

Mike Hale

Grub Hunter

BIG SUR'S
A FOODIE
PARADISE

At its heart, Big Sur remains an uncultivated, almost feral region isolated from its Monterey County neighbors. It's a wild land known for its natural beauty and the frequent wrath of Mother Nature.

Yet marketing it as a culinary destination does not stretch the imagination. In fact, it's an easy sell for Big Sur Food and Wine Festival, a third-year event that is gearing up for another run on Nov. 3-5.

Big Sur is a foodie's paradise, from the burrito bar at the Big Sur River Inn General Store to the Ambrosia Burger on the patio at Nepenthe or a high-end dinner at Sierra Mar perched high above the Pacific.

Big Sur Food and Wine runs the gamut of a culinary experience. Where else can you attend an event called Hiking with Stemware a day before a swanky benefit dinner at Ventana Inn and Spa?

Several Big Sur restaurants get in on the action by hosting winemaker dinners. Or enjoy four different preparations of wild hog at the Wine & Swine event at the Henry Miller Library (which, by the way, is fast becoming *the* big-time venue for entertainment). The piggy event features barbecue expert Rob Baker (www.meandthehound.com), with the Pig Wizard, Jonathan Christopher Roberts (www.pigwizard.net) giving on-stage butchery lessons.

"There's something for everybody down here, and I love that," said festival founder Toby Roland-Jones. "Big Sur is a place of unrivaled beauty, and we're trying to really promote it as a culinary destination, too."

Roland-Jones reports charitable donations of \$40,000 over the first two years. Among the beneficiaries are the Big Sur Health Center, Big Sur Volunteer Fire Brigade, Gazebo and the Big Sur Charter School.

Information and tickets: www.bigsurfoodandwine.org.

Diner rant

Clueless, arrogant diners heap abuse on restaurant servers every day. Nowhere do anecdotes of this mistreatment come to light more clearly and hilariously than in the book "Waiter Rant," and the blog of the same name.

I just got around to reading the real-life, frontline account of New York waiter Steve Dublanica, and could understand better this challenging job even filtered through his vitriol and cynicism.

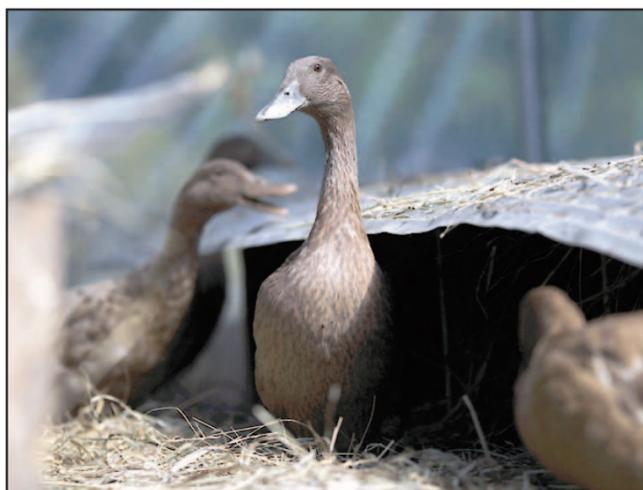
But I'm a diner, through and through. And "Waiter Rant" got me to thinking about the annoying practices of restaurant service employees themselves. My personal Top 5 pet-peeves, if you will:

Not being acknowledged upon entering the restaurant. I'm searching for an immediate, welcoming feeling. Nothing is more uncomfortable than standing inside the doorway, unacknowledged, as oblivious servers buzz by.

Reciting the specials list and never mentioning the prices, which makes a diner uncomfortable being forced to ask: "How much is the sea bass?" Side pet-peeve: Having no opinion when asked "Which do you prefer?" "Everything's good" does not help inform me.

Checking in with me

Please see Grub Hunter page B5



Ducks live a quiet life at L.T.D. Farm, owned Khaiti and Andrew French in Reeves, Wis., and feast on a diet of organic grains supplemented by clover, sorrel, goldenrod and other cover crops cultivated inside the paddocks.

Quack an egg
for baking

Freshly-cleaned duck eggs are carried by Khaiti French at L.T.D. Farm, owned by her and husband Andrew French in Reeves, Wis.

TOM WALLACE/Minneapolis Star Tribune

With more protein and fat,
DUCK EGGS are a baker's delight

By RICK NELSON

Star Tribune (Minneapolis)

We should all live a life as carefree as that of the Khaki Campbell ducks at the western Wisconsin farm of Khaiti and Andrew French.

The 200-plus birds soak up the sunshine and fresh air as they waddle through a series of fenced paddocks, roaming under shade trees and through mud-streaked patches of clover, moving in packs and squawking up a storm on this picturesque and fascinating farm. The scene is a marked contrast to a nearby turkey operation, a factory farm where birds pass the whole of their brief lives crammed wing-to-wing in a space the size of a hockey rink, their only glimpse of the outside world through long horizontal openings.

It's a depressing sight, and it raises a question: How good can that poultry taste? The moral to this story: Healthy, happy ducks become exceptionally good at doing what they do, and that's laying eggs.

"Ethics are so important when you're dealing with animals," said Khaiti. "I know this sounds cheesy, but we don't think of our animals as profit centers. Our animals are so happy here. If you treat animals the way you would want to be treated, you will get spectacular results."

The farm started when Khaiti, who spent more than a decade working in Twin Cities natural foods co-ops, went on the hunt for chickens. She answered a Craigslist ad and encountered a few stray ducks. "I discovered that I liked duck eggs better," she



Because duck eggs boast higher fat and protein figures than chicken eggs, they work wonders in baking and in custards; scramble them, and the descriptive word that applies best is creamy.

said. "Chicken eggs are wimpy." One small step forward led to another, and soon enough she found herself doing what she'd always wanted — farming. Hence the name, L.T.D. Farm, or Living the Dream. Andrew, another longtime co-op vet, signed on two years ago, and the couple exchanged

"It's not our biggest product by any means, but we do sell them," said owner John Metzger.

At L.T.D., the ducks — a breed which, like turkeys, are able to get only a few feet off the ground, flightwise — dine very well, feasting on a diet of organic grains supplemented by clover,

sorrel, goldenrod and other cover crops cultivated inside the paddocks. Bugs are a highly prized treat, along with vegetable scraps from the

kitchen. "They love kale, and they'll gnaw down a winter squash with their beaks," said Khaiti with a laugh. "And it adds to the nutritional content of the eggs."

Although Andrew teases that his wife chose the Khaki Campbell breed because of its similarity to her name, the real reason is because of their prolific

Liven up marinades, dressings and more

Sipping
cider is
just the
beginning

By SUSAN M. SELASKY
Detroit Free Press

A cup of apple cider is a delicious part of the fabric of fall. But don't stop at sipping. Versatile apple cider can be used in recipes sweet and savory. And cider makers not only have the goods on making it but on cooking with it, too.

When customers buy apples for applesauce at Westview Orchards and Adventure Farm in Washington Township, Mich., Katrina Schumacher advises them to cook down the apples in cider instead of water.

"It's a way to get more



PATRICIA BECK/Detroit Free Press

Versatile apple cider can be used in recipes sweet and savory, including this recipe for scalloped potatoes with cider cream.

flavor into the applesauce and use less sugar," she said.

Schumacher, a sixth generation co-owner of the farm, says cider also is great blended into smoothies with other fruits or used for slushes and popsicles.

But marinating is one of the most popular uses of cider other than drinking, the cider makers say.

Richard Koziski of Dexter Cider Mill says cider makes an excellent tenderizer in marinades.

"Cider will make any meat tender," said Koziski. "It's a great tenderizer for venison, as it really breaks down the gaminess of it."

Nancy Steinhauer, Koziski's daughter and owner of the mill, cooks ribs directly in cider, a recipe from her sister Julie Black.

"They just cook in the cider, which breaks them down nicely and tenderizes them," Steinhauer said.

She also cooks steel-cut oatmeal in a slow-cooker with apple cider. "I like that you can make it ahead, love the apple flavor, and it's easy," she said.

You can also boil cider down to intensify the flavor and thicken. Brush the sweet glaze on pork loin or tenderloin, poultry and

Please see Duck eggs page B4

Please see Cider page B5

InSight Eyewear

MONTEREY'S BEST SELECTION OF EYEWEAR

Insurances Welcome
Cathy Shue ABCO
187 El Dorado St. • Monterey
831.373.4400
M-F 9-6 • Sat 10-4
www.insighteyewear.com