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I'm not a good cook by any stretch, but when I step into this restaurant supply store, I believe I CAN COOK ANYTHING!!!!!!!!!!!!!! [salad explodes] *By Andrew Kiraly*

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Editor's Note

DINE AND DASH

One of the things that bums me out most about how the pandemic has pushed the mute button on so many facets of our lives and plunged everything into this kind of extended-play subaquatic unreality is the draining of intrigue and spectacle from everyday public life. (Unless you're counting as spectacle the burgeoning genre of anti-masker freakout videos, which I most assuredly am not.) And, perhaps just as much as our city's stellar cuisine and service both on and off the Strip, that sense of social theater has always been a key ingredient of the valley's dining scene — the stirring stage play of the ordinary that arises from scenes and settings where people are quite simply enjoying themselves. It's one of the virtues we typically celebrate this time of year with *Desert Companion's* annual Restaurant Awards issue. With the dining scene dormant, so are the awards.

Dormant, but certainly not dead! We're all still eating, just adaptively — hitting drive-throughs, getting curbside, venturing to cook and connect through food a lot more at home. And the fact that our restaurants are adapting, too, is a testament to their resilience and ingenuity — elevating their take-out, experimenting with pantries, meal kits, and cooking classes, even testing out entirely new business models. So, like most celebrations these days, this one is certainly subdued, but I hope our feature highlights how the valley's culinary scene understands how Las Vegas eats now. But certainly not forever!

Andrew Kiraly
EDITOR

OH, YEAH, ALSO

1. HERE'S WHAT WE'RE COOKING AT HOME THESE DAYS.

Heidi Kyser: "When it's hot, I eat salad for dinner, and it was a long, hot summer, which meant a lot of salad. I kept it interesting by rotating ingredients through a formula I learned — and have since adapted — from the *NY Times* cooking section several years ago: Greens (or other base) + sweet/savory + rich/creamy + crunchy. So, for instance, last night I had spinach, pomegranate seeds, feta, and toasted pumpkin seeds."

Scott Dickensheets: "My pandemic go-to is the same as before — scrambled eggs, literally the only thing I can make — but with a twist. Once I began cooking them two or three times a week, boredom set in. That's when I made a life-altering discovery: the spice rack. Cumin! Chili powder! Chile flakes! Italian seasoning! Cajun seasoning! Curry powder! *OMG, the curry powder!* Now I blast my eggs with spontaneous spice combos — and maybe last night's leftover spag sauce — for a sanity-preserving taste-bud roller coaster. Additional pandemic twist: Spoon the eggs into your facemask and eat on the go!"

Sonja Swanson: "I've been making pesto in giant batches and freezing it — then I have pesto for weeks! Pesto pasta, pesto mixed with white beans over zucchini, pesto swirled into soups and dolloped onto pizza. I can't get enough of that green gold."

2. CHILDREN'S BOOKS FOR 2020

1. Karenheit 451
2. The Very Hungry Data Brovker
3. Oh, the Places You'll Go Once the Landlord Gets His Way!
4. Are You There, God? It's Me, Margaret, Texting from the Biden Campaign
5. Where the Wild Things Are Holding the Governor
6. Harry Potter and the Half-Baked Covfefe
7. Amy and the Terrible, Horrible, No Good, Very Bad, but Ultimately Successful Confirmation Hearing
8. Goodnight, Zoom
9. The Little Engine That Could Will Arrive with Your Order in Three Minutes
10. The Cat in the Hat but No Mask Because America

Scott Dickensheets



3. Mild winters mean it's hiking season in Southern Nevada, and what better way to escape the living purgatorial prison of your home than by fleeing to the majesty of nature? At desertcompanion.com (search "recreation"), we've got the pandemic-aware slowdown on the region's national parks and recreation areas. Nature: The original Zoom background! Pictured: Calico Basin Trail.

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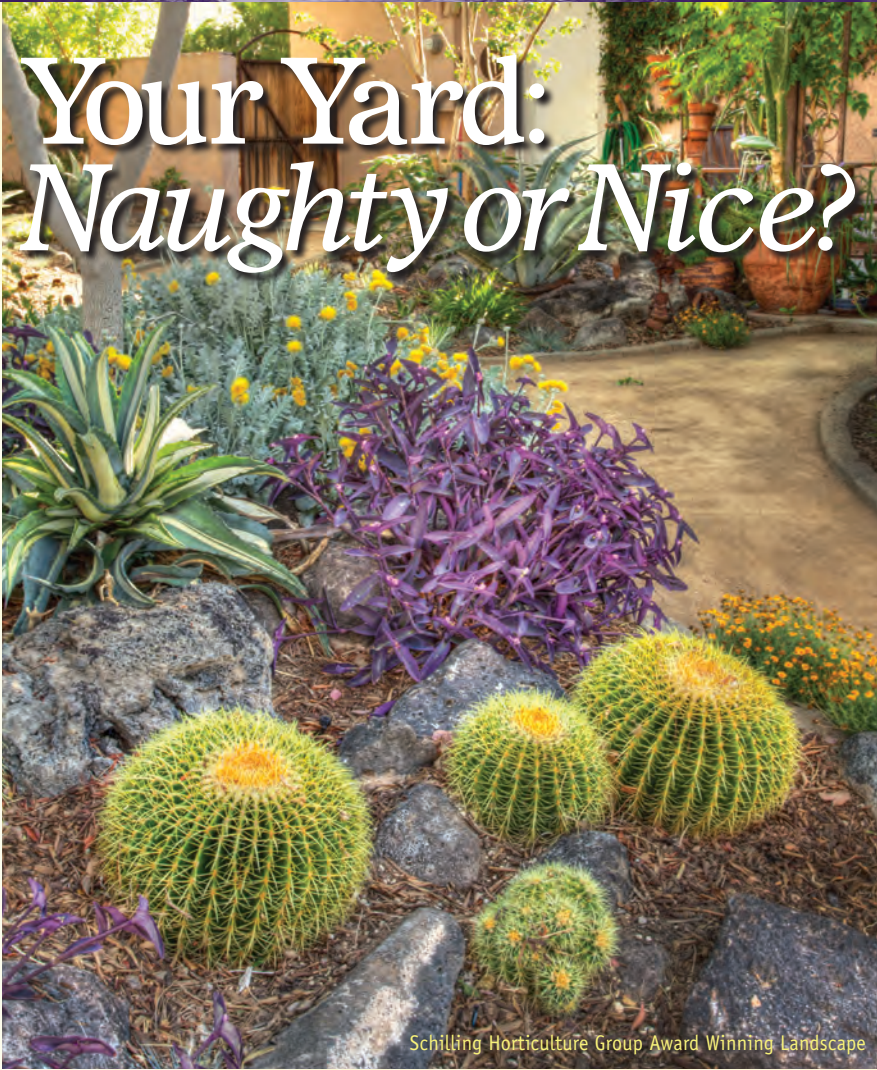
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BUSINESS OF FOOD

EATING AT YOU

Some restaurant owners are asking whether food delivery apps are friend or foe

BY **Heidi Kyser**

Imagine you and a friend go out to eat at your favorite restaurant and the tab is \$100. How much do you think the restaurant pockets, after stocking its pantry, paying its staff, keeping the lights on, and so on? If you guessed \$5, you're right. The industry-wide profit margin averages 5 percent, according to the National Restaurant Association.

Now, imagine that you ordered that same meal through a third-party food delivery app such as DoorDash, Grubhub, Postmates, or Uber Eats, the top four. These apps can take as much as \$30 out of that \$100 for their services (on top of any fees they charge you). That means your favorite restaurant now has \$70 left to cover its other expenses as opposed to \$100.

Finally, imagine that no one's allowed to dine in groups outside their homes, so your favorite restaurant is reliant on

pick-up and delivery for 100 percent of its revenue. And four out of 10 customers are using third-party apps, rather than the restaurant's own app or website, to place their delivery orders.

This is the picture Tacotarian cofounder Kristen Corral likes to paint when she's speaking to fellow restaurant owners, government officials, and the public about the harm she says third-party food delivery apps are inflicting on the very businesses they say they support.

"When the pandemic started, people were scared to leave their house," Corral says. "Now, I think people are just very used to getting things on demand. It's easy; you click a button, and you don't think about it. And because the apps aren't transparent about who's paying what, the customers don't know we're paying 30 percent."

"Our goal is to support restaurants, and Grubhub's mar-

ketplace allows independent restaurants to compete against larger enterprise brands and chains for diners,” a Grubhub spokesman says. “This has never been more important than now, as we all work to support restaurants during the COVID-19 pandemic.”

Corral’s not buying it. Amid the economic wreckage of the shutdown, she and some restaurant-industry peers started lobbying local governments for a limit on the apps’ fees. Clark County passed an emergency ordinance capping fees at 15 percent beginning August 4.

But the law didn’t solve the problem. For one thing, it doesn’t apply outside Clark County; the Tacotarian in Spring Valley may benefit, but for the one Downtown to do so, it would need a similar ordinance in the City of Las Vegas, which says it can’t impose such a law, because it doesn’t have jurisdiction over the delivery app companies to which it hasn’t issued business licenses. (Henderson said it’s in a similar quandary; North Las Vegas didn’t reply to *Desert Companion’s* inquiry about the matter.)

Additionally, within a month after the Clark County ordinance passed, restaurants began reporting that some of the apps were either unaware of it, refusing to comply, or exploiting a loophole to shift their fees from delivery to marketing (thus keeping the total fees as high as they were pre-cap). In early October, the county commission proposed a fix that was scheduled for public discussion on October 20, as this story went to press. Meanwhile, Las Vegas and Henderson said their city councils were investigating the licensing issue.

“My hat’s off to Kristen (Corral),” Natalia Badzjo, co-owner of Big B’s Texas BBQ says. “It’s something that the restaurant community has been crying over for years, and she got it done. Standing ovation to her.”

But, as Badzjo’s own experience illustrates, the problems with the apps go beyond their fees. From data hoarding to copyright theft,

Corral and others say, the apps’ practices are hurting more than they help. The following examples show three ways restaurant owners have chosen to navigate the turbulent waters of an industry disrupted.

* * *

BIG B’S NEVER closed, technically. Between Governor Steve Sisolak’s March 17 non-essential business closure and his May 9 limited reopening of dining rooms, Big B’s was open for takeout and delivery. Badzjo says staff handles large deliveries, such as to events, and a small percentage is takeout, but third-party delivery companies handle the majority of the to-go business.

Early on, she says, she and her husband, Brian Buechner — co-owner, chef, and namesake of Big B’s — didn’t think the restaurant would make it. But they’d already paid rent through the end of March, so they figured they may as well stay open. As Las Vegas ventured out, they found the few places that were open, including Big B’s.

“From March to May, we didn’t really make a lot of revenue, but we got a lot of new customers,” Badzjo says.

This is one reason restaurateurs sign up with third-party apps (and why the apps say their fees are justified): to reach a demographic that wouldn’t find them otherwise. Another reason: “I’m not in the delivery business,” Badzjo says. “I’m in the food business.”

Most orders come in rushes — 60 or more between 5 and 7 p.m. at Big B’s on a busy night. No restaurant keeps enough drivers on staff to handle that volume. And some delivery customers are so far away that in-house staff wouldn’t drive to them anyway. This is a benefit of outsourcing the service to a specialist.

Third-party apps make sense, Badzjo says, when their commissions are reasonable (15 percent, in her opinion), and the slice of the overall business they’re taking is small. The problem comes when both their commissions and their slice of the business get so

big that they eat into profits. She says she looked into Uber Eats during the pandemic, but they wouldn’t give her a rate of less than 30 percent. She declined. (Uber did not respond to *Desert Companion’s* emails.)

And about those new customers Badzjo reaches through the apps: How does she persuade them to switch to the more profitable options of dining in or ordering directly from her? The app operators own all the data they gather on Big B’s customers. And they’re not sharing it.

* * *

LOTUS OF SIAM’S longstanding reputation as one of the top Thai restaurants in Las Vegas (if not the U.S.) gives it a huge advantage in any situation. But it’s had its share of adversity recently, too, such as the 2017 roof collapse that suddenly shut down its original Commercial Center location and the mid-March 2020 rain damage that shuttered its Flamingo location as well. Reopening both sites has come in fits and starts, because of the pandemic and remodeling. But, as of this writing, the Commercial Center location was open and the Flamingo location was set to do so in November.

Thank goodness, co-owner Penny Chutima says, for takeout and delivery in the interim.

“When we weren’t able to seat inside, the to-go was doing really well,” she says. “Then, when we implemented the delivery, it was even better.”

A staunch opponent of third-party delivery apps that charge commissions, Chutima took an alternate route: ChowNow. This developer charges restaurants a flat rate (\$499 in Lotus of Siam’s case) to develop a to-go app, and then a fixed monthly fee (\$99) for marketing and ordering services, and, in limited instances, delivery. Lotus of Siam had been using the app for takeout a little less than a year when the pandemic hit, and then quickly enlisted the company to customize a delivery option.

Now, if a customer downloads the Lotus of Siam app (and opens a ChowNow account), they can place an order that goes straight to the restaurant for either pickup or delivery. DoorDash (through its contract with ChowNow) delivers orders placed within a five-mile radius, and Lotus staff handle the rest. It’s a manageable volume, Chutima says. “In one day, we may have 20 to-go orders, and of those, maybe five are for in-house delivery.”

The restaurant did have to make cutbacks during the business closure; still, she’s glad she resisted the big-name apps.

	Average per-person spend	Amount of delivery or takeout (estimated)	Current revenue compared to pre-pandemic	Apps using	Commissions paying
Big B’s Texas BBQ	\$15	30%	Down 20%	DoorDash Grubhub Postmates	20%, 27.5%/33.5%, 20%
Lotus of Siam	\$55	30%	Down 60%	ChowNow	None
Sparrow + Wolf	\$52	5%	Down 50%	None	None

“To me, as a businesswoman, it’s a wrong move,” she says. “With a company like Grubhub, they’re a huge corporation. Putting myself in their perspective, they have expenses, too. As a small-business owner, you can negotiate your credit card processing rates. They won’t do that. They charge for marketing, drivers, legal fees.”

Despite this sympathy, Chutima finds the delivery app companies frustrating. For instance, she says, customers will call to complain about an order. When she asks what phone number they used to place it, they’ll give one not belonging to Lotus but to a delivery app — despite her having no contracts with any of them. As this story was being reported, Postmates had an active Lotus of Siam page on its website. (Postmates did not respond to *Desert Companion’s* e-mails seeking comment.)

The American Economic Liberties Project found this problem to be widespread. In a September white paper, the organization describes how app companies hire call centers to take orders for non-contracted restaurants. A call center worker will then place the order directly with the restaurant, send a driver posing as the customer to the restaurant to pick up the order, and deliver it to the actual customer.

Why engage in such a high-hassle (and presumably, low-profit) way of doing business? The report asserts it’s because the companies’ main goal is gaining market share. As evidence, it says their public financial reports show they’re unprofitable, yet they continue to receive huge investments. At the same time, the industry is in a consolidation race: “Grubhub and DoorDash alone comprise more than 20 companies that once competed with one another,” the paper says.

According to data analytics firm Second Measure, the big-four companies control 90 percent of the consumer meal delivery market. And Uber is currently in talks to acquire Postmates.

* * *

SPARROW + WOLF co-owner Brian Howard says the restaurant’s staff considered all its options during the pandemic closure and declined to do any delivery or takeout at all.

“We felt like the hustle that would go into chasing the dollars would be more stressful than coming out of it having planned and prepared for what would be next,” Howard says.

They decided instead to focus on connecting to their community. They opened

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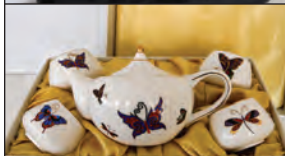
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a pantry where people could pick up artisan bread, hard-to-find ingredients such as oysters or spices, and recipes for dishes they could make at home. They ran cocktail-mixing competitions on social media platforms. They participated in charity food drives. When Sparrow + Wolf opened at half-capacity on June 1, Howard says, its friends and fans were ready and waiting.

About 20 percent of the restaurant's business is still from the pantry, which now offers items such as burger kits for outdoor grilling. And, Howard concedes, they do some takeout on a very limited basis.

"We've always done carryout," he says. "If people want something to take home, we'll do it. But I believe food's meant to be eaten in a restaurant, especially the way we cook it."

Most of his peers would prefer dine-in, of course, but the delivery app genie is out of the bottle now. And, particularly for more casual restaurants than Sparrow + Wolf, opting out of delivery may not be possible — or even desirable. There will always be potential enthusiasts who won't come in, or can't, as in the pandemic.

The solution, Corral of Tacotarian believes, is for restaurant owners to create their own delivery system — something akin to Chomp, a co-op of sorts developed by Iowa City, Iowa, locals to compete with Grubhub. This would allow independent businesses to control their own data, menus, and prices, and give them the opportunity to build community among all their customers, not just the ones they see in person.

* * *

NO ONE IS more worried about the state of the local restaurant industry than Alexandria Dazlich, the Nevada Restaurant Association's director of government affairs. She notes that her organization's research indicates 15 percent of restaurants have closed because of the pandemic, and that Open Table predicts one in four will never reopen.

"We're trying to do what we can to save the restaurant industry," she says. "The Clark County action was an emergency ordinance for a reason.

Continued on Page 14

ECO-POLITICS

Reid and the Rurals

A new documentary about Harry Reid's environmental work spotlights his relationship to outback Nevada

In late September the documentary *The New West and the Politics of the Environment* debuted locally on KCET. It's a 90-minute look at the environmental accomplishments of former U.S. Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid, who retired in 2017 after more than 30 years of public service. Longtime environmental activist John Hiatt, conservation chair for Red Rock Audubon, and relative newcomer Elspeth DiMarzio, of the Sierra Club's Beyond Coal campaign, previewed the film for a roundtable discussion in our weekly newsletter, *Fifth Street*. The following is an additional excerpt of the original conversation, moderated by *Desert Companion's* Heidi Kyser. It's been edited for length and clarity.

Heidi Kyser: I noted a heavy emphasis in the film on Reid's indifference to backlash when he thought what he was doing what was right. Is that an accurate characterization, in your view?

John Hiatt: I think that Senator Reid was very smart and calculating about who was going to support him and who was not. And he recognized after his work on the (Great Basin National) Park bill that rural Nevada was not going to support him. And so, it was like, why worry about it? We might as well go ahead and do what we want to do, because the support to get him reelected is going to come from Clark County, basically.

Elspeth DiMarzio: From the work we did with Senator Reid on Reid Gardner (a coal-fired generating station), it always felt to me that he has a strong moral compass, so he really was fighting for what he thought was best for Nevada and Nevadans, whether that was wilderness protection or a national park or something else. I think the documentary got at this a little bit, but having lived through it, I saw that when the senator was



making bold statements about the need to retire or not build any new coal plants in Nevada, that was not a popular opinion. Now, 10 years later, we can look back and say coal plants are shutting down because of economics, but there was a time that was a really strong position he was taking, especially with environmental justice communities like the Moapa Band of Paiutes, and it was because he thought that was the right thing to do.

Hiatt: He certainly had a strong moral compass, but he was also pragmatic about knowing what he could get away with, and knowing where things were going, quite frankly.

Kyser: Toward the end of the documentary, Ernie Schank from the Truckee-Carson Irrigation District says that Reid is not well-liked in rural Nevada. Was getting to Reid's conservation goals worth the cost to people living in the rural areas who make their living farming, mining, and ranching?

Hiatt: It's an interesting question. Things are changing in rural America whether we go to clean energy or not. If you look all over the country, you can see that rural areas have been depopulating for most of the 20th century and into the 21st, and there's no evidence that the trend isn't going to continue. ... The challenge in rural Nevada and the rest of the country is how to make those areas economically attractive to young people, so they feel their activities will be sustainable and still valuable 10, 20 years into the future.

DiMarzio: I haven't spent as much time in rural Nevada as John ... but it did feel to me that, Senator Reid being from Searchlight, he's not unfamiliar with that rural lifestyle. ... It's close to a metropolitan area, but some of the work Senator Reid did in conjunction with the Moapa Band of Paiutes to help the transition from a coal-impacted community to a thriving clean-energy community — those are things that, in other states I work in, are still looked at as an example of how you can make that transition the right way. That goes back to the foresight John was talking about earlier. **Heidi Kyser**

Read the rest of Hiatt and DiMarzio's conversation in the September 24 edition of Fifth Street, knpr.org/desert-companion/fifth-street

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Continued from Page 12

Restaurants are fighting for their lives.”

That temporary delivery fee cap expires in February. Corral and Dazlich see it as an opportunity to work toward a better permanent solution.

“In the future, we hope to address billing transparency and less-than-savory practices,” Dazlich says. “Call fees, bag fees, taking menus without consent, listing restaurants that have actively declined to be a part of it. ... We want to encourage business-friendly practices, but we don’t endorse practices that exploit our businesses. There are a few really big food delivery providers, and right now, they remain pretty unregulated. They’re here to stay, and we want to make sure it’s a good partnership.”

That partnership may not come without a struggle. The app companies have spent millions fighting fee caps in other jurisdictions where they’ve been imposed, and Dazlich says her understanding is that they’ve already contested the proposed amendment to the Clark County ordinance.

Both DoorDash and Grubhub tell *Desert Companion* they believe fee caps are bad for business, and tend to hurt smaller, less profitable restaurants the most. Grubhub says its research suggests restaurants affected by the fee cap saw orders decline by 20 percent compared to those not affected by the cap. The company also says the cap forces delivery companies to charge diners higher fees to cover their losses.

Furthermore, the companies argue, they came to restaurant owners’ rescue during the pandemic. DoorDash cites results of a study it commissioned Technomic to conduct as evidence it has helped its clients in the U.S., Canada, and Australia save \$120 million from mid-March through May, and that merchants on its app had a six times greater chance of staying in business during the pandemic than those off it.

If Corral and Dazlich get their way, Southern Nevadans will get to hear both sides of the issue in public hearings about proposed legislation over the coming months. Meanwhile, people who love restaurant food have another complication to factor into their choice to dine out or eat in. ♦



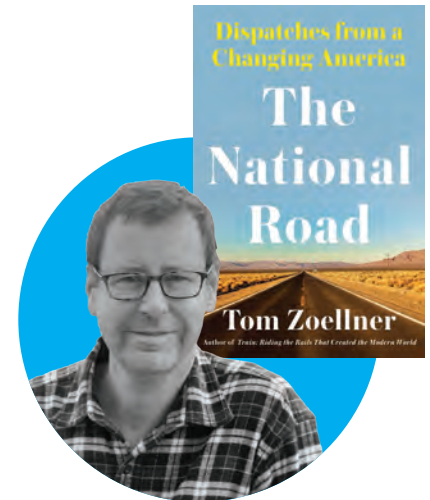
BOOK EXCERPT

‘I’m Going to Die Here’

A brief encounter in Searchlight at the start of a long journey through Nevada

BY Tom Zoellner

Editor’s note: In his new book, *The National Road: Dispatches from a Changing America*, Los Angeles author Tom Zoellner “takes to the highways and byways of a vast land in search of the soul of its people.” “Searchlight,” the longest chapter in the book, recounts his journey through Nevada. It takes him from the title burg (subject of this excerpt, courtesy of Counterpoint Press) through Las Vegas, Beatty, and points north, closing with a suspenseful account of his attempt to climb Pilot Peak. Along the way he digs into the state’s history, geography, ephemerality, and people.



The woman behind the bar hands me a piece of silver that she assayed herself — not perfect, as it bears a pimple of iron in the middle — but she got it for free, scavenged from a pile of mine waste and then cooked down into this blob of wealth.

“You put the rocks into the furnace and it goes into a kind of black sponge,” C.J. says. “Every now and then you can see a flash when it shows platinum. There’s rainbow colors, depending on what type of mineral you’ve got in there. It’s awesome.”

She’s tending the bar tonight at Terrible’s Roadhouse, one of two casinos in the town of Searchlight, which sits near the southernmost dagger-point of Nevada. The carpet bears a pattern of fleur-de-lis, faded and gummy with a thousand spilled drinks, and the stage in the corner — approximately the square-footage of an average hot tub — is empty. No green velvet table games available here, only forty-nine slot machines winking

in obedient rows. C.J. pours me another whiskey and keeps talking.

“Now you get these people around here who use cyanide. I don’t f--- with that anymore. It killed my sister. My husband and I take walks all the time around here and look for gold and silver, picking up rocks as we go. You can tell by their weight if there might be something hiding in there.”

Searchlight’s motto is The Camp That Didn’t Fail. Like almost every surviving town in Nevada, Searchlight was built around a mineral craze. A group of investors hacked into a Miocene-era bluff in 1897, and one of them, Fred Colton, snorted: “There’s something here, boys, but it would take a searchlight to find it.” They kept digging. A vein of gold materialized, and with it, more people. For years, the town had a tennis court but no churches. A midcentury hustler named Willie Martello built a gambling den and cathouse called the El Rey Club and flew in big spenders for weekend fun. Now the El

Rey is a rectangle of ruined walls bleaching in the sun, and the town is at a population of 539, which includes the bartender C.J., who lives in a single-wide trailer with a load of broken computers stacked outside that she melts down for the metallic guts.

“I’m going to die here,” she says. “This is the first land I’ve ever owned.” She can supplement the \$8.50 an hour plus tips she earns at the bar with the gold that lies around her. The land is blasted and sere in all directions; nothing grows but weeds and yucca. But the land can yield coin if you look at it correctly. “Right place, right time,” C.J. told me. Money is nothing but labor stored in a little package.

I slept that night on a flat spot in the desert that I found in the dark and woke up to discover a green-and-red speckle of plastic shotgun shells around me, along with a mess of shattered clay pigeons and a pair of kitchen appliances that had been generously ventilated with gunfire — a makeshift shooting range on federal land, which is 84.9 percent of Nevada. For as much as the Western constitutionalist desert rat likes to rail against the heavy fist of Uncle Sam, out here you can pretty much do as you like: camp, fish, hunt, shoot your guns, ride your quad. Freedom’s banner flies high. The Battle Born State’s unwritten ethic is that you can have anything you want at any hour, as long as you pay for it yourself and don’t bother the other customers. I yawned, scratched, got a coffee at Terrible’s Roadhouse, and drove north. My aim, eventually, was the Idaho border. ♦

The National Road: Dispatches from a Changing America, by Tom Zoellner, \$26, Counterpoint Press



OPEN TOPIC

GROWING TOWARD CHANGE

A just food system has to encompass every step from the soil to your plate

BY **Jocelyn Jackson**

The last several months we've been asked to expand our perceptions of reality. We learned what's most essential to thrive as we navigate both the largest pandemic and most sustained social justice protests in living memory. As we shift to find solutions, it is beautiful to witness the sustained courage and ongoing dedication to positive change.

As a founder of two social justice-centered community food projects, as well as an attorney, artist, and environmental educator, I focus on identifying the people most at risk in the food system. I leverage my time and effort in the direction of healing the old, oppressive assumptions of the food industry—centered on unethical profit—so we can become a thriving and liberated food community centered on people and planet.

Many folks only interact with grocery stores, farmers markets, and restaurants as their primary relationship to food. In fact, our food chain reaches all the way to the seed and the soil and includes all the processing, transportation, and regulatory entities required for food to make its way to our plates. During this pandemic and social unrest, every system is being interrogated and, thankfully, the ones that uphold oppressive structures are being torn from their pedestals of presumed normalcy.

In general, business in the United States was founded upon the legacy of slavery. It is important for every business sector, including food, to eliminate any vestige of white su-

premac, and adopt a framework that uplifts liberated systems of cooperative economics and realigns with fundamental human rights.

Here are four specific ways we can begin to build an equitable and collectively held food community.

ETHICAL LABOR PRACTICES

THE CURRENT PROFIT structure is based on cheap, unprotected labor: undocumented fieldworkers and meatpackers, incarcerated prisoners, line cooks, dishwashers. The same people we have often lauded as essential during this pandemic.

A commonly held value of most people is that everyone working a full-time job should receive a livable wage and healthcare. Unfortunately, food preparation, serving, farming, and fishing are occupations that earn the lowest median wage. Before COVID-19, farm workers already experienced the highest rates of toxic chemical injuries and lifelong health consequences. They often receive only \$2 per vessel of fruit or vegetables picked. And the people who grow and serve our food often are food insecure themselves.

Another way food employers circumvent their labor obligations is by saying that tips make up the living-wage difference. Tipping in the U.S. began as a way to selectively compensate Black workers, and it still encourages racism, sexism, harassment, and exploitation. Businesses will also use contract, temporary, and part-time workers to avoid their ethical responsibilities. Every employer needs to renounce these practices and commit to providing workers the wages, safety equipment, and healthcare they require.

Consumers must be vocal about our commitment to ethical practices across the entire food chain. Collectively we can extinguish the fear and desperation that food workers feel in the face of power structures willing to dismiss them at the first sign of dissent.

Resources: HEAL Food Alliance, Food Chain Workers Alliance, Restaurant Opportunities Centers United

WORKER COOPERATIVES

IF A BUSINESS isn't able to make a reasonable profit without using cheap labor and unsustainable environmental practices, their business model is unethical. We must grow beyond these models to rebuild an equitable food community.

Worker cooperatives are a proven concept of business leadership that creates a centrally governed and democratically controlled worker-owner establishment. This model is applicable to every kind of business, including

restaurants, grocery stores, and farms. It flattens hierarchies and empowers workers, which leads to less racism, sexism, classism, ableism, and climate-change denial.

Many worker cooperatives have social justice frameworks that honor the whole person in support of their contribution to the business. For example, creating reciprocal relationships with a childcare cooperative and a housing cooperative can make it so that employees are better able to perform their jobs. These are the old-school modes of community support that can be renewed now that collective support is the most realistic and sustainable path forward.

Resources: Mandela Grocery Cooperative, Rainbow Grocery Cooperative, Cheese Board Collective, Arizmendi Association of Cooperatives, Ubuntu Coffee Cooperative, United States Federation of Worker Cooperatives

MUTUAL AID NETWORKS

MANY PEOPLE ARE hearing the term “mutual aid” for the first time as our society instinctively comes together to provide resources and support for everyone, but especially the people most at risk. But it is important to note that mutual aid isn’t new, and it isn’t a response only in exigent circumstances. It is an ongoing approach to building and maintaining what Martin Luther King Jr. called beloved community. Many restaurants and food banks pivoted to support the huge need created when our cities were called to shelter in place. We witnessed the great capacity and agility we have to meet that need. I propose that we never stop.

Leverage your skills, resources, and networks to be of service to your community. Ask your neighbors what they need. Align with groups committed to mutual aid with communities at the highest risk. This is one of the most profound opportunities we have to take sustained action and manifest the radical hospitality our society needs.

Resources: Las Vegas Town Fridge Project, Mutual Aid Network of Las Vegas, World Central Kitchen, Idealist.org Mutual Aid

COMMUNITY GARDENS

MUTUAL AID AND cooperative work structures have a beautiful manifestation in community gardens and community-supported agriculture (CSAs). Before monolithic corporate farming, these collective local enterprises were the standard for sustainable and healthy food systems. In 1982, Booker T. Whatley, from the Tuskegee agricultural legacy that included George Washington

Carver, put forth the farming and marketing concept of CSAs with his Clientele Membership Clubs. His goal was to grow healthier food and bring producers and consumers closer together. And with CSAs, a more stable food economy is created when consumers commit to the farmer through seasonal subscriptions to the harvest.

Decide today to support the abundance of our local food community. And in that commitment, we consumers need to also be prepared to pay more for food and/or

grow our own to bring balance back to our food community.

Resources: San Miguel Community Garden, Vegas Roots, Master Gardeners of Clark County

ALONGSIDE ITS INEQUITIES, the food community is filled with deep love and care. This moment has shown us what we can accomplish together. So let’s eat food harvested, cooked, and served by empowered workers, and give our next generations a legacy of caretaking one another and our planet. ♦

THE ONE-QUESTION INTERVIEW

Your Brain on Zoom

What does your gray matter think of socially distanced human connection?

Stephen Benning, a UNLV psychology professor, directs the school's Psychophysiology of Emotion and Personality laboratory, which looks at the intersection of emotional processes and bodily responses. Who better to query about the fluctuating satisfaction of online togetherness during quarantine?



Has modern communications technology, like Zoom, been a useful substitute for face-to-face interaction?

I would say it may have helped people maintain *some kinds* of social connections. However, it is unlikely to replace the satisfaction of physical presence in a lot of interactions.

One of the things that we have shown in our lab is that having your friends put their hand on your shoulder while you’re doing a stressful task makes people’s positive emotion go up and negative emotion go down. So there really is something about physical touch that helps people regulate their emotional states in a way that’s just not available at a distance.

There are basic perceptual reasons for this, too. When you think about how large a visual angle a person occupies when they’re sitting in front of you, it’s much larger than when they’re in a Zoom window, even at full screen. They take up more perceptual space. You can see more of their bodies and more of their fine movements than you might be able to discern over Zoom.

The other thing about making connections online is the different latency in response that often comes up, especially when people are using wireless connections. The amount of lag between when someone says something, it gets transmitted, it gets represented on the computer, then transmitted through the speakers is not even *constant*. So our brains can’t really adjust to that technological lag. Whereas when people are sitting in front of us, it’s relatively easy to process what they’re saying. I think a lot of this differential lag that we can’t predict or compensate for is part of what underlies Zoom fatigue.

The way I like to think about this is: Technically, we should be seeing the world upside down, based on how the optics of our eyes work. But through development our brains know that if we flip the picture, we’ll get a great representation of how the world works. And we are *always* seeing the world in exactly the same way, and our brain just knows, yes, I just do one flip. The auditory equivalent now is, you can’t just do one correction. The brain’s gotta be figuring out how many milliseconds something is delayed from when it is said to being received, and that delay can change. Imagine that in the visual domain, how your brain would just be flippin’ and floppin’ and get all staticky. You can see why Zoom fatigue challenges our brain’s ability to adapt to these dynamic and laggy connections.

Scott Dickensheets

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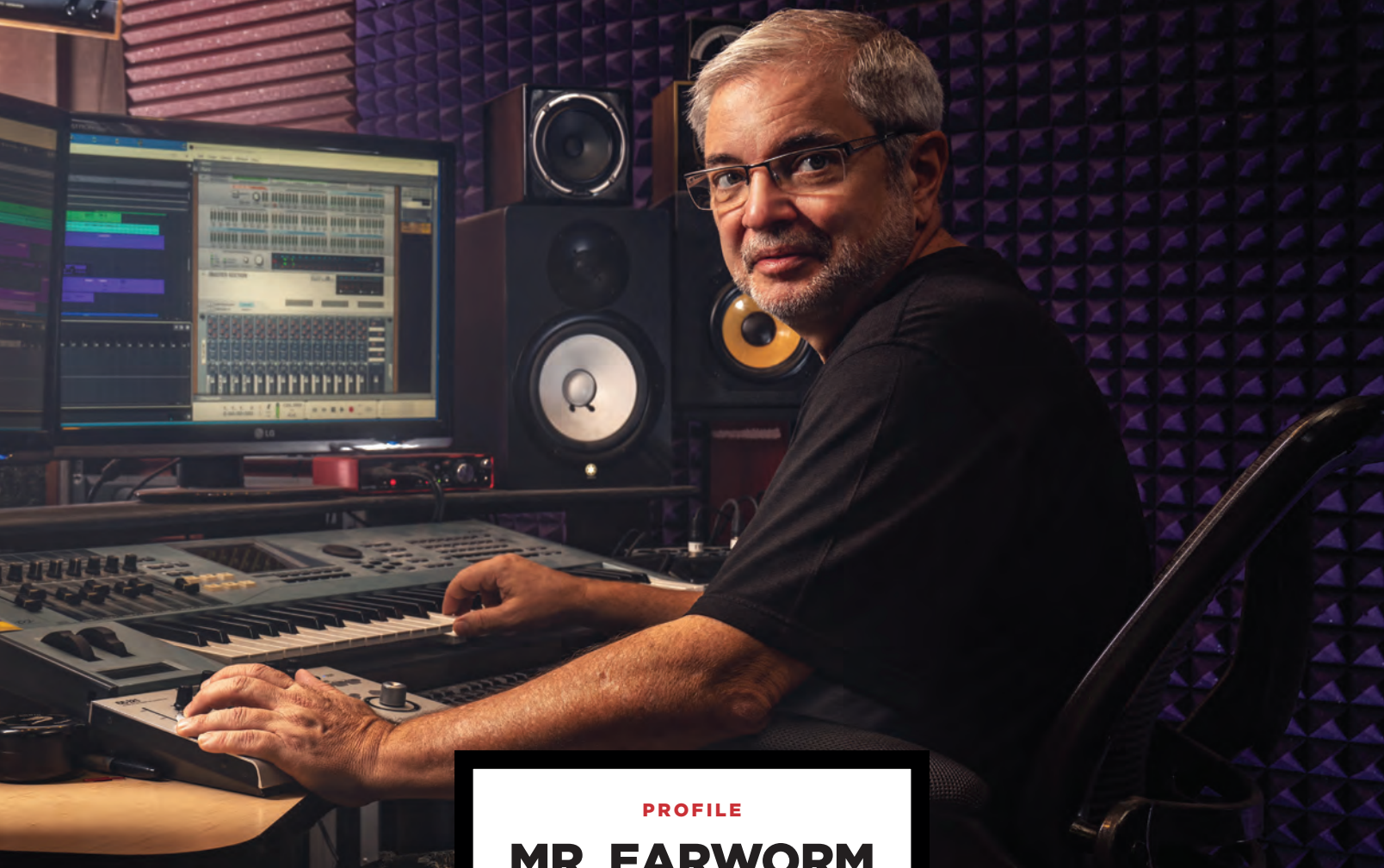
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CULTURE



PROFILE

MR. EARWORM

Meet the musician behind the jingle that will soon be stuck in your mind — again

BY *Krista Diamond*

There are many elements of Las Vegas that permeate culture on a national or even global level — the Welcome sign, the Bellagio fountains, the disappointing realization that what happens here does not, in fact, stay here. For Las Vegas locals, however, few things are as ubiquitous as seven numbers: 877-1500.

That phone number. When you see it on the side of a bus, you sing it in your head. To live in Las Vegas is to know it by heart. You may not be able to recite your grandmother's phone number, but you know *that* one. Glen Lerner, personal injury lawyer. He is, according to the jingle anyway, *the way to go*.

If you've had Glen Lerner's phone number stuck in your head, you can thank Pete Radd. The master of jingles produced the tune more than a decade ago.

"Jingles become famous or infamous

based on the budget the advertiser has to run it frequently," Radd says of the ad's longevity. "Radio stations try songs and watch what catches on, and they run those songs based on how people respond to them, based on how the market responds. When an advertiser has a jingle that they believe in, they have the power to play that jingle as much as they want and as much as they can afford. And that's a big part of why a jingle is successful. Of course, I think it's a good jingle. It is a good jingle. But it also has been played incessantly, nonstop on all TV channels, all radio stations, and now online."

A lifelong musician, Radd has toured

as pianist for The Four Tops, served as musical director for The Temptations, and was music director for the show *Bottoms Up*, which ran at the Sahara. He played at President Clinton's first inauguration, was featured on a Christmas album with Aretha Franklin, and is a regular pianist in the Bellagio lounge. Radd got into the advertising earworm business in the '80s, after being hired to produce a jingle for a Reno cab company. The ditty ("333-3333, Reno-Sparks Cab gets you where you want to be") was a hit.

After moving to Las Vegas, Radd sought out advertising agencies and went on to produce jingles around town, scoring another memorable hit in the early 2000s with a four-second ad you also probably haven't forgotten: "UNLV Tickets. We getcha there." But it wasn't until Glen Lerner's advertising agency came calling that the ultimate "you

know you're a Vegas local when ..." reference was born.

Radd describes the process of creating the jingle as collaborative. The advertising agency suggested the lyric; Radd produced the music, which he describes as "kind of macho with a funky hip-hop beat behind it."

The fact that those seven digits are now stuck in all of our heads is proof of the logic behind the phone number-centric approach.

"Nobody gets up in the morning thinking they're going to need a personal injury lawyer," Radd says. "If you are an unfortunate soul who gets in a car accident, that's the first thing you need. It flips your life over like a pancake one day. What we were able to do, what Mr. Lerner's ad agent team knew ahead of everyone, was that it was all about the phone number."

The jingle's reach extends beyond Clark County. Not only does it play in other states where Lerner's law firm has a presence (Arizona, New Mexico, Illinois, to name a few), the melody is used by affiliated law firms. Oftentimes, Radd's friends will call him up while traveling to tell him that someone stole his jingle. "No, I did all of them," Radd tells them. "They were all done here."

When asked about his connection to Vegas's best-known phone number, he says that he feels fortunate to hear his work played so often. There's an English version, a Spanish version, a fast-tempo version, a slower version. Strip visitors hear it in their hotel rooms. Locals hear it, well, everywhere, and probably will continue to do so for the foreseeable future.

"They had the budget to play it frequently, and they stuck with it," Radd says. "They used it consistently over time. Over and over again. You and I could turn on the TV right now and find that jingle playing on a channel somewhere." ♦



Q & A

'Go Back and Get It'

Local scholar and author Erica Vital-Lazare on her new project to resurface important Black literature

BY **Scott Dickensheets**

The 1978 novel *Tragic Magic* by Wesley Brown should've been back on bookshelves by now. It's the first book in a series, from respected publisher McSweeney's, titled "Of the Diaspora," which will reprint out-of-print and new works of Black literature. Now, thanks to COVID-19, you can't read *Tragic Magic* until February. That hasn't dampened the enthusiasm of series founder Erica Vital-Lazare, a CSN English professor and stalwart of the Las Vegas literary scene.

Tragic Magic was championed by the late Toni Morrison, and the second book in the series, *Praisesong for the Widow*, from 1983, was written by Paule Marshall, whom Vital-Lazare cites as a mentor. These volumes and the ones to follow are "all tied to the same narrative, of having crossed that

treacherous triangle and becoming part of the slave trade — much of Western civilization is based on that diasporic journey that was not voluntary in any way, but upon which our identity rests," Vital-Lazare says.

Following are excerpts from a wide-ranging conversation about the series, Black literature, and the value of the past.

IT STARTED AT such an intimate level, just myself and my good friend talking about books. That friend would be Brian Dice, president of McSweeney's. And we were just doing what we do, we're talking about books, talking about classic Black works that sometimes fall out of print.

EVERY 20 YEARS or so, generations need to revisit the past. All the strides of the Civil Rights Movement and the turmoil that my parents and grandparents had to endure in order to be recognized as human — in the '80s and '90s we got further and further from wanting to revisit that struggle. We were told you can *be* anything, *do* anything, the playing field is now even. Then in comes 2016. And Brian and I, talking about works of literature like we do, it had a particular urgency then. Almost like we were sleeping, we were dreaming, and then all of a sudden you're reminded that there are certain powers that would prefer you not to breathe. And love of this literature became conversations about how much it is needed. The message,

PHOTO COURTESY ERICA VITAL-LAZARE

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ALL THINGS

the stories, the reminders, the beauty, and the Black humanity in those works. We needed to revisit and remember.

THERE'S SANKOFA, THE African symbol — “go back and get it,” is what *sankofa* means. You don't go back (into history) and *hold on*. You don't go back and *wallow*. You go back and get it.

PARTICULARLY AS A Black woman I see the ways that re-invention is always necessary to survival. And what you really want to be reminded of is the thriving that is the ascendancy of just survival.

EACH OF THESE works is about liberating the self at a very personal level. There's whiteness on the large exterior landscape and the particular ways it has impacted Black life. But in these works you're looking at how these Black identities are able to reclaim for themselves who they are.

WITHOUT SOUNDING TOO “Ebony and Ivory” about it, the fact that the project came out of the love that my friend and I have for this work, and he's a white dude in San Francisco, and I'm a Black woman here — and yet we share this love, and from this love and a conversation, this project is born. It's one thing I'm often struck by.

THE GREAT IRONY that the works would not exist without the narrative of captivity is something that is very painful to think about, and also something that's very liberating. Because a whole art form, a whole genre of literature, literature itself, I think — Toni Morrison in one of her essays talks about how white literature would not exist without the tension of Blackness, of otherness, to support it. So that's a lot to contend with. It's amazing, horrifying, brutal, and lovely. ♦

Comments have been edited for length and clarity.



THEATER

IF ONLY IN MY DREAMS

THROUGH DECEMBER | IN-PERSON

What's up with your new neighbors, the Stephensons? Why are they here, on your porch this Christmas season ... caroling? Welcome to theater — in *your* front yard. The inventive crew at Majestic Repertory has adapted to distancing with a theater-delivery service. Weekends through December, you can have this pandemic-safe holiday production brought to you. And knowing those Majestic folks, whatever Stephenson family dynamics are about to unspool in your yard as you sing along, they will be entertaining. **(Scott Dickensheets)** majesticrepertory.com

(Art)

Future Relics: Artifacts for a New World

THROUGH AUGUST 2021 | IN-PERSON

Like many in the museum world, UNLV's Barrick Museum of Art (above) is reevaluating its Latin American collection. In the process, “we look to artists to show us possible avenues of transfiguration. Who will interpret these objects in the future? What will survive to tell our stories?” Involving a group of local artists known as the Gulch Collective, *Future Relics* will respond — through the eyes of marginalized communities — to selected items from the Barrick's pre-Columbian holdings. There will be three phases of the exhibit during its long display period. **(SD)** unlv.edu/barrickmuseum

DANCE

MORE DANCE

DECEMBER 4 | VIRTUAL

Now is a time for change, and the change we desire in this world is not an ordinary change, it is a sea change. So goes the 2020 social justice vision statement of UNLV's dance department. Of course, there's a second

change of oceanic magnitude that the students have to deal with, the one that requires their end-of-season dance concert to premiere on YouTube instead of a concert hall. But perhaps this will entice viewers who might not otherwise make the trek to campus. And here's why we *should*

CONVERSATION

LAUNCH YOUR LAPTOP INTO THE SUN

DECEMBER 2 | VIRTUAL The parts of the country that aren't on fire, or being bluntly hurricaned, or bracing as COVID comes back for round 2, are deeply roiled by social and political turmoil. And you're gonna write a *story*? Paint a *picture*? In what's sure to be a crackling back-and-forth, powerhouse writers Samantha Irby (*Wow, No Thank You*) and Megan Stielstra (*The Wrong Way to Save Your Life*) will help us figure out why creative work is still worth doing. This would be useful information! Presented by Black Mountain Institute. **(SD)** *5p, RSVP required, blackmountaininstitute.org*



watch: Much of the work will “reflect the times we live in.” Human bodies moving in reaction to the world around them — what could be more elemental than that? **(SD) 7:30p, unlv.edu/dance**

(Conversation)

CLAUDIA RANKINE

NOVEMBER 16 | ONLINE

In her latest collection, *Just Us*, poet Claudia Rankine presents samples of conversations she’s had with random white male strangers, 911 call transcripts, and startling statistics to frame racism in its less visible — but no less vicious — manifestations. With *The Believer* poetry editor Jericho Brown, she’ll discuss race in America and the role of literature in moving this crucial conversation forward. **(Andrew Kivaly) 5p, blackmountaininstitute.org**



ART

23 Views

THROUGH DECEMBER 20 | IN-PERSON

The census seems like a good idea on paper: counting our people to inform the decisions we make about policies and resources. But when artist Tiffany Lin (above) puts it on paper, the census becomes fraught with complexity: What does it mean to be counted, categorized, catalogued? Her exhibit questions the purported objectivity of the census as it relates to history, race, and immigration, in cryptic drawings that are as much a form of social practice as they are social commentary. **(AK) Spring Valley Library, 702-507-3820, tlinart.com**

Art

RECLAMATION

NOVEMBER 18-JANUARY 9 | IN-PERSON

Two very different Las Vegas-based multidisciplinary artists, Jung Min and Clarice Tara Cuda, are revealed in this exhibit to share some core attributes: strong female voices that have “a healthy relationship with risk-taking and a belief that they are far more than a sum of their gendered parts,”

according to Core Contemporary, the gallery bringing them together. “*Reclamation* is about taking back what is rightfully theirs as women, whether it be their bodies, equity in their careers, freedom from gender (and even cultural) divides, etc.” Virtual/in-person opening reception 3p, November 21. **(SD) 900 E. Karen Ave. #D222, corecontemporary.com**

(Music)

SPOTLIGHT ON A BRASSY HOLIDAY CELEBRATION

DECEMBER 17 | VIRTUAL

Who knows what the state of the union will be as we lurch into the holiday season? Up or down, we’re looking forward to this horn sesh by the breakaway brass players of the Las Vegas Philharmonic. If the nation’s Dumpster fire continues unabated, these bright horn renditions of holiday faves — from classic carols to Bach’s Choral No. 64 from Christmas Oratorio — will serve as mournful comfort. If things are looking up, well, hearing “Have Yourself a Merry Little Christmas” performed by trumpets, trombones, and tubas just may be an unabashed, unironic joy. Either way, we’ll take it. **(SD) 6p, \$30, lvphil.org**

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TEXT AND PHOTOS *by Brent Holmes*

Imagine a world in which millions of creatures are attached to mobile pods. Mostly powered by internal combustion, a few by electricity, these pods transport the occupants to and fro. The creatures base their lives around them: their self-worth, identities, and even the ability to obtain nourishment. Alas, there is one problem: They have achieved monoculturization, the death rattle of variety — miles and miles traversed across a landscape riddled with “more of the same.” Into this bleak moment comes a foodie, a Street Foodie, to guide these strange creatures away from drive-through monotony and toward a delicious variety.

NO BUTCHER So much of our drive-through culture revolves around the consumption of meat — of all kinds, on every corner, at any hour. Street Foodie is burdened by the sociopolitical, moral, and environmental implications of such easy access to meat. It diminishes our appreciation for the sacrifice inherent in eating animals. Also, most of it doesn't taste very good. No Butcher has an alternative to your chicken-fried, quarter-pounded lifestyle. A vegan deli with a drive-up window is just what us tired, hungry Americans need. Street Foodie was more than satisfied by the



pad prik king. Green beans and meat (optional) in a red hot sauce that incorporates kaffir lime leaves for a vibrant and singular flavor. The fish cake, a personal fave, will have even the most responsible drivers racing for the head of the drive-through line. And the green curry will dispel any doubts about the quality of one of Vegas's Thai food institutions. 6360 W. Flamingo Road, 702-880-5550

POLLO INKA EXPRESS Street Foodie's had some crazy chicken over the years, but this Peruvian drive-though actually drives me sane. It seems perfectly rational to order the half-chicken dinner with a side of yucca fries, cilantro rice, and plantainos. The chicken is juicy and tender, and the species distinguish this from the panoply of chicken options cluttering our lives. French fries are a poor comparison to fried yucca. Both are crispy and starchy, yes, but

a well-fried cut of yucca has a soft, pillowy texture that a potato just can't get next to. The cilantro rice is pretty darn special, too. Green from the abundance of herbs, this may be the highlight of the combo. Even if you're one of those oddballs who doesn't like cilantro, I think you might just like this. 2440 S. Maryland Parkway, polloinkaexpress.com



Italian cold-cut sandwich. The Oktoberfest Schnitzel hit all of the spots promised by the words *schnitzel* and *Oktoberfest* (except for beer — don't drink and drive, folks). It's liberating when you can do drive-through and not taste your moral qualms in every bite. 3565 S. Rainbow Blvd., 702-268-7488

CALI BOMBS & BURGERS On the other hand, and, notwithstanding the above, in fairness Street Foodie must admit, with a greasy smile on his lips, that there are *some* good burgers. One of the most compelling factors in a great burger may be the use of onions. Here, the burgers themselves can be topped with



PLEASE PULL FORWARD Don't skimp on the green sauce at Pollo Inka Express, top. Or the meatless wonders at No Butcher, above right. Or the fresas con crema at Chamango, left.

with a side of Russian dressing: the Onion Bomb. They come regular, street, or loaded. Drive through this spot for classic fast-food flavors with a bit of difference. 2300 E. Lake Mead Blvd., calibombs.com

ARCHI'S THAI KITCHEN What's better than Thai food? Thai food from a drive-through, of course. Trust Street Foodie and get the

onions grilled or raw, adding a soft or hard aromatic hit to these savory, beefy babies. And while you can't get onion rings here, you can get something better: whole, sliced, deep-fried onions dipped in a crunchy batter and served up

CHAMANGO MEXICAN SNACKS Pulling up to a window never tasted so sweet. This Mexican snack spot — located across from favorite Street Foodie nomming ground Broadacres Swap Meet — doles out the best kinds of dessert companions. The choco-banana with sprinkles or nuts is a brilliant frozen treat that retains the taste of youthful simplicity. Sublime bliss is offered in the form of fresas con crema. This is a parfait of sorts, consisting of what Street Foodie assumes is an entire strawberry patch doused in cream and yogurt. As you wheel back to the safety of home, you will thank yourself for listening to me. 2831 Las Vegas Blvd. N., 702-485-4480 ♦

There are many more options for drive-through satisfaction; check out Street Foodie's writeups of Maryland Parkway and North Las Vegas at desertcompanion.com.

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LEFT OF CENTER

A new Nevada environmental coalition echoes Green New Deal values — and challenges the political establishment

BY **Heidi Kyser**

Like many of the questions in the October 7 vice presidential candidate debate, the one put to U.S. Senator Kamala Harris about her and running-mate Joe Biden's stance on the Green New Deal went largely unanswered. Moderator Susan Page, of *USA Today*, asked, "Vice President Biden said in last week's debate that he does not support the Green New Deal, but if you look at the Biden-Harris campaign website, it describes the Green New Deal as a crucial framework. What exactly would be the stance of a Biden-Harris administration toward the Green

New Deal?" In response, Democrat Harris repeated her previous assertion that Biden would not ban fracking and then spent the remainder of her time on his job-creation plans.

The response, calculated to appease Green New Deal opponents and the natural gas lobby (particularly in Pennsylvania, where Biden was born), was odd for a senator who's supported climate justice action, though in-character for the former veep, who's more oil and gas industry-friendly than environmentalists would like. The moment captured a broader tension between two modus operandi:



the bold, idealistic approach of the Sunrise Movement, propagators of the Green New Deal, and the moderate, pragmatic approach of establishment Democrats. This tension seems to be manifesting itself locally, too.

In early 2020, a new consortium popped up on climate insiders' radar: the Nevada Environmental Justice Coalition (NEJC). This band of social justice and conservation nonprofits — the Center for Biological Diversity, Ecomadres, Great Basin Resource Watch, Indivisible Northern Nevada, Make It Work Nevada, Make the Road Nevada, Mi Familia Vota, Moms Clean Air Force Nevada, Progressive Leadership Alliance of Nevada (PLAN), Sierra Club Toiyabe Chapter, and Sunrise Vegas — came together to ensure that “equity, justice, and sustainability are brought into governmental decision-making in the face of climate change,” as their mission statement reads. The plan is to stick their noses in public policy processes that offer a chance to lessen the negative impacts of climate change on poor and marginalized communities, and people of color.

It's hard, laudable work by most measures. But it could also be a thorn in the side of establishment liberals with climate deniers on their right and economic growth boosters breathing down their necks. No Democrat wants to be seen as anti-environment, but the NEJC's staunch far-left stance makes some conservationists look conservative by comparison.

Here's an example. The NEJC formed amid controversy over the Clark County lands bill, a complicated plan to increase the boundaries of the Las Vegas metro area by making some public lands available for private development. This seemingly never-ending process crystallized most recently in proposed federal legislation sent from the Clark County Commission to Nevada's congressional delegation in mid-2018. Several constituencies — from off-roaders and hunters to hikers and scientists — hated that plan, mainly because it threatened cherished habitat, recreation areas, and wildlife, but also because it would have allowed development to circumvent longstanding environmental study and public review processes. Over the following year-and-a-half's worth of discussions between lawmakers and interested parties, consensus among conservation groups broke down. Two of them, the Conservation Lands Foundation and Nevada Conservation League, wrote op-eds endorsing the plan, while two others wrote a critical response calling it “greenwashing.”

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ESSAY

The latter two, the Center for Biological Diversity and PLAN, are members of the NEJC. In mid-January, the coalition published an official letter opposing Clark County's public lands plan. They objected to what they described as urban sprawl, from increased carbon emissions and air pollution, to infrastructure inefficiency and heightened inequity between "those who would benefit from growth and those who would be left behind." And they gave a list of nine specific recommendations for a more sustainable alternative, mirroring ideas included in the Green New Deal. Leading the list was the suggestion to forego federal legislation until a comprehensive planning process was completed at the county level — *with* community input.

Two days later, U.S. Senator Catherine Cortez Masto, the politician whom former Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid endorsed as his replacement, proposed a compromise: The city's boundary would be expanded, yes, but in exchange, hundreds of thousands of acres would be set aside for wilderness, additional Moapa Paiute territory, and sensitive habitat protection, among other things. "With Clark County's population expected to grow to 2.85 million by 2035, this legislation will provide for sustainable and responsible growth in the Las Vegas Valley," read an announcement of the legislative discussion draft. Many conservationists applauded.

But in February, the NEJC wrote a somewhat less enthusiastic response to Cortez Masto's compromise. "We appreciate that you are trying to find a balance that accommodates Southern Nevada's growing population while conserving the region's unique and irreplaceable public lands, habitats and opportunities for recreation for future generations," it said. But, it added, while the discussion draft increased the amount of public land preserved and rectified the land-sale process, it also promoted sprawl.

As it had done with the county proposal, the coalition addressed the senator's draft legislation in detail, thanking her for some sections and suggesting alternatives to others. With regard to the withdrawal of 40,000-plus acres of Bureau of Land Management land for potential development, the NEJC proposed rethinking the entire urban-planning enterprise altogether: "To date, there have been too few discussions about sustainable de-

velopment in Las Vegas and how we can build a sustainable future. The biggest challenge is that solutions are required at every level, and neither the county nor the federal government have authority, capacity or jurisdiction to implement the solutions needed. But this cannot stop us all from trying. This requires multi-level cooperation. We appreciate your leadership on this."

Coincidentally, two initiatives — one local and one statewide — were in the works that do just what the NEJC was asking for. The first, Transform Clark County, is the government's effort to revise its threadbare 30-year-old master plan. Because it launched during a pandemic, the public forums have all been online, but the county has solicited input through surveys, videos, and webinars. Second is Governor Steve Sisolak's Nevada Climate Initiative, another effort to engage the public in devising a statewide plan to tackle the climate crisis. Having gotten what it wanted — a community-based process for envisioning a more

equitable, sustainable future — the NEJC leapt into action, actively promoting participation in both processes among its constituencies.

Between that and the congressional delegation's preoccupation with the COVID-19 pandemic, 2020 elections, the U.S. Supreme Court nomination, and other matters, the Clark County lands bill seemed to have slid to the back burner.

Or had it? In early September, the NEJC sent another letter to Senator Cortez Masto asking her

to hold off on her public lands legislation. "We understand that your office is also considering introducing a new version of the Clark County Lands Bill," the letter said. "We appreciate the dialogues we have had with you and the rest of the delegation on this issue. However, we feel this is premature at this time."

A few weeks later, during a KNPR radio segment about Transform Clark County, Dexter Lim of Sunrise Vegas said the county lands plan was the "elephant in the room" in discussions about urban sprawl and its tendency to heighten social injustice. "I'm not entirely sure why we would be going forward with sprawl when we haven't completed the Transform Clark County process or the similarly attributed Nevada Climate Initiative process, where the state is trying to gather information from the people on where they want to see the state go in the future," Lim said.

.....
***While it's the
role of elected
officials to
shepherd
compromise,
it's the role of
groups like the
NEJC to hold
the space for an
idealistic vision.***
.....

Cortez Masto’s office declined to comment on the NEJC’s criticisms on the record, other than to say that it welcomed the coalition’s continued collaboration. At press time, the two sides were planning to meet to discuss the issue.

Perhaps there’s a history lesson about balancing growth and conservation in the Southern Nevada Public Lands Management Act. In a recent conversation with the Sierra Club’s Elspeth DiMarzio about a film documenting Reid’s contributions to Nevada conservation (see excerpt, p. 12), 40-year environmental activism veteran John Hiatt touched on a controversy over SNPLMA, one of Reid’s signature achievements, that’s similar to the one over the current lands bill. While many involved parties saw it as a fair compromise between development and conservation, further left-leaning environmentalists have criticized it — especially in retrospect — as a mechanism that facilitated urban sprawl.

“Growth was going to happen either way,” Hiatt said, adding that SNPLMA, at least, was an improvement over the shady, lopsided land swaps that were being done previously.

This may be a best-case scenario for progress in the complicated public-planning arena, which usually only happens incrementally and after a long struggle. While it’s the role of elected officials such as Cortez Masto and Reid to shepherd compromise among diverse factions, it’s the role of groups like the NEJC to hold the space for an idealistic vision. More mainstream environmental groups find their place on the spectrum from center to far-left based not only on their missions, but also what they’re getting from the parties in power. That’s the nature of politics.

If a final federal Clark County lands management bill is coming soon (and I suspect it is — Transform Clark County is a two-year process, and a lands plan may not be able to wait that long), then the NEJC may have years, as the life cycle of legislation goes, to pull consensus in its direction. And by the time this is published, the biggest decision affecting the future of any U.S. climate justice policy, local or national, will be just days away, on November 3. If Donald Trump wins a second term as president, he’ll continue rolling back environmental protections by the dozen, as he’s promised supporters he would. But if Biden and other Democrats prevail, they’ll have a chance to follow groups like Sunrise and the NEJC further to the left. Will they take it? Maybe, one step at a time. ♦



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PROFILE

NO EASY ANSWERS

The struggles of one cook provide a deep look at an industry — and maybe a society — in crisis

BY **Kim Foster**

The first time I meet Chris Preston and his son, Ty-Jon, it's in the Smith's parking lot. The one on Sahara and Maryland. He asks if he can help me load my groceries for some change. I have 20 12-packs of sparkling water and a heap of groceries in my cart, and I have some cash. I appreciate the help. I want to get everything loaded, get in the car, switch on the air-conditioning.

I know the minute I see Chris in the sun of a full-throttle Vegas summer, heaving soda into my car, that he is a cool guy. He is not afraid to work, obviously. And his eyes are kind. Sweet and dopey. In fact, it's his eyes that relax me and prompt me to ask questions while he loads 12-packs into my trunk. Sweat is dripping down his face. And my back. It's 115. I'm just standing in the parking lot chatting.

"I'm a cook," he says, grabbing bags. Ty-Jon joins us. "I got laid off at my bar." Chris worked at Foothills Tavern in North Las Vegas until COVID changed everything in

the middle of March. He introduces his son. I'm not sure if Ty is a teenager or a young adult. Turns out he is in his early 20s and has a serious babyface.

"I'm tryin' to get enough money together to move my family out of Motel 6 and into a weekly."

It is not lost on me that improving your life shouldn't involve moving into a weekly, as if that were something to aspire to. But my privilege is showing. This family had lived in their 2003 Saturn sedan for weeks before moving to a Motel 6. That motel had to feel like paradise, at first. A minute to breathe. Sleep in a bed. And think about next steps, like putting together a plan to move into something permanent and safe, where you can pay the rent without cannibalizing your food money, without stretching yourself so far it'll be just a few days until you're again scheming to come up with the cash to keep your family in the safe place.

This is how people are living. There's no respite.

Right now, the restaurant industry is in a shambles. Two out of every three restaurant workers have lost their jobs during the pandemic, according to the National Restaurant Association, and it's projected that as many as four of every 10 restaurants will close permanently.

At the same time, COVID has exposed the restaurant industry as a dysfunctional system in need of a major re-do. Washington, D.C.-based chef Kwame Onwuachi talks openly on Eater.com about how the restaurant industry was created on the backs of unpaid and underpaid labor, mostly Black, during Reconstruction. "That's why it was a profitable business. Because they didn't have to pay for labor. They didn't have to pay servers. They didn't have to pay their cooks. They just had to pay for their food." Even the tipping system is steeped in these racist traditions of not properly paying staff.

As eaters and patrons, we are complicit. We care about where the food comes from, what farm grows the beets — by God, is it organic? — but not so much about whether the porter gets health insurance or the server can make rent or the chef has seen her husband in three days. We care more about the rainbow carrots and the wagyu than the people who grow, pick, slaughter, transport, and prepare our food.

But we can't look away now.

There's a cook in a parking lot — not in a restaurant — asking for money. A professional in an industry I love. He is not opening a restaurant. He is not unionized. He is not being written about in the *Los Angeles Times*. Or the *Review-Journal*, for that matter. No one cares about a dish he is creating that can be shot and published in a magazine. He has not been carried by the restaurant-business PR machine to a place of visibility.

Most chefs and professional cooks are not celebrities. They aren't rich or even necessarily making ends meet. They are craftspeople. They work for \$10, \$12, \$15 an hour in boiling, cramped spaces with other cooks who make the same kind of money.

Restaurants off-Strip tend to be private, small businesses. Personnel issues can get sorted in kitchen walk-ins, not HR offices. Until very recently, when #MeToo raised the visibility of inappropriate workplace behavior, restaurants were notoriously difficult places to work, rife with verbal and physical abuse, racial and homophobic slurs, overtly sexist interactions with women chefs, and almost no support for trans chefs. The celebrated male bravado, the coke-fueled bad-assery of being a chef, written about so brutally by Anthony Bourdain in *Kitchen*

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PROFILE

Confidential, was exalted and respected, even encouraged. Black people, like Chris Preston, and brown and/or undocumented people, struggle to get hired and promotions, and are paid, on average, roughly 56 percent lower than white colleagues. Only recently has there been an industry-wide emphasis on wellness, health, and even sobriety.

The pre-COVID structure of the restaurant business, without benefits and safety nets, left whole categories of workers vulnerable. Undocumented porters and tip-dependent servers evaporate when times get tough. Health insurance is a pipe dream.

How difficult is it to fall from being a hard-working cook to being the guy who approaches people in the Smith's parking lot asking for money to load the lady's soda into her trunk in 115-degree heat?

It's easy. Security in the restaurant industry, and maybe everywhere, is an illusion.

I hand Chris a handful of bills and my number. We start texting immediately.

* * * * *

"THAT WAS A rough day for us."

Chris is talking about the day we met. I am sitting with him, his partner, Melinda, and Ty at a picnic bench in a mostly treeless park in North Las Vegas. We cannot go to his house. Because he has no house. They are living with Melinda's brother for awhile, out of necessity. It's toxic as hell. But their choices are car or family.

That relationship takes up a lot of our conversation, because the wounds are so deep and humiliating right now. One of the pitfalls of COVID isolation and joblessness is managing forced relationships with family. Unable to pay rent or buy groceries, people are moving in with family and friends at alarming rates. This year, one in five Americans, roughly 22 percent, moved in with someone else or knew someone who had because of COVID, according to the Pew Research Center. This means families are central to keeping people afloat right now.

But it's hard to be dependent on family.

Melinda's brother — we'll call him Darryl — says he wants to help them, but there are decades-old hurts that keep interfering. He is angry. About a dog that ran away when a door was left open, about \$200 that someone took or didn't, about who took care of Maw-Maw when she was dying. Their relationship is family, and bonded, but it's also mired in old trauma that becomes a series of explosions when they live together. Melinda is stressed.

"My priority is this woman right here, my mom." Ty puts his hand on Melinda's shoulder, while Chris nods silently.



FAMILY RECIPE

Chris Preston, his son, Ty-Jon and partner, Melinda, have had to live in their car and with family, but they've managed many of the challenges by sticking together.

She is pretty, in her 40s. But tired. Afflicted with chronic diseases. She keeps a balled-up tissue in her fist and occasionally has to get up and cough a few feet away. She is fragile but still carries a lot of the weight for her family.

"I hate the way my uncle treats her," Ty says. "She is too good for that, and so is my dad."

Chris and his dad are tight. The love and respect are obvious. They have the weariness and connectedness that grows when you've both seen all the bad things and lived to tell the stories. Despite the scarcity, there is great richness in this family.

Everyone wants them out of Darryl's house. But Chris and his family are stuck. Because poverty sticks you.

* * * * *

THE IDEA TO help people load groceries in a parking lot came when Chris decided to use his natural gifts for talking to people. Mostly a man of few words, he is funny and sweet when he does talk.

"I used to sell food, you know, in a cart," he tells me. "I was born with a seasoned hand." They came here last year from West Virginia on a Greyhound trek that Chris says was "the longest, most horrible trip ever."

Ty joined them in July. "I came to Vegas to cook," Chris says. "I heard cooks make decent money here on the Strip."

In West Virginia, Chris had a hot dog cart he positioned outside of a Save-a-Lot. His fish sandwiches were popular, as were his chili dogs. He sold hamburgers off a flat top, with chips and soda.

"I use the same things in a parking lot as I used to (operate) a food cart," he tells me. "I get a conversation going, communicate with people, tell 'em my story."

They were down to bologna sandwiches and cold cereal. It felt like do or die. He was bringing in \$125 a week in unemployment.

"Pop coached me so many times. I haven't got the salesman thing down," Ty says. They laugh about how hard it is to approach strangers in parking lots, to make yourselves vulnerable in the darkest hours of your life.

"You can't be prideful," Ty says. "You have to let that go sometimes. Pops taught me that." He nods to Chris, who has his head down, listening.

Pride is a big issue for people in the wake of COVID. Many laid-off workers have never been in dire financial straits before. They do not see themselves as poor, have never had to accept help from strangers to put food on the table, and there is great shame



attached to asking for it.

Before moving into Darryl's house, where they have a room and Ty sleeps on the couch, they slept in the Saturn. An unemployment check got them from Darryl's to the Motel 6. The money from the parking lot got them from Motel 6 to a weekly on Harmon Avenue.

It's exhausting just to consider all this upheaval and moving. I can't imagine what it must feel like for someone as sick as Melinda.

"We were in the ghetto," Melinda says of the weekly on Harmon.

But Chris tells me that seeing other folks on the street around the weekly, not able to rent a room, helped him see that they were lucky.

COVID created this new group of poor and financially unstable people, who had never had to wait in line at a drive-through food bank, or know what giveaway happens on Wednesdays but not Saturdays, or hit a circuit of food charities on any given day just to feed their children.

This is the stress of poverty and instability. *How can I scheme today to get what we need?*

Cooking, a highly pleasurable act for me, is a stressor for food-insecure households, because you have to cook the spaghetti squash that comes in that food-bank box. You have to make it into something your kids will eat. And maybe you know how to make it with tomato sauce and piles of cheese, but maybe they didn't put sauce or cheese in the box today, so you are screwed for dinner. If you are financially unstable and dependent on the pantry system, you are playing a game of *Chopped* with a mystery box every night. It's not challenging or fun. You can't say "screw it" and click on Postmates.

Which brings us back to pride.

"The pride is what you give up," Chris explains.

For many, not being able to provide for their family is soul-crushing. It alters self-esteem, alters what you know about yourself. It colors everything. It reminds you that you are dependent on others, on the community. That you can lose it all. That this your life. In Las Vegas, and specifically in the restaurant industry, there are thousands of Chris Prestons.

* * * * *

WHEN COVID SANCTIONS lift at the end of summer, Chris is back working at Foothills Tavern in North Las Vegas. He is making \$11 an hour, but his district manager, Chris Biscoe, offers him a shot to become a kitchen manager, giving him a 90-day trial at \$12. The whole family is excited. This is nothing short of life-changing for them, and they set about making plans to move again.

Foothills Tavern is a neighborhood gambling bar. Their customers are mostly locals. Biscoe tells me that it's mostly the familiar faces, regulars, who keep the bar going. He's happy to have Chris come back and to train him for the kitchen manager job.

"It's hard to find kitchen managers because of the pay," Biscoe tells me on the phone. They don't stay long for \$12 an hour. "But Chris is eager to learn. I want to teach him how to run the kitchen, do the ordering, staffing, budgeting, so in a couple years, if he decides to leave, he can take these skills with him. I get excited teaching him because he cares."

Biscoe talks candidly about the narrow margins of the business.

"We'd be happy to have the kitchen break even," he said. "We make our profit from gaming, and that keeps the kitchen running."

This excitement of being back to work, for Chris, is multiplied when Ty lands graveyard work at a 7-Eleven. Things are looking up. They find a small studio in a Siegel Suites on Bonanza Road. It's nothing pretty, but when I visit them, there is a small kitchen with sink, stove, oven, and

fridge. The living room has a huge fold-out bed, and Melinda is sprawled there under blankets, her head propped on pillows, the nightstand cluttered with 7-Eleven cups and a CPAP machine. She is watching TV.

She was just released from the hospital. She had passed out again.

"I'm going to get those tests," she assures me when I ask about her cancer.

See, I found out in one of our talks that Melinda has a cancer diagnosis. But when I ask her about it, it seems as though she is completely removed from the conversation. She is ambivalent about the healthcare system. For good reason. She has been beaten down by paperwork, credentials, verifications, and records that are barely possible to manage when you're living in a car and a succession of motels and weeklies. She needs to make calls, book appointments, deal with bills; someone

needs to be actively involved in managing her cancer, pushing the process to get labs, tests, and diagnostics. And regularly filling up the car with gas. But it feels overwhelming. She is exhausted by it all.

Like many poor families, Melinda and Chris use the ER system for doctor visits, which is expensive and financially unrecoverable for the hospital, and it means she is only treating the symptoms, not the disease.

And most of her doctors are white. There is substantial evidence that this matters in a life-and-death kind of way. When doctors and patients share similar races and ethnicities, they spend more time together, patients are more apt to take medicines correctly, the wait for treatment is decreased, wellness screenings increase, cancer risks decrease, and a patient's comprehension of their diagnosis improves. But this is a tough ask; only 5-10 percent of doctors in the U.S. are Black.

Melinda is barely represented by the system.

This healthcare issue is huge for Chris and Melinda. She has cancer on her thyroid, a cyst on her pancreas, and a few chronic and serious diseases, such as diabetes. She is not getting better. She does not receive consistent treatment. Chris and Ty are terrified to lose her. It is a constant stress.

For now, she has a bed to rest in. A TV to occupy the hours. Some peace. Some relief — for now.

* * * * *

IT'S THE LAST Saturday of the month, and Chris and Ty come by my house, where my husband, David, and I run a small community fridge and pantry. We pick up boxes from grocery stores and food-drop locations, and take donations from the generous neighbors here in the Huntridge area, who keep the fridge stocked with fresh foods.

I meet restaurant workers at the fridge all the time.

I hand Ty a pile of plastic to-go containers holding dinner — lemongrass and coconut-braised brisket with coconut rice and a cumin-scented, cold broccoli salad. The cookbook club from The Writer's Block bookstore — we call ourselves Please Send Noodles — makes more than 150 dinners on the last Saturday of every month for anyone who wants them. That last weekend of the month is tough for many folks, with benefits running out. These meals are a little band-aid on a gusher of a problem.

I give Chris a box of produce to tide them over. I put a lot of the more obscure vegetables in his box, some broccoli rabe,

.....
For many, not being able to provide for their family is soul-crushing. It alters your self-esteem.

PROFILE

some celeriac, as well as chicken breasts, avocado, cheese, greens, pasta, oranges, and dates because I know he can cook whatever I throw at him.

I am in the middle of unpacking 30 boxes. Some are gallons of milk, others are boxes full of yogurt, potatoes, onions, hardboiled eggs, cooked chicken patties, and squash. Emilie and Chantal show up, too. They are regulars and pull their tan Suburban up to the curb. They and all their kids pile out, which brings my kids and dogs out, and the next thing I know, everyone is scouring through boxes, calling friends to see what they need, kids are petting dogs and riding scooters, folks are taking what they need and putting what they don't in the fridge. Everyone is masked and aware of COVID and not on top of one another, and it's all happening outdoors, but, man, it almost feels social, almost like a party. It feels like we are all alive and in it together and somehow prevailing. We are all talking and laughing while we hold up bags of onions and ask who needs them.

Chris tells me Melinda has a date to get some tests done. They are in a better place now to fight for her. There is momentum

for them, and I know that the momentum is everything. They might be able to ride that flow into a more stable life.

I check my phone and see a note from someone who had just been to the fridge. She worked as a server at Momofuku in the Cosmopolitan before it closed in March. "Just wanted to tell you, I, like many of us, have had some super hard luck as of late," she writes, "and finally accepted that I am poor enough to utilize your pantry, and I took care not to take too much, but just having produce and the generosity of it all brought tears..."

I wave as Chris and Ty drive off.

We live in an age where the people who feed us, cook for us, serve us, are being driven to their knees by the scarcity of even the most simple and foundational of food.

* * * * *

CHRIS HAS NOTHING but lovely things to say about his bosses at Foothills Tavern. "They take care of me," he says. This makes sense to me — people who feed people are generous by nature.

And I know that as a small business, Foothills Tavern is being as generous as it

can be — offering him a raise, a promotion at \$12 an hour without benefits, maybe a small cut of a customer's gaming win. But it doesn't feel like things have been set right with the restaurant business, as much as it has been pried open and exposed by COVID. This industry still has so much work to do to keep its workers off the bread lines, to make sure they have health insurance, days off, a healthy life, a livable wage, a focused and positive work environment, while still allowing operators to thrive and make money within their slim margins. And we guests have to care as much about people as we do about provenance, including being open to paying more for our food experiences to help cover those costs.

There are no easy answers.

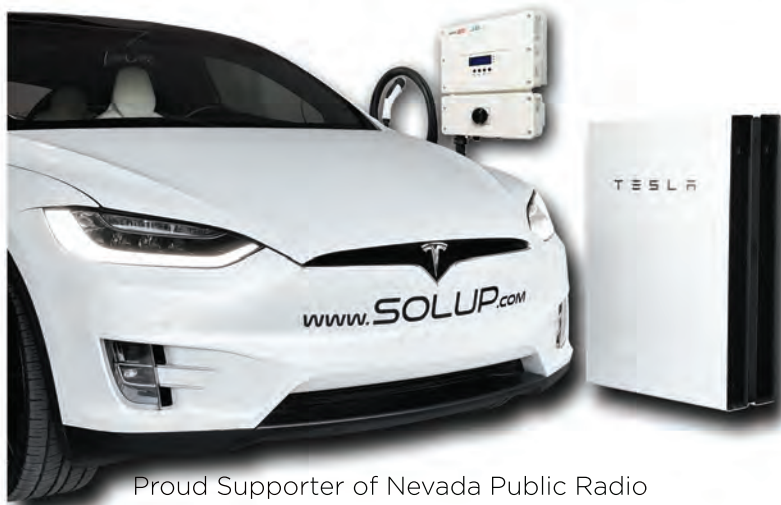
For his part, Chris Preston's goals for being a chef are eminently doable. Or should be.

"I want to have a normal life. I want to make my bills. Take care of my family. Have a place to sleep," he says. "That's it. I just want to cook for people and enjoy my life." ♦

Kim Foster's neighborhood food pantry is located at 1041 Sweeney Avenue.



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HOW WE EAT NOW



Photography **SABIN ORR**

Someday soon you're gonna crowd around your favorite table at your favorite restaurant with your motley entourage of stunningly charismatic friends and eat, drink, and laugh until closing time, and then on the toasty Uber ride home muse on how that crazy 2020 felt like, wow, some strange bad dream.

That day isn't here yet, but we're still eating — dishing takeout onto our nice plates to recreate the restaurant experience at home, unearthing old family recipes for comfort and continuity, perhaps taking virtual cooking classes to sharpen our kitchen skills and trade intel with a real chef. Eating in Las Vegas has changed, but the meaning of enjoying, sharing, and celebrating food has not. Here's a guide to how we eat now.



HOW
WE EAT
NOW

AND AWAY WE GO



Takeout,
to-go, curbside,
pick-up —
whatever
you call it,
these 25 local
gems do
it right

By **JIM SEGLEY**
ANDREW KIRALY
LISSA TOWNSEND RODGERS
SONJA SWANSON
MITCHELL WILBURN

G

etting meals to go used to be for busy schedules and budget dining. Then, well, you know the rest. But one of the many upsides to living in a renowned dining destination: a restaurant community that can nimbly adapt to new realities. Takeout used to involve compromise: convenience at the expense of quality, expediency at the cost of a culinary experience. Not anymore. Whether you've got an appetite for quick comfort food or designs on a date-night dinner at home, these **25 restaurants** dish up amazing meals worth the drive.

FERRARO'S

Adaptation and innovation are buzzy watchwords for restaurants in 2020, but I bet that the secret to the staying power of Ferraro's — a family-owned Italian restaurant dishing up divine pasta for more than 30 years — is the opposite: An enduring devotion to the classic virtue of culinary excellence. They're always just so *on*. I'm happy to report they, too, have adapted to the New Whatever This Is with expanded takeout and delivery options, including family dinners; getting their cuisine to go is still a lesson in freshness, discipline, and rigor. My go-tos have been their simple, impeccable, pastas and salads — comfort food done with class. **(AK)**
4480 Paradise Road,
702-364-5300,
ferrarolasvegas.com

ROOSTER BOY CAFÉ

Tucked among the white-napkin restaurants of Desert Shores, the gingham pocket square of Rooster Boy Café puts all of its sprawl on the menu. With a mix of prepared foods, fresh-made items and a killer bakery, it's the ideal stop to take out a weekend's worth of meals. Many dishes lean towards breakfast-lunch comfort food — chilaquiles, shakshuka, fruit-dotted and sugar-dusted Dutch oven pancakes, food-coma-inducing Brisket hash — but there's also a refrigerator filled with soups, sides and entrees for when you need something that's drive-thru fast but tastes kitchen-fresh. Bonus: Rooster Boy's bagels are among the best in town. **(LTR)**
2620 Regatta Drive #113,
702-560-2453,
roosterboycafe.com

MAKERS & FINDERS

Makers & Finders is old-school new-school DTLV. One of the early entrants into Downtown's Main Street renaissance, it's since settled comfortably into a status of sleeper mainstay. But they deserve some fresh hype for their solid takeout, brisk service, and easy access. As a devoted brunch hound, I've stuck to their decadent breakfast sammies — Croissant Sandwich 2.0 ftw! — but I suspect their entire menu is worthy of a sequel or two. **(AK)**
1120 S. Main St. #110; 2120 Festival Plaza Drive #140,
702-586-8255,
makerslv.com

JOHNNY C'S DINER

Opening a new restaurant in the midst of a pandemic might not make the most sense, but Johnny Church is a man of his word. While he was opening Johnny C's Diner, COVID hit, throwing his plans into a tailspin. But instead of delaying the opening he

forged onward, beginning as only a takeout joint while allowing himself the time to tweak recipes while easing staff into service. While Johnny C's is open for dine-in now, Church continues to maintain the integrity of his dishes with packaging to minimize the soggy factor and by using only ChowNow for delivery. (They deliver direct to customers, minimizing travel time with no additional stops.) It's the little things that matter. **(JB)**

8175 Arville St.,
702-263-0146,
johnnycsdiner.com

LAZEEZ INDIAN-MEDITERRANEAN GRILL

One the lockdown's silver linings has been my discovery of Lazeez Indian-Mediterranean Grill, a nondescript strip-mall restaurant with a diverse menu. Little did I know I'd been overlooking some of the valley's best Indian food (with a touch of Pakistani flair) within walking

The Classic Cheeseburger at Johnny C's Diner, featuring an Angus beef patty, house pickles, and special sauce.



distance of my house. Saucy dishes such as Pakistani nihari (beef stew) or an exemplary chicken makhani (butter chicken) are delivered piping hot and well-wrapped, ensuring no spillage on the drive home. And Lazeez can deliver your meal car-side, easily accommodated by the ample storefront parking. *(JB)*
**8560 W. Desert Inn #D3,
 702-778-1613,
lazeezgrill.org**

**PASTA SHOP
 RISTORANTE & GALLERY**

A fixture in the southeast Valley, Pasta Shop Ristorante has been serving exemplary, housemade Italian dishes for over three decades. The onset of COVID shifted business to a successful takeout/curbside model, which continues as in-house dining resumes, the restaurant taking care to package saucy dishes with extra protection from spillage while offering curbside service to those still a little hesitant about dining out. In addition to dishes ranging from classic lasagna to the seafood-laden salmon lobster ravioli, Pasta Shop also offers a haven to Italian-craving vegans. *(JB)*
**2525 W. Horizon Ridge
 Parkway, 702-451-1893,
pastashop.com**

SPARROW + WOLF

For most of us, home cooking can get pretty dull after a while — but ordering takeout day after day doesn't seem quite right, either. Enter the pantry: Restaurants like Sparrow + Wolf are now selling sauces, ferments and other prepped ingredients

to elevate your next home-cooked meal. You can pick up a freshly baked baguette, house-made charcuterie, and a container of bright and pungent pickles for a picnic. Order some oysters and mignonette sauce for a briny starter, then follow up with the miso-rubbed porterhouse. Or opt for an entire burger kit, which comes with patties, buns and condiment for six. Everything is available for curbside pickup, but make sure to order pantry items a day ahead. *(SS)*
**4480 Spring Mountain Rd
 #100, 702-790-2147,
sparrowandwolflv.com**

CHENGDU TASTE

While Chengdu has only recently reopened its dining room, their takeout game through the lockdown has been magnificent. A social-distanced doorway table arrangement with one-time-use pens and an ample supply of utensils make ordering the valley's premier Szechuan a breeze. Favorites such as numb-taste wontons are packaged pre-assembled, with the otherworldly, Szechuan peppercorn-laden sauce separated from the steamy dumplings, minimizing sogginess, with most other offerings served in high-quality plastic containers not prone to dumping or seepage. It's elevated Chinese takeout. *(JB)*
**3950 Schiff Drive,
 702-437-7888,
chengtasteevegas.com**

**VALLEY CHEESE
 AND WINE**

World-renowned cheesemonger Diana Brier took over the hallowed grounds of Henderson's Valley Cheese and Wine during the pandemic,



Above: Valley Cheese and Wine curbside pick-up
Right: Beef noodle bowl at Shang Artisan Noodle

and continued with a successful curbside pickup program — choose any variety of cheeses, charcuterie, or wines, and have them delivered to your car by a masked and gloved employee. The program continues, though Brier now also offers safe browsing and sampling, enlightening you with the intricacies of her offerings. Trust me, it's worth it. *(JB)*
**1570 W. Horizon Ridge
 Parkway, #140,
 702-341-8191,
valleycheeseandwine.com**

CARSON KITCHEN

When the pando hit and we were all in Netflix detention for a month, I missed Carson Kitchen the most. They've

since bounced back, hella. Under the new protocols, the usually clamorous dining room is decidedly more subdued (its lively social scene is the highlight of the meta-menu), so I've been sticking with curbside. You can usually nab a coveted storefront parking spot if you order in the early evening. My favorites (the stewy oxtail risotto, the hefty Butter Burger, the plump and loamy beets) are served in conscientiously stacked, sticker-sealed boxes, nice touches that say they understand takeout orders are just as deserving of Carson Kitchen's lauded attention to detail. *(AK)*
**124 S. 6th St.,
 702-473-9523,
carsonkitchen.com**



TACOS & BEER

Since I've been self-diagnosed with sporadic but acute shrimp taco deficiency disorder, Tacos and Beer on Paradise has been my urgent-care clinic. The spacious strip-mall parking lot offers plenty of room to swoop in close and grab your supplies curbside. They haven't compromised their namesake virtue for take-out customers, either: Twenty bucks gets you 32 ounces of margarita or a growler of any of their 19 draft beers. **(AK)**
3900 Paradise Road #A,
702-675-7572,
tacosandbeerlv.com

SHANG ARTISAN NOODLE

A good noodle is hard to find; a good takeout noodle, even harder. It's basic science: Water swells the starch granules in the noodles — so after a sweet spot of nice and al dente, it all starts to go

to mush. This is why Shang Artisan Noodle's workaround is a smart one: Order any noodle dish for takeout, and they'll package your noodles separately. Key to this operation is the choice to have your noodles "cold" or "hot." Hot means they're cooked and ready to eat right away, cold means they're par-cooked: You can either steam them, or pour a kettle of boiling water over them in a colander, as I did, and they'll be perfectly springy, tender and ready to eat. **(SS)**

4983 W. Flamingo Road #B,
702-888-3292,
shangartisannoodle.com

ESTHER'S KITCHEN

My occasional weekend comfort ritual of late is carb-bombing my new-normal weltschmerz with pasta and wine until I'm in a state of glaze-eyed dopamine stupor. Esther's Kitchen is my takeout candyman for that.

Personal bests: the lasagna verde, a dense cube layered with spinach, ricotta, and bechamel; the simple spaghetti, a platonic ideal of the classic; the crisp gem salad they usually pack separately to keep cool for the trip home. They can also provide a nice bottle to go from their small set of versatile, pasta-perfect wines. Tip: I usually park at Vesta, walk around the corner, and pick up inside. **(AK)**

1130 S. Casino Center Blvd.
#110, 702-570-7864,
estherslv.com

SECRET BURGER

Secret Burger is like Schrödinger's takeout: It is all restaurants, and it is no restaurant. Before the pandemic, it was primarily a way to allow foodies access to special dishes from favorite spots. But after dining rooms shuttered, its primary focus shifted to bringing restaurant experiences into the home,

via traditional takeout meals or kits with videos allowing you to create your favorite dishes and cocktails at home. Marc Marrone of Graffiti Bao has guided people through lamb fried rice; Bruce Kalman taught a class in making meatballs; and James Trees of Esther's Kitchen offered pasta clinics. Straight takeout has included full meals from China Poblano, Sparrow + Wolf, and La Strega. Takeout meals can be a meh substitute for the dining-room experience, but Secret Burger uses it as a way to put diners in the kitchen. **(LTR)**
secretburger.com

VEGETATION

Getting takeout with a pando partner in a different culinary headspace? Say, for instance, you want a stonerlicious comfort burger for the *Love Island* finale (Team Jaleb, represent!) and your bae's in more of a dignified salad-and-edifying-documentary mode. Vegetation has split personalities covered. For the stoners: the Mac Daddy burger, a soft cylinder of slacker flavor with mac 'n' cheese and collard greens. For the staid and steady: the Torre Washington, a dense, leafy burrito-bowl salad that will fill you up without dragging you down. Daytime curbside is usually a cinch with street parking out front. **(AK)**
616 E. Carson Ave. #120,
702-366-8515,
vegetationlv.com

CRAFTHAUS

If the bar isn't an option, then bring the bar home: Local brewery CraftHaus has made it easy to order 6-packs, growlers, and even small kegs of their brews online. If you order by 2

p.m., you can pick it up the same day. To keep things extra-sanitary, CraftHaus isn't currently doing growler refills, but you'll get a 20 percent off coupon with every online growler purchase to use for a fill when the taprooms reopen. Cheers! *(SS)*

**197 E. California Ave. #130,
702-888-1026;
7350 Eastgate Road #110,
702-462-5934,
crafthausbrewery.com**

CORNISH PASTY

Getting takeout is often a low-key race to get it home before it gets cold. Cornish Pasty lets you avoid this unpleasantness by offering their signature pasties par-baked. When you're ready to eat, follow the directions, and they'll pop out of your oven golden and steamy. There are dozens of pies, from salmon to Reuben to chicken Tikka, as well as abundant vegetarian and vegan options, from your straight eggplant Parmesan and balsamic portobello to the ultra-meta vegan Royale pasty. (The Royale is a wrapped-in-dough rendition of a Big Mac, so this is a version of a version but, dang, it's tasty!) *(LTR)*

**10 E. Charleston Blvd.,
702-862-4538,
cornishpastyco.com**

GOOD PIE

Pizza has long been the ultimate takeout meal. Given that Good Pie has always done pizza so very right, it follows they'd handle the technicalities of takeout in troubled times equally well. They were among the first to offer no-contact pickup (few



things are as viscerally spirit-lifting as the home-kitchen warmth and garlic-tomato smell of pizza suddenly rising from the cardboard box on the backseat). But Good Pie goes further than just walking a pizza to your car. On Sundays, you can pick up a half-pan of take & bake lasagna or feed your entire family with one of their family dinners, which includes lasagna, pizza, meatballs, and cannoli. Proprietor Vincent Rotolo has also taken to the internet, offering kits and classes in how to make calzones, lasagna and, natch, pizza. With a new space opening soon on Main Street, dining in will become an option at Good Pie, but no doubt the takeout will still be stellar. *(LTR)*

**725 Las Vegas Blvd. S., #140,
702-844-2700, goodpie.com**

PUBLICUS

Not gonna lie, early in the shutdown I did a two-month grief stretch of PublicUs weekend brunch delivery, eating familiar favorites such as Brekkie Sandwiches, shakshuka, and salmon toasts like they were stable caloric flagstones levitating above the wailing bullshit reality maelstrom vortex below. Always fresh, perfectly packaged, and *sniiiiiff* somehow always redolent of PublicUs' lightly madcap twee millennial sitcom energy. *(AK)*

**1126 Fremont Street,
702-331-5500,
publicuslv.com**

MCMULLAN'S

In the stark and unsettling days right after the stay-at-home came down, one of my

avored coping mechanisms was a nighttime drive, rolling my aging muscle car down streets that hadn't been this empty since the day they were paved, singing along to the radio. One of the few possible endpoints for this restless roaming was McMullan's, where people no longer gathered to share pints or music or trivia or sports, but rather lined up their cars to wait for their food to come out. It was a warming reminder that there were other humans out in the world, wondering and worrying, coming together to scoop up bangers-and-mash or chicken Florentine before disappearing into the night. No matter how "not hungry" I was, something on the diner-sized menu always appealed and, no matter how emotionally and physically

Shinchi. Because while Shinji-san does straight-up naked fish, his forte lies in the delicate sauces and garnishes he uses in his presentations. Akin to the surgical precision on display in his sushi skills, he's developed a detailed method to deliver an authentic sushi bar feel to your home. His preparations begin disassembled — sauces nestled aside their seafood in small plastic containers and each dish's ingredients, from the fish itself to accompanying sauce and garnishes, detailed in Sharpie on your takeout container above each serving. Diners simply drizzle the sauce atop the fish in the viewer-participation portion of the meal to complete the experience. Best of all, the ample servings assure you'll have leftover sauce to elevate other household meals afterwards! *(JB)*

8480 W. Desert Inn,
702-871-7781, senofjapan.com

TACOTARIAN

It's purely by happenstance that Downtown's Tacotarian is optimally situated for pandemic-friendly pickup — a spacious corner spot on Casino Center and California where you can flip on your hazards for a few minutes hassle-free. But the small perk holds big appeal if the thought of crowded vestibules gives you the coronavio shivers. The Tacotarians are budding talents at the emerging art of takeout packaging Jenga, and the curbside orders always taste promptly prepared. My go-to is the three-taco platter; the rich mushroom asada is a must, the jackfruit barbacoa an utterly umami indulgence. Jug margaritas, pricey but potent, are on tap for home drinking, too. *(AK)*

130 S. Casino Center Blvd.
#170, 725-251-3853,
tacotarianlv.com



Left: PublicUs' popular pickup counter. **Above:** Tacotarian's wet burrito with sides

drained I was, halfway through a Limerick Cheddar burger, I'd start feeling like I could survive whatever was coming next — and, every now and then, a surprise bonus bread pudding would restore my faith in humanity. With eateries open again, you can now have a pint and plate in the dining room, but it's good to know McMullan's is still boxing up its soul-soothing fare to go. *(LTR)*

4650 W. Tropicana Ave.,
702-247-7000,
mcmullansirishpub.com

EVERY GRAIN

Restaurateur Sheridan Su (Flock & Fowl, Fat Choy) has a new venture that's takeout-focused from the get-go. With items like their braised pork belly rice bowl or their Dan Dan noodles, it's no more troublesome than keeping the complex flavors inside the bowl. Not so easy when it's a crispy fried pork chop or Cornish hen, potentially turning soggy every moment it spends lying on their steaming signature mixed rice. Happily, the takeout items are packed in

a neat little compartmentalized bento-box/school lunch tray hybrid, perfectly portioned and separated. With this, the Su family has created yet another stellar lunch concept. *(MW)*

1430 E. Charleston Blvd.,
eateverygrain.com

SEN OF JAPAN

Succeeding with takeout sushi/sashimi can be somewhat challenging, particularly when it comes to the sophisticated stylings of Sen of Japan co-owner and head sushi chef Shinji



NAKED CITY PIZZA

As of this writing, Chris Palmeri has yet to reopen his Paradise location dining room, so pickup or always-free delivery are the only ways to get his Buffalo-style offerings. His airy, thick-crust pizzas are what he's known for and, by adorning his pizza boxes with TSA-style security stickers, you need not be concerned someone is rifling through your pie. COVID has allowed him to display his prowess outside of pizza and wings, such as his recent unveiling of weekend BBQ, which immediately proved itself as some of the valley's best. (JB)

4608 Paradise Rd.,
702-722-2241,
nakedcitylv.com

OTHER MAMA

Other Mama remained cautious through the shutdown, closing their doors pre-emptively as local cases spiked even after restaurants were allowed to reopen. Through it, they masterfully honed their takeout skills with daily to-go menus and environmentally friendly packaging for their top-flight, Asian-inspired offerings and sushi. But best of all, GM and co-owner Allen Holmes wanted to differentiate his takeout game by prepackaging their innovative cocktail mixers, such as the addictive, spice-laden Savannah that melds heat and sweet. It makes an authentic Other Mama experience in the comfort of your own home as close as your favorite cocktail glass. (JB)

3655 S. Durango Dr., #6,
702-463-8382
othermamalv.com



OUR MENU OPTIONS HAVE CHANGED

High-tech hygiene, cooking classes, and take-home kits are just a few ways local restaurants are adapting to how we eat now

By **SONJA SWANSON**

In all of my conversations with Las Vegas restaurant operators this year, the mood has ranged from resigned to frustrated to hopeful. But one thing was constant: I had the distinct impression that I was interviewing runners at the midway point of a marathon.

The pandemic is far from over. Every week, new closures are somberly announced on social media channels. In October, *The Wall Street Journal* reported that employment in restaurants and bars has dropped by 2.3 million jobs, and that independent restaurants have lost nearly double what chain restaurants have lost in sales this year.

For those restaurants still soldiering on, a mix of ingenuity, support networks, and sheer luck has kept them going.

STARTUP MODE

“It feels like I’m in startup mode all the time,” says Nina Manchev, owner of Eastern European restaurant Forte Tapas. When the shutdown was announced on March 17, Manchev had just bought a huge amount of inventory for the restaurant and her wholesale customers. Within two days, she decided to sell online cooking classes with ingredient kits, and reached out to Secret Burger, an online events platform, to host the registrations. “I think the classes saved my business,” Manchev says.

I was one of the many eager customers who signed up for a Forte Tapas khachapurri class in early April. With restaurants closed and most of us confined to home amid the uncertainty, this felt like the safest way to do something fun with food at home (and I was getting *really* tired of my own cooking). As I carefully rolled the edges of the khachapurri dough over piles of cheese and cracked an egg into the center, questions poured in for Manchev over the Facebook Live feed: How much of the cheese should I use? What’s in the spices? Have you ever added garlic?

Manchev says this interaction was one of the surprising benefits of holding the classes. “It’s almost like we were training people to understand our food better, so when

they actually came back to the restaurant ... it’s not that unfamiliar.” She says it also gave customers a better sense of why she might price dumplings higher than a frozen bag from the grocery store — they got to experience firsthand how labor-intensive it is to make them from scratch.

Coping with the inventory issue — fridges full of perishables like milk,

cheese, and meat amid the dining slowdown — inspired some restaurants to open small grocery operations. Yvonne Wallace owns Pacific Diner in Henderson with her husband, Marvin. As panicked shoppers cleared grocery store shelves this spring, Wallace knew she could put her inventory to good use while supporting the business. They sold flats of eggs, five-pound sacks of potatoes and chicken breasts in 10-pound bags.

“We did it as a response to our community,” Wallace says. Their restaurant is right across from a senior living facility which wasn’t letting drivers in or out, so the elderly residents weren’t able to get groceries delivered, she says. “Seniors could come up in their motorized chairs and I could stack it in their baskets.”

Liam Dwyer, the owner/operator of 7th and Carson in Downtown Las Vegas, says that for the first six to eight weeks of the shutdown, the pantry helped make up about a quarter of their sales. Like many of the restaurants that ran pantry sales, they’ve since slowed down: They’re open for dine-in again (and the weather is perfect for outdoor seating), and grocery stores are no longer short on supplies.

Most of the restaurants who’ve continued to offer grocery items are selling value-added ingredients — the kind of stuff a casual home cook might not make from scratch, like

Sparrow + Wolf’s homemade pickles, charcuterie, and sauces. You can also get meal kits to finish at home, like the Merino lamb

Left: Pantry goods from Sparrow + Wolf
Below: Lotus of Siam’s hygiene tech at work





Nina Manchev of Forte Tapas launched online cooking classes. Here, she partners with local bar Golden Tiki.

rack from Bazaar Meat or Hobak Korean BBQ's wagyu bulgogi.

As we see more of these new experiences, from the cooking classes to the meal kits, I think they represent a blurring of the lines between restaurant dining and home cooking. Recently, I had a meal that started off with some takeout charcuterie and a freshly-baked baguette — followed by a salad I made myself. In a few weeks, I might try to wow my parents with the results of a Bulgarian cooking class. And as the weather cools and outdoor dining is less of an option, I know I'll be getting more take-out — but will eat on real plates and maybe even light a candle.

After all, the aesthetic pleasures of dining out are important, too. Manchev says she's noticing more people staging beautiful spreads at home on their Instagram ac-

counts. "Even if they're picking up kits, or if they're picking up to-go items," she says, "they're recreating the restaurant experience in their house."

Other restaurants, rather than embracing pantries and interactive classes, are doubling down on safety and hygiene. Lotus of Siam manager Penny Chutima, whose family owns the restaurant, says employing every precaution possible was paramount for reopening their renowned Thai dining destination. She started watching the news from Asia ever since the coronavirus first became serious there. "And during the time that we were closed, I was asking all my friends over there to send me pictures of how people were doing," she says. "You know, especially in Taiwan, because they're very strict on their procedure."

Taking these lessons from Asia into account, Lotus of Siam installed plexiglass shields, hand sanitizing stations, thermal cameras, disinfectant floor pads, and extra cleaning for both guest areas and staff areas. They paid for all of their staff to get tested. Chutima estimates they spent \$35,000 on these upgrades — a fee she acknowledges that not every restaurant can afford. But she sees it as an investment. "If we cheap out on something, somebody gets sick, then what happens? You know, it's our reputation on the line."

A PHANTOM FUTURE

As chefs figure out how to open and operate restaurants in this new era, one idea that's attracting a lot of attention has less of a corporeal form than traditional eateries. "Ghost kitchens," as they've been dubbed, rely on the boom in take-out and delivery. These restaurants have a commercial kitchen but no dining area, focusing solely on fulfilling orders made over apps or the phone. Here in Las Vegas, chefs Jon Batista and Jordan Dunewood opened one such operation this year called Ghost Unit Kitchen.

"If I wanted to open a brick and mortar today, it would be the most foolish investment I could ever make," says Batista. You could spend tens or hundreds of thousands of dollars building out a dining room and a concept and a menu. But a ghost kitchen allows Batista and Dunewood to be more nimble: They don't have branded signs all over their industrial space. They can test out menu items and switch them up by simply updating their offerings on the apps.

Currently, Ghost Unit Kitchen is home to three restaurants that all have their own pages on the delivery apps: A Southern creole menu at Chef JD's Taste Kitchen, empanadas at YourPanadas, and soup and wings at Souper Wings. Since all three operate out of the same kitchen, they can share ingredients and create less waste.

The flexibility of their workspace has also allowed them to cook where the need is — because feeding hungry people is what chefs do. This spring, Batista and Dunewood started a nonprofit called Chefs 4 Vegas that collects unused ingredients and distributes free produce boxes to hungry families.

One of the biggest hurdles of a ghost kitchen, however, is the same one that

plagues all restaurants doing delivery: The most popular delivery apps (and therefore the place they're most likely to be discovered by hungry customers) charge high fees that can end up zeroing out any profit. It's become such an issue that cities across the country are enacting fee caps on apps like UberEats and Grubhub. In August, Clark County passed an ordinance capping fees at 15 percent. But, Batista says, it's not enough. "So then they added additional fees that makes it 30 percent anyway," he explains. The best thing to do as a customer, Batista suggests, is calling the restaurant directly with your order and driving to pick it up yourself.

GOVERNMENT CHEESE, PLEASE

It's important to note the vital role PPP loans have played — and that structural inequalities favor restaurants that are already better-resourced and know how to navigate the system to begin with. Manchev at Forte said a PPP loan helped her with rent over the summer; Wallace at Pacific Diner said that it helped them keep every one of their employees and start paying her husband minimum wage after months of going without pay. Restaurateurs have made sacrifices, and they know there's more to come.

Currently, there's a bill that has passed the House and is awaiting discussion in the Senate called the RESTAURANTS Act (five stars for this acronym, which stands for Real Economic Support that Acknowledges Unique Restaurant Assistance Needed to Survive). The bill would provide \$120 billion in grants for payroll, rent, and PPE. Importantly, it's specifically earmarked for smaller businesses, unlike the PPP loans, which were initially given to massive chains like Sizzler and Shake Shack (the latter of which later returned the loan after public outcry).

This year is a rough one for restaurants—even the ones who've scrimped, saved, hustled, and pivoted as if their lives depended on it. It's likely that without another stimulus package, we'll lose even more of them, and more restaurant jobs.

They're still determined to forge onward. Dwyer at 7th and Carson is thinking ahead to next year with high hopes. "When we do turn the corner, the eternal optimist in me says, you know, we will be in a great position then to help even more people."

NEVER THE SAME AGAIN

It took 30 years for Vegas to become a global dining destination. COVID wiped it out. What do we do now?

By **JOHN CURTAS**

We seemed invincible once, didn't we? Thirty years of ever-expanding prosperity will do that to you. With Vegas surviving Gulf wars, dot-com busts, recessions, mass shootings, and depressions, it felt like the public's appetite for all things Las Vegas was insatiable. Since 1994, we witnessed one restaurant boom after another: celebrity chefs, the French Revolution of the early aughts, Chinatown's 20-year expansion, Downtown's resurgence — and all of it gave us rabid restaurant revelers a false sense of security. A cocky confidence that the crowds would flock and the champagne would always flow.

Then we were floored by a COVID left hook no one saw coming. In an instant, literally, 30 years of progress hit the mat. To keep the metaphor going, we've now lifted ourselves to the ropes for a standing eight count. The question remains whether we can recover and still go the distance, or take one more punch and suffer a brutal TKO.

There was an eeriness to everything in those early months, as if a relative had died, or we were living in a bad dream. A sense of loss and apology filled the air. Our first instinct was to reassure ourselves. Restaurants were there to feed and help us back





to our feet, and the feelings were mutual. Reassurances and gratitude were the watchwords whenever you picked up a pizza or grabbed take-out from a chef struggling to make sense of it all.

Then the mood turned surly and defensive. The moment restaurants were given the go-ahead to start seating people again, the battle lines were drawn. It took some weeks to build the trenches, but by July, what began as a “we’re all in this together” fight for survival devolved into a multi-front war pitting survivalists on all sides against each other. Mutual support evaporated as tensions arose between those needing to make a living and those who saw epidemic death around every corner. Caught in the middle were the patrons: people who just wanted to go out and take advantage of our incredible restaurant scene. Suddenly, everyone felt uncomfortable, and in a matter of a few calamitous weeks, dining out in America went from “we’re here to enjoy ourselves” to “let’s all struggle to get through this” — not exactly a recipe for a good time, which is, after all, the whole point of eating out.

Reduced hours and crowds meant shorter menus, since every restaurant in town was forced to narrow its food options. No one seemed to mind, since anyone taking the time to dine out was simply happy the place was open. But if you sum it all up — the rules, the emptiness, the fear, the feeling of everyone being on guard — it’s a wonder anyone bothered going out at all. But going out to eat is what we do, because it is fun, convenient, and delicious, and because we are human.

As Las Vegas’s most intrepid gastronome, I’ve had to curb my voracious appetite more than anyone. Overnight, my routine went from visiting 10 restaurants a week to a mere few. Even in places where I’m on a first-name basis with the staff, the experience is as suppressed as the voices of the waiters. Instead of concentrating on hospitality, the singular focus is now on following all the rules. All of which makes you appreciate how the charm of restaurants stems from the sincerity of those serving you — something hard to notice when you can’t see their faces.

Nowhere are these feelings more acute than on the Strip. “Las Vegas needs conventions to survive,” says Gino Ferraro. “If the hotels suffer, we suffer.” He’s owned Ferraro’s Italian Restaurant and Wine Bar since 1985, and he’ll be the first to tell you how thin the margins are for success in the business. Restaurants are in your blood more than in your bank account, and micromanaging, cutting costs, and (hopefully) another year of government

assistance are what he sees as keys to their survival. “Good restaurants will survive,” he says, “but there’s no doubt there will be less of them.”

Unlike the free-standing Ferraro’s, the Strip is different. There, the restaurants are amenities — like stores in a mall, if you will — and from Sunday-Thursday (when the conventions arrived) they used to thrive. These days, like Ferraro’s, they still pack ‘em in on weekends, but almost all are closed Monday-Wednesday. This doesn’t mean the food or the service has suffered — far from it — only that everyone is hanging on by their fingernails, and this anxiety is palpable when you walk through the doors. The staffs are almost *too* welcoming, which is nice, but you can sense the fear. It’s not pretty, and it is not going away for many months to come.

As Vegas slowly re-opens, one thing you can no longer take for granted is that each hotel will have a full complement of dining options, from modest to world-famous. If I had to make a prediction, it would be that a year from now, some hotels may field a smaller team of culinary superstars, and their bench will not be as deep, and those stars will have another season of wear and tear on them without any talented rookies to come along and take their place. Long before the shutdown, there were already signs we had reached peak Vegas and things were starting to wane. Some fancy French venues were showing their age, the Venetian/Palazzo (with its panoply of dining options) seemed overstuffed, and rumblings were heard that even the indefatigable David Chang had lost his fastball. The same could be said for the whole celebrity-chef trend, which was starting to feel very end-of-last-century by the end of last year. The Palms’ murderer’s row of newly minted sluggers was mired in a slump, and our gleaming, big box, pan-Asian eye-candy (Tao, Hakkasan) was not shining as bright as it once did.

The stakes are much higher when you consider the reputation of Las Vegas as a whole. Survey the landscape these days and all you can ask is, how much of this damage is permanent? It took from 1989-2019 to take Las Vegas from “The Town That Taste Forgot” to a world-class, destination-dining capital — a claim to fame like no other — where an entire planet of gastronomic delights, cooked by some of the best chefs in the business, was concentrated among a dozen closely-packed hotels. Now, what are we? A convention city with no conventions? A tourist mecca three days a week? Can we recapture this lost ground, or is it gone forever? Everyone is asking, but no one has the answers.

Perhaps a culling of the herd was already in the works, and all COVID did was accelerate the process. Are the big-money restaurant days over? Certainly until those conventions return, and no one is predicting that until next year, at the earliest. If that’s the case, it will be a leaner gastronomic world that awaits us down the road, not the cornucopia of choices laid before you every night. The fallout will include the casinos playing it safe; not throwing money at chefs like they once did, and sticking with the tried-and-true for a while. Less ambitious restaurant choices? Absolutely. It is impossible to imagine a single European concept making a splash like Joël Robuchon did in 2005, or any Food Network star getting the red carpet treatment just for slapping their name on a door. The era of Flay, Ramsay, Andrés, and others is over, and the next big thing in Las Vegas dining won’t be a thing for a long time.

If the Strip’s prospects look bleak, the resilience of local restaurants has been astounding. Neighborhood venues hunkered down like everyone else, but now seem poised for a resurgence at a much faster rate than anything happening in the hotels. If the Strip resembles a pod of beached whales, struggling to get back in the water, then local restaurants are the more nimble pilot fish, darting about, servicing smaller crowds wherever they find them. Four new worthwhile venues are popping up Downtown: upscale tacos at Letty’s, Yu-Or-Mi Sushi and Sake, Good Pie, and the American gastropub Main Street Provisions, all in the Arts District. Off the Strip, Mitsuo Endo has debuted his high-toned yakitori bar Raku Toridokoro to much acclaim, and brewpubs are multiplying everywhere faster than peanut butter stouts. The indomitable Chinatown seems the least fazed by any of this, and Circa is springing to life on Fremont Street, hoping to capture some of the hotel mojo sadly absent a few miles south. The bottom line: Look to the neighborhoods if you wish to recapture that rarest of sensations these days — a sense of normalcy.

Watching my favorite restaurants endure these blows has been like nursing a sick child who did nothing to deserve such a cruel fate. In a way, it’s made me realize that’s what they have become to me over decades: a community of fledgling businesses I’ve supported and watched grow in a place no one thought it possible. As social experiments go, the great public health shutdown of 2020 will be debated for years, but this much is certain: Las Vegas restaurants were at their peak on March 15, 2020, and reaching that pinnacle is a mountain many of them will never climb again.

Grab a bag, or help fill one.

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to help fill the bag.**



**Because your golden years
should be delicious.**





THE HARD 9

A cookbook group canceled by COVID becomes a tight-knit community of kitchen activists, using cookbooks to feed the community

By **KIM FOSTER**

I started our cookbook group at The Writer's Block in 2019. Pre-Covid. When we could all hang out together in one room, breathing on each other, spooning dollops of each other's home-cooked food onto our plates without concern. God, it seems like forever ago. We met once a month. We called ourselves Please Send Noodles, a name I shamelessly stole from my daughter's friend's TikTok. They still don't know.

We made buttermilk fried chicken and oyster po' boys from Toni Tipton Martin's *Jubilee*, Hawaiian plate lunches with Alana Kysar's *Aloha Kitchen*; Samin Nosrat's *Salt, Fat, Acid, Heat* guided us toward tomato confit and herby, crunchy Persian rice, and we dabbled in Israeli and Middle Eastern flavors — think crispy fried lima beans with feta, sorrel, and sumac. We tasted each other's food through successes and failures. Every dish was made with love, respect, and earnestness. But with just four cookbooks under our belts before the pandemic, we only knew each other on the surface. We still needed our name tags.

Then: COVID. I wondered whether we should keep getting together. Zoom felt awkward and not intimate in the early days. How would we cook together? How would we share food? We didn't. As with most people in isolation, we adapted. My husband, David, *made* me — pretty much shamed me to — continue the group over Zoom. I'm sure I've told none of the group about that. I was afraid it wouldn't work. That no one would want to hang out for hours online talking about cookbooks. But as people lost jobs, as less money flowed in, as the numbers of the sick and dead rocketed, there were fewer places to go, and there was simply more time to make connections, while we were severing most of them. Folks turned to things that comforted them — like long dog walks, waving at neighbors we never spoke to before, making our own kombucha (what were we thinking?), growing little garden patches on patios and backyards. While restaurants shuttered, we cooked simple meals for ourselves. Our pantries were stocked. Heirloom beans from Rancho Gordo and Zoom socials became a path to new normal.

The Please Send Noodles gatherings went from 50 people attending a cookbook meet-up at a book shop, with food and booze, to the Hard 9 — the core and soul of our group — who meet bi-weekly on our computers. We bring our glass of whatever-the-hell-we-want and sit out on porches while the desert sun burns down behind us, and talk dosas, and the Jordanian triple cream feta at Aladdin market, and the near-miraculousness of Chinkiang vinegar. We don't need name tags anymore, and we have little

inside jokes, and a few more people joined us, and then left, and came back, and we just kept using our cookbooks and making dishes for our families.

And we laughed. It's a gift to laugh with people during a pandemic. But we knew what was happening around us. Money was tight. We were all eating, budgeting, figuring it out, but we watched people in our communities falling off the edge. So, in June, we started planning 100 Dinners. Every last Saturday of the month, we cook 150-200 dinners for anyone who wants them, as a bridge meal, to get them over the last weekend before their benefits arrive.

We choose the menu together. We box up the food together. We put dinner after dinner into the trunks of cars that pull up, because it's hard out there right now. And we learned some things — we know that Bethany makes the tastiest vegetarian and vegan food. And LeAnne, who went to culinary school, is severely bossy, which makes her the perfect expeditor when we box up the food. Noreen is abeginningcook, who now cooks Ottolenghi-inspired meals and is making her own preserved lemons. That's how we know each other now, by how we cook. No name tags needed.

The Hard 9 knows each other the way people do when they go through little wars together and emerge arm-in-arm, dusty and triumphant. We've come a long way from our first meetings at The Writer's Block. When we go back to meeting there, we'll be a different, tighter, more accomplished group of humans. We will be more in touch with the community around us, more naturally inclusive, and clearer that cooking for people matters. ♦

PLEASE SEND NOODLES

- Join the Facebook group for food discussions, recipes, food questions, and more.
- Upcoming Zoom sessions: November 9 and 23, December 7 and 21. More information on the Facebook page
- Upcoming cookbook: *Stir-Frying to the Sky's Edge* by Grace Young, available at the Writer's Block
- November excursion: SF market in Chinatown, date and time TBA on Facebook page
- 100 Dinners: open to all home cooks who wants to help others. Details on Please Send Noodles Facebook page
- Please Send Noodles will resume in-person meetings at the Writer's Block, sixth and Carson, when it's safe to eat and drink with each other again

WATER ONLY 1 DAY A WEEK

NOV 1 - FEB 28



SLASH your water
use and **SAVE** money

Find your mandatory winter
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{ 2020 Holiday Gift Guide }

Gifts you'll to Love Give

Mistletoe kisses may not be on the menu this season, but these gifts bridge any kind of social distance – and support local businesses

**Lovebox Spinning Heart Messenger
by Marie Pouille and Jean Gregoire**

Send heartfelt messages to loved ones with this modern take on the classic love note. When you send a message through the app, the heart on the bamboo box spins to alert the recipient. Opening the box reveals the message on the mirrored screen inside. (The Black & White Lovebox can display emojis; the Color Pix version can handle photos.) \$100.

uncommongoods.com



▀ Compiled by Christie Moeller ▀



Cookies by TSP Baking Company Order cookies by the dozen for shipping nationwide or for local delivery from this Las Vegas shop. Your choice of up to four cookie flavors wrapped in sets of three. Box is sealed and shipped as soon as cookies are cool. \$20, [TSP Baking Company, tsplv.com](https://www.tsplv.com)



Tommy Bahama Island Soft Throw
Whether you need a touch of cozy while working from home or a binge-watching blankie, this polyester throw is the perfect companion. \$99.50, [Tommy Bahama in Fashion Show](https://www.tommybahama.com) and [tommybahama.com](https://www.tommybahama.com)



Grown Alchemist Hydra-Gel Hand Sanitiser
An advanced antiseptic hand sanitizer formulated with Hyaluronan and antioxidants to instantly sanitize and hydrate, protecting hands from dryness and premature aging. \$14, [Neiman Marcus in Fashion Show](https://www.neimanmarcus.com)



Tory Burch Mask Set These stylish masks are more than a pretty face. For each purchase, Tory Burch will make a donation to the International Medical Corps working to stop the spread of COVID-19 and to the Tory Burch Foundation, working to advance women's empowerment and women entrepreneurs. \$35 for five, [Tory Burch in the Grand Canal Shoppes at the Venetian](https://www.toryburch.com)



PhoneSoap Pro

PhoneSoap Pro offers an enhanced sanitizing experience for your smartphone, killing 99.99 percent of bacteria in just five minutes. With its large sanitizing bay, large phones and thick accessories fit comfortably. \$119.95, phonesoap.com



Globein Tranquil Box Globein is a subscription box service that sends you beautiful, handcrafted items from around the world every month. Each box contains four to five products, all sharing a special theme, which you select monthly. Verified by the Fair Trade Federation. \$40 monthly, \$396 annually, globein.com



Tory Burch Foundation Seed Box The annual Tory Burch Foundation Seed Box is a curated selection of products from women entrepreneurs, and it represents the foundation's commitment to growing women-owned businesses and helping them thrive. \$98, [Tory Burch in the Grand Canal Shoppes at the Venetian](http://ToryBurchintheGrandCanalShoppesattheVenetian)



Sweet Existence: A Strange Planet Card Game
Sweet Existence is a strategic party card game inspired by Nathan W. Pyle's *Strange Planet* webcomic and books. This game has players forming connections, experiencing life events, and collecting sweet disks (cookies), while avoiding the dreaded Perish square. \$19.99, [Target stores](#) or [target.com](#)



Cedar Mountain Candle Humidor Collection
Las Vegas-based Cedar Mountain Candle has created a three-candle set that's perfect for the tobacco lover. Add a layer of class and sophistication to any space with these dye-free, phthalate-free candles infused with essential oils. \$54, [cedarmountaincandle.com](#)

Pour in the Alley Experience

Pour in the Alley is a virtual tasting event hosted and curated by the team at Fergusons Downtown. Bringing the experience to the living room, Pour in the Alley features an educational conversation led around the event's pairing that involves local bites, wines, spirits, and craft beers. Experiences start at \$60, [fergusondowntown.com](#)



Mike's Recovery Mineral Soak

Mike's Recovery mineral soaks were created by local sports massage therapist and aromatherapy trainer, Mike Buckham. With fine essential oils in his magic mineral recipes, he's got a custom soak for every body. \$16.95, [Mike's Recovery at Fergusons Downtown, mikesrecovery.com](#)



Apple iPad 8th Generation

Wanna go big this gift-giving season? The 8th gen iPad features the A12 Bionic chip that brings the Neural Engine to the entry iPad for the first time — and it'll bring you eternal gratitude from the lucky recipient of this high-tech gift. \$329, [Apple Store in the Fashion Show Mall, Downtown Summerlin, the Forum Shops at Caesars, and Town Square](#)





"No Mask, No Soup" face mask by Boomer Naturals
Las Vegas-based Boomer Naturals sells every type of face mask you can imagine; better yet, they're made with antimicrobial nano-silver fibers woven throughout each mask's three layers. \$9.99.
[Boomer Naturals, boomernaturals.com](http://BoomerNaturals.com)



Go Holiday events

Even with a pandemic, there's still holiday cheer to be found. Ho, ho, ho! (But with a mask.)

SEPT. 18–NOV. 27 & DEC. 5–JAN. 4

Bellagio Conservatory & Botanical Garden
The installation at The Conservatory & Botanical Gardens showcases harvest and holiday displays. **24/7, free.** [Bellagio, bellagio.com](http://Bellagio.com)

NOV. 6–8
Holiday Craft and Gift Festival
Enjoy holiday music, the Christmas train display, Santa, and more than 40,000 square feet of Christmas shopping for handcrafted items. **Fri–Sat 10A–5P; Sun 10A–4P, \$5; children 12 and under, free.** **The Expo at World Marketplace, 209 S Grand Central Pkwy.,** lvcraftfestival.com

NOV. 6–JAN. 3
Holiday Cactus Garden
More than 500,000 lights will be strung around the three-acre garden. Stop inside for a chocolate sample! Visits from Santa Fri–Sun. 5–10P, free. The annual lighting celebration is going virtual; check the website for access. **Ethel M Chocolate Factory and Botanical Garden, 2 Cactus Garden Drive, Henderson,** ethelm.com



Ethel M's Holiday Cactus Garden

NOV. 7
Veterans Day Ceremony
Mayor Debra March and the Henderson City Council, along with the Basic High School Marine Corps Junior ROTC, local veterans groups and others will honor all who have served the United States. This ceremony will pay tribute to Henderson patriots who fought for our country. **10A, free.** **Veterans Memorial Wall (adjacent to Henderson City Hall).** Cityofhenderson.com

NOV. 12
Camelot
This year's virtual gala will feature many ways to show your support for Opportunity Village and celebrate the honoree, Wynn Resorts. Purchase a table for your business, sponsor an element of the evening, bid on exclusive live auction packages, and enjoy special performances. Proceeds benefit Opportunity Village. **6:30P, from \$150.** **Virtual event,** CamelotOV.com

NOV. 13–JAN. 5
Glittering Lights Las Vegas and Santa Tram
Nevada's largest drive-through light show, this annual event showcases one million LEDs and more than 400 animated displays over 2.5 miles. **Sun–Thu 5:30P–9P; Fri–Sat and holidays 5:30P–10P. \$20–\$75 per vehicle (season passes available).** **Las Vegas Motor Speedway, 7000 Las Vegas Boulevard S.**

Give

Charitable Opportunities

There are several ways you can give to others this holiday season. The following organizations are seeking donations, volunteers, and other support.

ADULT DAY CARE CENTERS OF LAS VEGAS AND HENDERSON

As an alternative to expensive in-home care, this organization helps keep your loved one home longer through visits, day centers, and social programs. **Needs:** Donations, visits, entertainment, event planning, facilities support and class leadership. **Volunteer:** 702-648-3425, adultdaycarelv.org

AID FOR AIDS OF NEVADA

AFAN provides medical case management, medical transportation, education, prevention, housing, and nutritional services for adults and children affected by HIV/AIDS. **Needs:** Host a holiday fundraising event; volunteer for transportation, house cleaning, or administrative work. **Volunteer:** 702-382-2326, afanlv.org

BABY'S BOUNTY

This active group provides new and gently used infant clothing and gear to babies born to victims of domestic abuse, teen mothers, and low-income families. **Needs:** Help with collecting, sorting, cleaning, clerical work, and preparing clothing donations. Sponsor or donate to the diaper bank. **Volunteer:** 702-485-2229, babysbounty.org

BEST BUDDIES NEVADA

Best Buddies International works to enhance the lives of people with and without intellectual and developmental disabilities through socialization programs, job coaching, and tools in leadership development. **Needs:** Donate money and office supplies; assist with special events; become a "Buddy" to offer mentoring, friendship, or jobs to persons with IDD; purchase items from the shop. **Volunteer:** 702-822-2268, bestbuddies.org/nevada

BIG BROTHERS BIG SISTERS OF SOUTHERN NEVADA

BBBS is a mentoring network that provides children facing adversity with professionally supported, positive relationships. **Needs:** Donate toys for ages 7+, volunteer as "Bigs" who are interested in playing sports, hiking, reading, and other fun events with their "Littles." Also consider donating a new bicycle or skateboard for their Holiday Bike and Board Bonanza. Consider donating your vehicle. **Volunteer:** 702-731-2227, bbbsn.org

BLIND CENTER OF NEVADA

BCN assists the blind and visually impaired by focusing on personal development, social interaction, and meaningful employment. **Needs:** Assist with various daily

programs and activities. **Volunteer:** 702-642-6000, blindcenter.org

BOYS & GIRLS CLUBS OF SOUTHERN NEVADA

Club programs and services promote and enhance the development of boys and girls by instilling a sense of competence, usefulness, belonging, and influence. **Needs:** Volunteer at a local club. Each location has its own needs. **Volunteer:** 702-367-2582, bgcsnv.org

CATHOLIC CHARITIES OF SOUTHERN NEVADA

Regardless of faith, the charity provides counseling services, services to pregnant women, immigration legal assistance, transitional housing, aid to low-income families, and a food bank. **Needs:** Frozen turkeys, nonperishable food, hygiene items, winter clothes; donate your car. All in-person volunteering is suspended because of COVID. **Volunteer:** 702-405-0597, catholiccharities.com

GOODIE TWO SHOES FOUNDATION

The organization provides disadvantaged children and children in crisis with new shoes and socks as well as other items deemed essential for good health and positive development. **Needs:** Volunteers to help participating children in selecting brand-new shoes and socks. **Volunteer:** 702-617-4027, goodietwoshoes.org

HEAVEN CAN WAIT ANIMAL SOCIETY

Heaven Can Wait works to eliminate companion animal suffering and pet overpopulation through aggressive spay/neuter programs, adoptions, community outreach, and education. **Needs:** Write for various publications; assist in fostering, adoption programs, administrative and clinical work; donate your car. **Volunteer:** 702-655-4800, hcws.org

HELPING HANDS OF VEGAS VALLEY

A nonprofit with the mission to provide free assistive services to senior citizens in Southern Nevada, allowing them to maintain their dignity and independence while improving health and daily living. **Needs:** Drive seniors to their appointments; help coordinate food drives; administrative duties; and assist with the food pantry and delivery services — bilingual volunteers particularly needed. **Volunteer:** 702-507-1850, hhovv.org

HELP OF SOUTHERN NEVADA

HELP assists the poor, the homeless, and those in crisis to receive emergency services and holiday gifts through its three signature programs: Adopt-A-Family, Turkey-A-Thon, and Toy Drive/Holiday Assistance. **Needs:** Host a donation drive, sponsor an event, assist in events planning and execution, adopt a family. **Volunteer:** 702-369-4357, helpsonv.org

JEWISH FAMILY SERVICE AGENCY

JFSA supports people of all backgrounds by providing professional

social services including counseling, senior services, adoptions, and emergency assistance. **Needs:** Help with daily administrative tasks, the food pantry, driving seniors, and events held throughout the year. Also assist with veterans and food delivery. **Volunteer:** 702-732-0304, jfsalv.org

LAS VEGAS VALLEY HUMANE SOCIETY

The Humane Society is dedicated to improving the welfare of animals, particularly those that are stray or abandoned. **Needs:** Foster or sponsor an animal; assist with transport rescues; socialize with cats; assist in fundraisers; help with administrative work; and donate pet food, or toys. **Volunteer:** 702-434-2009, lvhumane.org

LAS VEGAS RESCUE MISSION

The Las Vegas Rescue Mission provides people in need with shelter and services without regard to religion or origin. During the holidays, it provides children with Christmas gifts as well as food and other essentials. **Needs:** Help serve meals, sort and price items for the thrift store, assist in toy and food drives, and mentor recovery clients. **Volunteer:** 702-382-1766, vegasrescue.org

LUTHERAN SOCIAL SERVICES OF NEVADA

LSSNV provides professional social services to people of all backgrounds, including counseling, senior services, adoptions, and emergency assistance. **Needs:** Assist with assembly and distribution of holiday baskets; help with the emergen-

cy services food pantry, office tasks, maintenance at housing units; and participate in children's toy and clothing drive. **Volunteer:** 702-639-1730, lssnv.org

PUBLIC EDUCATION FOUNDATION

The PEF offers literacy programs to children and families. **Needs:** Donate used electronics (less than 5 years old). **Volunteer:** 702-799-1042, thepef.org

TOYS 4 TOTS

This program run by the U.S. Marines collects new, unwrapped toys and distributes them as Christmas gifts to needy children. **Needs:** Gather toy and financial donations, help with the transportation and storage of donated toys, assist in the warehouse, help with meals, become a toy drop-off site, host an event. **Volunteer:** 719-317-4336, las-vegas-nv.toysfortots.org

NEVADA PARTNERSHIP FOR HOMELESS YOUTH

NPHY provides youth services, including street outreach, 24-hour crisis intervention, a fulltime drop-in center, and an independent living program. **Needs:** Donate food, clothing, hygiene items, school supplies and other needed items; assemble and distribute sack lunches; join or host events; assist with clerical tasks; help in the food pantry and clothing closet and assist in fourth annual "It's a Wrap" holiday block party. **Volunteer:** 702-383-1332, nphy.org

OPPORTUNITY VILLAGE

OV helps people with severe intellectual and related disabilities seek

independence by providing vocational training, community employment, day services, advocacy, arts programs, and social recreation. **Needs:** Donations. All volunteer programs are currently suspended. **Volunteer:** 702-888-3377, opportunityvillage.org

THE RONALD MCDONALD HOUSE OF GREATER LAS VEGAS

Ronald McDonald House Charities provides lodging, transportation, and support to families while their children receive medical treatment. **Needs:** Donations. All volunteer programs are currently suspended. **Volunteer:** 702-252-4663, rmhlv.com

THE SALVATION ARMY

This organization offers adult rehabilitation, emergency disaster relief, victim and veteran services, and youth programs. **Needs:** Sponsor and assist with toy drives, food drives, and Christmas Angel Tree programs; participate in the Adopt-a-Kettle program through the holidays. **Volunteer:** 702-870-4430, salvationarmysouthernnevada.org

THE SHADE TREE

The Shade Tree provides a safe shelter for homeless and abused women and children in crisis — along with their pets — and offers services promoting stability, dignity and self-reliance. **Needs:** Help prepare and serve daily meals; conduct activities with children; organize arts and craft projects; provide transportation; sort donations; data entry; assist with résumé writing, financial literacy, and other life skills. **Volunteer:** 702-385-0072, theshadetreecore.org

SPREAD THE WORD NEVADA

The goal of Spread the Word Nevada is to promote early literacy by giving books to children in at-risk, low-income communities. **Needs:** Book cleaning; all other volunteer programs are suspended until further notice. **Volunteer:** 702-564-7809, spreadthewordnevada.org

ST. JUDE'S RANCH FOR CHILDREN

SJRC works with abused, neglected, and at-risk children and young adults

through residential foster care, transitional living, housing, services for homeless 18-25-year-olds, child-focused sibling preservation, emergency placement, and child nutrition programs. **Needs:** Volunteers in the thrift store and mailroom; help with maintenance of the grounds and buildings; holiday decorating for community holiday events; and donations from the holiday wish list. **Volunteer:** 702-294-7100, stjudesranch.org

THREE SQUARE

Three Square's mission is to provide wholesome food to hungry people while passionately pursuing a hunger-free community. The Backpack for Kids program provides Clark County schoolchildren in need with bags of nourishing food for after school, weekends, holidays,

and school breaks. **Needs:** Donate funds; sort and package meals for school programs; help out at special events; box meals for the Senior Hunger Program. **Volunteer:** 702-644-3663, threesquare.org

YMCA

The YMCA provides personal and social change through Christian principles and opportunities to learn, grow, and thrive side-by-side regardless of age, income, or background. **Needs:** Varies by location. **Volunteer:** lasvegasymca.org

SAFE NEST

Safe Nest provides emergency and legal services, safe housing and long-term counseling to victims of domestic violence and abuse. **Needs:** Donate gently used household items; donate funds. **Volunteer:** 702-821-2736, safenest.org





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IN THE SPIRIT OF
GIVING
2020

While “’tis the season for giving” may have joined the ranks of cliché holiday sayings quite some time ago, the concept still resonates loud and clear with many Las Vegas businesses and organizations that work tirelessly to improve the quality of life for the metropolitan area’s 2 million-plus residents. Through efforts that range from offering various forms of assistance and support, to programs that empower less-fortunate individuals and families with the capabilities necessary to successfully engage in everyday life, to providing opportunities for educational and career advancement and success, philanthropy surely is alive and well in Las Vegas.

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The Howard Hughes Corporation® is proud to sponsor for the sixth year, “In the Spirit of Giving,” a testament to the rich tradition of philanthropy in Southern Nevada. While 2020 has been a year of unprecedented hardship and challenge caused by the COVID-19 pandemic and its sweeping economic and social impacts, it stands as the ultimate reminder of the need for increased corporate giving to support and strengthen the nonprofits that have worked tirelessly to meet the needs of our Southern Nevada community. Needs that are so large, they are hard to quantify, impossible to ignore and will only continue to grow even as life begins to “normalize.”

We invite other businesses and corporations in a position to continue their giving missions to join us in maintaining their support of the organizations and nonprofits that provide hope and help to those most affected and in need, while bolstering quality of life valley-wide. Working together, we are stronger.

For more than four decades, The Howard Hughes Corporation is proud to have played a role in the growth of Southern Nevada, particularly through the development of Summerlin®. As a builder of community, we understand and appreciate the value of access to quality education, a healthy environment, the uplift of culture and arts, and a robust network of community services that improve the lives of all who call our valley home.

ENVIRONMENT

Even before Summerlin began, The Howard Hughes Corporation established a growth and sustainability plan that would develop the community as a partner to the environment, protecting natural habitats and wildlife while building neighborhoods that enhance the natural desert landscape. Our 2020 support of organizations dedicated to protecting the environment includes long-time beneficiaries of The Howard Hughes Corporation: **Get Outdoors Nevada**, **Southern Nevada Water Authority’s Water Conservation Coalition**, **Friends of Red Rock Canyon** and the valley-wide **Christmas Tree Recycling** program organized by **UNLV Rebel Recycling** with support from a large coalition of partners, including **Springs Preserve**.

EDUCATION

Education is a pillar of The Howard Hughes Corporation as we have strived to provide unequalled educational opportunity in Summerlin while doing our part to support education valley-wide. Among those entities we supported this year are **Clark County School District** and its **School Community Partnership Council** and the **UNLV Foundation**. We continue to provide annual college scholarships to deserving students in our community through our own nonprofit, **The Summerlin Children’s Forum**.

CULTURE AND THE ARTS

Recognizing the significant social impact and uplift culture and arts have on community, we continue to support **Vegas PBS** which provides educational outreach programs for learners of all ages; professional development services for teachers; educational workshops for families and individuals with special needs; and 24/7 online access to informative and creative content via an array of devices and media. We are especially proud to support the **Mayor’s Fund for Las Vegas LIFE** to fund the completion and installation of iconic ‘Queen of Arts’ sculptures at the West Las Vegas Arts Center that celebrate African-American heritage in the heart of our city. And we are pleased to support **Poetry Promise, Inc.** that advances the literary arts through poetry.

COMMUNITY SERVICES

This year, we are proud to support the **Goodie Two Shoes Foundation** that provides disadvantaged children and children in crisis with new shoes and socks, and other items deemed essential for good health and positive development.

In Las Vegas, a city known for its generosity and philanthropy, we are grateful for so many corporate partners and philanthropic foundations that make community betterment a top priority. May the holiday spirit coincide with a spirit of giving that will extend well beyond the season. Working together, we will help our community to recover and ultimately prosper. Together, we are #VegasStrong.

With Gratitude,

Kevin T. Orrock
President, Las Vegas Region
The Howard Hughes Corporation



CONTACT

The Mayor's Fund
for Las Vegas LIFE
702-229- LIFE (5433)
mayorsfundlv@LasVegasNevada.gov
mayorsfundlv.org

MISSION

The Mayor's Fund for Las Vegas LIFE provides the private sector – individuals, businesses, foundations and nonprofits – with a way to support city programs and initiatives that enhance quality of life for Las Vegans, particularly for the city's most vulnerable populations. The Fund's focus areas include Livability (homelessness, youth sports, arts and culture); Innovation (increasing access to the Internet, technology); Future (workforce development); and Education (Pre-K and other learning programs).



CONTACT

Clark County School District
4601 W. Bonanza Road
Las Vegas, NV 89107
702-799-6560
bmason@interact.ccsd.net
www.partnership.ccsd.net

MISSION

The mission of the School Community Partnership Program is to improve academic achievement, foster successful individuals and enrich student experiences by connecting schools with business and community resources. The program began in 1983, as a pilot program of seven schools partnered with seven businesses. Since that time, it has grown to hundreds of partnerships with programs that range from kindergarten to 12th grade, from tutorial programs 10 scholarships, from science activities to line arts programs. Partnership ventures are designed to support, supplement and complement the curriculum of the Clark County public schools. For good news about CCSD visit PledgeOfAchievement.com



Goodie Two Shoes® FOUNDATION

CONTACT:

Goodie Two Shoes Foundation
10620 Southern Highlands
Parkway, #110-474
Las Vegas, NV 89141
702-617-4027
info@goodietwoshoes.org
goodietwoshoes.org

MISSION

Goodie Two Shoes Foundation provides disadvantaged children and children in crisis with new shoes and socks! Whether students are traipsing to childcare or Grandma's, learning in the classroom or remotely, or going outside just to be kids, they are still on the move and in need of new shoes! Your gracious support, particularly at this time, will enhance our abilities to EMPOWER and outfit thousands of vulnerable Southern Nevada children in need with new shoes and socks of their choice, with everyone's health and safety remaining the utmost priority! Since 2003, GTSF has outfitted over 112,000 of our community's critical-needs students!

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CONTACT

UNLV Foundation
4505 S. Maryland Parkway
Box 451006
Las Vegas, NV 89154-1006
702-895-3641
unlvfoundation@unlv.edu
www.unlv.edu/foundation

MISSION

The UNLV Foundation raises and manages private funds for the University of Nevada, Las Vegas. These funds help UNLV and its diverse faculty, students, staff and alumni promote community well-being and individual achievement through education, research, scholarship, creative activities and clinical services. In fact, 75-percent of UNLV's 30,000 students rely on some form of financial aid. We also stimulate economic development and diversification, foster a climate of innovation, promote health and enrich the cultural vitality of the community we serve. Through the UNLV Foundation every charitable dollar UNLV receives has an exponential impact, as it helps us leverage UNLV's most valuable skills – research, teaching and community service – for the benefit of all Nevadans.



CONTACT

Summerlin® Children's Forum
10845 Griffith Peak Drive, Suite 160
Las Vegas, Nevada 89135
702-791-4000
Randy.Ecklund@HowardHughes.com
summerlin.com

MISSION

The Summerlin® Children's Forum (SCF) is a nonprofit organization established in 1997 by leaders of the Summerlin master-planned community and its developer, The Howard Hughes Corporation®. The organization is dedicated to recognizing academic excellence. Since inception, the Summerlin Children's Forum has provided college scholarships and school enrichment grants totaling nearly \$650,000. Today, Summerlin Children's Forum is focused on its annual college scholarship program that is open to all graduating high school seniors who reside in Summerlin.



Discover. Experience. Connect.

CONTACT:

Get Outdoors Nevada
919 E. Bonneville Ave., Suite 200
Las Vegas, NV 89101
702-997-3350
info@getoutdoorsnevada.org
www.getoutdoorsnevada.org

MISSION

Get Outdoors Nevada connects people of all backgrounds and ages to Nevada's diverse outdoor places through education, service, community engagement and collaboration. We envision a community that discovers, experiences and connects to our state's many natural environments, from wild landscapes and recreational areas to urban trails and parks. To this end, we pursue a three-fold approach of education, service, and community engagement. Many of our programs focus on the needs and lives of families and school children, especially those have limited opportunity to experience the great outdoors. We are also honored to serve as the non-profit partner for the Las Vegas Community Healing Garden.

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CONTACT

Vegas PBS
3050 E. Flamingo Road
Las Vegas, NV 89121
702-799-1010
membership@vegaspbs.org
vegaspbs.org

MISSION

Dedicated to enriching lives in Southern Nevada, Vegas PBS uses television and other technologies to educate and empower individuals and to amplify the effectiveness of community organizations. Vegas PBS Channel 10 is one of America's most-watched PBS stations and offers five unique secondary channels: Create, VEGAS PBS KIDS, Worldview, Rewind and Jackpot! Vegas PBS also collaborates with strategic partners to create content that examines current and historic regional issues. Vegas PBS provides outreach programs to assist students of any age, from childhood through adulthood; professional development services for teachers; literacy and educational workshops for families; educational materials for the deaf, hard of hearing, blind or vision impaired; and 24/7 online access to content via an array of devices and media.



CONTACT

Poetry Promise
5771 Empress Garden Court
Las Vegas, NV 89148
702-205-7100
bruce@poetrypromise.org
poetrypromise.org

MISSION

Poetry Promise, Inc. was incorporated in Las Vegas, NV in 2016. It was inspired and founded by Clark County's first Poet Laureate, Bruce Isaacson. The second Poet Laureate of Clark County, Vogue Robinson, was its Executive Director. We are an advocate for the arts and provide a support system for poetry in the Las Vegas Valley. Poetry Promise's mission is to advance the knowledge and practice of poetry and the literary arts in Clark County, the State of Nevada, and beyond. Poetry Promise provides educational programs, public readings, poetry awards, poetry contests, book publishing, writing workshops, and other related programs and services that advance the cause of literature, poetry, and the arts.



CONTACT:

The Christmas Tree
Recycling Committee
702-895-3760
Tara.Pike@unlv.edu
springspreserve.org/education-conservation/christmas-tree-recycling.html

MISSION

The Christmas Tree Recycling Committee, established in 1995, is a partnership of dozens of Southern Nevada cities and municipalities, community partners and sponsors. Today, the Committee is overseen by UNLV Rebel Recycling and secures more than 30 Christmas tree drop-off sites each year. Since the committee started tracking trees in 2011, more than 260,000 trees have been diverted from the landfill, creating more than 2,265 tons of mulch to date. The 2019-2020 season yielded the second highest volume of recycled trees since tracking began.

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HENDERSON EQUALITY CENTER

CONTACT

Henderson Equality Center
1490 W. Sunset Road, Suite 120
Henderson NV 89014
855-955-5428
Info@HendersonEqualityCenter.org
HendersonEqualityCenter.org

MISSION

Henderson Equality Center, a community supported organization to engage, empower, enrich, and advance the gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender, allies and queer community of Henderson, NV by providing a safe space, pursue resources and providing courses focus on educational, social, support, skill building and job assistance classes for at-risk, low-income LGBTQ youth and adults.

We offer social groups for youth, Seniors, Transgender, Bisexual, HIV, NA, AA, Youth in Recovery, GSA, People of Color, Asian Pacific Islander. We have a food pantry for high school students and clothing room. We also host various events throughout the year.



CONTACT

Toys 4 Kids Las Vegas
2251 North Rampart Blvd. Unit 902
Las Vegas, NV 89128
702-281-0590
Glimp65@cox.net

MISSION

Toys 4 Kids Las Vegas is a non-profit organization where people of all ages, disabilities, and backgrounds can experience the joy of making a hand made toy that will put a smile on a youngster's face. Over this past year, 21,000 toys were made and 21,000 smiles appeared. We support and inspire many community organizations around Nevada plus others nationally and internationally. Toys 4 Kids Las Vegas is run by seniors and veteran volunteers.



CONTACT

Caridad
Merideth Spriggs, M.Div
Chief Kindness Officer
O: 702-350-1880
C: 702-981-7800
Hello@caridadcharity.com
CaridadCharity.org

MISSION

Caridad is a non-profit organization created in 2010 who's mission is to "Humanize the Homeless." Caridad Gardens is a jobs program using garden therapy to reintegrate formerly homeless Veterans back into the workforce. Caridad also operates a Grow Pod hydroponic farm shipping container at the Las Vegas Rescue Mission and US Vets main site. Caridad also has an outdoor farm area in front of the that Green Our Planet works with children of shelter clients to create compost and grow produce.

Connect with us on social media. We're on Twitter: @CaridadCares, Facebook: CaridadLV, and Instagram: CaridadLV

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CONTACT

Trauma Intervention Program
of Southern Nevada, Inc.
500 N. Casino Center Boulevard
Las Vegas, NV 89101
702-229-0426
info@tipoflasvegas.org
tipoflasvegas.org

MISSION

The Trauma Intervention Program (TIP) of Southern Nevada, Inc.'s mission is to ensure that those who are traumatized in emergency situations receive immediate emotional and practical assistance. To accomplish this goal, TIP partners with emergency response agencies in Clark County (police and fire departments, hospitals, coroner's office, etc). These agencies request TIP's specially-trained volunteers to respond to emergency scenes where the volunteers are able to assist victims, families and witnesses with emotional and practical support during the investigative process. In 2019 volunteers responded to more than 1,600 scenes of tragedy where they assisted almost 8,000 individuals in crisis.



CONTACT

The Just One Project
711 N. Rancho Drive, Suite 100
702-462-2253
info@thejustoneproject.org
thejustoneproject.org

MISSION

The Just One Project is a thriving grassroots organization connecting the community through volunteerism.

As Nevada's largest mobile food pantry and eager to aid in the collective COVID-19 relief efforts, their Pop Up & Give program provided fresh groceries to over 14,000 households and nearly 50,000 individuals in the months of March and April alone.

Their opportunity youth program focuses on providing pathways for disengaged youth to help break the cycles of systemic barriers. Through psychoeducation, individual therapy, and support from licensed clinicians as well as education and career specialists, participants will work cooperatively to ensure a successful future.



CONTACT

The Unforgettables Foundation
of Southern Nevada
702-626-0380
unforgettables.org

MISSION

For many families, the anguish and heartbreak of a child's death is accompanied by the additional burden of financial incapacity. The simple truth is that many families are unable to afford a dignified, respectful burial for their beloved child.

The Unforgettables Foundation of Southern Nevada is a 501c (3) non profit organization established in 2015 in an effort to carry on the mission of the first chapter which was established in 1999 in Southern California. The mission of The Unforgettables Foundation of Southern Nevada is to assist financially challenged families who are faced with the death of a child to provide a dignified funeral or cremation. The mission further continues to be proactive with programs that work to avoid deaths that are preventable. As a local charity, all monies raised in Southern Nevada are solely used to assist Southern Nevada families.

To learn more or to donate please visit unforgettables.org or contact us at 702-626-0380.

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CONTACT

Las Vegas Natural History Museum
900 Las Vegas Boulevard, North
Las Vegas, NV 89101
702-384-3466
development@lvnhm.org
lvnhm.org

MISSION

The Las Vegas Natural History Museum is a private, nonprofit institution dedicated to inspiring a better understanding and appreciation of the world, the sciences, and ourselves. After humble beginnings 29 years ago, the Museum is now a Smithsonian Affiliate, accredited with the American Alliance of Museums, and a federal and state repository for hundreds of thousands of fossils and artifacts. These important materials are preserved, stored, researched and often exhibited at the Museum. Visitors are invited to view the Research and Collections Department's work in the Richard Ditton Learning Lab – one of the only working paleontology labs in Nevada. The Museum's galleries immerse visitors in some of the world's most intriguing places and times. From the desert to the ocean, from Nevada to Africa, from prehistoric times to the present, the Las Vegas Natural History Museum takes visitors of all ages on a learning adventure around the world.



CONTACT

The Neon Museum
770 Las Vegas Boulevard, North
Las Vegas, NV 89101
702-387-6366
customerservice@neonmuseum.org
neonmuseum.org

MISSION

The Neon Museum was established as a nonprofit organization in 1996 to collect and exhibit neon signs, the art form synonymous with Las Vegas. Dedicated individuals from the private sector, as well as corporate and government entities, worked collaboratively to promote the preservation of these national treasures as significant pieces of artistic and historical importance. Each of the more than 250 signs in The Neon Museum's collection offers a unique story about the personalities who created it, what inspired it, where and when it was made, and the role it played in Las Vegas' distinctive history. In addition, The Neon Museum collection chronicles changes and trends in sign design and technology through pieces ranging from the 1930s to the present day.



CONTACT

After-School All-Stars Las Vegas
8485 W. Sunset Road, Suite 106
Las Vegas, Nevada 89113
702-259-1850
info@asaslv.org
asaslv.org

MISSION

The mission of ASAS is to provide free, comprehensive after-school programs that keep children safe and help them achieve in school and in life. This is accomplished by providing at-risk youth the opportunity to participate in programs that include sports, educational, cultural, and community enrichment components. The programs provide essential support to students who are often underserved and offer creative, engaging learning opportunities to Greater Las Vegas youth of all backgrounds. The goals and vision for ASAS participants are to be safe and healthy, graduate high school and go to college, find careers they love, and learn the importance of giving back to their communities. Programs are offered in 19 Title-I schools in the Clark County School District and 6,000 total students receive the program each year. Programming is offered at no charge to students, families, or schools. The nonprofit relies on funding from donors, foundations, and government grants, as well as the support of community partners and volunteers.

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CONTACT

Assistance League of Las Vegas
6446 W. Charleston Blvd.
Las Vegas, NV 89146
702-870-2002
assistanceleaguelv@gmail.com
allv.org

MISSION

Assistance League of Las Vegas has been serving Southern Nevada for over 40 years by providing goods and services to children in need. As an all-volunteer organization, every donation benefits our programs. Operation School Bell®, our signature program, annually provides over 8,000 Clark County School District students with new clothes, shoes, and school supplies, creating an enhanced self-esteem for learning. Our newest program awarded over \$200,000 in scholarships to local students to attend Nevada universities and trade schools. Some of these scholarships are designated for students excelling in high school programs for dropout intervention. We are committed to serving and enriching the lives of children in need. You can help with a tax-deductible donation or by donating and shopping at our recently expanded volunteer staffed Thrift Shop. We are the best Thrift Shop in town!

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CRESCO-RESCO

I'm no great cook. So why am I addicted to this shop's kitchen gadgets?

BY **Andrew Kiraly**

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It's tricky to explain why I've come to love shopping at Cresco-Resco Restaurant Supply.

It's not that I'm a terrible cook. The irony is more layered than that. It's that I'm a species arguably worse than a terrible cook — I'm a suitably competent kitchen chef, but one whose threshold for a sense of culinary achievement is so low that I consider something like canned lentil soup poured over Fritos and sprinkled with *uh this Parmesan should do the trick* an inventive kitchen feat, the triumphal pleasures of which border on the metaphysical. (Don't get me started on my utterly divine graham cracker-peanut-butter-and-banana dessert funwiches.) At home, I'm a routinized function eater who thinks the art of cooking is outsmarting gastronomic boredom with what I tell myself is mad-lad cupboard deejay improv. So, okay, I'm just mostly DIYing Lunchables. I'm fine with it.

But where I really get most of my kitchen jollies is from the tools and preparation phase. No matter what I'm making, I insist on pre-organizing my gear on the counter with architectural precision. I wish I could say it's a ritualistic stay against entropy or something like that, but I'm a vapid consumer who happens to love specialized kitchen gadgets, and it's gear and gadgets, not aspiration, that drive whatever impulse I have resembling culinary ambition. I don't think, *I want a salad* and then get the salad bowl. I look at my 12-inch

woven-wood salad bowl from Cresco-Resco and think, *Dayuum, you'd look good with a salad up in you*. Any dish that emerges from my kitchen is mediocre, but it is always *precisely* mediocre.

That's why I love browsing and shopping at Cresco-Resco, a longtime restaurant supply shop on Charleston next to the old Huntridge Theatre. It's a funhouse of specialization, a toy store of tantalizing professional seriousness that thrills me with the dream of perfectly executed food. Wandering the ancient linoleum aisles, you see elegant solutions to every cooking dilemma — wooden pizza blades as big as galley oars, fry baskets from minuscule to massive, spoons, ladles, strainers, and whisks of every shape and proportion. (Behold the hefty “kettle whip” that looks menacingly gladiatorial — wish-listed!) You know that metal triangle people rang for dinner in the olden times? They sell that. They also sell industrial blenders, snack ovens, plating wedges, steak weights, pasta-drying racks, Bakelite ashtrays, napkin dispensers, coffee urns, plastic bartender practice bottles, and a tool that “easily removes coconut meat!” And, of course, there's an aisle of pro-level cutlery that makes me giddy with that peculiar micro-fantasy that I'll find a perfect all-purpose chef's knife of such grave, redoubtable quality that it transcends being a mere tool and becomes more like a lifetime cooking companion who perhaps even warrants being named, like a pet. You might think you'd be bewildered by this epicurean library of Babel — so relentlessly,

exhaustively iterative — but I find it soothing to know that every possible kitchen contingency is ingeniously accounted for.

There's an added frisson of truancy and trespass for me. I've been shopping at Cresco-Resco for years (oh, that's another thing: because I'm apparently 12, my house is embarrassingly accessorized with official-restaurant touches like amber plastic pizza-parlor tumblers, multifold paper towels, silhouette-figure bathroom signage, a “waitress only” bar mat, all from the store), but I still always feel like an interloping poseur who somehow snuck in unnoticed. Cresco-Resco is open to the public, but the cashiers, brisk and rote, always ask what company you're with. It never fails to make me feel unmasked and exposed, but I certainly hope I sound convincing when I answer, “I'm a private chef.” ♦



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GRANDCANALSHOPPES.COM