

Eco-eating lecture, dinner

The A.W.A.R.E. Club at Lake Tahoe Community College is sponsoring an organic, vegan dinner and speaker with a Thanksgiving theme on Nov. 20. Hope Bohanec, Grassroots Campaigns Director, IDA, will be the speaker. Her topic is Eco-Eating: The Power of Your Plate. She will discuss the environmental impacts of our food choices including global warming, deforestation, water use and pollution, topsoil depletion, loss of biodiversity and species, and over-fishing of our oceans. The dinner will be prepared by culinary arts students under the direction of Chef Steve Fernald. Cost is \$9 (advance purchase). Tickets are available at Student Services from through Nov. 18.

Annual tasting features 50+ wineries-restaurants

By Rose Marie Ottman

Soroptimist International of South Lake Tahoe's biggest fundraiser of the year – "An Evening of Food and Wine Tasting" – will be at Harrah's Tahoe Convention Center on Nov. 13 from 6-9pm.

SISLT's event is considered one of the "go to" social events of the year by many locals and features food and wine from more than 50 restaurants and wineries. With all the new wineries attending this year, you can save yourself the drive and do all your tasting locally.

In addition to having an excellent time catching up with

friends, participants can feel great knowing that all the proceeds will be funneled back into the local Tahoe community through educational scholarships, environmental programs, arts education, youth activity sponsorships and social service projects. With funding slashed for so many programs, it is up to our close-knit community to support each other and invest in our own future.

This year 21 grants were awarded to programs including Elementary Arts Education, Parks & Recreation Equipment, Special Olympics, CASA and The Women's Center. With about \$50,000 contributed each year, there is bound to be a friend, neighbor or relative who has benefited from this philanthropy.

The food and wine are delicious, laughing with friends is fabulous, but the satisfaction of building a vibrant and healthy community is priceless.

Call 866.801.8652 for more information. A complete list of restaurants and wineries can be found at www.sislt.org along with ticket information. Credit card orders are available.

Rose Marie Ottman is a member of Soroptimist International of South Lake Tahoe.

Slow Food movement meeting

Learn about Slow Food Lake Tahoe on Nov. 11 at 4pm at the Dragonfly restaurant in Truckee.

Slow Food Lake Tahoe is a nonprofit organization started in 2007 whose mission is to reconnect people to the enjoyment of good, clean and fair food, as well as clean and fair goods, and to educate the community about its role as co-producers.

Monthly meetings are the second Wednesday of the month.

Contact Susan Diane at (530) 582.7498 or sdbrumm@sbcglobal.net for more information.

A slice of variety in LTCC kitchen

By Susan Wood

Turkey at Thanksgiving may be considered the ultimate as a food for gatherings. But no other dish is more popular as a communal meal than pizza.



Dan Kramer educates Lake Tahoe Community College students about pizza. Photo/Kathryn Reed

That's why it made for an ideal culinary class at Lake Tahoe Community College this fall. It comes with a warning though.

Go to class with an appetite.

My class of about a dozen students ended up making so many pizzas and calzones in the three four-hour sessions that we stayed late to finish cooking the first night. On the second evening, I was grateful for wearing loose pants. Then, I learned. After the last session, I took enough leftovers home to feed most of my coworkers the next day.

And if you're like me, you'll learn a few things. The first night was launched with a bit of fascinating history from instructor Dan Kramer, who runs the college kitchen with a penchant for making pies.

Pizza's evolutionary past remains as varied as its toppings and styles, according to New York author Ed Levine, who wrote "Pizza: A Slice of Heaven." Of Italian descent from a bastardized version of the Latin word picea, King Ferdinand IV built a pizza oven in the 1700s for his wife, Maria Carolina, the sister of Marie Antoinette. But royalty aside, its origins are rooted as an inexpensive peasant food.

Pizza hit American ovens first in a New York City grocery store in 1905, Levine explains. Seven years later, Joe's Tomato Pies specialized in the fun food, which quickly spread through the East. In 1943, Chicago got a hold of the idea. Then the chains popped up about a decade later, partly fueled by a demand from American soldiers returning home from Italy during World War II.

Now pizza is an easy phone call away. Americans eat 350 slices of pizza per second, according to about.com.

But as I soon learned, nothing compares to the nurturing of a yeast mixture and punching a well in a bowl of flour to make your own dough. There's a variety of dough including basic, whole wheat and cornmeal. The trick is timing – starting the dough before worrying about the sauce and toppings.

The first evening, I was in a foreign land, not only in an industrial kitchen, but also in making dough from scratch. My baking experience revolves around a Betty Crocker box and pizza dough that is premade. Focaccia dough for a Sicilian recipe was out of my vocabulary. However, what I lacked in experience I made up for in ambition – blind, as it may have seemed.

My confidence level rose with my dough in the second session. Plus, I was teamed up with two experienced cooks – Kae and Hannah. Our mission: an eggplant calzone with four cheeses and a stuffed spinach pizza. None of us is crazy for eggplant, but we did enjoy the accomplishment of working on our recipes, along with tasting the variety of calzones and deep-dish pies that other chefs brought out of the ovens. Spinach and feta, zucchini-stuffed and Italian sausage – which the class churned out that night from the grinder – rounded out the list.

My favorite dish came from the team of Julie, her daughter, Sage, and Karen.

“This could be a picture on any Chicago deep-dish menu,” Kramer said, throwing out the ultimate compliment of the night as he carved individual pieces for the class.

Kramer was full of kudos on the last night, when the class took him up on the creativity challenge of making California-style pizza.

“This has been my most creative class,” Kramer said.

Students tackled the caramelized onion and Gorgonzola, barbecued chicken, spanakopizza, pesto, smoked salmon and Brie, and their own free-for-all version of pie. Our trio’s task involved dessert – a chocolate and strawberry pizza made with sweet dough smothered in chocolate sauce and my addition of crumbled vanilla wafers for texture. I never thought of pizza as a pastry until now, but the concoction won me over. And it’s quick.

The night included a hands-on lesson in grilling pizza dough. Let's put it this way: one can't walk away from the stove for this type of pizza making. Watching a blaze or two that others were managing on the grill triggered my memory of having something of my own in the oven.

"The pizza," I said, turning to Hannah. We sprinted to a back oven where an overdone crust edge had me sighing relief that the whole thing didn't go up in flames. Sweet dough cooks faster because of the sugar content.

The culinary department of the college includes a variety of classes that range from food and wine and cheese pairing to soups and Mexican dishes. I've nibbled at five of the offerings. A sushi class has been added, too.

For now, those wanting to venture out of their comfort zone with an unusual holiday dessert may want to try the following recipe:

Chocolate and Berry Pizza

Sweet dough recipe (see below)

Vegetable oil or cooking spray

About 3 cups ripe raspberries or strawberries

Sugar

Melted unsalted butter for brushing crust

1 lb. cream cheese cut into small pieces

About 1C chocolate sauce

Fresh mint sprigs for garnish

Sweet Dough

Add 1 cup sugar with the flour and reduce the salt to $\frac{1}{2}$

teaspoon in the yeast and water mixture. Substitute canola or other bland vegetable oil for the olive oil.

Make sweet dough and set aside to rise as directed. About 30 minutes before baking pizza prepare an oven and preheat to 500 degrees. Brush a pizza pan with oil or coat with spray and set aside. As the pizza must be removed from the oven before the crust is completely set, do not bake directly on a stone or tiles.

In a bowl, lightly sprinkle the berries with sugar to taste and set aside, stirring occasionally, until needed.

On a lightly floured surface, roll out or stretch the dough and shape it as desired. Place the dough on the prepared screen or pan. Prick the dough all over with a fork and brush it with melted butter.

Transfer the pizza to the preheated oven and bake until the crust just begins to brown, about five minutes.

Remove the pizza to a work surface and top with the cheese, leaving a $\frac{1}{2}$ -inch border around the edges. Return the pie to the oven and continue baking until the crust is golden about five minutes longer.

Meanwhile, gently heat the chocolate sauce and drain the berries.

Remove the pizza to a wire rack and drizzle the warm chocolate sauce over the cheese. Arrange the berries over the cheese, then transfer to a cutting tray or board and lightly brush the edges of the crust with melted butter. Garnish with mint sprigs. Slice and serve immediately.

Susan Wood is a freelance writer based in South Lake Tahoe. She may be reached at copysue1@yahoo.com.

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El Dorado wineries wrap up harvest

By El Dorado Winery Association

This year's near-perfect growing season and long hang time on the vines hinted that harvest would yield plenty of intensely flavored grapes – and that's just what our vintners report from their cellars as they put these young wines to bed.

A hot spell earlier this month sped up the harvest that began the first week of September, and many wineries were done picking before the mid-October storm. One winery hauled in 26 tons just two days before.

After the rains, some hearty varieties like Mourvedre, Roussanne and Petit Verdot were still on the vine, among the last to be picked. Winemakers are wrapping up crush by pressing off the last of their reds and bringing in just a few remaining whites.

After months of nurturing these grapes, El Dorado's vintners and their crews already are looking forward to enjoying the fruits of their labor.

Chefs with experience at

Esalen featured at Wilbur Hot Springs

Charlie Cascio and Angela Karegeannes will be the featured chefs at Wilbur Hot Springs Nov. 13-15.

Cascio has cooked throughout Europe. He has worked as a personal private chef and has been head chef for numerous restaurants. He has taught natural food cooking seminars to individuals, restaurants, and health professionals throughout Europe and the United States. Cascio worked as the head chef and kitchen manager for the Esalen Institute in Big Sur from 1998-2004 and continues to work for Esalen as a consultant and instructor.

Karegeannes became a chef while living and working at the Esalen Institute in 2001. She now resides in San Rafael and has her own catering business. She also works at the Marin Academy as a full time chef, sourcing food from local farms for the menus. Evenings and weekends are spent doing catering events and participating as a guest chef at the Occidental Arts and Ecology Center .

For reservations, call (530) 473.2306. For more information, visit www.wilburhotsprings.com.

Organic, vegan meal at LTCC

Lake Tahoe Community College instructor Chef Steve Fernald and the culinary arts students are preparing an organic vegan Thanksgiving themed feast Nov. 20.

This event is sponsored by the Advocates for Wellness, Animal Rights, and the Environment, A.W.A.R.E., a student club.

Special guest Hope Bohanec, Grassroots Campaigns Director, IDA, will be speaking about "Eco-Eating: The Power of Your Plate." This presentation will explore the effects of food choices on the environment: global warming, water use and pollution, energy consumption, deforestation, loss of biodiversity and species, as well as the impact of fishing on the oceans.

Tickets are \$9 in advance and available for purchase at LTCC Student Services, Nov. 4-18 or online at www.ltcc.edu/news.asp. If not sold-out, they will be \$12 at the door.

Dinner will be in the Student Center Cafeteria at 6:30pm, Lake Tahoe Community College, One College Drive, South Lake Tahoe.

Placer County farmer's produce a hit in Santa Monica

David Karp, NW32 TV

Jeff Rieger's commute each week to the Santa Monica farmers market from his farm in Placer County— 924 miles round trip — is probably the longest regularly undertaken by any vendor at a Southern California certified market. He is driven by a passion to grow and market rare and high-quality fruits, all the more remarkable since he got into farming almost by accident.

It was the mandarins that hooked him. For 23 years he had

lived near Lake Tahoe, first skiing, then painting houses, then building them on speculation. When Rieger and his girlfriend at the time bought a 4.3-acre property in Penryn, in the Sierra foothills northeast of Sacramento, in November 2002, he intended to fix up the house and flip it for a profit. But the owner had left the crop of satsuma mandarins on the trees, and Rieger started picking them and bringing them to a local store. Soon he split with the girlfriend and fell in love with the farm, which he named Penryn Orchard Specialties.

Read the whole story

Apple Hill ripe with tradition



Apple Hill in El Dorado County is a bevy of activity this time of year. Photo/Kathryn Reed

By Susan Wood

CAMINO – Johnny Appleseed may have planted roots in the Ohio Valley, but his memory is alive and well in El Dorado County.

The agricultural region that spans from Placerville to Pollock Pines has become the toast of the town this fall with its signature Apple Hill Growers Association harvest. The area boasts 50 ranches, including Christmas tree growers, vineyards, a microbrewery and spa. Johnny's reported bare feet would have slipped nicely into the California spa lifestyle as well as his supposed conservation nature to maintain the apple trees he planted for 49 years before dying in 1845.

John Chapman was born in Massachusetts on Sept. 26, which has turned out to be reason alone to have a fall festival for apple growers like those in El Dorado County.

Tour buses, shuttles and a long line of vehicles descended on the area last weekend. The seasonal event boasts Trick or Treat Days on the last weekend of the month; with November bringing a Harvest Run at ParaVi (formerly Primus Vineyards) on the first and a holiday pie tasting on Nov. 14.

If you're seeking an eating experience, this is the place to be. Apple pies, crisps, syrup, turnovers, cider and the candied version can be found alongside fudge, berry cobbler and pumpkin roll pastries. Some of the orchards serve more conventional lunch food.

At Rainbow Orchards, the farm off Larson Drive, even serves a small Braeburn apple with your burger and chips. These people take their apples seriously. Visitors are invited to watch the cider bottling operation in the back as they're ordering pie or other culinary delights. You can buy unpasteurized jugs of apple cider. In summer, the place hosts the likes of Elvin Bishop and others during their concert series.

But it's the food most people show up for. Worker Karen

Carrero had a hazy gleam in her eye when she described the apple syrup over vanilla ice cream.

“It’s killer,” she said.

On a busy Saturday, their grounds are more low-key when compared to the festival atmosphere of Abel’s Apple Acres – the latter crowded with children wanting to ride ponies and meander through a hay maze more than anything else.

There’s something for everyone on the scenic drive through rolling hills, open meadows, ridge-tops and country roads. Kae was after apples because she’s the blue ribbon champ (El Dorado County Fair) of pie making. The Ench family of Smokey Ridge Ranch off Carson Road delivered.

I’ll be the judge of whether the pie she says she’s going make measures up since she’s never used Rhode Island Greening or Braeburn apples before.

Smokey Ridge – named after the family’s farm mule – is all about apple tasting when you belly up to the apple bar of sorts. Wendy West, aka Mom, obliged anyone wanting to listen and try a honest-to-goodness spectrum of apples from sweet to tart off the 15-acre farm of 85 years. She started us out with the Mutsu and Fuji and ended with the Rhode Island Greening.

While we were standing there, a visitor asked about the Arkansas Black known for its smokiness. Their harvest is a couple weeks out. I stood there dumbfounded. Who knew there were so many types of apples?

The fun-filled day was kicked-off by Boeger Winery’s kick-butt Barbera for red wine lovers and roll-off-your-tongue Pinot Gris for white fans, which is a short distance from Smokey Ridge.

Cider rules

But maybe I should know more about apples. After all, the

roots of my family are embedded in this fruit. Both my grandfathers made hard cider, which is essentially the fermentation of the apples to a 3 to 8.5 percent alcohol. If you add brown sugar or honey to the process, the alcohol is boosted.

My Mom, who called it “the poor man’s alcohol,” remembers how her father would take his apples to the cider mill and have the apples pressed. He’d let the liquid sit in barrels to ferment for a few weeks to make the alcohol ripe. It’s no wonder they had company in the fall. When she discovered I was going to the Apple Hill event, she told me to find an apple press.

The closest I got to any equipment was an industrial-sized apple peeler that looked capable of pumping enough apples for a million pies.

Oh, the wonders of the Internet. I found out one can buy a complete kit of 27 items to make hard apple cider, which is supposedly making a comeback. Add yeast, sugar and apples, you’re well on your way.

To find out everything that is going on at Apple Hill, go to www.applehill.com. El Dorado Transit’s last free weekend Apple Hill Shuttle is Oct. 24- 25 from 10am to 5pm. For more information on the Apple Hill shuttle, call (530) 642.5383 or go to www.eldoradotransit.com.

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MontBleu winemaker dinner

Ciera Signature Wine Dinner on Dec. 18 at the Ciera Steak + Chophouse, MontBleu, Stateline.

General Manager Steve Loyd and Director of Food & Beverage Jean-Michel Labadie pair dinner with Domaine Chandon Sparkling, Sonoma Valley.

For reservations, call 800.648.3353 or after 4:30pm call (775) 588.3515, ext. 3235.