberry sauce was left behind.

“It shows the spirit of Thanksgiving Day because the Native Americans and pilgrims share their food,” explained Alison Riegel, one of the teachers.

The teaching of Thanksgiving was more than just a one-day lesson plan. Place mats were made in preparation for the meal; they were laminated so they could be reused. Necklaces that the kids wore were strung with colored macaroni. Hats were created. Classrooms were decorated.

Songs about turkeys were sung “ something about “gobble, gobble don’t eat me.” But no one took it literally.

Cranberry relish for the holidays

Publisher’s Note: *Reprinted with permission from the November 2008 Tahoe Mountain News.*

By Kathryn Reed

St. Theresa’s is known for many things – not all are religious in nature.

During the Angora Fire of summer 2007 a sense of community was even more evident at the Catholic church. By the end of the week more than 5,000 meals were cooked in its kitchen. Breakfast, lunch and dinner were available to anyone needing nourishment.

The Red Cross got its meals from the volunteers at the church, officials at the fire command post got food, meals were sent to hotels housing displaced locals. Restaurants and grocery stores donated food, the church pantry provided staples, financial donations allowed volunteers to shop for specific items.

Daunelle Wulstein and Robyn Smith got the burners fired up.

Weldon Wulstein kept on top of supplies.

Diane Weidinger arrived that Tuesday when Gardner Mountain was most at risk and the number of displaced just kept growing.

“I cook at St. Theresa’s for the Bread and Broth program so I know the kitchen very well and I knew what supplies we had,” Weidinger said. “By midweek we got it down to a science. We knew how many meals we had to deliver outside the church hall. (Menus) were all based on what was donated and what was in our pantry.”

According to Weidinger’s friends, she is a phenomenal cook. Accompanying her in the kitchen was a gaggle of professional and home schooled chefs. Jeannette Shippee and Hugo Lizaola from the county jail lent their expertise. So did Stephen Moise, Reds Regan and Bill Marchetti.

“With the onset of the Angora Fire, my buddy Reds Regan and I were perplexed: Where could we best offer our limited array of talents?” said Marchetti, former chef at Eagles’ Nest restaurant on Kingsbury Grade and current manager of the lounge there. “Perhaps it was divine intervention, but at that moment we drove by St. Theresa’s. Now, if there’s anything two Catholic boys would know about, it’s volunteerism and guilt.”

During that frightful experience 17 months ago, plenty of people stepped forward to donate time, money and resources to help their neighbors. Perhaps this Thanksgiving is another good opportunity to say thank you to everyone who fought the fire, as well as thank the countless volunteers who fought to provide stability, love and a sense of community to those who were touched by Angora.

The following recipe is one of the first dishes Marchetti learned to cook in culinary school in 1977. It’s also something he whipped up during the Angora Fire.

“This relish makes a delightful addition to mayonnaise for a

tantalizing turkey sandwich,” Marchetti said.

Cranberry Orange Relish

4 cups fresh cranberries, rinsed

$\frac{3}{4}$ cup sugar

1 whole orange

$\frac{1}{2}$ tsp. fresh grated ginger

Blanch cranberries for five minutes, chill.

Peel the orange. Reserve the sections, remove the thick white pith and reserve the zest.

Combine the cranberries, sugar, orange zest and ginger. Pulse in a food processor until chunky. Chill and serve.

Sipping something French on Thanksgiving

By Peter Arcuri

How did French wines become the traditional American quaff for Thanksgiving? Marketing, that’s how.

Every third Thursday of November, France releases a Beaujolais Nouveau. The wine is released just six weeks after the grapes are harvested. The wine is actually a preview of the current vintage. In 1985 France passed a law to have the wines released just after midnight of that third Thursday, it is not coincidental Americans rush to pick up their wines.

The Gamay grape is grown in the Beaujolais region of France, which is actually part of Burgundy. After the initial fermentation, carbonic maceration, which extracts no tannins and retains more sugar, the wine contains a slight fizz or carbonation. The wine is light and fruity with the dominant flavors of raspberry and strawberry, two flavors that would complement most recipes served with Thanksgiving turkey.



The Lake Tahoe Wine Guy on the Atlantic waiting for the Nouveau.

Georges Duboeuf is the largest producer of Beaujolais Nouveau. A Beaujolais Nouveau shelf life is short, drink and enjoy by New Year's Day. They are about \$25 or so.

Another traditional French wine for Thanksgiving would be Pinot Noir. This wine is also from the Burgundy region of France. You may need a Sherpa, or at least a sommelier to navigate your way through Burgundy.

Burgundy's main growing area is Cote d'Or, [golden slope] which is divided into Cote de Nuits, [newee] and Cote de Beaune, [bone.] There are two main grapes grown here: Pinot Noir and Chardonnay. Cote d'Or contains 33 Grand Crus, about 600 vineyards merit the appellation Premier Cru, hundreds of village wines and more a 1,000 producers.

The vines that exist are passed on from generation to generation so many relatives may own the same single grape

vine. Pinot Noirs are not sweet like its cousin Gamay. The flavors are more subtle with dark strawberry, sour cherry, tobacco, tar and good old fashion dirt. Some Grand Crus, for instance, Romanee-Conti or Richebourg can cost almost \$1,000 per bottle especially for a vintage year like 2002.

If you would like to keep Thanksgiving American, well sort of, try a California or Oregon Pinot Noir. All West Coast grapes are vitas vinifera. This means their roots are native to France. West Coast Pinots contain more forward fruit flavors, and like the Burgundies they are not sweet. They are not as subtle as the Burgundies, which can contain multiple nuances.

French wines are still preferred in New York City and they are more affordable than West Coast wines. It costs the same, if not less, to ship wines across the Atlantic as it is to ship wines across the country. Domaine Serene Pinots from Oregon are fantastic costing about \$60 a bottle depending on the vineyard appellation and which state you are living in.

How do you overcome the rising costs of wine shipping? There are wineries and retail operations that will ship wine directly to your home, which will in turn save you money. If you are in New York, California, Oregon or any other state where wine can be legally delivered call Tom Simoneau 800-289-9463 at Vintage Wines in Sonoma County. Simoneau grows his own grapes in Sonoma County's Alexander Valley and he is one of the country's best amateur wine makers. He represents many small wineries and can ship in time for the holidays.

One Pinot Noir that has received a lot of attention lately is the 2007 Sonoma Coast Platinum Series, \$30. The Sonoma Coast is an ideal spot for Pinot to grow. The Pacific's marine influence and foggy conditions add superbly structured acids to the grapes. This wine has deep and dark cherry flavors with an earthy, chocolate-anise finish. The Pinot was aged in 50 percent new and 50 percent old French oak barrels, which create smooth and elegant tannins. The earthiness of the wine

is an excellent complement for a roasted turkey.

Peter Arcuri is the Lake Tahoe Wine Guy.

From olive to oil

By Kathryn Reed

GERBER – Refried beans. Really, that's what one stage of making olive oil looks like.



No two olive oils taste the same.

Photo/Kathryn Reed

It's Day 3 of camping, and we find ourselves at a crush party somewhere between Red Bluff and Chico. Joining the four campers are four others who live in the area.

Wine is the first order of the morning (it's close to noon). For \$3, a commemorative glass is filled umpteen times until the driver of the dirty Jeep cuts off her passenger.

New Clairvaux is pouring its wines from Vina. Burnsini Vineyards came down from Cottonwood.

“The heat causes the Petite Syrah to be intense,” Tom Burnham, Burnsini general manager, said of the winery’s specialty.

Sue described the varietal as, “A little peppery, but not as much as the Zin, with a hint of almond.”□

I just know I liked it.

This is the fourth year Pacific Sun Olive Oil has opened its doors to the public for a one-day crush party. Each year “Love at First Crush”□ grows, with 300 people attending last year’s event and 500 this year.

“People want to know where their food comes from. They are getting back to their agrarian roots,” owner Jane Flynn said.

In 2008, the family-run operation bottled 200 gallons of the liquid gold. The crop is smaller this year, so the number of gallons will be less. It takes about 7.6 pounds of olives to fill a 500ml bottle. Olives must be milled within 24 hours of being picked.

The recession has not hurt Pacific Sun.

“People are still eating. They want good olive oil,”□ Flynn said.

Part of the experience includes watching the “crush” from whole olive to oil. The bottling part is skipped for health code reasons.

Mission olives, a mix of green, red and black, fill 4-foot-by4-foot bins. A bin weighs about 1,000 pounds. Olives are sent up a conveyor belt to sort out debris like leaves.

They are washed with a brush that seems like a car wash for olives.

An auger elevator moves the cleaned olives into crushers. These contraptions are important because the type of crusher

can affect the flavor of the oil. Pacific Sun has two different crushers.

The mixture has warm water added to it as the malaxers churn the paste for about 45 minutes.

“The pits, skins and all are in there,” Brendon Flynn, the owner’s son, explained as he kept an eye on the goo that looks like refried beans.

A decanter centrifuge separates the solids from the liquid as it spins at about 3,600 rpm. What comes out is a really unappetizing mixture that looks like someone got ill.

The liquid, which is carmel color at this point, is poured onto metal that has tiny holes on it to again strain the solids.

Then it’s onto another machine where the end product looks closer to something you want to dip bread into or cook with.

When one of the big blue oil drum-looking containers is filled, it’s time to sit for a month or two in a temperature controlled setting before bottling begins.

In another section of the operation is an olive oil tasting room set up just for the party. The four oils go from mild to full-bodied. The first, Proprietors Select, is buttery.

No. 3 was the favorite with most of the gang I was with – Manzahillo. It will be good for dipping and cooking.

Two balsamic vinegars “a dark and blueberry” were also on the table for tasting.

My sister, Pam, had brought me a three-pack sample of Pacific Sun’s products last year. I stocked up on some more while I was there Nov. 8.

Hayrides through the prune orchard are part of the fun. The

Flynn's medium-size orchard is full of prune, walnut and almond trees. The two rows of olive trees are what they used for the initial crush. Most of what is now made into olive oil comes from other orchards.

The whole event – except wine and lunch – is free.

Be careful of strangers taking pictures. Pam and I were on the cover of the *Red Bluff Daily News* this week tasting olive oil.

For more information, go to www.pacificsunoliveoil.com.

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