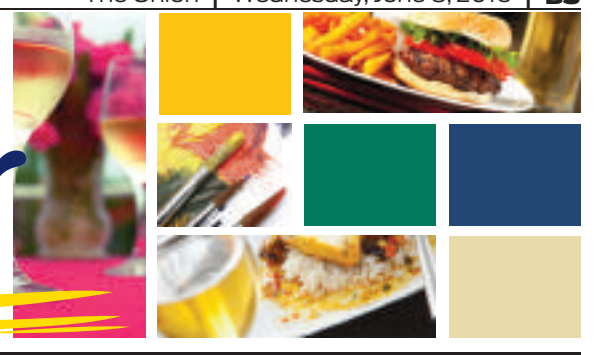




foothill connoisseur

A GUIDE TO LOCAL WINE, BEER, FOOD AND ART



Meet your local farmers with Sierra Harvest



By Valerie Costa

Here in Nevada County we value local, organic food. So much so that we have farmers markets three days a week at various locations, can purchase locally grown produce, eggs, honey, and meats at several local markets, and can eat food prepared from local products at a wide variety of restaurants. This is thanks in large part to the local family farms that operate all over our county, and Sierra Harvest, a nonprofit organization in Nevada City, seeks to connect the public with their food and the farms (and farmers) that grow it.

Every year, Sierra Harvest hosts a series of farm potlucks on the first and third Thursdays of each month from 5:30-8 p.m. This will be the groups eighth year hosting these fun events, and they continue to grow with every passing year. The purpose is to get people out to see where their food comes from and meet the people do the backbreaking work to make sure that we all have fresh, local, often organic produce, and celebrate the local food community. Besides that, these family-friendly events are always a great way to meet new people, and children are always welcome, and even encouraged, to come.

"The idea is to connect the local growers with new customers who might be interested in their products. It's really different buying something from a grocery store vs. buying from someone whose farm you've visited and people you've met," said Sierra Harvest co-executive director Malaika Bishop.

Their first two potlucks of the year were on May 20 at Fowler Family Farms, a meat

farm that raises cows, pigs, chickens, goats, and more, and continued at Mountain Bounty Farms on June 3. Mountain Bounty is the largest CSA in Nevada County and offers vegetable, fruit and flower shares to their members. "These potlucks are a great opportunity to tour our local farms and meet other people who are interested in food and farming, and have a delicious meal in a beautiful place," Bishop said.



The next potluck will be held next Thursday, June 16. Join the Soil Sisters - Maisie Ganz & Willow Hein - and their farm hosts, The Riley's, at this beautiful farm nestled off Lake Vera Purdon Road in Nevada City. Soil Sisters Farm is flower farm and florist in Nevada City, providing arrangements for weddings and other special events. They sell bouquets and offer a unique Flower CSA, a

subscription program that brings you a fresh bouquet of flowers direct from their farm each week of the summer.

Arrive at 5:30 for a farm tour with Maisie & Willow, followed by the potluck dinner at 6 p.m. Make sure to bring utensils, a plate and cup for yourself/selves, a bountiful dish to share (it's nice to label key ingredients for those with allergies), a blanket to sit on, a healthy appetite, and

a checkbook or some cash for farm direct purchases.

Upcoming farm potlucks include Riverhill Farm on July 7 and Early Bird Farm on July 21. Because these events are popular, Bishop encourages those attended to consider carpooling since there is often limited parking at the farm sites.

Welcome summer with a fun cooking class with Jim E

By Mellisa Hannum

Jim Eckardt's amazing food is well known in this area, first from Jim E's Take Out and Catering, then his catering business, and finally, Club 141.

Known as Jim E to almost everyone, Eckardt even signs his emails with the moniker.

"As a boy I was Jimmy, my last name starts with E, so I came up with Jim E and it sure did stick!" he explained. "Some people call me Jim, some Jimmy, some Jim E, and I even get a Jaime (hi me in Spanish) once in a while."

He first learned how to cook after moving out on his own. Eckardt would call his mother and quiz her on how she made some of his favorite foods. From there, his cooking abilities took off.

In 1983, he moved to Santa Cruz, working in a couple of different restaurants. Soon, however, he found himself in Nevada County and called it home for the next two decades, leaving only for a short time to attend the California Culinary Academy.

Eckardt now lives in Mexico but has returned this summer to share some of his vast food knowledge in Co-op Cooking Classes.

Tonight, he'll be teaching a "Traditional Mexican Dinner," developed from his experiences living in Mexico. After meeting a local chef, Eckardt learned to make dishes like Pastel Azteca, a layered, baked tortilla dish with a zucchini chipotle and crema mixture. He'll also show how to make different mini tostadas for an appetizer, a black bean soup, and green rice with poblano chiles. For dessert, he promises to make an easy and delicious tres leches.

"It all seemed daunting when Jorge was telling me about these dishes," he said,



"but after making them, they are really quite easy and fun."

Eckardt will also be teaching a '70s-inspired class about casseroles on June 10 which will include a Shepard's pie, cheesy biscuit pot pie, and a zucchini and yellow squash casserole.

The night before, on June 9, he'll focus on "Yummy Summer Salads," celebrating the bounty of the garden.

Finally, on June 14 - the June 7 class is already sold out - he'll share his knowledge of tapas.

"Tapas are some of my favorite foods to eat," said Eckardt. "A tapa can be anything bite-sized or made to share ... they bring people together."

Getting to take classes while he's summering in Nevada County is a real treat, and the diverse selection should appeal to many. Eckardt is really looking forward to these upcoming courses.

"I love to share my knowledge, and this is why I'm teaching the classes. Cooking puts me in a happy place," he said.

BriarPatch Co-op Cooking Classes are held at 648 Zion Street in Nevada City. More information is available at (530) 272-5333, ext. 134 or www.briarpatch.coop/community/cooking-classes.

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