

FOCUS ON WINE



ELEANOR & RAY HEALD

Go south for Italian wine values

By ELEANOR & RAY HEALD
SPECIAL WRITERS

"Every three seconds someone in the U.S. pulls the cork of a Winbow bottle of wine," Leonardo LoCascio, CEO of Winbow, Inc., a major importer of Italian wines remarked. Annually, he spends a minimum of eight weeks in Italy choosing wines for his company. LoCascio understood our concern about the very high price tag on Italian wines from the heralded northern regions of Piedmont and Tuscany. "Go south to central and southern Italy," he directed.

"This is not unlike southern France where wines from the southern Rhone, Provence and Languedoc-Roussillon have created interest because they are good values," LoCascio explained. "In the south, you don't have land cost to spread over a limited number of bottles and escalate wine cost." Additionally, LoCascio singled out the vintage situation where only two or three years out of 10 are very good in the Piedmont and in Tuscany, only four in 10 years. In the south, there is no longer a middle European climate, but rather a North African climate. This creates good and great vintages in the south, but none that are poor as is the case in the north. Returns on vineyard investment in the south are more constant, but in the north, one must wait for the good vintage to make big money.

Southern Italy remains fairly undeveloped where local demand for wines, historically, has been low and has not created consumer competition for the best wines like that occurring in the Piedmont. "The Tuscany, the Piedmont is like the Napa Valley of Europe," LoCascio remarked. "People drive from Switzerland, Austria and Germany, fill up their vans with cases of wine and drive home. It's not quite

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Wine Picks

After tasting a line-up of new U.S. West Coast wine releases, attendees at The Great Wine Shootout last month voted their palate preferences.

- Top three winners in the white wine category:
- 1996 Sautbury Chardonnay, Centaro (Hills) \$22
 - 1995 Alderbrook Chardonnay, Dry Creek Valley \$13
 - 1996 Estate Chardonnay, Santa Cruz Mountains \$20

If you're looking for the best quality to price ratio, the Alderbrook is hard to beat.

- In the red wine category:
- Alderbrook scored again with 1995 Kunde Vineyard Merlot \$20
 - Number two behind the winner, a re-release of an older vintage, 1988 Burgess Cellars Library Reserve Cabernet Sauvignon \$22
 - In third was 1995 Ridge Mountain Vineyards Cabernet Merlot \$25. In our opinion the best bottling of this varietal available.

- Best buys at \$10 and under:
- 1996 Hogue Fume Blanc \$9
 - 1996 Meridian Sauvignon Blanc \$8.50
 - 1995 Fetter Valley Oaks Cabernet Sauvignon \$9
 - 1994 Chateau de Gournay, France (blend of syrah and mourvedre) \$9. One of the truly great values from southern France.

LOOKING AHEAD

What to watch for in Taste next week:

- 2 Unique
- Main Dish Miracle



STAFF PHOTO BY BILL HARRIS

Pumpkin pickin'

Big, orange Jack-o'-lanterns haunt local patches

By KEELY WYONIK
STAFF WRITER

Scary, cute, huge, round, are words we use to describe pumpkins, but ancient Greeks had another one — "Popon," meaning "cooked by the sun."

Don't call your pumpkin a vegetable, you might offend it. Pumpkins are fruits, melons to be exact, and one the largest in the family.

Peter Peter was a pumpkin eater. I'll bet he had pretty good eyes too. Pumpkin is rich in vitamin A, which can help you see better at night, and improve weak eyesight. Vitamin A also helps unbuild resistance to respiratory infection, a good thing as we enter the cold and flu season, and promotes growth, strong bones, healthy skin, hair, teeth and gums.

There's more than three times the U.S. recommended daily amount of vitamin A in a half cup of canned pumpkin. When you're looking for the perfect pumpkin, "choose pumpkins that are brightly colored and heavy for their size; their rinds should be free from blemishes," said Sharon Tyler Herbst, author of the "Food Lover's Dictionary," (Hearst Books, New York).

Some pumpkins are for jack-o'-lanterns, others for cooking, they're not the same. Choose a pie pumpkin for cooking, and look for the smaller ones, they'll be sweeter, and meatier. Herbst says to store whole pumpkins at room temperature for up to 1 month, and you can refrigerate them for 3 months, a blessing for cooks planning to make fresh pumpkin pie for Thanksgiving. Lefover pumpkin pie can be stored in the refrigerator for no more than three days.

John F. Mariani, author of "The Dictionary of American Food and Drink," (Hearst Books, New York) credits Indians with introducing pumpkin to the pilgrims. Besides making pumpkin pies, Mariani says pilgrims made pumpkin beer and pumpkin soup.

A popular rhyme in the 17th century went like this — "We have pumpkin at morning and pumpkin at noon. If it were not for pumpkin, we should be undone."

Cook pumpkin just like you would any squash. Winter squash, such as acorn and Hubbard can be substituted for pumpkin in recipes. Roast squash and pumpkin in the oven, or boil until soft in enough water to cover. Add a splash of apple cider to the water for flavor.

Herbst said Halloween pumpkins will keep longer if you spray them with an antiseptic inside and out.

Chris Williams of Drivers Berry Farm in South Lyon has heard about this method, but never tried it. "We tell people to keep their pumpkins in a cool, dry place, out of the rain, and off the ground. Put it on a milk crate," said Williams who owns the farm with his wife JoAnn. The Drivers grow pumpkins on 20 acres of their 230 acre farm, which has been in the family for 60 years. The farm was started by JoAnn's father Louis Driver, and Chris was a farmer before he and JoAnn married.

"Wait three days before Halloween to carve, your pumpkin," said Williams. Tell your anxious children their pumpkin will look absolutely gruesome, and scary in a Halloween way, if they carve it too early. "As soon as air gets into the pumpkin it starts to rot," said Mary Hawk of Canton who

offers u-pick pumpkins on her farm at Ford Road at Ridge Road, and picked pumpkins, corn stalks, scare crows and other seasonal decorations at her farm market on Ford Road at Beck.

Everyone asks, what is the best way to prepare pie pumpkins for pumpkin pies. "I don't have time to do it," said Hawk. "But people tell me all kinds of ways. Some cut it open, bake it like squash and scoop out the pulp, others peel it first and then bake it."

Cathy Caldwell who works at Ward's Orchards in Washtenaw County says fresh cooked pumpkin never tastes like canned. "My mother and grandmother prefer it to canned," she said. "You have to add a lot of spices to it — allspice, cinnamon and nutmeg."

Mother Nature played a scary trick with all the rain this spring, but farmers say this year's pumpkin crop is a little early, and looks good — a treat for little goblins.

"It's the best crop we've had in a long time," said Williams. "We have some nice looking pumpkins, I just came in from the field," said Hawk.

"It's wonderful this year," is how Caldwell described it. Good news for kids who are already haunting their parents about Halloween costumes, and decorations.

Erwin Orchards near Kensington Metropark is offering Pumpkin Picking by Moonlight, 8-10 p.m. Friday and Saturday, Oct. 17-18 and Oct. 24-25. It sounds romantic, but this is a family event, which features a wagon ride to the Spooky Barn, a stop at the pumpkin patch, cider and doughnuts afterward. Call (248) 437-0150 for information.

• See recipes inside.

Harvest: Mary Hawk brings a load of freshly harvested pumpkins in from the field. Halloween was originally a Celtic festival to mark the start of the new year. Introduced to the United States by Scots and Irish immigrants, Halloween is a children's festival, and pumpkins, carved into scary and silly faces, are a part of it.

PUMPKIN PATCHES

Always call ahead to check availability of fruit. The Michigan Department of Agriculture publishes a directory of most of Michigan's farm markets. Titled "1996-97 Farm Market and U-pick Directory." To get your copy, call (517) 373-1058 or send your request to the department, P.O. Box 30017, Lansing, MI 48909.

Macomb County

- **Blake's Big Apple Orchard**, (810) 784-9710 — One mile south of downtown Armada at North Ave. and 33 Mile Road. Open 8 a.m. to 6 p.m. daily. Cider, u-pick apples and pumpkins, animal farm, haunted barn, Pony rides on weekends.
- **Blake's Orchard and Cider Mill**, (810) 784-5343 — Run by same family as Blake's Big Apple Orchard, 17885 Armada Center Road. Open 8 a.m. to 6 p.m. daily. Cider, u-pick apples and pumpkins, animal-petting farm, and haunted barn.

Oakland County

- **Drivers Berry Farm**, 9191 Silverado Dr. (between Duane Road and Silver Lake Road), just west of South Lyon. Open daylight to dark, (248) 437-8461 — u-pick and picked pumpkins, u-pick fall raspberries, corn stalks, straw, Indian corn, gourds.
- **Erwin Orchards & Cider Mill**, (248) 437-4701 — Between Milford and South Lyon, 61475 Silver Lake Road. Open 9 a.m. to 6 p.m., weather permitting. Cider, u-pick apples, pumpkins and fall raspberries. Spooky barn for children open 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. daily. Barn of Horrors open Oct. 10-14, Oct. 17-19, Oct. 23-25, and Oct. 30 to Nov. 1. Hours are 8 p.m. to midnight Fridays and Saturdays, 8-10 p.m. Thursdays and Sundays. Reservations accepted, but not required, call (248) 437-0150 for information.
- **Long Family Orchard & Farm**, (248) 360-3774 — On Commerce Road (west of Bagley Lake Road), Commerce Township. Open 9 a.m. to 6 p.m. Saturday-Sunday, 3-6 p.m. Monday-Friday — Cider, u-pick apples, picked pumpkins. Free hayrides on weekends.

Wayne County

- **Mary's Farm Market**, 47453 Ford Road (southwest corner at Beck), Canton, (313) 981-2866, open 9 a.m. to 7 p.m. — Picked pumpkins, corn stalks, and other seasonal decorations. U-pick pumpkins 10 a.m. to 7 p.m. Saturdays and Sundays at the farm on Ford Road at Ridge Road. Halloween Hay Rides and Bonfire Parties, for groups, minimum 15 people. Call for information.
- **Plymouth Orchards & Cider Mill**, (313) 455-2290 — 10685 Warren Road, Plymouth. Open 9 a.m. to 8 p.m.; u-pick 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. through October. Cider, u-pick apples, (u-pick pumpkins begins Saturday, Oct. 11), picked pumpkins, country store.

Washtenaw County

- **Obstbaum Orchard & Cider Mill**, (248) 493-5569 — 9252 Currie, Northville (four miles west of Beck Road between Seven and Eight Mile Roads). Open 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. Saturday & Sunday. Cider, u-pick apples, cider, pumpkins.
- **Ward's Orchard and Cider Mill**, (313) 482-7744 — South of Ypsilanti, take I-94 to Huron St., go south 4 miles. Open 9 a.m. to 6 p.m. daily. Cider, u-pick apples and pumpkins. Country Fair Saturday and Sunday 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. through the last weekend of October. Features live entertainment, children's activities. Different event each weekend call for details.

If your pumpkin patch is not listed, for information to: Keely Wynoniak, Taste editor, (313) 591-7278, or send to her attention at the Observer & Eccentric Newspapers, Inc., 30251 Schoolcraft, Livonia, MI 48150.



Vegetarian diet can fit demands of athletes

LIVING BETTER



BEVERLY PRICE

An increasing number of young athletes are adopting vegetarian diets for many reasons. Athletes who seek low-fat, high carbohydrate regimens find that a vegetarian diet fits in with their training prescriptions. Let's explore the nutrient needs of the vegetarian athlete.

To meet energy needs, athletes may need to eat six to eight meals and/or snacks per day. For the vegetarian athlete, it is helpful to include calorie dense foods such as nuts, seeds, legumes and vegetable oils. Many athletes do not even consume the Recommended Dietary

Allowance for calories. This is especially common in adolescent wrestlers. Those athletes may maintain their weight by conserving energy through chronic dieting and weight fluctuation. This, in turn, can lower metabolic rate and, of course, is unhealthy.

Although nutrient needs vary based on age, gender and activity level, the common deficiencies in nutrients on calorie restricted vegetarian diets include riboflavin, vitamin B-12, vitamin D, iron, calcium and zinc. Loss of bone calcium may lead to stress fractures and osteoporosis. In female athletes who stop menstruating, this may cause further complications. Because amenorrheic women tend to have lower estrogen levels, this may impair their calcium absorption and retention. Because dairy products are high in sodium

and protein, which cause calcium loss from bone, vegetarian sources are recommended for more efficient absorption and retention such as fortified soy milk, fortified orange juice, tofu, almonds, legumes and leafy vegetables such as collard greens, kale, mustard greens and turnip greens.

Iron deficiency anemia is a common problem in female athletes. Since iron loss may be increased in runners due to red blood cell destruction through foot pounding as well as sweating, prevalent among female long distance runners. Although absorption of iron is three times greater from food sources containing heme iron (meat) versus non-heme iron (plant sources such as beans, nut butters,



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