

# 4 weeks left of SLT farmers' market



Jim and Lois Coalwell are veterans at the weekly farmers market.

Photo/Kathryn Reed

The weekly farmers market is in South Lake Tahoe today from 8am-1pm in the American Legion parking lot on Highway 50.

Growers from El Dorado County and beyond will continue to bring their produce to Tahoe through Oct. 13.

A slew of items are available – peaches, peppers, tomatoes, lettuce, carrots, onions, garlic, squash and more.

This time of year corn stalks start to show up as well – good for decorating with since Halloween is around the corner.

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# Connecting farmer and chef

BY JOHNATHAN L. WRIGHT, Reno Gazette-Journal

The match seems a natural one. Chef and farmer, farmer and chef. One supplies bounty; the other shapes it. As easy a pairing, you'd think, as vodka and olives or designer and muse.

Today, chefs everywhere extol farm-to-table cooking, but traditionally, the relationship between farmers and chefs has often been anything but easy.

That's been especially true in the Truckee Meadows, where climate constrains agricultural diversity and where casino properties have historically ordered food mainly from large commercial suppliers.

To farmers, "chefs haven't always understood that sometimes we don't have a perfect crop, a perfect season. Sometimes, what we can provide is limited," said Gary Romano of Sierra Valley Farms, which lies outside Beckwourth, Calif., about 45 minutes northwest of Reno.

Read the whole story

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## Wine and radio



Hear Justin Boeger, president of the El Dorado Winery Association, on KTHO AM-590 ([www.kthoradio.com](http://www.kthoradio.com)) at 10am Saturday or Monday at 6pm talk about what's going on with this year's crush and what else is going on with the wine industry in El Dorado County.

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# Guest Chef weekend at Wilbur Hot Springs

Wilbur Hot Springs will host guest chefs Charlie and Marion Cascio Sept. 25.

Charlie Cascio has cooked throughout Europe, including Germany, France, Belgium and Spain. Cascio has worked as a personal chef and has been head chef for numerous restaurants. He has taught natural food cooking seminars to individuals, restaurants, and health professional throughout Europe and the Untied States.

He continues to cook for large conventions to develop natural health food products and recipes, and to teach courses on cooking, including cooking with raw foods.

Marion Cascio comes from a family of cooks and has been involved with restaurants since childhood. She studied classical culinary arts in Germany for five years and has cooked in many famous restaurants and spas. Marion Cascio was a staff cook at the Esalen Institute for five years where she learned ethnic cooking techniques and fell in love with cooking from the garden. Cooking is a creative outlet, a place where she can be an artist of taste and texture.

Charlie and Marion Cascio live completely self-sufficiently on land in Big Sur where they keep goats, bees, chickens, and an abundant garden. During their weekend at Wilbur, they will marry healthy, organic cuisine with exceptional taste.

For more information about Guest Chef weekend, visit [www.wilburhotsprings.com](http://www.wilburhotsprings.com), or contact the reservation line at (530) 473.2306.



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## Lutz claims Blazing Pans title at annual food-wine fest



David Lutz and son Jacob after the big win.

More than 2,000 food and wine lovers came out for the 24th Lake Tahoe Autumn Food and Wine Festival last weekend, where they were treated to gourmet demonstrations, fine libations and dozens of delectable creations from some of Sierra Nevada's finest restaurants.

The festival, which took place at the Village at Northstar in Truckee, featured a special luncheon prepared by James Beard award-winning chef Traci Des Jardins, who is opening Manzanita

inside The Ritz-Carlton Highlands, Lake Tahoe Dec. 9; a competitive grape stomp, wine tasting and luncheon cooked by Chef and Owner Mark Estee of Baxter's Bistro & Lounge; and the Blazing Pans Mountain Chef Cook-Off. This year's Chef David Lutz of Tahoe City's Evergreen Restaurant beat out his friend and colleague Mike Trombetta of Farm to Belly Personal Chef Services to take home the title of Blazing Pans Champion, after the judges favored Lutz's quail-themed dishes (this year's secret ingredient).

This year's Grand Tasting featured the food and wine pairings of approximately 30 of the region's restaurants, caterers and premium wineries. Food and wine industry professionals, in a double blind judging, tasted and rated each pairing. Guests also had the opportunity to cast ballots for their favorite pairings in the coveted People's Choice Award. This year's winners are

### **Best Marriage of Food & Wine**

Gold – Mamasake (Hamachi Sushi Cilantro, Yuzu, Hosho Ponzu, Cold Cucumber Soup), 2008 Evergreen Vineyard Columbia Valley Kung Fu Girl Riesling

Silver – Pianeta (Lamb Lollipops, Moroccan Spice Red Currant & Plum Sauce), 2006 Pride Mountain Vineyards Napa/Sonoma Merlot

Bronze – D'Lish Catering (Smoked Duck Corndog w Blackberry Maple Dijon Reduction), 2007 Silkwood Red Duet (Cab Sauv/Syrah) Lodi

### **Best White Wine**

Gold – 2008 Evergreen Vineyard Columbia Valley Kung Fu Girl Riesling

Silver – 50/50 Brewing Rye IPA

Bronze – Kikisui Sake

## **Best Red Wine**

Gold – 2005 Twomey Napa Valley Merlot

Silver – Silver Oak Alexander Valley Cabernet Sauvignon

Bronze (Tie) – 2006 Truckee River Winery Sta Lucia Highlands Pinot Noir Garys Vineyard and 2006 Inman Family Winery Russian River Valley OGV Pinot Noir

## **Best Food**

Gold – Manzanita/ The Ritz-Carlton Highlands, Lake Tahoe (Pork Belly Sliders, Summer Pepper Preserve)

Silver – Mamasake (Hamachi Sushi Cilantro, Yuzu, Hosho Ponzu, Cold Cucumber Soup)

Bronze – D&Lish Catering (Smoked Duck Corndog w Blackberry Maple Dijon Reduction)

## **Best Dessert**

Gold – Big Wave Catering (White Chocolate Bread pudding with Mission Figs)

Silver – Longboards Bar & Grill (Sticky Toffee Pudding Caramel & Chocolate Sauces Italian Marinated Cherries)

Bronze – D&Lish Catering (Pink Champagne Cake)

## **People's Choice Awards**

### **Best Marriage of Food & Wine**

Big Wave Catering (White Chocolate Bread pudding with Mission Figs), 2005 Deerfield Ranch Late Harvest Botrytis Sauv. Blanc

## **Best White Wine**

2008 Rombauer Carneros Chardonnay

## **Best Red Wine**

2006 Pride Mountain Vineyards Napa/Sonoma Merlot

## **Best Food**

Six Peaks Grille/Resort at Squaw Creek (Short Rib Patty Melt, Truffle Cheese, Huckleberry Jam)

## **Best Table Presentation**

D&Lish Catering (Pink Champagne Cake)

Gruet New Mexico Sparkling Rose

The Lake Tahoe Autumn Food and Wine Festival is a fundraiser for the Community Fund of North Lake Tahoe through the 501c(3) Truckee Tahoe Community Foundation. The 24th annual festival is produced by the North Lake Tahoe Resort Association in partnership with Northstar-at-Tahoe; the Northstar Foundation; The Ritz-Carlton Destination Club; Audi of North America; Standards of Excellence Appliance Showrooms; Sunset magazine; Nothing to It Culinary Center in Reno; Charbay Winery and Distillery; and Tahoe Quarterly.

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# **Latin wine-food pairing at Lakeside**

Lakeside Inn and Casino at Stateline is creating a five-course meal to pair with Chile's award-winning Montes Alpha winery.

The meal begins with a conch salad accentuated by Brazilian xuxu slaw. Montes Alpha's stainless steel-fermented Sauvignon Blanc will accompany this course and the next.

Next up: Puerto Rican prawns sauteed in achiote oil with a Caribbean sofrito sauce and plantain banana mofongo.

For the third course, pork with pipin sauce. This dish consists of steamed leg of pork with a handcrafted sauce of tomatillos, roasted peanuts, almonds, sesame and pumpkin seeds; served with romaine leaves, black beans, steamed rice and pickled onion. Montes Alpha's Chardonnay will complement this dish.

Intermezzo follows, cleansing diner's palates with a cucumber-mint lemonade granita, laced with chia seed and spiked with Gran Fuedo Rose. This pause in the meal prepares for the transition from white to red wines.

A corn crepe with duck confit and chocolate-orange sauce is served next.

Argentina's premium Malbec, the Kaiken Ultra Malbec makes a guest appearance for the final two courses of the meal and stars in the next dish: braised short rib with rosemary, sage and Malbec. Served with roasted calabaza, Cuban white beans with chorizo all drizzled with truffle oil.

An imported and domestic cheese platter is presented for the final course. Goat cheese in baked phyllo, five-year aged white cheddar, gouda and Manchego cheeses deliver mild and savory flavors to the accompanying berry and rhubarb compote, candied pine nuts, pistachios and chocolate wafers.

The \$95 cost includes tax and gratuity. Reservations are advised as seating is limited, (775) 586.7707.

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# Tequila adds punch to food and wine fest

Charbay Tequila Blanco will make its presence known at the Lake Tahoe Autumn Food and Wine Festival.

The Sept. 12 tasting at the Village at Northstar will feature Marko Karakasevic, a 13th generation distiller and an integral part of the creative force behind the Charbay Artisan Winery and Distillery in St. Helena. Karakasevic will share his family's authentic agave tequila, which he produced at a distillery in Aransas, Jalisco.

Tequila can only be produced in Mexico.

Karakasevic and his father, Miles, are the first American distillers to hand-distill 100 percent Blue Agave Tequila Blanco in Mexico.

Karakasevic says tequila is a complicated spirit, taking seven to 10 years for an agave to mature before they are then harvested, baked, pressed, fermented, distilled, then distilled again.

The tasting, which starts at 5:45pm, will be paired with appetizers created by Chef Jason Gronlund, former executive chef and culinary director for Tabasco Brand Hot Sauces. Tickets cost \$65 and include a signed 750ml bottle of Charbay Tequila Blanco.

For more information about the Lake Tahoe Autumn Food and Wine Festival or to purchase tickets, call 888.229.2193 or go to [www.tahoefoodandwine.com](http://www.tahoefoodandwine.com). The festival runs Sept. 11-13 and includes tastings, seminars, demonstrations and activities at the Village at Northstar in Truckee and locations throughout North Lake Tahoe.

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# Flowers' wines blossom at PlumpJack

By Kathryn Reed

OLYMPIC VILLAGE – “The reality is God is the winemaker – and any winemaker who thinks he is hasn’t been in the industry long enough.”

That’s what Sam Sebastiani of the famous Sonoma County Sebastiani family told this reporter years ago for a *San Francisco Examiner* story.

Some would disagree and say Mother Nature is the true winemaker. After all, growing grapes is farming. With crops of any kind being so weather dependent, and the skin of grapes so fragile, – especially Pinot Noir – it’s no wonder each vintage is special.

A sampling of one of Sonoma County’s northern-most wineries was offered to guests of PlumpJack Cafe at Squaw Valley in August. Flowers Vineyard & Winery in Cazadero was the featured vintner during the sixth of 10 winemaker dinners.

The event is a steal at \$60 per person. It comes with four courses (vegetarian options available by calling ahead) and four glasses of wine.

The Sonoma Coast 2007 Chardonnay (\$65 by the bottle at PlumpJack) was paired with tartare of Angus tenderloin. The vegetarian offering was a minced portabella mushroom lime concoction that was super tangy and yummy. Both were served on a spoon. So good were the starters, a few more spoonfuls would have been welcome.

Unfortunately the wine was so-so. It came to the table a bit over-chilled so the true flavors did not come through until it had been at room temperature a bit. Even then it fell a bit flat.

The other Chardonnay of the night, the Andreen-Gale Sonoma Coast 2006, was more delightful from the get-go. It is not sold by the bottle at PlumpJack, but goes for \$16 for a 6 ounce glass. It is not overly oak-y, despite being aged in French oak.

The second course – also designed to be enjoyed with the Chardonnays – was a sweet corn soup. Because it has cured lardo (pork) I didn't have it. But the presentation of having server Justin Bak pour the soup over the warm mushroom salad, summer truffle and house cured lardo was stunning in itself. It added a certain *je ne sais quoi* to the event.

I was served some odd egg concoction. It was good, but one of those things I don't need to have again. It was also the first time at a restaurant of this caliber where they know I'm a vegetarian and didn't ask if I'd eat eggs and cheese. Good thing I do.

Next up were the two Pinot Noirs and the entree seared ahi tuna for my dining partner; smoked tofu for me. Sue was in heaven; I was left scratching my head wondering how a chef would think this would be a great choice. It's no wonder non-vegetarians have a bad impression of tofu. Sue wrinkled her nose when she took a bite of the tofu.

But the wine – oh my – it was jammy in such a wonderful way that I wish I were now sipping a glass of the Sonoma Coast 2007 Pinot (\$70 bottle at PlumpJack). The fruit of the wine was full and vibrant, like a burst of berry in my mouth.

The final wine – the 2007 Flowers Perennial Pinot Noir Syrah Sonoma Coast (\$10 per 6 ounce glass) – is definitely special. Not only does it stand alone as a Pinot dominated meritage

that would be good with an entree, it is a dessert wine that complements the food instead of overpowering it.

The espresso panna cotta (fresh cherries, chocolate soil, French macaroon) was my favorite course of the night. At home I like to lick my ice cream bowl; I had to use self-restraint not to lick the plate at PlumpJack.

A nice feature of the evening was the unobtrusive meanderings of Flowers' General Manager Tom Hinde, who made sure each table was enjoying themselves. He spoke of the difficulties of making wine, Pinot in particular. Hinde also touched on how the weather – all that fog rolling off the Pacific Ocean – bodes well for the vines.

Ask to sit in waiter Justin Bak's section. He has been at PlumpJack since 1993. The lifestyle allows him to work at night, ski-hike by day – a true local who knows his job well.

By the time the two-hour meal was over I was more than satisfied – not overly full, not feeling like I had too much to drink. Dinner was an event – one I recommend.

PlumpJack's winemaker series continues through Sept. 13. For information, call (530) 583.1578 or go to [www.PlumpJackCafe.com](http://www.PlumpJackCafe.com).

Flowers' tasting room is open by appointment only – [www.FlowersWinery.com](http://www.FlowersWinery.com) or (707) 847.3661.

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# Free events during annual food and wine fest

The Lake Tahoe Autumn Food and Wine Festival (Sept. 11-13) at the Village at Northstar in Truckee is offering a number of culinary events for free to celebrate September being California Wine Month.

Attendees can peruse the festival's outdoor Gourmet Marketplace and Trade Fair, which will feature epicurean goods and gifts, and the North Lake Tahoe Plein Air Painting event.

Also at no charge, food lovers can learn the secret to Japanese grilling with Chef Lars Kronmark; simple seasonal fall menus with Chef Jason Gronlund, former executive chef for McIlhenny Tabasco Sauce; and hands-on pizza grilling with Chef Lara Ritchie. Tickets for Sunday's Grand Tasting and Culinary Competition are \$75 through Sept. 9 and \$90 thereafter. The event attracts more than a 1,000 revelers to mingle and socialize over California wines paired with creations of Tahoe's finest chefs at Northstar's Village.

For more information or to purchase tickets, call 888.229.2193 or visit [www.tahoefoodandwine.com](http://www.tahoefoodandwine.com).

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## Regional chefs to dual during annual food and wine fest

One of North Lake Tahoe's most heated competitions will pit culinary comrades against each other to determine who rightfully deserves the title of Mountain Chef at the Blazing

Pans Cook-Off Sept. 12. The cook-off is part of the three-day Lake Tahoe Autumn Food and Wine Festival (Sept. 11-13) at the Village at Northstar in Truckee.

Reigning champion Mike Trombetta, owner of Farm to Belly Personal Chef Services, was considered a relative newcomer last year when he out-cooked Jacques Cornelis of the Resort at Squaw Creek. This year he will be challenged by David Lutz, owner of Tahoe City's Evergreen Restaurant.

The one-hour competition will entail both chefs taking one main, secret ingredient and creating as many delicious dishes as possible in the allotted time. The ingredient will not be revealed until moments prior to the start of the clock.

The Blazing Pans Mountain Chef Cook-Off begins at 4:15pm. Tickets for the event cost \$15 and include a Charbay cocktail, hosted by Charbay Artisan Winery and Distillery. For more information about the Lake Tahoe Autumn Food and Wine Festival, call 888.229.2193 or go to [www.tahoefoodandwine.com](http://www.tahoefoodandwine.com).