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**FRIDAY, SEPT 28**

7:30PM



**Nizar Ibrahim**  
Paleontologist

# SPINOSAURUS: LOST GIANT OF THE CRETACEOUS

"We found an entire lost world; a window on a moment of major evolutionary change." —Nizar Ibrahim

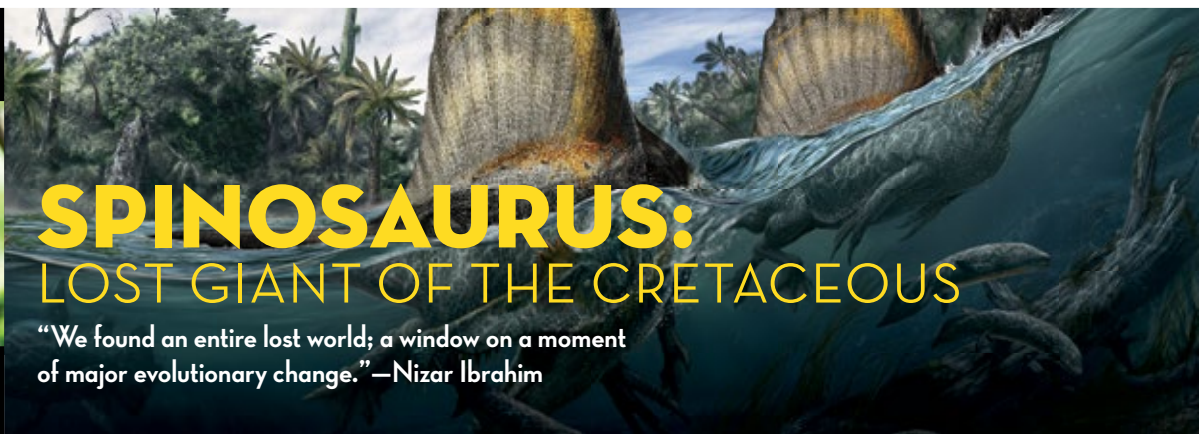


PHOTO CREDIT: MIKEL HEALEY. PHOTO OF KARA COONEY WITH SARCOPHAGUS ©MARISSA STEVENS.

**FRIDAY, FEB 1**

7:30PM



**Kara Cooney**  
Egyptologist

# WHEN WOMEN RULED THE WORLD

Travel back thousands of years to ancient Egypt during a time when women ruled supreme.



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**FRIDAY, JUNE 14**

7:30PM



**Steve Winter**  
Photographer

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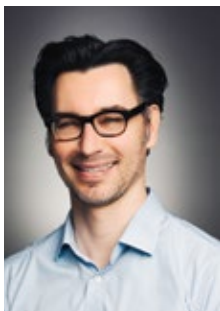
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*Editor's note***BUT IT'S  
OUR HEAT**

**S**ummer in Las Vegas isn't like summer in other places. That's palm-to-face obvious in some ways — take the momentous heat that sweeps in and lays imperious claim to the valley for three months. But the heat has interesting side effects. It gives our summers the flavor of a challenge, a communal trial, maybe even a shared rite, and we're asked to adapt with composure and ingenuity. It would be easy enough to shutter the blinds and shelter in place with the a/c cranked up until September, but where's the Vegas spirit in that? Our summer dining feature on p. 53 affirms — or at least doesn't shrink from — the reality of the Vegas summer by embracing the season's culinary customs that take us outside: grilling, patio dining and drinking, and picnicking. We cover the best barbecue joints, stylish and sun-dappled restaurants, summer cocktails, and great parks for planting a blanket and a basket. In fact, our table overflows: Visit [desertcompanion.vegas](http://desertcompanion.vegas) for plenty of additional summer dining content.

This July also marks a year since recreational marijuana was legalized in Nevada. When that happened, not all of us immediately zipped into line at the neighborhood dispensary. Perhaps, like me, you were initially perplexed by the culture and protocol of this new industry that seemed to spring up overnight — not to mention bewildered by the dizzying array of cannabis products and forms. Our second package on p. 63, "Our Big Pot Feature," is for you. It's equal parts introduction, overview, cheat sheet, and matching service for exploring the wide of world of cannabis for both wellness and enjoyment. Whatever your pleasure, our July issue will help make this a summer of discovery.



Andrew Kiraly  
EDITOR

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# ALL IN

6 PEOPLE, ISSUES, OBJECTS, EVENTS, IDEAS, AND CURIOSITIES YOU SHOULD BE AWARE OF THIS MONTH

ONE | ENVIRONMENT

## After the Fire

Five years on, Mount Charleston residents and firefighters recall the Carpenter One wildfire and ponder what we've learned

BY *Heidi Kyser*

**S**everal wildfires started in the Spring Mountains — and all over the western U.S., for that matter — during the hot and dry summer of 2013. Among them is the fire remembered as Las Vegas' very own: Carpenter One. Sparked by lightning on July 1, the Carpenter One fire would eventually consume 28,000 acres in Red Rock and on Mount Charleston, spilling over ridges familiar to millions of outdoor enthusiasts, scorching popular recreation areas, and licking the

edges of mountain neighborhoods. In the eight weeks it took to contain Carpenter One, no one died or was injured, and only a few human structures were destroyed. But the proximity of the fire to urban areas, along with the destruction of so much natural landscape, put the fear of God into mountain residents and the officials who protect them. Five years on, what do they remember about that day? What has recovered, and what remains to be done? Here are five people's recollections and ideas, in their words.

ONE

**RETIREES BECKY AND DUFFY**

Grismanauskas moved to Mount Charleston in 1989. Becky, a Henderson native who'd dreamed of living in the mountains since she was a kid, chaired the Mount Charleston Town Advisory Board on July 1, 2013, when the fire started. It had been burning in the Spring Mountains for a few days, prompting evacuations in Trout, Kyle, and Lee Canyon communities, when the Grismanauskases had friends over for a July 4 barbecue.

"We were still living in Rainbow Canyon, and our house faced west toward the lodge area and Cathedral Rock and Charleston Peak. We had all, of course, noticed the smoke. You're very aware of smoke, especially living in a mountainous region. And we were all looking at it out on our deck and saying, 'Oh, that smoke's really grown.' And all of a sudden, while we just happened to be looking up at that ridge, it literally exploded. It just blew up! ... Well, my husband and I, at that point, had lived there for 24 years. My husband had been a rural coordinator for Clark County Fire Department, so he has been to and seen many incidents like this. We had never evacuated before, even though it was requested of us, because we felt we could be more help on the mountain. But my husband and I had an interior fire in 2007, and we lost all our animals and our house was gutted. We had to rebuild. ... The people that were at our house for the barbecue were just kind of talking and stuff, and I said, 'Everybody go home. I'm out of here. I'm going to start packing up the kitties.' I mean, I knew that this was serious. This was not some little fire."

The Grismanauskases stayed first at a relative's home and then at a pet-friendly hotel during Mount Charleston's 13-day evacuation period. Their home, like all those in Rainbow Canyon, was untouched by the fire. Two structures in Harris Springs were the only structures that burned.

TWO

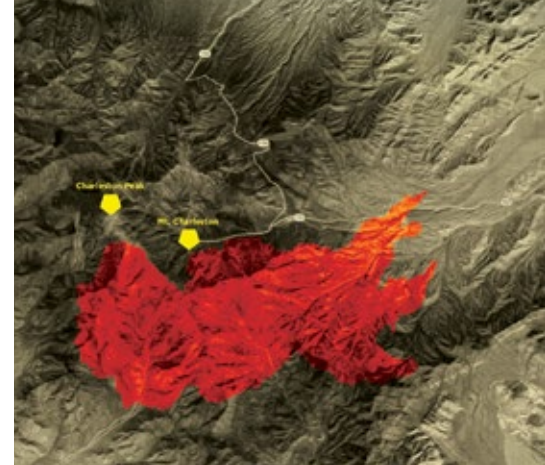
**JORGE GONZALEZ HAS NEVER BEEN**

anything but a firefighter, the job he'd dreamed of doing since childhood. Today, he's the Mount Charleston Fire Protection District chief, but in 2013 he did that job for the Nevada Division of Forestry, which then had jurisdiction over the area. Late June to early July, Gonzalez was keeping an eye on several lightning cells roaming the Spring Mountains and sparking small blazes. Meanwhile, wildfires were raging



**BURN NOTICE**

Above: The Carpenter One fire sets Mount Charleston aglow beyond the Strip on July 10, 2013. Right: a map of the fire's scope. Far right: An image from March 2017 reflects the fire's legacy of devastation in the Spring Mountains.



across the parched Southwest, draining resources, and putting officials on edge.

"The minute we noticed the fire activity crest the ridgeline (above Mount Charleston), we initiated evacuations. As you know, Kyle has four major subdivisions, a hotel, a lodge, and several other enterprises in the canyon. ... After the evacuation, we had more resources come into the canyon, and we started putting in fuel breaks and making sure that there was security around those properties and those subdivisions. ... In the Kyle Canyon area, Rainbow Subdivision, which is our biggest, the fire reached the fuel break and, thankfully, we were able to hold the fire at the fuel break. ... It was all-hands-on-deck from Clark County Fire, Forest Service, Metro, Nevada Highway Patrol, and BLM. We had a mutual aid response from the city of Las Vegas, Henderson, North Las Vegas. It was pretty much a full day of activity, at a minimum 16-hour days. ... It was really traumatic to see some of the residents evacuate their properties and see their concern. To see a resident pretty much walk away from his property, you remember that. I remember that."

THREE

**ONE OF THE "RESOURCES" CALLED**

in to help Gonzalez and the other local agencies was a Bridgeport, California-based

helitack crew. On it was Carrie Thaler, now the district fire manager for the Spring Mountains. She's fought thousands of wildland fires, she estimates, in her 23 years on the job. What stood out about Carpenter One?

"It got so big so fast. It went from a type 5, which is your small, single tree fire, to a type 1, which is basically the biggest fire that we manage, in a matter of three or four days. That's a lot of people, a lot of information, a lot of messages that, if you're not careful, you can drop. ... Carpenter One was also a little bit crazy because there are so many homes and so many people there. We were staying in the Santa Fe hotel, and it was a little bit surreal, because you also had people staying there who had been evacuated. It was emotional. ... For as much fire activity as you saw and the flames that you saw, the fact that the fuel break that we had in actually was successful and saved homes was, I think, the most remarkable thing to me on that fire."

FIRE: AP IMAGES; MAP GRAPHIC: BRENT HOLMES; HIKER: HEIDI KYSER



#### FOUR

**EVEN AFTER CARPENTER ONE WAS** put out, the danger wasn't over. The fire had stripped the hills of the soils and surface vegetation that harness runoff. A month after the fire was contained, in September 2013, floods devastated the Mount Charleston and Red Rock communities that had narrowly escaped being burned, including Kyle Canyon. Dennis Lovell, the current chair of the Mount Charleston Town Advisory Board, remembers it well.

"We had a normal summer thunderstorm, a couple of inches real quick. I was in the house. I stepped outside just to look and see — you know, it was really cloudy. And I could hear it. I looked across my lot through my neighbor's property and could see a 5-foot wall of water coming down the mountain, with debris, trees, rocks. It was going through my neighbor's property. I ran down there. It had dammed up, the water was knee-deep, and I was breaking dams down just trying to get it to go through. It was a lot of mud, and a lot of water. It took out the road, took it down three feet, four feet. You couldn't get out on Rainbow Canyon Boulevard. Then, an hour or two later, another storm came through, and same thing: just a big wall of water. So we

had a double dose that day. I'm up high, but there were some people who really had a lot of damage. (The Grismanauskases) lost both vehicles. It flooded the whole bottom of their house. There were about a dozen other homes that were damaged. Trees were floating down the street, ponderosa pines. There's a YouTube video of a truck floating down the road. That's Duffy Grismanauskas's truck."

Becky Grismanauskas estimates the flooding, which was *not* covered by insurance, cost them \$400,000. A year later, after rebuilding, it happened again — a second flood, worse than the first. Although the Grismanauskas's house wasn't as badly damaged, many more were. Despite being deeply touched by the help of friends and neighbors, they left the mountain in 2014.

#### FIVE

**DONN CHRISTIANSEN DIDN'T SEE** the Carpenter One burn area until he started his job as Spring Mountains National Recreation Area manager in October 2015. Even then, two years after the fire, Christiansen could see that he had his work cut out for him. The popular South Loop hiking trail was still closed (it's since reopened); threatened

butterfly habitat was destroyed; deer, elk, and other wildlife had moved out in search of new grazing areas; watersheds were severely damaged; and miles of dried-up vegetation, fodder for future fires, remained around campgrounds, houses, and roads — the target of continuous fuel-reduction efforts.

"It takes a long time for these areas to recover, especially given our drought conditions that we've been experiencing. It's only been five years; you estimate probably a 25- to 40-year recovery timeframe. ... We've been doing a lot of seed collection and grow-outs for different plant species that we can then restore back into some of those areas to try and stabilize the ground more, to prevent additional scouring that happens. Sometimes it just takes time for the rocks to break down into soil or to be replenished naturally. And some places will never be the same. ... It'll take a long time for the ponderosas that all burned up to come back — probably not in our lifetime, because those are 60-, 70-year-old trees or, in the case of the bristlecones, hundreds of years old. Our goal is to try and help it as much as we can, and sometimes that's leaving it alone and letting it do what it has to do. We intervene where we can, but we can't always put it back the way it was." ♦



TWO | CULTURE

# Light Bite

Thoughts on Damien Hirst's finned spectacle at the Palms, and casino art in an Instagram world

BY *Karla Laguna*

**A**s luck would have it, I attended the opening night at the renovated Palms, when they dramatically unveiled Damien Hirst's floating shark piece, "The Unknown (Explored, Explained, Exploded)" in the Unknown Bar. "Oh, hey, that's a Damien," I remarked, more concerned with the Dom Perignon. It was an absurdist inevitability — it made no sense, so it made absolute sense. It was flashy, but after the initial eyecatch, it was just a shark floating in a tank of formaldehyde. I was far more impressed with the ice sculpture full of caviar.

On my second visit, I paid more formal attention to the details of the bar and the piece, as well as the adjacent Hirst dot paintings — the artist designed the whole bar, right down to the cocktail stirrers — and considered it as a whole. The shark piece doesn't hold water once you spend

time looking at it. You're too far away to appreciate its details, especially with other distractions like pretty cocktail waitresses with side-boob or a rapper at a nearby game. But it's not just a trickling off of impact; it has more to do with its inscrutability. You look for answers, a context. But there is nothing around you but dots and slots.

But clarity isn't the point, I think. While art in casinos is not new, what the Palms is doing, under new owners Frank and Lorenzo Fertitta, is clearly catering to selfie culture. The more striking and dynamic photo opportunities a venue has, the more attractive the space is to consumers. And a trisected floating shark certainly makes for a social-media moment that shines with the glamour of high art. It's sure to have followers asking, "Where are you?!" A fellow guest at the party pointed out an Instagram influencer with 5.2 million followers posing

for pictures nearby. An influencer's proven social media impact gets them flown out to openings like these, and, sure enough, days later I found her posts of that night fetching tens of thousands of likes.

One can compare Palms' use of the Fertittas' extensive art collection to the art at The Cosmopolitan, Wynn, and even the Bellagio. Those resorts impart a certain sense of reverence to their major works — they are labeled as in a museum, separate from where gaming and drinking occurs. At the Palms, the distinction between decoration and art isn't so clear, though I wouldn't chalk it up to lack of reverence. They're just falling in line with the trend to move fine art from the sterile chambers of museums to unexpected places.

But the collection is not only serving the casino. The casino serves the collection, too. By activating buzz around these works and their artists, the casino is increasing their appeal to a wider public. Works like Hirst's balloon in value with every photo op — the shark tank could be fitted with a progressive jackpot meter displaying its increasing worth.

When I was looking for a bathroom on the night of the opening, an employee recommended I try the middle stall for a surprise. In there was an installation by artist Scott Hove, who creates rooms decorated to look like elaborate cakes and pastries, complete with mirrors. Selfie heaven, even in the bathroom. One more concept for this city to explore, explain, and explode. ♦





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# Dog Gone

It was unlike Kona not to snap back to the side of her owner, Ricky Brannon, a former animal trainer, as soon as he called. But during their June 1 Mount Charleston hike, Kona darted after a squirrel and, within seconds, slipped over the edge of a steep dropoff covered with scree. Anyone who's loved a pet can imagine Brannon's panic as he scoured the hillside for two hours — and his anguish at having to give up before finding her.

3  
Happy  
ENDING

"Kona is my rock ... my everything," he says. His loyal sidekick has helped him through many life changes.

And she'll be there through more. On June 6, a couple leaving Lee Canyon spotted a weary black dog walking along the road. They took her to an RVer staying at the McWilliams campground, then left. Within an hour, his dad was filming Brannon and Kona's tearful reunion.

This wasn't just good luck. Brannon and a host of Samaritans helped make it happen. He wrote a moving Facebook post that was shared some 14,000 times. Overwhelmed, he started a group, Bring Kona Home, which garnered 1,600 followers. Relatives came to Las Vegas to hike miles of trails near where she fell. This is why the couple who found Kona recognized her and knew who to call.

But a mystery remains: Who were they? During the flurry of activity and emotion, Brannon misplaced their names, and, as of press time, they hadn't come forward. **Heidi Kyser**



FOUR | CRIME AND PUNISHMENT

## Notorious

Ex-con Frank Citro wants to get out of Nevada's Black Book. If history is any indication, the streetwise singer faces an uphill battle

BY **John M. Glionna**

**A** few years ago, Frank Citro Jr. wanted to take his family to see *Jersey Boys* on the Strip. Now 73, the Jersey City native knew the original band that inspired the show, and had become close with singer Travis Cloer, who played Frankie Valli in the Vegas gig.

Citro sent his wife and two grown children on without him; he knew he couldn't go. He's banned for life from setting foot inside any of Nevada's 220 statewide gaming rooms. Citro belongs to a notorious club that harkens back to the historic annals of Las Vegas public life. It's Nevada's Black Book, officially known as the "Excluded Person's List," an index of undesirables, felons, and parolees blackballed by state casino regulators. For 27 years, Citro hasn't been able to enter a casino. That means no shows, no fancy dinners, or nights out gambling with friends. The avid doo-wop singer can't see his favorite

retro groups or pursue any well-paying Strip gigs. His predicament has forced him into a decades-long struggle for employment.

"We got terrorists around the world today who are chopping people's heads off, and they can go to any casino they want," he says. "But I'm so notorious that people are going to see me and start to panic? It's ridiculous."

The Black Book was created in 1960 to reassure tourists that Vegas wasn't indeed overrun by the mob. It featured characters such as William "Icepick Willie" Alderman, Murray "the Camel" Humphries, and Chicago crime boss Sam "The Cigar" Giancana, not to mention a cast of minor players. Sandra Kay Vaccaro, the only woman ever to make the list, was included in 1986 for her role in one of Nevada's largest slot-cheating cases involving millions in phony jackpots.

Citro appeared before the state Gaming Control Board in 1991, four years after his

KONA: COURTESY RICKY BRANNON

release from a two-year stint in federal prison. He had been convicted of helping run a loan-sharking operation in Southern California, where prosecutors say Citro and others charged clients as much as 1,000 percent interest. Citro claimed his felonies had nothing to do with any Las Vegas casino, and weren't even committed in the state of Nevada. Nonetheless, they voted to place him in the Black Book. His official blacklist entry includes a sly swipe at his not-so-subtle Jersey style: "Citro appeared at his Black Book hearing wearing a tuxedo, telling commissioners, 'I've never been invited to join anything in my life, I just wanted to show the proper respect.'"

Now he wants to join another exclusive club: the handful of entrants who got their names removed from the Black Book. If successful, he would be first to do so in more than 50 years. Mike Lawton, spokesman for the state Gaming Control Board, says only three people have been successfully removed from the book. As to Citro's chances: "The Nevada Gaming Control Board has no comment."

To Citro, his argument is a no-brainer. Since 1991, he hasn't been arrested, hasn't gone to jail, hasn't even received a traffic ticket. He's become a model citizen who's paid for his checkered past. After he addresses a host of health problems — including a shoulder issue that has required two surgeries — he plans to make his formal appeal for removal later this year. Citro has consulted with lawyers, though he plans to represent himself. The lawyers say Nevada officials may have violated his rights to due process and equal protection by enforcing his indefinite inclusion on the list.

Nevada's casino blacklist has a chorus of critics, including lawyers who have represented clients similar to Citro. "It's downright laughable the way they keep track of the list like it's some infamous hall of fame for losers and ne'er-do-wells," says Las Vegas attorney Richard Wright. "For every name in that book, there are scores or even hundreds who deserve the indignity as well."

In the 1980s, Wright unsuccessfully challenged the Black Book on behalf of Carl Wesley Thomas, a reputed organized-crime figure accused of teaching the Kansas City mob how to skim casino profits. Wright claimed Thomas had been unfairly singled out, and presented the records of 150 felons then approved to work in the state gaming industry. "There were killers, rapists, drug kingpins, and child molesters," Wright says.



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“The only crime I couldn’t find was treason.” Years later, he still believes he lost the case because of Nevada’s need to protect gambling as its crown jewel of tax revenues. “It’s like suing Detroit,” Wright says. “You have slim chance of winning.”

In his 1995 book *The Black Book and the Mob: The Untold Story of the Control of Nevada’s Casinos*, historian Ronald Farrell wrote that the list was “an abomination of the law.” He added: “The evidence used is hearsay from snitches and informants. It’s a kangaroo court.”

Alan Balboni, a retired political science professor at the College of Southern Nevada who wrote the 1996 book *Beyond the Mafia: Italian Americans and the Development of Las Vegas*, believes the blacklist has lost its clout. In the last decade, the book has added only seven names — the last being Bujar Kaloshi, added in 2016 for marking cards. “It’s sort of fading away,” Balboni says. “And that might favor Frank Citro.”

Jennifer Roberts, associate director at UNLV’s International Center for Gaming Regulation, says the state will probably prevail. But, she adds, “If Mr. Citro can prove he no longer has the associations he once had and has moved away from his previous lifestyle, he might have a chance. But he would have a very strong burden of proof.”

One of Citro’s first jobs after prison was running a janitorial company. Since then, he’s held a succession of lackluster jobs — including strip-club manager, plumber, and carpenter. But nothing stuck, especially once bosses found out about the Excluded Persons List, which many view as a more serious blemish than any racketeering conviction. Citro eventually decided to capitalize on his notoriety, that shoulder-shrugging streetwise persona that’s part of his New Jersey genes. In 2010, he briefly starred in an Internet reality-show titled *Tough Guy* in which he played a version of himself — a fedora-wearing sinner seeking redemption. He says playing up a Hollywood vision of a tough guy does not mean any association with the real thing. In a way, you might say the *Black Book* made him do it.

“It’s all I’ve got left,” he says. “They made it so I can’t find work in this town. It’s like I have leprosy.” ♦



### Sense of Place

A series in which writers find meaning in specific sites around town

5

## Into the Mystic

*Mystic Falls, that is, Sam’s Town’s gloriously schmaltzy ecosystem of past and future*

BY **Dan Hernandez**

There’s a certain natural splendor that, having grown up in Colorado, I’ve missed since moving to Las Vegas. The sound of water raging down a cliff. Bubbling creeks. A wolf’s howl, an eagle’s scream. Lasers, and herky-jerky animatronic figures that twist and tilt under layers of dust.

Okay, I grew up in suburban Denver, so

my flashback is equal parts mountain getaway and Chuck E. Cheese laser-tag night. Fortunately, all those places are conjured at Mystic Falls Park, the alpine valley inside Sam’s Town on East Flamingo.

Mystic is the appropriate way to describe what’s ultimately a hotel lobby. In the park, you’re sprayed in the face by humidity. It reeks of chlorine, but there are beautiful live trees that provide a canopy over ferns and fountain streams in a surreal new climate. The 10-story atrium is roofed with windows to allow natural light. But what’s really transcendent is the show. It’s Western-themed — mining equipment is set throughout the park — and the 1880s meet the 1990s when a fog machine pumps thick vapor at the waterfall. Music comes on, and lasers slash through the mist.

This brings me back. When I was a kid, seeing lasers teleported me to the future. On the craggy precipice, the lights draw the story of the Old West — railroads and



pickaxes and you know the rest. The show includes a robotic mountain lion, wolf, owl, bear, and eagle, all of which blink and nod. I'm gonna say it: It's a hoot.

I like to watch from the Ram's Head Bar, which serves \$3 beers. It's the rare cheap bar that intentionally resembles a cave. Lanterns hang about, and this being a product of old days, where they could install mirrors, they installed mirrors. In its heyday the bar rotated, and you can still see the track.

In a city obsessed with everything slick and new, I find Sam's Town refreshingly goofy. Sometimes you want that. It provides a Nevada history lesson and is, itself, a relic of a bygone era, one in which Vegas embraced family-friendly schmaltz.

For me, though, it's all about the mountain-laser combo. Remembering when, from a place known for its majestic peaks, a simple light beam could transport me to another time. ♦

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**BLADE RUNNERS**

Brian Bulmer remembers riotous partying and raucous games from the Gamblers era. “The crowds were just as excited about hockey as you saw this year with the Golden Knights.”



SIX | HISTORY

# Puck Wild

Recalling the slap shot days and party-hearty nights of the Las Vegas Gamblers, this city’s first hockey team

BY **Matt Jacob**

**P**icture this: It’s a crisp Thursday night in late November. The San Jose Sharks have just arrived for a Friday night game against the Vegas Golden Knights. Being gracious hosts, the Knights players invite their opponent out for a night on the Strip, and the Sharks, well, bite. Their thinking:

*Come on, it’s a hockey team from Vegas! We can stay out well past dawn, show up for the game with our eyes half-shut, and still whip them.*

Some 24 hours later, the Knights skate circles around the hungover Sharks on their way to a blowout victory. Afterward, players from both teams resume the party, even inviting fans to join in. Again, the debauchery lasts into the wee hours — even though the teams will play again Saturday night.

It’s an absurd scenario ... in 2018. But 50 years ago? It was as real as a slap shot to the groin.

Meet the Las Vegas Gamblers, our city’s first professional (okay,

semi-professional) hockey team, one made up mostly of twenty-something Canadian transplants who loved to do two things: play hockey and have a good time.

“I remember the first time I saw the movie *Slap Shot*,” says Mike Monahan, whose father, Charles, was the Gamblers’ first coach. “I was like, ‘Holy shit, this is exactly what things were like!’ It’s almost a documentary of the Gamblers. It was just that insane.”

\* \* \* \* \*

**HOCKEY SAVANTS THAT** all of us now are, we’re aware that the Golden Knights’ just-completed inaugural season — magical as it was — wasn’t Las Vegas’ first brush with professional hockey. We know that the Las Vegas Wranglers called the Orleans Arena home from 2003-15, and that the Las Vegas Thunder rocked the Thomas & Mack Center from 1993-99. However, few realize that 11 pro hockey



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franchises — including a roller hockey team — preceded the Knights.

Fewer still know that the Las Vegas Gamblers were the team that broke the ice, back in 1968. Details concerning how the team formed are scarce, but according to HockeyDB.com — a database website dedicated to the history of professional hockey — the Gamblers played in the California-Nevada Hockey League from 1968-71. They played their home games on Friday and Saturday nights at the city's only ice-skating venue, the International Ice Palace in Commercial Center, against California teams from such locales as Culver City, West Covina, and Fresno.

The Gamblers' top goaltender was Dick Engelstad, whose older brother, Ralph, was the Las Vegas developer and businessman who would build the Imperial Palace. And while Ralph Engelstad eventually became an integral figure in Gamblers lore, it was another man with ties to a famous Strip property who was first tapped to lead Las Vegas' first pro hockey team.

Charles Monahan relocated to Las Vegas from Miami in the early 1960s to work as a sales director for the Las Vegas Convention Center. But before opening Caesars Palace in August 1966, Jay Sarno recruited Monahan to sell the new resort's 25,000 square feet of convention space. To say Monahan was good at his job is an understatement: According to LVstrophy.com, he sold \$42 million in convention dates before Caesars opened its doors.

Exactly how Monahan's sales acumen made him an ideal hockey coach is anyone's guess. Asked to recall how his father, who died in 2005, wound up coaching the Gamblers, Mike Monahan says the family lived "super close to the Ice Palace, he liked ice hockey ... they needed a coach, and my old man must've coached something at some point back in the day."

Mike Monahan says his father's primary task was to whip the players into shape. "I used to go to practices and watch him bark at the players: 'Breathe later, skate now!' For the most part, he let the players do their thing, because they were professional. So he just trained them."

Although HockeyDB.com doesn't list the Gamblers' records during their three seasons, Mike Monahan says the team was very successful. "They played some seriously good hockey."

That assessment is shared by Brian Bulmer, who joined the Gamblers in their third season, a year after his brother, Gary, played for the team. "The Gamblers led their



league and didn't lose a lot of games to those California teams," Bulmer says. "And visiting teams always lost that Friday night game."

Ah, yes, the now-infamous "Vegas Flu" — turns out Golden Knights opponents weren't the first to be stricken with it. "When opposing teams came to Vegas, the Gamblers players would take them out on the town and do Vegas stuff. These were all young guys, mostly Canadians, who didn't know anything about Las Vegas."

As raucous as the Thursday night shenanigans were, they were tame compared to the post-game afterparties that were held at the bar overlooking the rink, where players from both teams would booze it up with fans. "They drank and partied like crazy!" Monahan says.

Occasionally, the revelry spilled over to the Monahan home, where the coach and his wife hosted parties for players and fans. And even when the Monahans didn't extend an invite, players sometimes showed up anyway. "A couple of times, some of the players came over drunk at 11:30 at night. They'd knock on the door, and call out to my mom (in a drunken slur), 'Hey, Julie, make us food!' And my mom would get up and make them eggs."

"Mike's mom had a keg of Coors constantly flowing," Bulmer says. "Oh, yeah, it was there quite often."

Alas, the good times didn't last for Charles Monahan; according to Mike Monahan, his father quit after the second season when several of his players began telling him how to coach. So before the third season started, Grimmon "Buddy" MacDonald, one of the team's older players, took over as player-coach.

By this point, Ralph Engelstad had become heavily involved in the team and attempted to take control of it. (Engelstad had hired several players to work at the Flamingo-Capri hotel, which he owned and eventually absorbed into the Imperial Palace.) Bulmer, who would spend 20 years as a slot manager at the Imperial Palace, says MacDonald resented Engelstad's increased involvement and pushed him away from the squad. So the budding casino impresario started his own team and filled his roster with Gamblers' players, who were free to switch teams because there were no contracts.

The Gamblers effectively dissolved at that point (some players, including Buddy MacDonald, went to play for Reno's team). Engelstad wanted to keep the name Gamblers, but when trademark laws prevented him from doing so, he branded his club the Outlaws.




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Rather than join a league, the Outlaws played as an independent against fellow semi-pro teams from Reno, western Canada, and the Midwest. And like the NHL squad that would come along nearly five decades later, the Outlaws enjoyed a wildly successful inaugural season, going 29-8-4 in 1971-72, per HockeyDB.com. That was followed by a 34-5-4 record in 1972-73.

Along the way, both the Gamblers and Outlaws built loyal fan bases. Bulmer says tickets were \$4 to \$5, and estimates early crowds at the Ice Palace ranged from about 700 to 1,000 for Gamblers games. That attendance more than doubled at the height of the Outlaws' success. "We were a very small town back then, so the Gamblers were very much a niche thing," Monahan says. "But they had some very passionate fans. There would be games that would draw a couple of thousand people."

That includes a crowd of 2,500 that Bulmer says turned out for an exhibition contest against the 1972 U.S. Olympic team after it claimed the silver medal at the Sapporo Games.

"It was weird to see that many people in Las Vegas who were into hockey," says Bulmer, who grew up in Saskatchewan, where he played junior hockey starting at age 5. "But they got to be knowledgeable. They really did. The crowds were just as excited about hockey as you saw this year with the Golden Knights."

\* \* \* \* \*

**FOLLOWING THE 1973-74** season, Bulmer says Engelstad approached the owners of the Ice Palace in hopes of reworking the team's rink deal. "Ralph was a businessman, and it cost him a lot of money to run that team," Bulmer says. "He actually lost money." When the Ice Palace refused to budge, Bulmer says, Engelstad decided to build his own ice arena and start his own hockey league.

He got as far as digging a hole on land he owned near Rainbow Boulevard, but the arena never came to pass. And while Bulmer says Engelstad did launch his new hockey league, it didn't stick. At about the same time, Engelstad began focusing much of his time, effort, and finances on

constructing the Imperial Palace, and as a result, the Outlaws never played another game. (Likewise, without a hockey tenant, the Ice Palace soon closed.)

In the decades since, Bulmer and Mike Monahan have maintained a close friendship. And while Bulmer says he keeps in casual contact with some of his surviving Gamblers and Outlaws teammates, they haven't had any kind of formal reunion. But Monahan says he knows of a great way to fix that.

"When I found out we were getting the Golden Knights, the first thing I thought was, 'Man, they should have a Gamblers Night,'" he says. "Whatever players are still with us, bring them out and acknowledge that they were the first guys to bring hockey to Las Vegas 50 years ago."

"I wouldn't mind that," Bulmer says. "But I do understand the difference between the hockey that we played and the NHL. So to put us on the same level is sacrilegious. That said, we were Las Vegas' first (pro hockey team). And it was pretty damn good hockey."

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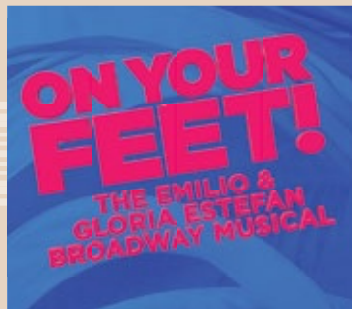
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Grillmeister Christie Vanover wants to fire up your passion for grilling

BY *Greg Thilmont*

**F**or Henderson's Christie Vanover, outdoor cooking isn't just a way of life, it's a calling. She owns more than 20 grills and smokers — but it's not just a collector's obsession. She's an award-winning barbecue competition pitmaster and the founder of [GirlsCanGrill.com](http://GirlsCanGrill.com), a recipe-rich blog dedicated to sharing the fun, excitement, and satisfaction of grilling.

**There are many ways to cook. What's the appeal of grilling?**

For me, the appeal is being outdoors. I just love any excuse to be outside. When you're in your kitchen, you're surrounded by four white walls and maybe a TV, but outside, you get the elements. You get a little heat, a little wind. You get the challenge of cooking. It makes it more adventurous than putting something in the oven and forgetting about it.

The flavors are far better, to me, than cooking something on a stovetop or in an oven, especially if you're using charcoal or hardwoods. You're going to get that kiss of smoke, especially meat. It'll really absorb that intensity and provide a clean, fun flavor.

**How did GirlsCanGrill.com begin?**

I've been developing recipes and blogging for eight years now. My previous blog was about my travels around the world as a military wife, and then I realized that more and more of my cooking was done outside, and I was grilling everything. So I thought, *I'm going to transition this to something that's just a grill-related blog.* When I started talking to people about it, I got that "Oh, you're going to be a grill expert, you're going to teach me how to grill?" — because I'm a girl. There was this kind of skepticism, because that wasn't really the domain where women are. So I said, "Hell yeah, I am. Let's do this!" It all went from there.

**What's the website's mission?**

To try to find out why women are afraid of grilling, because the majority of them, I have found through my research, have some hesitation. And then I'm going to help them overcome those fears. Through my website, I get a lot of guys who want to learn tips as well. Even though society has kind of stereotyped grilling as a man's domain, everybody needs a teacher, no matter what your gender is. So if anybody is willing to learn and I can share my experiences, we're good!

**What are some of the barriers you've found that keep many women from grilling?**

A lot of people don't like to get dirty; they think charcoal is a dirty thing. Or they feel that there's a danger to it, even with a gas grill — turning on the propane and pushing the ignition. There's a fear of it blowing up. They also don't know that it's acceptable for them to go out and fire up a grill, especially if they're in a relationship with a man who — that's kind of been his domain. Coming

into his territory, they feel that hesitation that they might not be welcome there.

**How do you encourage women who might be hesitant to embrace grilling?**

I always teach women to start with something small. "Hey, why don't I grill the vegetables tonight, or make the barbecue sauce?" Ease yourself out there. Women who do that find out that men and women enjoy grilling together. It takes overcoming those stereotypes that we've set for ourselves.

**How does our climate affect grilling?**

It's really awesome. We can grill all year long. I've got a lot of friends in northern climates like Upstate New York and Montana, and in winter, they struggle to grill. They're die-hards and they'll do it, but they have to wrap their grills in blankets to keep the temperature. Here, the hardest time to grill is summer, I would say, even though that's traditional grilling season. It's that July-August timeframe when it's 110 degrees and you still want to go outside and fire up the grill. That's when it takes a little bit of passion.

**What are some techniques for grilling in a sweltering Southern Nevada summer?**

No matter the season, you always want to monitor your heat level, especially if you're working with charcoal. You have to adjust your vents for the amount of oxygen that's going to flow through and burn your coals. In the summer, it doesn't take much oxygen and your grill is going to heat up a lot quicker because it's so hot here. And then, I would say, do your prep work inside. *Mise en place*, even though that's more of a formal term when it comes to cooking, I still do it with grilling. I prep all my vegetables inside. And pace yourself — drink lots of water and find a bit of shade. For those of us in Southern Nevada, we can handle the heat. We love it.

**What are some of your favorite things to grill?**

Rib-eye steaks are my favorite, because you can't really mess up a rib eye unless you overcook it. Because it's such a fatty piece of meat, it's going to be delicious pretty much however you cook it. I also like slow and low — a rib eye is going to be a fast and hot cook. I'm a barbecuer ... I love brisket, love ribs.

(See Christie Vanover's recipe for grilled kalbi ribs on p. 55)



DINING | BRRR! BITES

# COLD CALLS

*Exploring the icy desserts of Chinatown and beyond*

BY **Mitchell Wilburn**

Ice was the ancient version of having Drake sing at your birthday party. You had to be a true baller to even consider it an option. Could you imagine being a 7th-century landowner in Tang-dynasty China, and you go to some mega-rich cousin of the emperor's Feast of the Hungry Ghost festival party, and in the middle of a muggy August night he has *bowls of snow* brought in? Snow covered in sugar and fruits that you can eat? It would blow your freaking mind.

PHOTOGRAPHY **Brent Holmes**

## NEW AND NOMWORTHY

### **PALACE STATION TO DEBUT NEW RESTAURANTS**

Instead of letting your oven heat your house more than the temperature already does, consider Palace Station's four new dining options unveiling this summer. The casino will soon host bBd's (Beers, Burgers, Desserts), featuring American classics produced by Chef Ralph Perrazzo; Boathouse Asian Eatery, with a lineup of fresh seafood, Japanese, and East Asian cuisine; Mumfresh Asian Eats, a quick-serve venue from the creators of Boathouse; and a revised Feast Buffet.

[palacestation.sclv.com](http://palacestation.sclv.com)

### **ITALIAN SUMMER AT FERRARO'S**

At Ferraro's, the restaurant's first-ever summer menu continues through September 7. Choose from dinners composed by award-winning Chef Francesco DiCauda on the prix-fixe menu priced at \$49 per person. The regional menu series will rotate every two weeks between meals inspired by regions such as Calabria, Sicilia, Toscana, Veneto, and Campania. **4480 Paradise Road, [ferraroslasvegas.com](http://ferraroslasvegas.com)**

### **YOGA, NOW WITH MORE BEER!**

On July 22, Hofbräuhaus, the German/Bavarian beer hall and restaurant, will shift its Sunday afternoon energy into a more relaxing yoga experience (but still with beer). Beer Yoga, at 2p, allows patrons to skip their bland, Sunday afternoon yoga routine for one that includes enhancing beverages. Classes are \$20 and come with a bottle of German beer that adheres to the "Purity Law of 1516," which basically means it's chemical-free. (Also, turns out they do this every month!) After the one-hour class, Hofbräuhaus offers vegan, vegetarian, and gluten-free dining, and of course, more beer. **4510 Paradise Road, [hofbrauhauslasvegas.com](http://hofbrauhauslasvegas.com)**

Jessica Keasling



3

*Baobing* is the modern descendant of that rare icy treat, now a specialty of Taiwan. In fact, Taiwanese desserts are some of the most popular in Asia. There are little Taiwanese shaved ice places up and down Spring Mountain Road. The ritziest, **Meat Fresh** (3930 Spring Mountain Road, 702-478-9188), has piles of fluffy snow, with toppings like herbal jelly, sweet almond cream, black sesame paste-filled mochi balls, custard cups, and more. The array of toppings is unique to Taiwanese desserts.

The second cousin to *baobing* is *kakigori*, which has roots in

Taiwan but became mechanized in Japan. A block of ice spinning over a planer blade usually makes crunchy shards, but an Americanized version replaces the ice with frozen milk and agar-agar gelatin, creating feather-light ribbons of flavored cream. **Milkywave (1)** (5020 Spring Mountain #3, 702-333-2803) produces these special cups. The cottony ribbons get the froyo treatment with chopped fruit and cookie bits, but a simple taro snow with lychee will cool your sweaty self.

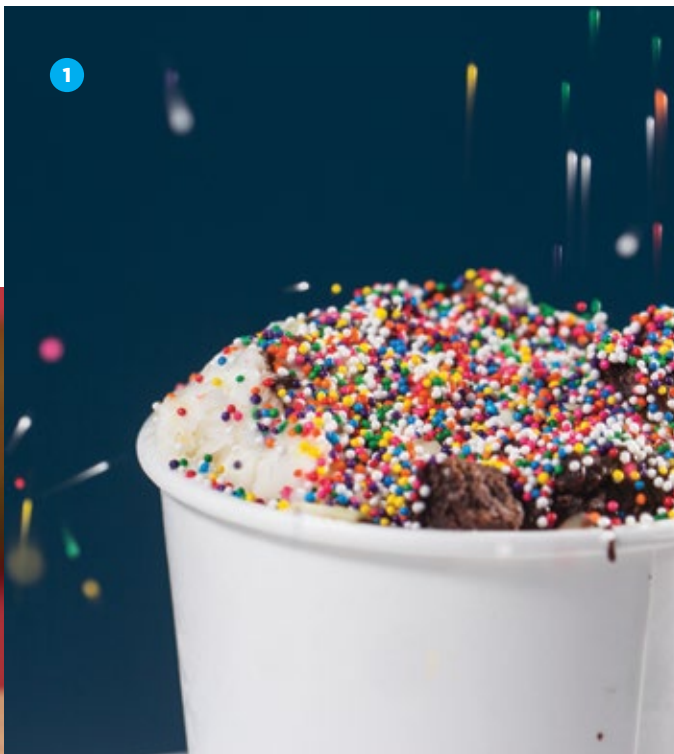
The texture of Hawaiian shaved ice is different than that of a snow cone. Hawaiian ice comes either in long, thin shards or shaved into the lightest snow. **Oso Ono ice bus** ([osoonolv.com](http://osoonolv.com)) is likely your most authentic, with topping choices like salted dried plum powder (*li hing mui*), but a spot like **Bahama Buck's (2)** (7345 Arroyo Crossing Parkway #105, [bahamabucks.com](http://bahamabucks.com)) comes a close second.

Thailand has a street-stall dessert that's getting a lot of buzz. Originally called stir-fried ice cream, we know it as rolled ice cream. A half dozen places have started making it, but **Flavours (3)** (4480 Spring Mountain Road, [flavours.com](http://flavours.com)) is about the best. Pouring the cream onto a -35C steel "anti-griddle," they chop and scrape, sometimes incorporating fruit, creating little scrolls of ice cream. They pop these cigar-size rolls into a cup, then top with fruit, candy, and other bits. The cup is so light it feels empty, but it's very satisfying.

No list of Asian ices is complete without the seemingly strange but addictive ice creams that are the rage among our Filipino population. **Magnolia Ice Cream** inside Seafood City (3890 Maryland Parkway, 702-862-8001) is the place to sample ice creams such as avocado, corn, cheese, cashew jackfruit, and ube, the beautiful purple stuff so popular in Filipino dessert.



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ALL OUT



DINING | FIRST LOOK

# Proving Grounds

With the opening of Gäbi Coffee & Bakery, the cafés and tearooms of Chinatown continue to percolate

BY **Greg Thilmont**

## If you're driving along Spring Mountain

Road, on the western edge of Chinatown, it's hard to miss a certain large, ancient-looking wooden door on the front of an industrial building. With its lacquered brown tone and iron detailing, it looks like the entrance to a faraway temple. This remarkable portal is the entrance to Gäbi Coffee & Bakery.

There's a bit of hyperbole going around that Gäbi is a hidden spot — some kind of caffeinated speakeasy. In reality, at some 12 feet in height, the door is an undeniable head-turner. No secret there. But it does indeed open into one of the most engaging new coffee shops in the valley. Gäbi is notable for its unfinished concrete walls, dangling Edison bulbs, Etsy-worthy woven chandeliers, stacks of books, indoor trees, and lofty skylights. Its airy, well-lit design unites a contemporary West Coast industrial aesthetic with historical flourishes from Korea in the early 1900s — including framed replica photos of period aristocrats. The nostalgia factor is enhanced by floral-patterned armchairs and couches for a comfortable “grandma’s house” feel.

Gäbi features two interior architectural

novelties. First, in the center of the large room, a glass-and-metal greenhouse contains the food production area. It's not quite a demonstration kitchen, but it does lend a sense of culinary quirkiness to the room. Then there's the popular, multi-tiered stadium seating, with four levels for kicking back with friends. It also features a slide, so kids gravitate to it. This is not a subdued coffee house, nor a turn-and-burn chain operation. Remember when cafés were about the nebulous art of hanging out? Gäbi invites you to hang out, drink up, and take it all in.

For the main draw — coffee service — espresso drinks are highlighted, from the austere ristretto to more lavish, sugared cups like the “Caramella,” with sweetened condensed milk. The signature drink is a dry cappuccino with its foam decorated with coffee ground and sugar crystals, making for a lovely craquelure texture. Numerous hot teas with infusions like peaches, mangoes, marigold petals, and cloves are brewed. Cold tea concoctions feature essences including yuzu, berries, and jujubes (dried red dates). The savory food menu centers on substantial



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croissant sandwiches like turkey and smoked Gouda. For more green, bricoche toast is topped with a schmear of ricotta cheese and avocado, then finished with a meadow of alfalfa sprouts. One of the more visually unique items is a soft charcoal bun, which is black-toned with the powdered burnt ingredient (which doesn't add any discernible flavor — it's more for show).

In the sweets department, Gäbi brings on the color, too, including the prismatic "Rainbow Roulade," iced lychee-rose cakes, and the intricate "DanMee" chiffon cake with orange blossom-mascarpone mousse and berry-wine gelée. Burnished "cruffins" conceal espresso crème at their whorled pastry bases, making for a gooey finish.

Gäbi follows a handful of other Chinatown coffee spots that are bringing the area some buzz for more than great food. For a pop culture-oriented vibe, stop by Kung Fu Tea (kungfutea.com) for a mind-boggling array of cold drinks topped with chewy boba bubbles (or not, if you're like me). For serious tea traditions, visit Niu-Gu (702-570-6363) for brewed rare leaves served on a fascinating log table from China that's carved to depict a mountain scene and reclining Buddha figure. And at minimalist Flavours (flavours.com), sip on an icy cup of butterfly pea flower tea — it changes color from blue to purple like a mood ring.

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### Gäbi Coffee & Bakery

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Q&A | MUSIC

# 'I Do Everything'

That DIY spirit is at the core of punk rock — and a new local record label dedicated to preserving it on vinyl

BY **Jacob Lasky**

**A**fter thinking about starting a record label for more than 10 years, Bobby Franks — a bartender at Downtown Cocktail Room who played in local punk bands in the '90s — finally did it last year. Through Running in Place Records, his DIY label, he plans to preserve the eclectic sound of Vegas' punk community — on vinyl.

"I want to help people I like, and music I like, get exposure, or just have something like a documentation," Franks says. "In 20 years, this is like, 'Check this out. This came out of Las Vegas in 2018.'"

His label has released four seven-inch records from four local artists across the punk-rock spectrum, including aggressive, in-your-face hardcore acts Oversight and recently disbanded Moonblood, atmospheric post-punk outfit Dark Black, and lo-fi songwriter Brett Vee. Now Franks is looking into the possibility of releasing either a split record or a compilation cassette of local artists.

*Desert Companion* spoke to Franks about what it's like curating a DIY record label against the backdrop of an entertainment industry often overshadowed by the glitz of the Strip — and in a world where digital music is king.

### How did Running in Place Records come to fruition?

I've been somewhat involved in the local music scene since around '94 or '95. I used to do fanzines. The last fanzine I published was called *Running in Place*. I just liked the name. It felt like a cool name to continue doing into a record label, and it was always something that was in the back of my mind.

I had a few false starts. Like 2007-2008, I tried starting a record label, but I just didn't have the money for it. Fast-forward 11 years, I was in a position where I could do it.

### What's the mission of Running in Place?

I might go see a band that's out on tour, but at the same time my eyes are opened up to all of this new stuff that I didn't go there for. That's kind of the concept of the label. It's all stuff that I've heard from a friend, or live. The live experiences are what really get me. So I always base what I do off of bands' live performances. The focus is obviously, like, punk and hardcore, and weird underground stuff that isn't really going to be highlighted — especially in a place like Vegas, where everything's big billboards, established DJs, and rock bands. My focus is house parties, garage shows, underground venues.

### What's appealing about putting music out on vinyl, especially in the form of seven-inch records?

Vinyl is forever. You're actually looking at something as a piece of art as opposed to something on your phone that you're just clicking on. The format of a seven-inch record is really cool. You have maybe eight minutes maximum, four minutes per side. It's a great representation of that band. I just like the concept of hearing something without hearing too much of it, and then wanting to hear more. Plus, pricing. Vinyl's kind of expensive. Doing a full LP for a band is, like, dedication. An album would take a year in planning, and three times as much as money.



### What's the process like for releasing a record?

I do everything. The business model is kind of the way a lot of my favorite punk rock labels started. I'm paying for the pressing. I'm also trying to get distribution, which is still kind of a hassle. The band supplies the recording, and I pay for the final mastering of that recording. They have the creative control. I'm just into it so much that I want to put it out in the physical form. I don't own the recording. There are no contracts. I'm pretty much curating a record label as opposed to running it like a business. The concept was never, "I'm going to become rich." My girlfriend convinced me to make shirts that I could sell to make more money to make more records, but I didn't even want to do that at first.

### Genre aside, what do you look for in bands for your label?

Ethos. There's a fine line between style of music and message. No misogyny, no sexism, racism, homophobia. I'm not going to put out something amazing just for the sake of it being amazing. Like, there has to be good politics behind those individuals. The mentality of the crowd — that all has

something to do with if I'm going to put out this band's records. That's important to me.

### How do you think the dynamics of *Running in Place* would be if you were in another city with a longer-established DIY punk and vinyl culture, such as Los Angeles, Seattle, or Portland?

It'd probably be a little smoother, but I still would have the same operating strategy. I'd probably sell more copies.

I love Las Vegas. I moved here in 1994, when I was 14, and I've never wanted to live anywhere else. I grew up in Los Angeles, so it wasn't like I came from the middle of nowhere. I like the smallness of Vegas. There are pockets of Las Vegas that seem very real and honest, but we're in a city that's surrounded by all this fake, so I like living here because of that. It's a big façade, a lot of it's bullshit. But underneath it all there's a lot of really cool stuff that I wish more people were into, and that's the whole point of doing what I'm doing.

*For more, go to [runninginplacerecords.com](http://runninginplacerecords.com), or visit *11th Street Records*, *Record City*, or *Vegas Vinyl*.*



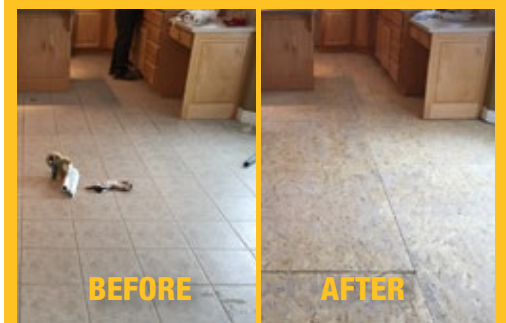
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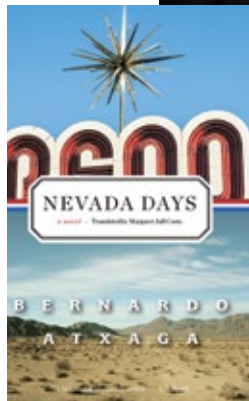
# Always in Between

A dislocated Basque writer living temporarily in Reno during a troubling time — this is the stuff of *Nevada Days*, a compelling new mix of fiction and memoir

BY **David L. Ulin**

**B**ernardo Atxaga's *Nevada Days* is something of a hybrid, not unlike the state where it is set. Built out of the author's experience, during the 2007-2008 academic year, as a writer-in-residence at UNR, the book falls into the amorphous territory of autofiction or life writing, which walks a line between fiction and nonfiction, novel and personal narrative. Atxaga is well-suited to navigate such an amorphous landscape; a Spanish Basque writer, he understands what it means both to belong and to be displaced. Even the name he uses reflects this state of bifurcation — he was born Joseba Irazu Garmendia in 1951.

The role of the writer-in-residence is, of course, bifurcated by its nature; one is always a fish out of water in that role. This is, to some extent, the point of the enterprise, to jar the writer out of his or her comfort zone, and in so doing, encourage seeing the world anew. It is also an unlikely subject for a novel; I don't know that I've seen it done before. It's not that I don't understand the impulse; as someone who's participated in residencies (in fact, I read *Nevada Days* while doing so), I've wondered more than once about keeping a kind of daybook, although I have never followed through. Something about the lack of distance, perhaps, the pressure of writing about an experience as you are living through it, keeps getting in the way. Yes, I agree that writers are "recording entities," to steal a phrase from William Burroughs, but I prefer my recording through a double lens. Past and present, observation and reflection, this represents another bifurcation, the kind on which autobiographical narrative depends.



Atxaga, however, has solved this problem deftly through the intersection of, yes, fiction — blurring the line between the actual and the imagined. As he writes in the early pages, after encountering a rattlesnake on the seat of a car, “Earle failed to pin the snake down properly and as he was picking it up, he managed to drop it onto the roof of the van. Then it slithered toward me, fixing me with its two black eyes ... No, that only happened in my head. Earle playfully scolded the snake, saying that the driver’s seat was only for drivers, not mouse-hunters. The snake hung limply from the forked pole, like a belt.”

This back-and-forth between outer and inner, Atxaga as character and also author, deepens as we read *Nevada Days*. In a certain sense, it is very much a daybook, recording the subtle demarcations by which one makes (or tries to make) an alien landscape home. Atxaga, who has come to Reno with his wife

and two daughters, recounts the process of acclimatization, getting settled in a small house, enrolling his kids at school. The girls are fascinated by a raccoon that lives in the backyard, “two points, two small yellow holes, two shining eyes. They did not move or blink, inhuman in their fixity.” Atxaga is more intrigued by the desert — which is always just below, or above, the surface. “As Daniel Sada might have said,” he notes, “reality was the desert, and representation of reality the stage set.”

It's a telling observation, reminiscent of Brecht on Los Angeles: “Scratch the surface a little and the desert shows through.” But it resonates here in another way because it also describes Atxaga's emotional terrain. For him, the desert — or more generally his own state of displacement — creates a kind of psychic blank slate, on which memories and reveries emerge from the stuff of daily life. A photograph of the Basque boxer Paulino Uzcudun, who fought Max Baer

in Reno in 1931, leads Atxaga to visit his former training camp in Steamboat Springs, then gives way to three long reveries about the fighter's life. The effect is of someone peeling back the surface, not of reality so much as of narrative, showing us a place less to describe it than to evoke the way it feels.

"Most human beings," Atxaga insists, "leave behind them only a name and a few facts." His book, then, is an attempt to uncover and connect these dots. That he can't do it, or can do it only on the most subjective level, is the point entirely; we are always looking to make patterns out of the fragments, especially in a place we do not know. "I, too, wanted to enter the real world," he admits. "... Once around, twice, three times, four times, and so on until the carousel stopped. But where was the centre? Where was the axis around which everything was turning?"

Such questions grow more complex after a 19-year-old named Brianna Denison is abducted (she is later found to have been raped and murdered) from a house in Atxaga's neighborhood. Suddenly, everything is not just odd but sinister. "It snowed in Reno," he reports, "on the three days after the kidnapping, on January 20, 21, and 22. Every flake that fell was like a word, always the same word, the one we heard everywhere: Rape! Rape! Rape! ... One morning, I noticed raccoon tracks on the snow covering the garden porch, and for a few hours, until Angela calmed me down, I was gripped by the absurd belief that our raccoon had turned rabid. I wondered, too, how we would defend ourselves if the criminal attacked at night."

On the one hand, this is a projection. As the father of two young girls, Atxaga can't help but see the tragedy on personal terms. On the other, it creates a different sort of subtext, a ripple in the fabric of routine. As a visitor, a stranger in a strange land, Atxaga looks for custom where he can find it; his narrative is marked by vacation trips (San Francisco, Las Vegas) and holidays with new friends and acquaintances, a kind of proxy family. "We were very glad to be back in our house on College Drive after that three-thousand-mile journey," he reflects after returning from a long drive through the Southwest. "If, as Eric Havelock writes in his book *The Muse Learns to Write*, all life's pleasures are

related to rhythm, we were really pleased to return to the rhythm of our Reno routine."

Here it is, one more bifurcation, distance and proximity again. It's not just that, by this point, Atxaga has been in Reno long enough to become a quasi-resident; it's also the dislocation of his fear. "The dark side of Reno life continued," he acknowledges, when a friend reminds him that "it's nearly two months since (the culprit) killed Brianna. He's probably already preparing to commit another murder." Belonging and unbelonging, comfort and unease. Even without the threat of the killer, he is somewhere in between.

Again, this has to do with his status as a visiting writer, in Reno as a resident but only temporarily. For him, there is no closure, really; he is always only passing through. Atxaga makes this explicit by ending *Nevada Days* with a collection of news clips, in which he reveals, among other details, the arrest and conviction of a 27-year-old Reno resident for the killing of Brianna Denison. The touch is just right, almost an afterthought — not least because the crime ceases to matter to the author or his family at the very instant they leave town. As long as they remain in Reno, it is their center. They are part of the community. Their participation, though, is temporary. They know they will soon be gone.

As a result, the experience of being in Reno is less lived, exactly, than it is remembered: Even as it happens, it has the texture of a dream. Atxaga understands this, which is one reason he toggles back and forth between daily life and memory, as a strategy for framing the middle ground, where he finds himself. "We leave behind whatever happens to us," he writes, "but our way of living changes." This sounds like a code for living to me. It's fitting that such a reflection comes in a sequence devoted to his mother's funeral, which takes place in Spain after his return from Reno; her deterioration plays a subtle but important role in the narrative.

What Atxaga is getting at, once more, is memory, which is the fabric out of which we stitch ourselves. What happens when it evaporates? What happens when we move on from where and who we were? Such questions are not exceptional. On the contrary, they are fundamental to every one of us. In the act of disruption, however, of moving somewhere for a fixed duration, Atxaga has opened an unlikely universal lens. Disruption, after all, is the nature of existence. There is never anything that we can hold. Experiences become memories and then evaporate. Everything is here to disappear. "We always return to our everyday life," Atxaga reminds us; "we have nowhere else to go." ♦

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### NEVADA DAYS BY BERNARDO ATXAGA

Translated from the Spanish by Margaret Jull Costa

Graywolf, \$16

SPORTS | HOLDING COURT

# ACES 101

*A quick primer on the other new pro sports team in town — the WNBA's Las Vegas Aces*

## THE BACKSTORY

The Aces began as the Utah Starzz in the WNBA's inaugural season, 1997, then moved to San Antonio as the Stars in 2003. Last year, MGM Resorts International bought the team and gave it a new name and a new logo that's a little Stardust, a little Riviera. Recent years haven't been winning ones, but a new roster, new coach, and new arena might offer a whole new deal.

## THE COACH

Bill Laimbeer was known as one of the NBA's toughest players. He's praised the grit and athleticism of the women's game, and coached the WNBA's Detroit Shock to three championships, and the New York Liberty to three conference titles. Laimbeer is known for building a strong defense and turning around struggling teams.

## THE TEAM

This is a young team, with most players under 25. Guard Kelsey Plum holds the record for most points scored in the NCAA, and was the WNBA's first draft pick in 2017. Point guard Moriah Jefferson and guard Kayla McBride are a strong back-court combination.

## THE DRAFT PICK

The Aces won the first draft pick in the WNBA lottery and chose A'ja Wilson from the University of South Carolina. She led her team to an NCAA Championship and four SEC tournament championships, and swept the National Player of the Year Awards in 2018. Now, the Aces rookie regularly notches double-doubles.

## THE COMMUNITY

Part of the WNBA's mission is to build community relationships, and the Aces have appeared at schools and events. Guard Sequoia Holmes — a Las Vegas native and UNLV alumna — has held local basketball clinics.

**Lissa Townsend Rodgers**  
See: [aces.wnba.com](http://aces.wnba.com)



Jeff Kutash, right, confers with the team on *A Mob Story*.

ENTERTAINMENT | DOWNTOWN

# Crime and Dance

With his mob-history dance revue, legendary Las Vegas producer Jeff Kutash looks for one more big hit

BY **Mike Weatherford**

**J**eff Kutash has consorted with mobsters. And he personally ordered one body to be buried in the desert: that of a 14-foot alligator.

Kutash was the producer of *Splash*, the often kitschy but never dull production show synonymous with the last great era of the Riviera. The “aquacade” known for MTV-style dancing and motorcycle daredevils always needed new, show-stopping specialty acts. And Kutash thought he had found one in Tahar the Beastmaster, a Brazilian alligator wrestler.

Things went well, Kutash says, until he got a late-night call from Tahar: “Alligator dead.” It was then that Kutash told him, “Take the alligator out to the desert until you can’t see the lights twinkling.”

Years later, Kutash learned the actual cause of death. Someone left the door open on the alligator’s transport cage. It escaped to Riviera Boulevard, where it got run over by a pickup. But that didn’t kill it. Just left a tire track. So Tahar attempted to cover the track with green spray paint. That’s what killed it.

Clearly, that was a different era of Vegas. Which makes it all the more remarkable that the 73-year-old Kutash is back, doing a Las Vegas show for the first time since the quaintly titled topless revue *Headlights & Tailpipes* closed ahead of the Stardust in 2006.

*A Mob Story* is a simple title for the concoction Kutash unveils at The Plaza on July 11. It’s the real history of organized crime in Vegas — told through dance! But also by two narrators: impressionist Marcel Forestieri and genuine former mafioso Michael Franzese, who’s spent two decades on the lecture circuit.

During a recent rehearsal of his 17 dancers, Kutash oversees a sequence detailing the mob’s planned assassination of Fidel Castro, with dancers representing John F. Kennedy, Marilyn Monroe, and alleged Kennedy mistress Judith Campbell. (“A tryst made in Vegas,” the narrator tells us.)

“I’ve combined a lot of elements in one show that normally would not be in Las Vegas,” he says. “I’m gonna have to say, this one is quite edgy.”

He moved back from California two years ago to mold *A Mob Story* into his “totalitarian” vision. “I just said there’s no sense in coming back here until I have the perfect storm,” he says. “I’ve seen too much shit, and I’ve been guilty of making my own mistakes to now know you don’t get a second or third shot anymore. ... You better do something that is bulletproof right out of the box.”

Kutash thinks his stars aligned in the authenticity Franzese brings to the project, a

renovated Plaza showroom, a promotional tie-in with the Mob Museum, and appearances by Oscar Goodman, the former mayor and mob lawyer who defended Kutash when he was acquitted in a 1997 federal case alleging he tried to bribe then-District Judge Gerard Bongiovanni.

Kutash has known Franzese since 1986, when he staged dance sequences for the 1986 action flick *Knights of the City*. Franzese produced the movie when he was still part of the Colombo crime family. He later renounced “the life” and spent 43 months in federal prison.

“I told Jeff we’ve got a worldwide audience, that I’ve experienced this for the past 20 years,” Franzese says. Audiences in Singapore, he says, asked informed questions about Paul Castellano and John Gotti. And Kutash says he is “a big fan of the mob because I always worked for them, from back in the day, when I was a kid in Cleveland, all the way up through ‘Lefty’ (Frank Rosenthal) and Tony (Spilotro)” at the Stardust, early in his career.

Debuting at the Riviera in 1985, *Splash* cemented Kutash’s place in Vegas legend. The show was named for its 18-foot-tall diving tank. But it soon became known as the Vegas revue plugged into the MTV generation. Faded spectacles such as *Lido de Paris* still paraded showgirls on staircases, remnants of an earlier era. *Splash* was the ‘80s at their electric boogaloo-est, with programmed lighting, lasers, and poppin’, lockin’ tributes to Michael Jackson.

The show ran 21 years, and only after the first eight did *Cirque du Soleil* begin to erode what the taste police couldn’t. (Acclaimed British theater designer John Napier said he “nearly vomited” when he saw *Splash*’s tribute to Broadway, complete with Phantom showgirls in mini-capes rimmed with runner lights).

Few of his contemporaries still have shows on the Strip. Norbert Aleman’s onetime Riviera mainstay *Crazy Girls* soldiers on at Planet Hollywood. Luxor’s durable *Fantasy* is produced by Anita Mann, whose first creation, *AM — Blast from the Past*, played at the Riviera before *Crazy Girls* arrived in 1987.

But Kutash brushes off any symbolic, last-of-the-breed resonance with his new effort. “Audience tastes change,” he says, “but the formula never really does.” ♦

**A MOB STORY** Tickets \$60-\$150; for details, visit [plazahotelcasino.com](http://plazahotelcasino.com)

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## Lecture

### 1955: THE DESERT BOOMTOWN

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There are some milestone years in Las Vegas history: 1932, the year gambling was approved and divorce laws loosened, both transformative in their way; or 1989, when The Mirage opened and kicked off the megaresort boom. To that, add ... 1955? Yes, says David Schwartz, boss of UNLV's Center for Gaming Research. Why? Gotta show up to find out. **July 5, 7p, free, lvccld.org**

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## Music

### TUMBLEDOWN HOUSE

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Says here this Bay Area band plays "modern speakeasy," and "saloon jazz," and even some "parlor pop." Whatever, music critics! We just like this band's bouncy, old-timey jazz vibe, threaded with Tyler Ryan Miller's smooth guitar, all backing the sultry growl of singer Gillian Howe. **July 14, 2p, free, lvccld.org**

### POLYHEDRAL, BY JERRY MISKO

SAHARA WEST LIBRARY

Misko let polyhedral dice and data charts — think Dungeons & Dragons — dictate his mark-making in these works. "Much like life, it's a bunch of randomness bouncing around inside a system of arbitrary rules." **July 13-September 15 (opening reception, July 19, 5:30p), Sahara West Library, free, lvccld.org**

## Theater

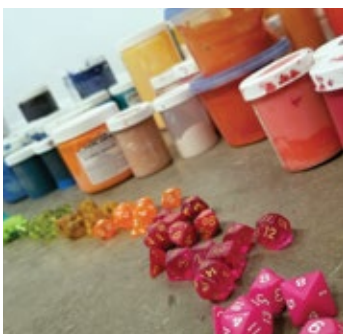
### PETER PAN SPRING MOUNTAIN RANCH

Flying children, a charismatic villain, a gee-whiz sense of adventure — there's a reason *Peter Pan* is a classic yarn. Add musical numbers and outdoor temps a few degrees more livable than down here in the valley, and you have Super Summer Theatre. **August 1-18, \$15, supersummertheatre.org**

## Music

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**SOCIETY**


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# RENTAL HEALTH

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*Thousands of Las Vegans are “housing insecure,” and while some agencies are helping, the need outstrips the resources*

BY **Michael Lyle**

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**O**ff and on over four years, Corina Dival shared a small twin bed with her two toddlers. If that wasn't cramped enough, she was also pregnant for some of that time, making the tiny space assigned to her at the homeless shelter feel even smaller.

“There were bunk beds, but that wouldn't work because the kids were so small,” she says.

Dival didn't have much of a choice. Her husband, who stayed at another shelter, had lost his job, and, unable to pay rent, the family had been evicted from their apartment. As a last-ditch effort to obtain an affordable place to live, the family applied for public housing. “I knew the process was going to be slow, but didn't know just how slow it would be,” she says.

Dival and her family waited four years to get placed inside public housing, the only thing they could afford. This isn't out of the ordinary. Experts say Southern Nevada lacks affordable housing, and as a result, families like the Divals can experience long wait times as they vie for the few available units.

“We are in one of the most challenged metropolitan areas in the country,” says Mark Zellmer, former director of communications for the nonprofit organization Nevada HAND, short for Housing and Neighborhood Development. (*Desert Companion* learned at press time that Zellmer is no longer with the organization). “The reality is, we are not building enough affordable housing for families who need it.”

By federal guidelines, renters who spend more than 30 percent of their income on housing and utilities are termed “housing insecure,” while those paying 50 percent or more are considered severely rent burdened.

In March, the National Low Income Housing Coalition released its latest report on affordable housing. Las Vegas was named one of the most severe cities, with only 10

affordable and available rental homes for every 100 households of extremely low-income renters. Nevada, which ranks the worst as a state, has 15 per every 100. The report also found that more than 95,000 households in Nevada are considered extremely low income. One missed paycheck, medical emergency, or car problem — let alone the loss of a job — could send a family spiraling.

This isn't an issue that has developed overnight, and it now unfolds against the backdrop of a booming, competitive real-estate market.

Dr. Vivek Sah, director of UNLV's Lied Institute for Real Estate Studies, says there have been significant jumps in both home prices and rental costs. In 2012, the average price for a rental was about \$745 (Sah says the average price takes into consideration anything from studio apartments to three bedrooms, meaning prices for larger units are higher). “We have data up to the last quarter of 2017, and the average price was \$976,” he says — about a 30 percent jump. Sah says Las Vegas has always touted its low cost of living. “We are slowly moving away from that tag,” he adds.

Las Vegas continues to build housing, but most of those complexes rent at market value and are out of reach for many who earn low wages. “Developers are building the housing that is going to get them the biggest return on their investment,” says Kevin Sharps, vice president of resident services at Nevada HAND.

For an hourly worker in Nevada to be able to afford a two-bedroom rental unit, he or she needs to make at least \$18 an hour, according to the National Low Income Housing Coalition. (Nevada's minimum wage is \$8.25.) This forces some families into tough spots, living in areas that lack convenient access to schools, public transportation, and grocery stores. It sometimes puts people at risk of being taken advantage of by landlords. "They know (renters) have no place else to go," Sah says. "There is no place else they can afford."

According to the report, Las Vegas needs another 64,000 affordable homes just to meet the needs of the most rent-burdened.

### 'THE HUGE NEED WE HAVE'

**AMPARO GAMAZO**, THE interim executive director for the Southern Nevada Regional Housing Authority, says there are two options for people who qualify. "We have the Section 8 program, which is a voucher that gives families a choice of where they want to live," she says. "Then we have the public housing program, where we actually own the units. You have to income-qualify." About 90 percent of the authority's clients make less than \$20,000 a year.

More than 11,000 families use Section 8 subsidies, while there are fewer than 3,000 public housing units scattered throughout Southern Nevada.

Gamazo says the Section 8 voucher allows people to move to any part of the city as long as there is a landlord willing to lease to them. This has a positive effect because it blends lower-income renters into middle-class environments and helps reduce stigma associated with housing assistance, she says.

Both options only require renters to pay 30 percent of their income. If a person's income increases, so does the amount they pay. While they can remain in public housing no matter the increase, they can lose their Section 8 subsidy if they begin earning too much. "Some families prefer public housing because it offers more of a security blanket," Gamazo says.

But first, people actually have to make it to the top of the waiting list. "For the Section 8 wait list, we haven't opened it up in 10 years," Gamazo says. "That tells you the huge need we have."

Looking at her three-bedroom unit in Sherman Gardens Annex, a public housing development at Doolittle and H streets, it's hard for Dival, 30, to believe where her family's journey began. "All we had was a blanket and some clothes," she says.




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## *SOCIETY*

“Now we have so much stuff. Almost too much stuff.”

Dival and her family lived paycheck-to-paycheck, so with the loss of income it wasn't long before they lost their home. Not knowing how long the wait for public housing would take, the family did the only thing they knew to do, which was to bounce around among homeless shelters. Since most of her time was spent at women's shelters, she was separated from her husband, who had to stay at a men's shelter. “I would check in to get updates,” she says. “I wouldn't do it every day, though. If I did, it would be too depressing, and I probably would have died.”

The couple, along with the three kids they had at the time — they have since had two more — had a brief respite from being homeless when they qualified for a rental-assistant program that paid for an apartment for nine months. Various nonprofits around town, such as Hope-link of Southern Nevada and the Salvation Army, offer help with emergency rental assistance, but this program, Dival says, arranged through the city of Las Vegas, placed her family in an apartment. But the couple still grappled with unemployment. After the program ran its course, they were unable to keep up the \$900 monthly rent and headed back to the shelters.

After her husband finally found employment, the family moved into a studio-style weekly motel, paying \$150 a week. “It had a sofa bed, a shower with no bathtub, a microwave but no kitchen, and a television with 10 stations,” she says. With no place for their children to play and the fear of upsetting property managers, their stay felt tense. But it was a place to lay their heads.

After a few months at the weekly, Dival finally got the news that was four years in the making: She was finally approved for public housing.

Her neighbor, 27-year-old Laquesha Fitch, arrived around the same time. “I was also waiting four years,” she says. “I was denied my first time because I had gotten into some trouble while I was waiting.” Fitch and her children were living with her mother at the time, and were struggling with food insecurity, which led her to shoplift a few times. “I know it was wrong,” she says. “It was for my kids, though.”

This infraction resulted in a denial, which Fitch appealed. The appeal was granted, and she and her children moved into their two-bedroom place. “People don't realize you can appeal and fight,” she says. “I'm glad I did.”

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**SOCIETY**

**'A LOT OF CHALLENGES  
 IN THE ECONOMY'**

**IN LATE FEBRUARY**, Nevada HAND hosted the grand opening of its 31st property, Cordero Pines Family Apartments, off Lamb Boulevard near Bonanza Road. The facility looks like any other apartment complex in the valley: swimming pool, modern clubhouse, even a small dog park. Yet it is affordable housing. And now home for Shelly Frost and her family.

Frost moved from Southern California to Las Vegas with her son in 2008. "We had nowhere else to go, but my mom was here, so we were able to move in with her," she says. Six months later, they were kicked out and became homeless. "We slept in a cemetery one night before we were able to go to a shelter," she says. "That's where my sister's boyfriend slept. He said it would be safe."

After a few months at The Shade Tree, Frost was able to get assistance and moved into an apartment in Henderson off Boulder Highway. "At that time, I didn't have any income, so I didn't have to pay rent for two years," she says. During that period, she also met her now boyfriend and had two more children. With his income, the family of five spent the next several years bouncing around from apartment complexes, paying between \$700 and \$775. Then the last place raised her rent from \$775 to \$900 per month. "It was a big jump," she says. "To live there for \$900, I didn't want to do it." Frost had previously applied for Section 8, but says she was denied.

One day, Frost saw an apartment complex being built. It was the soon-to-be-opened Cordero Pines Family Apartments.

The nonprofit, which started in 1993, owns and manages more than 4,000 apartment units in Southern Nevada. "Our units are funded through the low-income housing tax-credit program," Zellmer says. "We get money from a competitive application process to build affordable housing. That keeps our mortgage rates low. With our mortgage rates being low, we can discount our rents." Zellmer says applicants have to meet minimum income requirements. "If they move in and get a better job, we don't ask them to move out," he says.

Of the 7,200 residents Nevada HAND is housing, some 2,700 are seniors and 4,500 are families. Their average annual incomes are about \$16,000 and \$23,000, respectively. "Our residents are working," Sharps adds. "These are not people who are lazily wasting time. They are taking care of their obligations, paying taxes, investing in their communities and families. They are doing all

the things they are supposed to do as citizens and parents, but there are a lot of challenges baked into the construct of the economy."

Meeting the income requirements from Nevada HAND, Frost's family moved into a three-bedroom unit. "We were just praying we got this, because we didn't know what else we'd do," she says.

A committee with the Nevada Legislature is currently looking at affordable housing issues within the state to better determine what legislative support needs to be enacted.

There have been past bills some experts say could have an impact on those struggling to find affordable housing. Lauren Peña, the directing attorney at the Civil Law Self-Help Center (part of Legal Aid Center of Southern Nevada), says one bill that went into effect in October allows some tenants to seal their records if there is an eviction. In general, an eviction complicates the search to find affordable housing. Peña says, for one, Nevada's quick eviction process leaves many low-income families with few options. After receiving a notice, families can either pay the rent, move, or respond to the eviction through the court system. Even if they win, going through court puts a mark on them. Prior to this legislation, potential landlords could see if there was an eviction case, even if the tenant won the dispute. "Then a landlord sees that and doesn't want to rent to you," she says. Now, people who win their case can have the whole affair sealed. Peña says even if a person lost a case, they can still petition a judge to seal it.

While that's a step in the right direction, the issue still comes back to the lack of housing. Back at the housing authority, Gamazo doesn't know what future federal resources will look like for the agency, which she says constantly lacks adequate funding. "We have never been 100 percent funded," she says. "Some years are less than others." In the next year, Gamazo says the agency will be funded about 60 percent.

The other issue she says the housing authority is facing is needed repairs to existing facilities. However, the current federal budget decreases funding for capital improvement projects. "With HUD we have an agreement that says we (the housing authority) will maintain the properties, and they will give money for capital improvements," she says. "Under President Trump, the budget for capital improvements has been cut to zero."

Nevada HAND plans to open more facilities. "This population of those in need is growing every day," Zellmer says. "So we continue to break ground on new complexes." ♦

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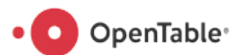
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BOOKS

# GOING DARK

*After the success of her literary memoir about her gypsy background, Oksana Marafioti is trying something different: urban fantasy*

BY **Jarret Keene**

**S**ilent and alone, she sits at a table in Makers & Finders, a coffee bar Downtown, surrounded by chatty hipsters ordering avocado-draped lunch plates. She studies the menu, checks the time on her phone. I'm only a minute or two late, but weaving through the restaurant, I'm reminded of how intimidating she can seem, of her quiet intensity. With Oksana Marafioti, you never know what she'll end up explaining to you. It might be the mechanics of kickboxing (at which she excels). It could be the intricacies inherent in performing Bach (whose music she learned as a trained pianist). Or perhaps she'll discuss introducing the work of James Joyce to undergrads at UNLV (where she teaches writing, and where I also teach). In other words, spending time with Oksana isn't at all like interviewing a regular author. It's more like listening to a secret agent who has done everything, and who you really hope doesn't have a folder marked KILL with your name on it.

At the same time, though, she is certainly feminine, nurturing. She does yoga



and cooks a mean Armenian barbecue. She is raising two sons, one a weightlifter enrolled at the university, the other an elementary-schooler and an autodidact with musical instruments and multiple languages. And she writes urban-fantasy novels — Wild Rose Press published her first, *Donatti's Lunatics*, last month — under the pen name Ana Mara. The latter is the most surprising fact I've learned. After all, five years ago, she made a splash with her acclaimed memoir *American Gypsy*, which chronicles her family's struggle to escape the crumbling U.S.S.R. and then acclimate

to living in, of all places, Hollywood. She almost ended up reading palms like her paranormal-obsessed parents — which perhaps explains her mystical aura. Instead, she earned a film degree and an MFA in creative writing.

She insists the transition from highbrow memoirist with literary powerhouse Farrar, Straus and Giroux to indie-published urban-fantasy writer was painless. Even if she's observed that her latest effort hasn't exactly lit a fire under New York book critics.

"I haven't noticed a difference in treatment, but obviously literary authors are



received as being more accomplished, let's be honest," she says, as her coconut-turmeric latte arrives. "Speculative-fiction writers aren't given the credit they deserve. They work not just full-time, but overtime. They work regardless of careers and responsibilities, and don't make as many excuses."

She speaks from her own experience. When the atmosphere wasn't conducive, she used to find it difficult to write. She used to need her "muse" to be present. But she quickly learned, as she prepared *Donatti's Lunatics* for publication, that commercial writers don't have such luxuries. And so the trajectory of Oksana's career has suddenly grown more interesting as she now unveils a story about a newbie U.S. special agent, Olivia Stone, working for an obscure federal agency called the International Bureau for Paranormal Activity. She is tasked with monitoring a group of badass ghost-hunters led by the enigmatic and darkly handsome James Donatti. As you have likely guessed, Olivia and James can't quite figure out if they hate each other, given their sexual tension. And along the way they fight demons in places as far away as medieval churches in Hungary and as close as the UNLV campus.

Within the first 20 pages, you recognize familiar elements and conceits. It's *X-Files* spliced with *Tomb Raider* with a dash of *Fifty Shades of Grey* for flavor, and you're left with no choice but to hold tight to the figurative railings for a fun neck-lashing.

"My friends and peers have known I've always wanted to dive into genre; it wasn't a surprise to anyone close to me," she says. "I feel like as a writer you can be a chameleon and get away with doing different things. You don't have to be bound to one specific category. It stagnates your creativity, your imagination, if you only consider yourself a literary writer and not, say, a spec-fic writer. Life is about experimentation. We're not meant to be one thing only; we change."

Spoken like a true teacher of Ovid. Indeed, there is abundant evidence of Oksana's transformation into thriller writer Ana Mara in the digital pages of *Donatti's Lunatics*. The novel doesn't read like a literary author stooping to pen a commercial narrative. It reads like a writer having a total blast crafting a piece of entertainment. Did Oksana — Ana Mara, I mean — catch herself striking out pretentious sentences?

"Not too often, but there were moments when I'd get lost in a paragraph of (the main character's) inner reflection that had nothing to do with the story, so I sometimes

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had to pull back on the flowery prose. What I mostly remember during the process was having fun, telling myself to chill and to not worry about sounding smart with every single sentence.”

**PARANORMAL ADOLESCENCE**

**IN HER TEENS**, she read tons of urban fantasy, a subgenre that pits supernatural good against demonic evil; the backdrops are concrete-and-steel cityscapes. She’d often read these books clutching her family’s heirloom crucifix.

“I think the reason I got into it is because my father was a professional ghost-hunter and exorcist for many years,” she says, explaining how her parents often secured money as Roma gypsies who eventually immigrated to the U.S. “I grew up in a house where I’d wake up and my dad would say to me, ‘Get dressed. There’s a demon-possessed house we need to exorcise.’”

Gypsy communities are generally attuned to the supernatural realm, she says, which partially explains why they’re often deemed grifters by biased Westerners. As

an adolescent, her identity was bound up in conversations about the paranormal, the immortal, the undead. Early on, she developed a healthy interest in all things metaphysical, in invisible demons that moved furniture and mauled humans. What made *Donatti’s Lunatics* a pleasurable effort was being able to look back on the harrowing events she and her father endured in spectral locations in Russia and Hollywood, then re-creating many of those moments in the realm of fiction.

“I wanted to show my character, Olivia, as she moves away from skepticism and toward acceptance, because that’s exactly what I experienced,” she says.

Olivia is certainly cut from the Lara Croft mold — fierce, independent, whip-smart, beautiful. But Ana Mara isn’t afraid to put her protagonist in peril and have men, and other women, come to her rescue every now and then.

“That was intentional,” she admits. “The urban-fantasy books I read that featured strong female protagonists always portrayed the lead women as indestructible. I wanted to instead offer a character who,

in the beginning, is faced with something unfathomable. I wanted to show what it really involves. When my father trained me to be a paranormal investigator, I asked questions and suffered fears, especially when the unimaginable arrived at our door. You need to be strong, but sometimes you’re not ready. Sometimes you come up short and fail. That’s what I was after.”

Making a choice between joining a world you know little about or staying woefully static is a recurring theme in her work. There’s a recurring lesson, too: When you think you know everything about reality, your knowledge will be contradicted.

There are less lofty kinds of knowledge in *Donatti’s Lunatics*, too. For example, the fight scenes are spectacularly brutal and will impress the most jaded dude who grew up reading Robert E. Howard’s *Conan the Barbarian* pulp adventures or anything in the Gold Eagle line of men’s action-adventure novels. Ana Mara, it turns out, has a flair for knuckle-dragging violence and gunplay.

“All of my uncles and cousins are heavily involved in martial arts,” she says. “I saw street fights in my own backyard from an

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early age. So the realness of the physical combat was important, and my background in film helps with the staging.” She went over the action scenes with UFC fighters and trainers, many of them women, to confirm that she was rendering violence authentically.

“I’d figured women fighters were softer, but they go even harder and dirtier than the men,” she says. “They’re unapologetic, even vicious, about their power. I wanted to give Olivia that particular strength from the start. Violence is an extension of her character.”

The love angle was trickier. She’s never had much taste for romance novels, so when her publisher asked her to add sex scenes she instead worked at developing the relationship arc between Olivia and James. Ultimately, the publisher put out Ana Mara’s debut novel on its Black Rose imprint since it “wasn’t romantic enough” and “bordered on horror.”

*American Gypsy* is concerned with identity, with racism, with diaspora, with social-justice issues. Those issues are muted, even missing, from *Donatti’s Lunatics*.

“It was liberating to not have to talk about

myself identifying with specific cultures or groups,” she says. “Writing the book gave me freedom to concentrate on human issues and situations, regardless of how many demons the characters are fighting.”

Does she have a group of urban-fantasy authors — online or in Las Vegas — from whom she draws support?

“Readers are more important than other writers,” she stresses. “Readers are focused on story and characters; they look at the emotional aspects. They’ll tell you how a scene feels, which helps you connect with readers. Writer-friends come back and say, ‘There needs to be dramatic tension.’ But a reader will ask you point-blank: ‘Why did she say this to him?’ Human connections are important to a reader.”

One reader and longtime compadre of Oksana’s is Alissa Nutting, a former UNLV professor, now a creative writing prof at Grinnell College in Iowa and the infamous author of edgy literary novels *Tampa* and *Made for Love*. Nutting says she’s eager to see her Las Vegas friend triumph with her new genre-writing alias.

“A very successful nonfiction book like

Marafioti’s can be difficult for the writer’s fiction — that ‘self-as-protagonist’ has really been edified in readers’ minds,” says Nutting by email. “Pseudonyms are such a great way to escape those expectations and have the freedom to do something wildly new.”

It’s also new to see UNLV as a cool, mysterious setting. Oksana is a professor, too, and her campus comes out looking quite good in her novel.

“UNLV was one of the few universities to have a paranormal department, in the ’90s, which is why UNLV appears in the book,” she says. “I wanted to place the book somewhere new, somewhere that had, at one time, a (Consciousness Studies) department.

“Everything I’ve ever written has a paranormal element,” she continues. “A friend asked me: ‘Why do you go dark?’ I thought about it, and I think you can safely judge a person by his worst deeds. How often has a crystal character suddenly been revealed as a criminal? ‘He was a great neighbor,’ they often say. I like to explore the darkness in my characters. You can really know someone by his bad deeds. Supernatural stories reflect that better than any other genre.” ♦



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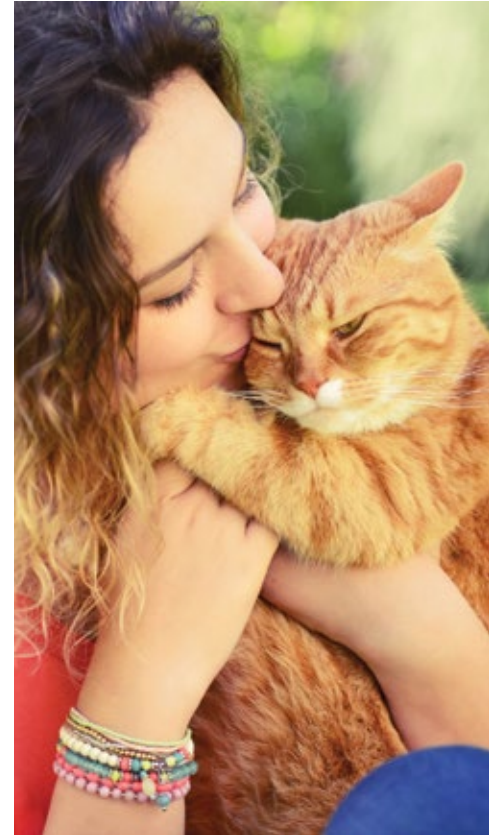
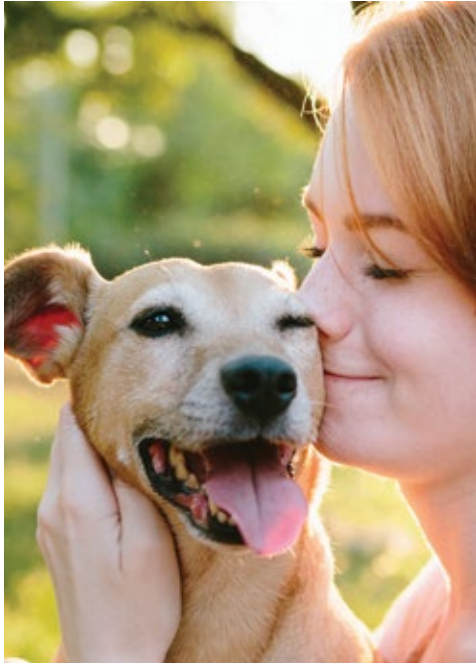
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# the thrill of the grill

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Summer Dining 2018

# the grill

Our favorite grilled and barbecued dishes in the valley

## Tri-tip at Big B's Texas BBQ

The Lone Star State is cattle territory, something celebrated abundantly with the tender tri-tip at Big B's Texas BBQ, smoked with mesquite and oak logs trucked in from southern Texas. On the side, opt for creamed corn, fried okra, and cornbread. There's also smoked pork, chicken, and turkey if you want to branch out from Longhorns. 3019 St. Rose Parkway #130, bigbtexasbbq.com **GT**

## Burnt ends at Rollin' Smoke Barbeque

Nestled in an industrial area under the shadow of DI on Highland, the original Rollin' Smoke feels like an authentic BBQ joint. For your immersive foray, just sidle up to a picnic table with an order of juicy, smoky burnt ends, cheese-laden mac and cheese, and mash rife with all the makings of a loaded baked potato. *Multiple locations, rollinsmokebarbeque.com* **JB**

**Prime rib at Bob Taylor's Ranch House** For decades, Las Vegas has been a prime rib kind of town. At Bob Taylor's Ranch House, hefty slabs of beef are

## Now Sear This!

Hot gear to take your 'cue to the next level

**Kamado Rocket Grill** These glinting, luxury-level devices are perfect for searing ribeyes, smoking rib roasts, baking flatbread, and more. *Galaxy Outdoor, 4425 Dean Martin Drive, galaxyoutdoor.com*

**Weber Rapidfire Chimney Charcoal Starter** Cooking with briquettes? Get rid of petroleum aromas with a metal cylinder that gets your grill fired up without lighter fluid. (*Home Depot, various locations*)

**RM Elixir hot sauces** Crafted by Sean Collins, RM Seafoods' chef de cuisine, elixirs range from "Sweet Heat" with habaneros and d'Anjou pear vinegar, to scorchers with scorpion peppers. *GT (RM Seafood, rmseafood.com)*

**Traeger Flexible Skewer Set** Don't let burnt bamboo make a mess of your kabobs. Trade up with flexible metal skewers by Traeger from BBQ Concepts. (*bbqconcepts.net*)

infused with mesquite smoke over a dramatic indoor open grill. Upgrade your plate into a surf-and-turf classic with a lobster tail on the side. Other entrées include honey barbecue chicken, rack of lamb, and seared steaks. Just don't fill up first on the complimentary garlic cheese bread — it's addictive. 6250 Rio Vista St., bobtaylorsranchhouse.com **GT**

## Pulled pork and pig roasts at Mountain Springs Saloon

Get your motor running up Blue Diamond Highway to the venerable Mountain Springs Saloon for a bit of free-wheeling eating amid pinyon pines. The roadhouse serves up pulled pork sandwiches and burgers with plenty of beers and whiskey shots on the side. Unexpected dishes include chicken gumbo and hobostew (hamburger meat and mixed veggies on noodles). On the last Saturday of each month, they roast a whole hog



party-style. 9350 Williams Ranch Road, 702-875-4266 **GT**

↓  
**Hungry for More?**  
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**Marinated meat combo platter at Goong Korean BBQ**

Going to Goong? Go hungry. Feel free to nibble upon the ample *banchan*, traditional Korean sides ranging from spicy fish cakes to marinated radishes. But don't overindulge, because ribeye, pork outside skirt, and chicken await, each marinated flavorfully without obscuring its inherent flavors. All you have to do is bask in the heat and the scent in this impromptu meat spa. 7729 S. Rainbow Blvd. #5, 702-979-9118 **JB**



**Chicken Asado at El Pollo Mobile**

You can't miss the billows of smoke that waft above El Pollo Mobile food truck. They emanate from a wide, mesquite-fueled grill filled with whole chickens. Paired with rice, refried pinto beans, and tortillas, they're saving graces for potluck parties. If the aroma makes you hungry while passing by on errands, turn around for a few quick street tacos and a can of Orange Crush. 2425 N. Rainbow Blvd., [elpollomobile.com](http://elpollomobile.com) **GT**

**Tri-tip at Big B's Texas BBQ**

The Lone Star State is cattle territory, something celebrated abundantly with the tender tri-tip at Big B's Texas BBQ, smoked with mesquite and oak logs trucked in from southern Texas. On the side, opt for creamed corn, fried okra, and cornbread. There's also smoked pork, chicken, and turkey if you want to branch out from Longhorns. 3019 St. Rose Parkway #130, [bigbtexasbbq.com](http://bigbtexasbbq.com) **GT**

**Kushi at Kyara Japanese Tapas**

Japan's rendition of grilling utilizes *binchotan*, a white charcoal native to the country which imparts a strong smokiness to ingredients typically cooked on skewers — aka *kushi*. Ingredients run the gamut from asparagus and shiitake mushrooms to *tsukune* (ground chicken and pork) and *negima* (chicken thigh). And while both *tare* (teriyaki) and *shio* (salt) preparations are available, the milder *shio* highlights the robata's

**We [yumz] These Sides!**

**Macaroni and Cheese at Daily Kitchen** Creamy and satisfying, the mac and cheese at Daily Kitchen is a perfect balance for saucy, spicy barbecued meats. They start with the classic recipe, but then there's a twist — Parmesan — that adds a nutty tang. 3645 South Town Center Drive, [dkeatery.com](http://dkeatery.com)

**Lexington red slaw at Jessie Rae's BBQ** Jessie Rae's Lexington red slaw is a vivid mix of green cabbage, red cabbage, and carrot shreds in a zippy, North Carolina-style vinegar-red pepper sauce. Each order is sliced and doused to order, making for a crisp vegetable side. 5611 S. Valley View Blvd., [jessieraesbbq.com](http://jessieraesbbq.com)

**Gooley Butter Cake at Call Me Cake** Sugary and velvety-smooth, this dessert has origins in St. Louis and is the star of soul food eatery Call Me Cake. They serve dozens of flavors from German chocolate to lemon drop. Call ahead and request the smooth, aptly named "Strawberry Letter 23." 450 S. Buffalo Drive, [callmecake.net](http://callmecake.net) **GT**

**(PSST! HERE'S A SUPER-SECRET RECIPE FROM A MAJOR GRILL GURU!)**



**GRILLED KALBI**

I was fortunate enough to live in South Korea for a short time. I fell in love with the country, its people, and its food. One of my favorite dishes is kalbi ribs. Since the meat on Korean short ribs is so thin and so marbled, it can be cooked up fast over direct heat. When I first developed this recipe, I tried pureeing apples and pears in the blender, and I didn't like the grainy texture. Now, I use baby food. It may sound unusual, but the texture is smooth and it's all-natural. I recommend the Gerber 1st Foods varieties. They come in 1/4-cup containers, which is the exact amount needed for this recipe. — *Christie Vanover*

**Ingredients**

- 1/4 cup soy sauce
- 1/2 cup dark brown sugar
- 1/4 cup pear baby food
- 1/4 cup apple baby food
- 1/4 cup minced white onion
- 2 cloves garlic minced
- 1/4 cup water
- 2 tbsp rice wine vinegar
- 1/2 tsp sesame oil
- 1/2 tsp salt
- 1/2 tsp black pepper
- 1/2 tsp chili pepper flakes optional
- 1/4 tsp ginger powder
- 2 lbs. Korean or flanken short ribs

**Finishing touches**

- 2 cups white rice
- 2 green onions
- 1 tbsp sesame seeds

In a large zip-top bag, mix together the soy sauce, brown sugar, apples, pears, onion, water, garlic, rice wine vinegar, salt, pepper, chili pepper flakes, ginger powder and sesame oil. Add the short ribs and marinate overnight. Preheat the grill to high. Grill the ribs for 5-7 minutes per side over direct heat. Serve with white rice and a sprinkle of sliced green onions and sesame seeds.

# the patio

Open-air spots with style and scenery on the menu

smokiness more. 6555 S. Jones Blvd. #120, [kyaravegas.com](http://kyaravegas.com) **JB**

**Laotian beef jerky at Sister's Oriental Market** For a surprising patio-party appetizer, add beef jerky from the foodways of Laos to your spread. At Sister's Oriental Market, chefs dry cuts of lean beef that have been marinated in fish sauce (*nam pla*), soy sauce, and black pepper. Then, the umami-laden strips are flash-fried and served with a potent tomato-chili chutney for dipping. 1732 Fremont St. #A, 702-386-9557 **GT**

**Teriyaki steak at Island Flavor** Home to tens of thousands of ex-pat Hawaiians, Las Vegas is often called the "ninth island." Some of the best local Aloha State cuisine is served at Island Flavor, including grilled steak with sweet-salty teriyaki sauce. Beyond beef, chicken dishes are numerous, from *furikake* to *tonkatsu* styles. Ahi tuna arrives as poke, both raw and pan-fried. Whatever main dish you chose, loosen your hula skirt and order an extra scoop of the incred-

ibly rich macaroni salad. 8090 S. Durango Drive #103, [islandflavor808.com](http://islandflavor808.com) **GT**

**Beef brisket sandwich at Jessie Rae's BBQ** Assembled with both fatty and lean smoked meat, the double brisket sandwich at Jessie Rae's BBQ is a double whammy of beefiness served inside a locally baked bun with crisp coleslaw. Add sauces from traditional tangy-sweet tomato and North Carolina vinegar to South Carolina mustard and Alabama mayonnaise styles, plus an incendiary hot pepper potion. Other meats on the menu include pork spare ribs, chicken, and hot links. 5611 S. Valley View Blvd., [jessieraesbbq.com](http://jessieraesbbq.com) **GT**

**Smoked Jerk Chicken Wings at Jammyland** Enter Downtown's new reggae-inspired bar, and dig into a plate of 24-hour smoked jerk chicken wings. With deep hickory nuances and hints of allspice, cumin, and chili pepper, they weigh in at a third of a pound each. Other Jamaican specialties include curried beef patties and smoke-braised oxtails. 1121 S. Main St., [jammy.land](http://jammy.land) **GT**



**Mon Ami Gabi** Nowhere in Vegas channels the electric energy of the European streetside cafe as well as Mon Ami Gabi. It's Paris magically poised across from both Lake Como and Rome, along our very own Rue Montorgueil. Peruse the classic menu while sipping a French 75, and the Strip-scape melts into soft, impressionist focus amid the bustle of the bistro. The perfect perch is the end of the bar where the restaurant meets the patio. Here, afforded all the views, it's easy to drift into vacation mode — even when home is but a few miles away. *Paris Las Vegas*, [monamigabi.com](http://monamigabi.com) **JPR**

**The Kitchen at Atomic** Tucked away behind a wood-slat wall between The Kitchen at Atomic and its beer-centric brother Atomic Liquors, The Kitchen's patio is an oasis off Fremont Street. Chef Justin Kingsley Hall's edgy but approachable menu includes an epic brunch with an irresistible monkey bread, and dinner stalwarts such as Nashville hot chicken hearts. And of course, Atomic's eclectic beer selection never disappoints. **JB** 927 Fremont St., [atomic.vegas](http://atomic.vegas)

**Americana Luxe** but laid-back, Americana features al fresco seating next to the lapping waters of Desert Shores. Watch geese, ducks, and turtles on the lake while you explore eclectic menus and wine pairings, including a seasonal harvest selection and a vegan tasting experience. On weekends, welcome to Mimosa Land. 2620 Regatta Drive #118, [americanallasvegas.com](http://americanallasvegas.com) **GT**

**Le Café du Lac** Lake Las Vegas draws water-lovers for stand-up paddleboarding, kayaking, and water-propelled flyboarding. They fuel up for those activities in the morning with pastries, crêpes, and cappuccinos on this bistro's waterside veranda, then return at lunch to relax over panini, salads, and glasses of white wine — all with a gorgeous view of Lake Mead in the distance. 40 Costa Di Lago #100, [lecafedelac.com](http://lecafedelac.com) **GT**

**Mt. Charleston Lodge** For decades, the Mt. Charleston Lodge has hosted skiers, hikers, and weekend bikers, all eager to swoop the slopes or flee the heat. In recent years, the lodge expanded its wooden dining deck (including a dog-friendly section), and in April, the local Ellis Island family took over, promising renovated bathrooms and an expanded beer tap — perfect updates for those who prefer a cool Alpine view with their post-hike burger and brew. 5375 Kyle Canyon Road, [mtcharlestonlodge.com](http://mtcharlestonlodge.com) **JPR**

**Tenaya Creek Brewery** While vantages of the Spaghetti Bowl and the vacant lot where the iconic Moulin Rouge once stood aren't the most picturesque, some of the valley's most inventive beers are being poured at Tenaya's flagship on Bonanza. And who doesn't enjoy open-air drinking? Particularly intriguing are Offline Series brews, small-batch variants of the brewery's mainline beers only available in the taproom. And if you visit on a

## The Hidden Patios of the Strip

While the most prominent Vegas patios open directly onto the Strip, there are some lesser known ones in unlikely locales. For instance, at **Il Mulino New York** in the Forum Shops, you can dine upon porcini ravioli with black truffle sauce on a patio with north-looking Strip views.

The Palazzo hosts two lesser-known patios. At **Morels French Steakhouse & Bistro**, dive into charcuterie, oysters, and an outrageously good tableside Caesar while overlooking the Strip under red umbrellas. Hidden below is **Lagasse's Stadium**, where blue umbrellas shade you while you can dine upon Lagasse's upscale bar food.

But the ultimate secret-patio mecca is Wynn Las Vegas. Everyone knows about the Lake of Dreams where, if you have good timing, a cowboy hat-adorned frog belts out "Friends in Low Places" for diners at **Lakeside Seafood** and **SW Steakhouse**, along with imbibers at **Parasol Down**. But even more obscure are the private lagoons at **Costa di Mare** and **Mizumi**. Costa's is a semicircle patio with cabana-style seating for 48. Abutting a koi-filled pond bobbing with silver spheres, you can enjoy your langoustines in a docile reprieve away from the Strip bustle. Even more private is the eight-seat outcropping at Mizumi where, flanked by waterfalls, you can dive into savory, 72-hour braised American wagyu short ribs. Because nothing says serenity like short ribs. **JB**



Friday night, Mama Napoli Pizza food truck never disappoints. 831 W. Bonanza Road, [tenayacreek.com](http://tenayacreek.com) **JB**

**Lazy Dog** The boutique California-based chain where everything is made in-house — they even brew their own line of beers — has a pair of Vegas locations with dog-friendly patios that offer mini-menus for the pooches. While your four-legged friend feasts, you'll enjoy wok-fired calamari or decadent "grizzly fries" while downing a surprisingly smooth coconut mojito. *Multiple locations, [lazydogrestaurants.com](http://lazydogrestaurants.com)* **JB**

**Milo's Cellar** Sidewalk dining is hard to find in Southern Nevada, so the loggia at Milo's Cellar & Inn in quaint Boulder City is noteworthy for its shaded bistro tables. Snack on cheese and cured meat plates along with glasses of vino, and

watch sightseers amble by for a relaxed afternoon or evening. 538 Nevada Way, [milosbouldercity.com](http://milosbouldercity.com) **GT**

**Bellagio Lake patios** The Fountains of Bellagio are an iconic sight from the Strip — but they also offer great views from the multiple spots fronting the lake. Take your pick of dining upon Lago's *capasanta* (scallop crudo with blood orange and pistachios), a dry-aged bone-in rib eye paired with a fine Bordeaux from Prime, or even Wolfgang Puck's iconic smoked salmon pizza at the newly relocated Spago, all while basking in as much "Luck Be a Lady" and "Fly Me to the Moon" as you care to. [bellagio.com](http://bellagio.com) **JB**

**Beer Park by Budweiser** Nestled atop Paris Las Vegas, Beer Park has clear views of both the Strip and the Fountains at Bellagio.

Accompany some of the valley's best views with casual-but-quality dining options consisting of beer-influenced ingredients, including Montejo-braised pork and Bass IPA cheese sauce. While the tap list skews towards Anheuser-Busch, nowadays that means more than Budweiser, with Goose Island, Elysian, and Four Peaks in the family. And with a retractable awning system, you need not worry about rain or shine affecting your open-air drinking and dining. *Paris Las Vegas beer-park.com* **JB**

**The Tap** Before and after adventures touring Hoover Dam, recreating on Lake Mead's beaches, or rafting in the Black Canyon of the Colorado River, stop by the patio at the stylish Tap in Boulder City. It features brewpub-inspired dishes for breakfast, lunch, and dinner as well as an impressively curated beer list. The estab-

ishment is attached to the newly renovated Best Western hotel, making it a great HQ for Boulder City stycations. *704 Nevada Way, thetapbc.com GT*

**702 Public School** This gastro-pub's second-story patio is a hub of beer-friendly activity, especially during happy hour and on weekend evenings. It features plenty of oversized games like giant jumbling towers and four-in-a-row for adult-style recess, plus a wide, palm tree-lined view of Downtown Summerlin's xeriscaped main plaza. Small plates like mini Kobe beef corn dogs, crispy Buffalo cauliflower, and edemame hummus are the way to go. *Downtown Summerlin, psontap.com GT*

**Marché Bacchus** Perched above the sparkling ripples of Desert Shores, Marché Bacchus' back patio has reigned supreme for nearly two decades as the "Am I really in Las Vegas?" suburban dining spot of Southern Nevada. Locals and visitors alike flock to the charming eatery for its gourmet French cuisine and impressively curated wine shop, but an old-fashioned burger with tomato-bacon chutney and a chopped



Cobb salad are perfectly informal al fresco choices, too. *2620 Regatta Drive, Suite #106, marchebackchus.com GT*

**Verandah** As classic Vegas fades, classy Vegas gets more elusive. Thankfully, the understated country-club elegance of the Four Seasons never goes out of style. Inside the recently refreshed Verandah, the vibe sings Italian trattoria, while poolside seating remains a glorious throwback to a more genteel moment. The best days to slide into the valet sporting that tennis dress or Lacoste polo? Weekend mornings, when an all-you-can-eat affair reminds us that brunch was once much more than an excuse to day-drink. *Four Seasons, fourseasons.com JPR*



**Hearthstone Kitchen & Cellar** Try this Mojave Desert summer action plan: head to Red Rock Canyon National Conservation Area in the early morning for a loop on

the Scenic Route and a hike to Icebox Canyon, then make a beeline to Red Rock Resort to chill out under a mister at Hearthstone. There, slurp down fresh-shucked oysters, fork into roasted octopus, and nibble on bacon-wrapped dates while tossing back glasses of sparkling rosé, with the Spring Mountains for a stunning backdrop. *Red Rock Casino Resort Spa, hearthstonelv.com GT*

**Southwest Diner** You can't miss the incandescent Google-style sign in front of this popular roadside attraction on Boulder City's main drag. Sit outside in the morning and dig into a monumental pork chile verde burrito. For lunch or dinner, knife into a steak sandwich or Tex-Mex chicken fajitas. Visual servings of kitschy décor are complimentary. *761 Nevada Way, southwestdinerbouldercity.com GT*

## TO DOG OR NOT TO DOG: A BRIEF RANT

I love dogs. Get me talking, and I'll regale you with tales of my smart, playful, and agile English Springer Spaniel, Rocki (RIP, girl!). What I don't love is people thinking that I love dogs — their dog! — so much that I want to eat with them. I don't. Similar to those who bypass notoriously smoky bars when they want a cocktail, I avoid health district-approved pet patios when dining out.

It's not some anti-puppy mean-spiritedness that compels me. Rather, it's partly because I'm an admitted clean freak (Rocki had her own bed, thank you), and also because I believe that there is a time and place for everything. Doggie time is not when I am eating, especially inside a restaurant.

That last point is critical. With the increase in approved pet patios has come the assumption that any dog can be taken inside, anywhere. They can't, but the reluctance of some restaurant owners to enforce the health code (and risk losing a customer) has created a tail-wagging monster. What may have begun with a Yorkie smuggled inside a designer handbag has escalated to pet owners who think nothing of bringing a frisky, full-grown Malamute inside a rather cramped cafe. (It happened.)

Before heading out to brunch with Fido, owners might ask themselves, Why am I taking my pet along? Does the location have a health district-approved pet patio? If not, do I fully understand the legal, social and health implications of taking my pet inside a restaurant? Honestly assessing these queries and understanding the responsibilities will help sidestep any issues you may encounter, whether they be from the law, the management, or another diner. At the very least, it'll keep my tail wagging. — James P. Reza

Summer Dining 2018

# the drinks

Refresh with these summer sippers

## Margaritas at La Comida

Mexico's remedy to a sweltering summer, the reliable margarita, is at its best at La Comida. This temple to tequila offers a standing repertoire of more than a dozen icy concoctions. Traditionalists keep it simple with the solid "Paloma," and foodies branch out with tamarind, passion-fruit, and guava varieties. Adventurists experiment with the jalapeño-infused "Spicy Cucumber." But why limit yourself to just one? 100 6th St., [lacomidalv.com](http://lacomidalv.com) **GT**

## Natural Daiquiri at Jammyland

Las Vegas has done the daiquiri a gross disservice, turning Hemingway's favorite cocktail into a sugared-up, watered-down slushy in a tube. However, Jammyland shows the drink the respect it deserves, with a simple, elegant version that perfectly balances sweet and sour over a nice rum buzz. It's the perfect match for Jammyland's laid-back vibe and vintage ska soundtrack. 1121 S. Main St., [jammyland.com](http://jammyland.com) **LTR**

## Limoncello at Bottiglia

**Cucina & Enoteca** Drink like Italians do. First, stroll the verdant walkways of The District at Green Valley Ranch. Then, relax at cheerful Bottiglia with a glass of icy, glowingly yellow limoncello, that sweet but puckery citrus kiss of the Mediterranean sun. Now you're living la dolce vita. The District at Green Valley Ranch, [bottigliav.com](http://bottigliav.com) **GT**

## Ketel One Frozen Mule at Topgolf

We've seen a trillion variations on the Moscow Mule, but Topgolf's frozen version is a standout. The

ginger and lime flavors take well to ice, and the chilled metal cup is welcome on a hot day. Find a shady spot near one of the pools and melt the day away. MGM Grand, [topgolf.com](http://topgolf.com) **LTR**

## The Magarian at Carson Kitchen

When it comes to potent potables, nothing surpasses gin on ice for keeping cool in warm climes. This signature beverage at Carson Kitchen features snappy Aviation gin and appealing hot-weather ingredients: thyme-honey syrup, fresh lemon, and cucumber soda. It'll be the zingy, effervescent star of your Downtown evenings. 124 S Sixth St. #100, [carsonkitchen.com](http://carsonkitchen.com) **GT**

## Frozen Jameson Irish Coffee at Double Down

How did it take so long for

the New Orleans hot-weather treat to make it to Vegas? It may seem weird to see a frozen drink machine behind the bar at the Double Down churning next to the "You puke, you clean" sign, but you will be oh-so-thankful for the Frozen Jameson Irish Coffee. It's a drink, dessert and blast of air-conditioning all in one, and goes down appallingly easy. 4640 Paradise Road, [double-downsaloon.com](http://double-downsaloon.com) **LTR**

## Stiegl Beagle at ReBar

Summer is the season for citrus, especially alongside some tequila. But if you're more of a sipper than a shooter, ReBar's Stiegl Beagle is a refreshing mix of Stiegl Radler grapefruit beer, tequila, and lime. It's a good drink for kicking back on their porch, wondering if you want to buy that Löwenbräu sign. And, given that every drink benefits local animal charities, why not have two? 1225 S. Main St., [rebarlv.com](http://rebarlv.com) **LTR**

## VIP at Del Frisco's

Even those who snootily refuse vodka enjoy the Vodka-Infused-Pineapple

concoction at this classic steakhouse. Bartenders submerge sliced pineapples in glass jars swimming with vodka, then set them aside to infuse. The result is a delightfully cooling (and deceptively potent) tropical "martini." Sure, you're in the Hughes Center, but you could be in Singapore. 3925 Paradise Road, [delfriscos.com](http://delfriscos.com) **JPR**

## Michelada at Broadacres

This handcrafted chiller combines Mexican beer, Clamato, lime juice, and spices for a mouth-woke, Baja-flavored beer-sperience! They come in a styrofoam cup rimmed with tajin, and are big enough to share, but why? It's hot outside, and you'll need it to wash down that bag of chili lime pistachios you are about to scarf. 2930 Las Vegas Blvd. N., [broadacresm.com](http://broadacresm.com) **JPR**

## Sparkling Sangria at Firefly

If traditional sangria is too sweet for your taste, try this. It's Firefly's incredibly popular Spanish wine punch served tall and cold over ice, and cut with a little sparkling cava. Is it wine, or is it bubbles? Is it brunch, or is it dinner? Who cares?! Order a pitcher and join the party. 3824 Paradise Road, [fireflylv.com](http://fireflylv.com) **JPR**

## Lemmy Peach Palmer at Bin 702

Wise cocktailists have been boosting the octane of the summery Arnold Palmer tea-lemonade sipper for some time. Bin 702's (off-menu) Lemmy Peach Palmer adds Jack Daniel's and a dash of Peach Schnapps to the mix, making for a clandestine Container Park cocktail that won't guilt-trip you for drinking while the kids play. 707 E. Fremont St., [bin702.com](http://bin702.com) **JPR**

## Mai Tai at Golden Tiki

The sun burns us hottest in the afternoon, making Golden Tiki's happy hour (2-6p) a true respite, especially since the classic Mai Tai is just \$5. Snag a seat by the relaxing sounds of the clamshell waterfall and enjoy GT's cool, dark environs, the perfect summer escape! 3939 Spring Mountain Road, [thegoldentiki.com](http://thegoldentiki.com) **JPR**



# Picnic Perfect

All the ingredients you need for the perfect spread

BY *Lissa Townsend Rodgers*



## THE THEME

## MAKE THIS

**La Dolce Vita feast: Dine al fresco like Marcello, Anouk, or the European retro-chic role model of your choice.**



Tortellini skewers with pasta, mozzarella balls, cherry tomatoes, basil, and a drizzle of balsamic are easy to make, transport and eat. Ditto for meatballs, but go light on any sauce.

**House of Windsor Tea Party: Spread out a blanket for an elegant sandwiches-and-scones tea.**



Little sandwiches are easy to make, but be mindful of anything that will get soggy. Smoked salmon on pumpernickel or rolled sandwiches that can be cut into slices before serving hold up well.



**Some Like It Hot midnight supper: Roaring '20s glamour on an intimate scale a la Marilyn Monroe and Tony Curtis' romantic yacht party.**



That Vegas stalwart, shrimp cocktail — try adding vodka and/or mayo to the usual cocktail sauce. Also simple and portable: cold prosciutto-wrapped asparagus with olive oil.

**Doris David Lynch luncheon: The classic American picnic, with a twist.**



Even kitchen klutzes can manage potato salad. Add a tablespoon of powdered espresso and a half-bag of chocolate chips to make mix brownies taste homemade.



### IT'S NOT A PICNIC WITHOUT ...

**Caviar from Cured & Why** Does caviar go with grilled burgers and brats? Maybe not on the same plate, but this is Vegas. Begin your party with chilled tins of fish roe from Cured & Why for a deluxe appetizer with thin crostini, or adorn deviled eggs with the glistening goodness. The boutique retailer

features varieties from beluga sturgeon aquafarmed in Florida to native hacklebacks from the Ohio River. 6265 S. Valley View Blvd. #K, 702-429-3617

**Appetizer platters from Valley Cheese & Wine** Deluxe artisanal cheese and charcuterie selections are the perfect way to get a party started while the grill warms up. A gourmet vanguard of Southern Nevada, Valley Cheese

& Wine carries a seasonal collection of savory comestibles from Cypress Grove Humboldt Fog to prosciutto di Parma. And lots of summer-perfect wines, too. 1570 W. Horizon Ridge Parkway #140, valleycheeseandwine.com

**Viands from Village Meat & Wine** Want to go paleo-tastic on your home hearth with a massive tomahawk bison steak? This is the

place. They also hand-grind beef brisket patties for succulent burgers, and offer everything else from New York Ridge to Chicago hot dogs. The store's freezer cases also hold exotic choices like ostrich, camel, and alligator. 5025 S. Eastern Ave. #23, villagemeatandwine.com

**Everdure CUBE by Heston Blumenthal from Williams-Sonoma** These sleek,

compact charcoal grills take campfires into the Space Age with a food-grade storage tray and bamboo prep board. Williams-Sonoma also carries accessories including a gleaming All-Clad BBQ Toolset and a Moulinex Chopper — just pull a string for no-mess, no-fuss pico de gallo salsa for dipping tortilla chips. 1001 S. Rampart Blvd., williams-sonoma.com

## BUY THIS

Hit Siena Italian Deli or Plantone's Italian Market for salame, prosciutto, provolone, burrata, olives, bread, and any other antipasti that appeals.

Delices Gourmands bakery has an array of jam sables, financier cakes, and fruit tarts. The International Marketplace can set you up with foods beloved by U.K. expats from crumpets to HP Sauce to Tiptree Strawberry Champagne preserves.

Artisanal Foods can supply that something special, be it escargot, caviar, smoked duck breast, foie gras or edible flowers. For dessert, Patisserie Manon's macarons in rose, pistachio, and salted caramel.

Score fried chicken from your favorite spot - M&M, Chicken Shack, or the Church's Chicken drive-thru. For dessert, Retro Bakery's sprinkles-encrusted cupcakes or their gourmet version of the Hostess chocolate classic.

### Fireworks dinnerware from Sur La Table

Keep Fourth of July exuberance going all summer long with the skyrocket-themed Fireworks collection from Sur La Table. The melamine collection comes in platters, bowls, and fun star-shaped plates. And patio daddios can look patriotically fly as they helm their grill stations with a stars-and-stripes cotton jacquard apron. Downtown Summerlin, [surlatable.com](http://surlatable.com)

## DRINK THIS

San Pellegrino sodas are divinely refreshing. Get two kinds of kick with espresso martinis made of equal parts espresso, espresso vodka, and Bails. Or open a bottle of your favorite red wine.

Tea, naturally. Her Majesty prefers Twinings Earl Grey. The British Fentiman's company makes botanical tonic, Victorian lemonade, and other drinks that are nice over ice, with or without a spot of gin.

Bubbly! Gemma di Luna Moscato is light and fruity and comes in a Tiffany-blue bottle, while Bellissima Prosecco is drier and adorned with a Botticelli Venus. Throw in a bottle of Perrier for hydration and it'll be a buoyant evening.

Rocket Fizz has glass-bottle sodas in all brands and flavors, from Frostie cherry limeade to Fitz's grape pop to whatever Cheerwine is. For more adult options, try those two American standbys: The Martini and the tallboy.

## YOUR PICNIC SPOT

The ponds and streams of the Clark County Wetlands Parks offer inviting nooks and coves for a sense of cinematic vignette.

Floyd Lamb Park at Tule Springs has a number of picnic areas. Find a lakeside spot under a grove of trees, and enjoy an afternoon in the country.

For a romantic late night, it's probably best to stay close to home, whether it be yard, terrace or patio.

The duck ponds and picnic tables, the palm trees and tiki heads: Sunset Park offers plenty of kitschy options.

## TOP IT ALL OFF

Cue up a playlist with Nino Rota and Maria Callas. To wear: Something black and the biggest, darkest sunglasses you can find.

A little elbow grease can return the luster to a Savers silverplate teapot. After tea, some fine literature from the U.K. to read aloud. Perhaps the poetry of Yeats... or the screenplay for Monty Python and the Holy Grail. Also: Hats!

Bring cushions for lounging, and set the table with "rose gold" plastic flatware and champagne coupes from the 99 Cents Store. If you've got secret ukulele skills, now's the time to bust them out.

Spread out on vintage floral or state souvenir tablecloths from a local thrift shop. Deck yourself out in a gingham sundress or plaid camp shirt and toast with your Party City plastic cocktail glasses.

## Blanket judgment

## Our 8 Favorite Picnic-Friendly Parks

**Desert View Overlook**

Pack for a snack with a mind-bending view from the slopes of Mummy Mountain. (State Road 158 between Kyle Canyon and Lee Canyon)

**Gardens Park**

Spread out in one of the most flower-filled, tree-lined spaces in town that also features nice shuffleboard and bocce courts. (10401 Garden Park Dr.)

**Cottonwood Canyon Park**

This pocket park-meets-nature trail has picnic pavilions and lush lawns — as well as hummingbirds, hares, and dragonflies. (915 Canyon Bluff Circle)

**Clark County Wetlands Park**

The air-conditioned Picnic Cafe at the Nature Center is ideal for outings with kids and others who are sensitive to the Mojave Desert heat. (7050 E. Wetlands Park Lane)

**Floyd Lamb Park at Tule Springs**

Relax with some cold fried chicken and lemonade by the reed-lined ponds of Vegas' original picnic place, stretching back to woolly mammoth days. (9200 Tule Springs Road)

**Aliante Nature Discovery Park**

This green stretch of North Las Vegas beckons young paleontologists to play under a giant faux Triceratops fossil. (2627 Nature Park Drive)

**Exploration Park at Mountain's Edge**

Li'l buckaroos can go bonkers in the park's Old West-themed playgrounds, then challenge mom and dad to hike up Exploration Peak to see who's the real sheriff of Picnic Town. Or they can just have some ice cream cones. (9700 S. Buffalo Dr.)

**Wilbur Square and Bicentennial Park**

Dating back to Hoover Dam days, this tree-bordered, grassy public space in Boulder City is home to art festivals and classic car jamborees. (999 Colorado Street)

## Ode to Super Summer Theatre

**H**ark, Super Summer Theatre, how I love thee! Perhaps it's your 43 years of connecting us to community and tradition. Perhaps it's your improbable location — a stage on the grass at the historic Spring Mountain Ranch State Park in gorgeous Red Rock Canyon. Or maybe it's the way you welcome all picnickers, from the family noshing on KFC to the teens scarfing snacks from a Trader Joe's bag, to the awesome-ridiculous couple boasting a (battery-operated) candelabra, (plastic) wine glasses, and a charcuterie plate that would make a chef blush. Indeed, Super Summer Theatre has never been just about the play. It's about the place, the people, and the experiences we've shared. Oh, and the hummus. And the cheese plate. And the wine! [supersummertheatre.org](http://supersummertheatre.org) **JPR**





**FOCUS ON NEVADA**  
**PHOTO SHOWCASE**

On May 31st, *Desert Companion* hosted its annual Photo Issue Party and Showcase at the Historic Fifth Street School downtown. The evening included cocktails from ReBar, music by NV89 and Vegas Golden Knights DJ Jake Wagner and Editor Andrew Kiraly awarding prizes to the top snaps in 6 categories. In all, more than 1,200 shots were entered in our Focus On Nevada photo contest and we extend our thanks to the winners, participants and everyone who attended the party.







*OUR BIG* **POT** *FEATURE*

By **LISSA TOWNSEND RODGERS**

Recreational marijuana has been legal in Nevada for a year. If you've been putting off your first trip to a dispensary, now is a good time. Why? The dispensaries are firmly established, the range of products is abundant and diverse, and the industry's customer-service protocol has evolved from Jeff Spicoli to Jeeves. Whether you want to dip in a toe or go for the full high dive, here's our guide to valley cannabis culture. (And remember, be 21 or older!)

# WHICH DISPENSARY IS RIGHT FOR ME?

There are more than 60 dispensaries across Clark County, each offering its own distinct customer experience. Which is right for you? It depends on who you are and what you're looking for.

## **ARTS DISTRICT MILLENNIAL:** *New Amsterdam Naturals*

Heading Downtown to take in a movie or some theater, check out the galleries or just poke around the vintage shops and cocktail bars? Perhaps a stop at New Amsterdam Naturals is in order. Located in a low building with '70s-style angled wood paneling and photo murals of the moon landing, it's got a laid-back young staff and a ska/reggae soundtrack. A decent selection of flower, edibles and concentrates are available at reasonable prices, which get even better with locals' and First Friday specials.

**823 S. Third St., 702-527-7685**

## **UPSCALE SUBURBANITE:** *The Apothecarium*

The Apothecarium is as far from the Indian bedspread-and-in-cense stereotype as you can get. The space has marble floors, brass railings, crystal chandelier and photos of old Las Vegas — think of a bank or hotel. Sit in the waiting room, perusing product listings in leather folders that resemble steakhouse menus until your budtender leads you into the showroom and guides you through finding the right product, be it an NLV

Vanilla Mint disposable vape pen or a Vert espresso toffee bar.

**7885 W. Sahara Ave.,  
apothecarium.com**

## **NEWBIE/NERD:** *Sahara Wellness*

The lobby's water feature and smooth jazz have customers relaxed before they even step onto the sales floor. With its small space and welcoming vibe, Sahara Wellness is an ideal spot for both the newbie consumer who isn't sure what she wants and the weed nerd who wants to talk terpene percentages. If you're a medical patient seeking a helpful tincture or gummy, there's gentle guidance. If you're looking to talk about the differences between the two new indica-leaning hybrids in stock, they've got that too.

**420 E. Sahara Ave.,  
420sahara.com**

## **BIG BOX BAZAAR SHOPPER:** *NuWu*

At almost 16,000 square feet, NuWu bills itself as the largest dispensary on the planet — so large that you place your order and get one of those restaurant reservation buzzers to let you know when to pick it up. There are hundreds of varieties of product: Flower, edibles, topicals, concentrates, and plenty of hats and T-shirts. NuWu also has an abundance of CBD items, quite a few pet products and fun Vegas-appropriate things like zebra-stripe vape pens and THC-infused bubble bath. For convenience, you can even order online and pick up at the drive-through window.

**1235 Paiute Circle,  
nuwucannabis.com**

## **HIPSTER AESTHETE:** *Blüm Desert Inn*

The Desert Inn outpost of Blüm is located in a mid-mod former bank building with expanses of glass and brick. The waiting room has sleek, low-slung

## A POT 101 GLOSSARY

### **CANNABINOIDS:**

The 80+ chemical compounds that can be found in the marijuana plant, including THC, CBD, terpenes and more.

**CBD:** A non-psychoactive compound that is one of the most prevalent cannabinoids. It's been used to treat Alzheimer's, epilepsy, arthritis, PTSD, and other ailments.

**CONCENTRATE:** A more potent, extracted version of cannabis. The category covers pills, waxes, tinctures, vape cartridges

**CULTIVATION:** Where cannabis is grown. It looks like any other warehouse in town but, if you get close, you'll notice a slightly different smell.

**DAB:** A method of smoking super-concentrated cannabis by heating up a "nail," melting wax or resin on it and inhaling the vapor. Also a dance move done by everyone from Drake to Hillary Clinton.

**FLOWER:** Cannabis in its leafy green state, whether fresh or dried.

**HYBRID:** A type of cannabis created by cross-breeding indica and sativa strains. Popular hybrids include Blue Dream, Pineapple Express and Jilly Bean.

**INDICA:** Indica plants tend to be shorter and more bud-heavy. They offer a relaxed, "body" high — helpful for sleep, pain or binge-watching

sofas and giant, high-contrast photos of people smoking. The sales floor has metallic tile and hanging lamps, with budtenders in Warby-Parker glasses and black shirts who guide customers through their choices. Blüm has a wide array of edibles, with unusual choices like cold-brew coffee, honey and popcorn.

**1130 E. Desert Inn Road,  
letsblum.com**

## **LOW-KEY SPORTS FAN:** *Nevada Wellness Center*

That case of Raiders memorabilia isn't anticipating 2020 — it's in honor of Nevada Wellness Center co-owner and former NFL player (and city councilman) Frank Hawkins. It's just one of many displays of sports memorabilia, cannabis paraphernalia and store merch you can check out before heading into the "smell room." The product range isn't enormous, but it's solid, with some unusual products like marijuana-spiked "Margarita" mocktails and cannabis-infused lavender-vanilla massage oil. Fast service, good prices and locals' discounts add to the appeal.

**3200 S. Valley View Blvd.,  
nvwellnessctr.com**

## **TOURIST:** *Essence on the Strip*

Easy to find with a Las Vegas Boulevard address and green neon sign, Essence's Strip location has been many a traveler's first legal cannabis experience. The product array is impressive, with constantly updated computer screens letting people consider their options while they wait (and sometimes it can be a bit of a wait). If you want to take advantage of the reward program and many specials without trying to rush some guy from Arkansas through item #4 on his Sin City bucket list, you can always try one of Essences' other outposts, or simply order ahead and pick up.

**2307 Las Vegas Blvd. S.,  
essencevegas.com**

# HOW THOSE GARDENS GROW

"We are the standard-bearers for the country — our position gives us a unique opportunity to be pioneers," says Aaron McCrary of Zion Gardens cannabis cultivation. The Silver State's green rush has spawned over 100 grow facilities, all sharing a mission to create the best product, but each in their own way.

Zion Gardens in North Las Vegas is one of the smaller grows in the valley, raising plants in shipping container-style pods that McCrary has custom-designed. "Hand-potted, hand-watered. We really want to emphasize a human relationship with the plant," he says. "We aren't the massive producer, so we want to make a high-quality product. A big part of that is pest and pathogen control and a lot of that is about maintaining a one-on-one relationship to the plant.

"I come from Seattle and Seattle is one of the hotbeds that really embraces a microbrew culture," he continues. "So we view ourselves as a micro-grow." He also points out that Zion Gardens' smaller size means he can experiment more, and create strains to specific specs. "With diversified growing spaces, we can meet certain consumer demands flexibly. If a dispensary said, 'Hey, we'd love a container full of non-till, LED-grown organic flower,' we can easily convert a space."

At the other end of the spectrum, Flora Vega is one of the largest grows in Southern Nevada, at over 40,000 square feet with a herd

of employees shepherding the plants through every stage. "There was something like 8,500 pounds sold in Nevada last month and we're growing about 700 pounds a month," says General Manager Nick Puliz. "Overall, rec basically tripled our business from medical. That was huge."

Plants are cycled through seedling, vegetative and flower stages in vast rooms with computer displays by the doors indicating the state of the greenery within. Once harvested, plants are dried, trimmed, and then packaged. Like most cultivations, there is room to grow at Flora Vega. "We have another 24,000 square feet ready to expand," says Puliz, but he'd like to grow in another direction first. "I don't have my own outlet — that's a whole different dynamic from somebody who's a vertical with their own dispensary." Flora Vega hopes to get one when the next round of licensing comes up later this year.

"Matrix is in a very different groove than a lot of people out there. They have this kind of 'take over the world' mentality and that's not us," says Evan Marder, COO of Matrix cultivations. Still, the brand has taken over a fair amount of dispensary shelf space with its line of flower and an assortment of concentrates and vape cartridges, and Marder is looking to add gummies to the list.

Of course, more product requires more space. "We're in the process of trying to expand our grow because we have more room at our facility to build out. So we're hoping to build out bloomrooms and have more grow space and expanding into other states, eventually." Marder is excited by the industry's increasing acceptance, even if he didn't quite anticipate it. "I've loved cannabis since I was a teenager, so that's a long time. But I had to keep it under wraps and people looked down on it — it's very different now."

Right, Aaron McCrary of Zion Gardens; below, a plant from Matrix.

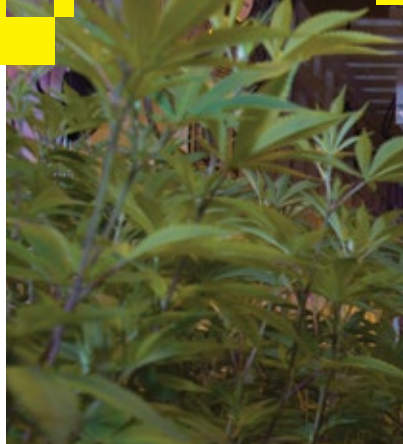


## ASK A BUDTENDER!

There's a lot on the shelf at your local dispensary, from vapes to tinctures, milligrams to ounces, indica to sativa. We asked three experts what they'd recommend for everything from post-surgery to movie night.

### I'M WORKING ON AN ART PROJECT. WHAT WILL STIMULATE CREATIVITY, BUT ALSO KEEP ME FOCUSED?

"I would recommend a flower that is high in pinene and/or limonene terpenes. Pinene will help you stay focused and maintain alertness; limonene will put



you in an uplifted mood and get that creativity going. Try a Sativa or a Sativa-dominant hybrid, like Mimosa, Dutch Treat Haze or Jack Herer." — *Kimberly Moore, Reef Dispensary*

### I DON'T CONSUME CANNABIS, BUT I HEAR IT CAN HELP MY ARTHRITIS. WHAT DO YOU SUGGEST?

"You want Rick Simpson oil, also known as cannabis oil. It's



basically just the oil of the plant. Low-dose oil capsules, like a quarter-dose. Cannabis oil will relax the muscles, letting go of the nerves, so you're not in pain." — *Rob Ruckus, Inyo Fine Cannabis*

#### **I'M GOING HIKING. WHAT WOULD YOU RECOMMEND?**

"I would recommend vape cartridges — they're discreet. I also recommend some sativa pucks. They're microdosed, about 10 milligrams per puck, so you can take one of those and feel energetic." (*Note that public consumption is not legal in Nevada.*) — *Deanna Martinez, Essence West*

#### **I HAVE INSOMNIA, BUT I DON'T LIKE TO SMOKE.**

"Edibles work well for sleep because the effects are longer-lasting than from smoking. Tryke gummies come in a variety of flavors, including strawberry kiwi and green apple. Recommended dosage for sleep would be roughly 10-30 milligrams of THC depending on your tolerance. Tinctures with THC only and tinctures with a 1:1 ratio of CBD/THC are another option." — *Kimberly Moore, Reef Dispensary*

#### **I WANT TO BRING SOMETHING TO A DINNER PARTY. THEY'RE NOT HEAVY USERS, BUT THEY DO SMOKE.**

"I'd recommend a disposable. It carries about 250 milligrams. It's also good if you're on vacation. It's very discreet: You're not bothering anybody, but you're still getting a mind change." — *Deanna Martinez, Essence West*

#### **I'M HAVING BAD MENSTRUAL CRAMPS. WHAT CAN HELP?**

"We just partnered with Evergreen Organics — they use our trim to make coconut oil and menstrual relief oil. I always

TV shows. Popular indica strains include Lavender, Kosher Kush and King Louis XII.

**KIEF:** The powdery resin that can be sifted from marijuana buds. It can be sprinkled on joints or compacted into hash.

**PRE-ROLL:** An already-rolled joint, sometimes dusted with kief or concentrate.

**SATIVA:** Sativa are taller plants with narrow leaves. The sativa high is generally more energetic and cerebral — think the house-cleaning, chatty, creative kind. Popular sativas include Aca-pulco Gold, Strawberry Cough and Chocolepe.

**SHATTER:** Another form of concentrated cannabis, formed into a glassy sheet that breaks into pieces. You dab it.

**STRAIN:** A specific breed of cannabis with its own name and characteristics, both of which are often derived from the strains it comes from. E.g., Green Queen comes from Green Crack and Space Queen.

**TERPENE:** A class of organic hydrocarbons that are found in a variety of plants, including marijuana, that have particular scents, flavors or effects. They include relaxing, musty myrcene, citrusy, mood-elevating limonene, anti-inflammatory linalool, etc.

**THC:** One of the main cannabinoids in marijuana — the psychoactive one that makes you "high."

recommend to my customers to place natural cotton tampons in some of that oil and stick them in the freezer, then when your monthly comes you use that tampon and it completely reduces those pain cramps." — *Deanna Martinez, Essence West*

#### **I'M GOING TO A FESTIVAL. WHAT WILL LAST ME ALL DAY?**

"Edibles. I'd suggest gummies. Start with half of one, then wait two hours before you try another because it has to go all the way through your system before it hits your bloodstream. You can always take more, but you can't un-take them." (*Note that public consumption is not legal in Nevada.*) — *Rob Ruckus, Inyo Fine Cannabis*

#### **I'M GOING TO SEE A BOMBASTIC SUPERHERO BLOCKBUSTER. WHAT WILL MAKE THE MOVIE MORE ENJOYABLE?**

"I recommend edibles or a hybrid strain/cartridge: If you dose an edible right you can enjoy your high throughout the entire movie. Smaller dosing will allow you to enjoy the movie without feeling groggy, or try to find a sativa-specific edible. Hybrid strains are another option, a pre-roll or vape cartridge." — *Kimberly Moore, Reef Dispensary*

#### **I HAVE A BAD BACK.**

"I would use a transdermal patch. It's really helpful because it just sends out CBD and THC — the 1:1 ratio really helps with chronic pain. If people don't like a patch, we have topicals that are also transdermal. There's one called Nordic Goddess that's a 1:1 ratio and also has the terpene limonene, which reduces inflammation." — *Deanna Martinez, Essence West*

#### **I'VE HAD STOMACH ISSUES AND SOMETIMES FEEL NAUSEATED. CAN MARIJUANA HELP?**

"Cannabis is a great way to get rid of nausea. Try a strain that has a high amount of caryophyllene in it, which is the terpene that works best to fight nausea. I would also suggest to smoke or vape versus ingesting because it will act faster. Good strains to try would be GG#4, Blue Sherbet or Purple Kush." — *Kimberly Moore, Reef Dispensary*

#### **AS A MUSICIAN, WHAT DO YOU SUGGEST FOR MAKING OR APPRECIATING MUSIC?**

"I'm old school. I like a joint. Roll a nice indica or an indica-leaning hybrid and just get into the groove." — *Rob Ruckus, Inyo Fine Cannabis*

## **TAKE YOUR MEDICINE: THE ADVENT OF CBD**

The operative word in Nevada's green rush is "recreational," but many are learning about the medicinal qualities of cannabis for the first time.

"Each day we are hearing about people's lives that have been changed — and saved — by the healing properties of cannabidiol," says Mike Pizzo of Reef Dispensaries. Cannabidiol, aka CBD, is one of the non-psychoactive components in marijuana, and has been used to aid everything from insomnia

# CHEFS GONE MILD

How the  
cannabis industry  
created a new  
type of culinary  
talent

When you think of a marijuana edible, crumbly pot brownies or off-tasting Rice Krispie treats spring to mind. You don't think of French macarons, frosting-drizzled tea cakes or salted pistachio mint candy bars — but that's what the modern edible is. As more chefs with traditional backgrounds enter the cannabis space, we've seen an influx of products that look and taste just as good as their conventional counterparts.

"I wasn't a smoker," says Victoria Babbitt, edibles chef at Acres dispensary, "I was 23 when I smoked for the first time." She began baking at 12 and went to culinary school, but what drew her into the cannabis industry? "I'm

a Cancer, I'm a natural nurturer, so the idea of doing something I love and incorporating a great ingredient that can help people? Yeah!" She had been working at a bakery in Arizona when she was approached to work for an edibles company, helped develop products for them, then moved to Nevada to work at Acres.

"I've received experience cooking up and down the Strip from small bakeries to Michelin-rated restaurants," says Dylan Eldridge, Babbitt's co-chef at Acres. "I left the industry for a couple of years, but I missed that human interaction. And then I began to work my way into the cannabis industry." He and Babbitt are developing a new line of edibles, from candy to desserts. Babbitt also wants to take on the challenge of creating cannabis-infused savory foods, condiments, and sauces.

**Right, Acres edibles chef  
Victoria Babbitt; below, a batch  
of fresh cannabis gummies**

That challenge is what attracts many chefs to the cannabis realm. "One thing I lacked in my culinary career before I entered the industry was a challenge," says Melissa Parks, a consultant who created products for Vert edibles. Parks studied at Johnson & Wales, worked in research and development for General Mills and at a variety of restaurants, but says that "working with cannabis has refined me as a chef." Parks also authored a cookbook, *Herb: Mastering the Art of Cooking Cannabis*, and she's currently working on a second volume.

The complexities of dosing, flavor profiles, working with infused oils and butters — it's a challenge many chefs welcome. Parks notes that people may feel more comfortable consuming "an edible from somebody who has degrees in these sciences and nutrition and has been cooking for years," she says, "but you have to have that heart and that soul to combine with that expertise."

That expertise is also valuable once the cupcake leaves the kitchen, so to speak. Rick Scarpello, CEO of Colorado-based Incredibles, had been working in the food industry for over two decades, creating bread for restaurants and grocery stores, before he got into cannabis. "There is a process by which you keep food safe, and I can bring that into the cannabis world. They're still making products that you stick in your mouth and swallow."

Part of the appeal of cooking with cannabis is the evolution of the industry and the central ingredient. "Now that I know what's possible, now that I understand the math and the dosing," says Babbitt, "I look at everything and go, 'I could dose that, I could dose that.'"



or inflammation to arthritis or anxiety. "We started off as a medical marijuana dispensary, so it has always been important to us to remember the patients and to offer products that cater directly to them." Reef has developed its own CBD line of tinctures, edibles and flower.

Rob Ruckus of Inyo Fine Cannabis is developing a line of cannabis oil capsules. "Everything on the planet with a spine has an endocannabinoid system and it fuels our immune system," he explains, and cannabis oil is a way to concentrate the plant's beneficial effects. He got interested in cannabis and developed the oil years ago when a friend's daughter was diagnosed with cancer. The lit-

tle girl who wasn't supposed to live past five but is still running around today. "Unlike chemo and radiation that target the area and destroy all the good and bad cells in the area, this just makes the body strong enough that it attacks bad cells that don't belong there," he says. "I've seen it used for everything from thyroid conditions to pain management, I've seen an epileptic go from 1,000 seizures a month down to, like, four. It's the best medicine. The body has an endocannabinoid system for a reason."

Ruckus would like to see another medical angle explored. "Right after October 1, my (dispensary) was full of guys in veterans caps. It had

triggered their PTSD. That's why we need consumption lounges — these guys needed a place where they could sit together, smoke a joint and talk about it." He'd like to see spaces where not only veterans, but other patients can discuss their issues and share information. For these patients, cannabis "may not fix everything, but it can make life bearable again," he says, "and that makes a world of difference."

# MARKETPLACE

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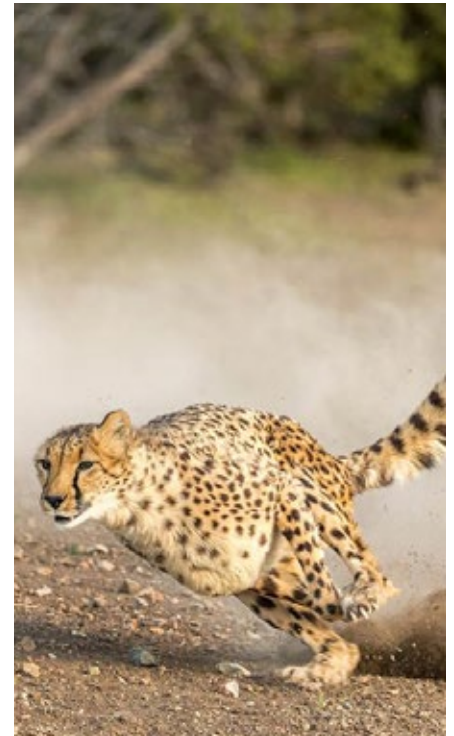
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## Animal Ark

Watch these magnificent cats running with extraordinary speed, off-leash, across the desert in pursuit of an enticing lure, Saturday, July 28, from 6:30-8 PM. Children must be at least eight-years-old to attend.

Reservations are required, due to limited seating. Prices vary. RSVP at: 1-755-970-3431 or Online at: [www.animalark.org/events/all-american-cheetah-dash/](http://www.animalark.org/events/all-american-cheetah-dash/)

**Animal Ark**  
1265 Deerlodge Road  
Reno, NV 89508  
1-775-970-3111  
[www.animalark.org](http://www.animalark.org)

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## Nannies & Housekeepers USA

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**ART**  
THROUGH  
AUG. 12

**Les Folies Bergère: Entertaining Las Vegas One Rhinestone at a Time**

This photo and costume exhibit explores the beauty, artistry, and extravagance of the legendary show, which arrived from Paris, France, at the Tropicana in December 1959. **Free.** West Charleston Library, [lvccld.org](http://lvccld.org)

THROUGH  
AUG. 19

**Wet is Wild: Water Stories**

Jim Atha's abstract photographs encourage viewers to notice the shapes, patterns, and colors found in nature. **Free.** Spring Valley Library, [lvccld.org](http://lvccld.org)

**SCOTT IS EXCITED ABOUT THIS. "LOVE THESE SURREAL CHARCOAL PORTRAITS. DRAW ME NEXT!"**

THROUGH  
AUG. 28

**Fading Shadows**

Artist David Veliz's black-and-white portrait drawings examine light and personality. **Free.** Enterprise Library, [lvccld.org](http://lvccld.org)

THROUGH  
AUG. 31

**Hearts4Vegas Touring Exhibition**

A traveling healing exhibition of items collected from

friends, family, and loved ones memorializing the losses from the tragic Oct. 1, 2017 mass shooting. **Free.** Durango Hills YMCA, 3521 N. Durango Hills Drive, [artslasvegas.org](http://artslasvegas.org)

THROUGH  
SEPT. 30

**Microscopic Beauty of Fruits and Vegetables**

Local artist Robert Belliveau discovered that microscopic crystals formed in the juices squeezed from fruits and vegetables self-organize into abstract designs. Free for members or with paid general admission. **Origen Museum at Springs Preserve, [springspreserve.org](http://springspreserve.org)**

THROUGH  
DEC. 16

**VESSEL: Ceramics of Ancient West Mexico**

The exhibition is organized by shape. Visitors are invited to contemplate how the form of each vessel informs both practical use and communicates ideas of power, identity, and belief. **Free.** Barrick Museum of Art at UNLV, [unlv.edu](http://unlv.edu)



**MUSIC**

JULY 6

**The Blue Oversouls featuring Sid the Kid**

Sid uses his saxophone to play tribute to the mu-

sic of Ray Charles and B.B. King. **7:30P, \$10.** Starbright Theatre at Sun City Summerlin, [scscai.com](http://scscai.com)

JULY 7

**The Leading Ladies of Jazz Presented by Broadway in the Hood**

A tribute to Billie Holiday, Sarah Vaughn, Ella Fitzgerald, and Nina Simone, featuring Tianna Renee Lewis and Genevieve Dew. **2P and 7P, \$44.** Myron's Cabaret Jazz at The Smith Center, [thesmithcenter.com](http://thesmithcenter.com)

JULY 7

**Jam Session**

Meet and jam with fellow musicians, just bring your own instrument! **3P, free.** Jewel Box Theater at Clark County Library, [lvccld.org](http://lvccld.org)

JULY 7

**"REBA" starring Corrie Sachs**

Sachs is the number one McEntire impersonator. **7P, \$20.** Starbright Theatre at Sun City Summerlin, [scscai.com](http://scscai.com)

JULY 12

**Cinderella's Tom Keifer**

The singer/songwriter and front man of the 1980s glam-rock band Cinderella, Keifer is touring with his own band and playing from his debut solo album. **Ages 18+. 7P, \$27-\$328.** Brooklyn Bowl at The Linq, [brooklynbowl.com](http://brooklynbowl.com)

JULY 7

**Thievery Corporation**

The most well-known, unknown duo with a 20-year history

## The Guide

performs an eclectic mix of Jamaican-influenced electronica. **Ages 18+.** 7:30P, \$35-\$50. Brooklyn Bowl at The Linq, [brooklynbowl.com](http://brooklynbowl.com)

**JULY 12**  
**Qawwali (Sufi Songs) by Taji Brothers**  
Enjoy a concert of Indo/Pakistan music, with food available for an additional fee. 7:30P, \$25-\$50. Clark County Library, [sunshinefamily.org](http://sunshinefamily.org)

**JULY 13**  
**Red Velvet**  
The band performs cool Top 40, dance, rock, and R&B songs you won't hear anywhere else in Las Vegas. 7:30P, \$10. Starbright Theatre at Sun City Summerlin, [scscai.com](http://scscai.com)

**JULY 13**  
**Jackson Browne**  
The legendary singer-songwriter performs songs from throughout his multi-decade career. 8P, \$40-\$130. Reynolds Hall at The Smith Center, [thesmithcenter.com](http://thesmithcenter.com)

**JULY 14**  
**Maoli**  
Winner of Maui's Battle of the Bands, Glenn Awong brings his newest lineup to play their latest hits. **Ages 18+.** 7:30P, \$18-\$20. Brooklyn Bowl at The Linq, [brooklynbowl.com](http://brooklynbowl.com)

**JULY 14**  
**David Perrico Pop Strings Orchestra Featuring the Las Vegas Tenors**  
An 18-piece ensemble and a variety of vocalists celebrate

music across many genres. **8P, \$25-\$40.** Myron's Cabaret Jazz at The Smith Center, [thesmithcenter.com](http://thesmithcenter.com)

**JULY 15**  
**Uketopia in Concert**  
The group is comprised of people from the entertainment, education, and theater worlds all playing ukuleles and singing. **2P, free.** Main Theater at Clark County Library, [lvccld.org](http://lvccld.org)

**JULY 15**  
**The Moonshiners ... Las Vegas's Best "Prohibition Pop" Combo**  
The retro band offers a mix of current Top 40 and classic swing. **3P, \$20.** Starbright Theatre at Sun City Summerlin, [scscai.com](http://scscai.com)

**JULY 17**  
**Neil Diamond — The Tribute**  
The quintessential Diamond show stars Rob Garrett and the K.O.D. Band. **7P, \$20.** Starbright Theatre at Sun City Summerlin, [scscai.com](http://scscai.com)

**JULY 20**  
**The Breeders**  
The American alternative rock band has been wowing crowds since 1989. **Ages 18+.** 7P, \$30-\$35. Brooklyn Bowl at The Linq, [brooklynbowl.com](http://brooklynbowl.com)

**JULY 20**  
**Chyna**  
Playing everything from classic rock to country, this high-energy 5-piece band really delivers. 7:30P, \$10. Starbright Theatre at Sun City Summerlin, [scscai.com](http://scscai.com)

**JULY 21**  
**The Donny Nova Band Starring Corey Scott and Laura Osnes**  
The band performs Broadway and pop standards. **6P and 8:30P, \$39-\$59.** Myron's Cabaret Jazz at The Smith Center, [thesmithcenter.com](http://thesmithcenter.com)

**JULY 21**  
**Fairchild Blues Tribute**  
This tribute to the Blues Brothers delivers a mix of comedy and music with a party atmosphere. **7P, \$20.** Starbright Theatre at Sun City Summerlin, [scscai.com](http://scscai.com)

**CHRIS CAN'T WAIT FOR QUICKSAND. "ONE OF MY FAVORITE BANDS GROWING UP. GLAD TO SEE THEM BACK AROUND!"**

**JULY 21**  
**Quicksand**  
The band has reunited to bring back their New York hardcore sound. **Ages 18+.** 8P, \$20-\$328. Brooklyn Bowl at The Linq, [brooklynbowl.com](http://brooklynbowl.com)

**JULY 22**  
**Streetlight Manifesto with Mephiskapheles and Kitty Kat Fan Club**  
The ska band brings together seven guys, seven different musical backgrounds, and seven different personalities to create one unique and unmistakable voice. **Ages 18+.** 7P, \$28-\$328. Brooklyn Bowl at The Linq, [brooklynbowl.com](http://brooklynbowl.com)

**JULY 24**  
**Two Tenors and a Funny Lady**  
The shows features musicians

Ricardo Antonio and Marco Antonio Varela with singer and comedienne Barbara Brighton. **7P, \$10.** The Summit at Sun City Summerlin, [scscai.com](http://scscai.com)

**JULY 26**  
**Secret Agent 23 Skidoo**  
The group combines family funk with hip hop and storytelling to deliver a purple velvet tuxedo good time. **3P, free.** Main Theater at Clark County Library, [lvccld.org](http://lvccld.org)

**JULY 27**  
**The Jazz Eclectic Concert Series (Vol. 3)**  
The new age jazz series continues with headliner Melissa Morgan, vocalist Courtney Fortune, trumpeter Bijon Watson, and singer/composer Niles Thomas. **7P, \$29-\$49.** Myron's Cabaret Jazz at The Smith Center, [thesmithcenter.com](http://thesmithcenter.com)

**JULY 27**  
**The Experiment**  
The high-energy 6-piece variety cover band is influenced by pop, disco, country, and classic rock. **7:30P, \$10.** The Summit at Sun City Summerlin, [scscai.com](http://scscai.com)

**JULY 27-28**  
**UB40**  
The reggae band that defined its genre in the '80s features Ali Campbell, Astro, and Mickey. **Ages 18+.** 7:30P, \$48-\$75. Brooklyn Bowl at The Linq, [brooklynbowl.com](http://brooklynbowl.com)

**JULY 28**  
**Nu Blu**  
The Southern Nevada Bluegrass Music Society presents this

toe-tapping night of fast-pickin' tunes. **7P, \$20.** Starbright Theatre at Sun City Summerlin, [scscai.com](http://scscai.com)

**JULY 28**  
**Dave Koz and Friends Summer Horns Tour**  
The sax legend performs songs from his new album with guests Gerald Albright, Rick Braun, Richard Elliot, and Aubrey Logan. **7:30P, \$33-\$105.** Myron's Cabaret Jazz at The Smith Center, [thesmithcenter.com](http://thesmithcenter.com)

**AUG. 3**  
**Bruce Harper Big Band with Elisa Fiorillo**  
A 19-piece Big Band performs the works of Allen Imbach and others. **7P, \$20-\$35.** Myron's Cabaret Jazz at The Smith Center, [thesmithcenter.com](http://thesmithcenter.com)

**AUG. 4**  
**Asian Moon Festival Concert**  
In a tribute to Asian culture, the Li Lin Hong Chinese Music Ensemble performs folkloric and contemporary songs. **2P, free.** Main Theater at Clark County Library, [lvccld.org](http://lvccld.org)

**THEATER & COMEDY THROUGH JULY 14**  
**She Loves Me**  
Set in a 1930s European perfumery, this musical is based on the plot of the beloved Jimmy Stewart classic *The Shop Around the Corner*. **Wed-Sat 6P, \$15.** The Boman Pavilion at Spring Mountain Ranch State Park, [supersummertheatre.org](http://supersummertheatre.org)

**JULY 13-19**  
**Ruthless!**  
Eight-year-old Tina Denmark knows she was born to play Pippi Longstocking, and she will do anything to win the part in her school musical. "Anything" includes murdering the leading lady! **Thu-Sat 8P; Sun 2P, \$20-\$25.** Las Vegas Little Theatre, [lvlt.org](http://lvlt.org)

**JULY 21**  
**Summer Fun with LVIP**  
The Las Vegas Improvisational Players make up their fun, kid-friendly show on the spot, based on the audience's suggestions. **7P, \$10; \$5 kids, seniors, and military.** Show Creators Studio, 4455 W. Sunset Road, [lvimprov.com](http://lvimprov.com)

**DANCE**  
**HEIDI'S EXCITED ABOUT NEON. "I'M A SUCKER FOR HIP-HOP DANCE COMPETITIONS!"**

**JULY 7**  
**Neon COTC Dance Concert**  
JRE Inc. presents a dance showcase. **2P, \$10-\$30.** Main Theater at Clark County Library, [lvccld.org](http://lvccld.org)

**JULY 21**  
**Christmas in July — Hawaii Style!**  
The graceful hula dancers of Na Hula Halia Aloha will showcase holiday songs and dances representing Hawaiian history and folklore. **2P, free.** Main Theater at Clark County Library, [lvccld.org](http://lvccld.org)



JULY 21

**Summer Dance with Boyd Coulter and The Good Times Band**

Roll into summer and enjoy a delightfully cool evening of great music. There will be light snacks and a cash bar. **7P, \$5.** Desert Vista Ballroom at Sun City Summerlin, [sccscaj.com](http://sccscaj.com)

AUG. 1-18

**Peter Pan, A Musical Adventure**

This faithful new version is a festive adventure featuring music and lyrics by the award-winning duo George Stiles and Anthony Drewe. **Wed-Sat 6P, \$15.** Super Summer Theatre at Spring Mountain Ranch, [supersummertheatre.org](http://supersummertheatre.org)

**DISCUSSIONS & READINGS**

AUG. 2

**Benjamin "Bugsy" Siegel and the Flamingo Hotel**

Larry D. Gragg, PhD examines Siegel's image as portrayed in popular culture and discusses the facts and fallacies about his role in the development of Las Vegas. **7P, free.** Jewel Box Theater at Clark County Library, [lvccld.org](http://lvccld.org)

**FAMILY & FESTIVALS**

JULY 6

**First Friday**

From crafts to food, this is the place to celebrate all things artsy. Cockroach Theatre offers 20-minute vignettes, food trucks offer dining, and booths offer one-of-a-kind items. **5-11P, free.** 1025 First St., [ffflv.org](http://ffflv.org)

JULY 13

**Fratello Marionettes — Aladdin**

Friendship and kindness triumph over evil as Aladdin discovers the magical lamp, frees the powerful genie, and saves the kingdom. **3P, free.** Main Theater at Clark County Library, [lvccld.org](http://lvccld.org)

**FUNDRAISERS**

JULY 9

**Mondays Dark — Cure 4 the Kids**

Mark Shunock gathers an eclectic cast of guests including stars from Hollywood, the Las Vegas Strip, musical acts, athletes, and celebrity chefs for 90 minutes of chat and entertainment. **7P, \$20-\$50.** The Space, 3460 Cavaretta Court, [mondaysdark.com](http://mondaysdark.com)

JULY 27

**Fill the Bus — School Supply Drive**

Help needy students start the year right. Bring new backpacks, hygiene kits, uniforms, socks, underwear, alarm clocks, and school supplies to the CIS drop-off areas. **5:30A-7:30P, free.** Sam's Club at S. Rainbow/215 and Galleria Mall in Henderson, [cisnevada.org](http://cisnevada.org)

JULY 23

**Mondays Dark — Sin City Sisters of Perpetual Indulgence**

Mark Shunock gathers guests including stars from Hollywood, the Las Vegas Strip, musical acts, athletes, and celebrity chefs for 90 minutes of chat and entertainment. **7P, \$20-\$50.** The Space, 3460 Cavaretta Court, [mondaysdark.com](http://mondaysdark.com)

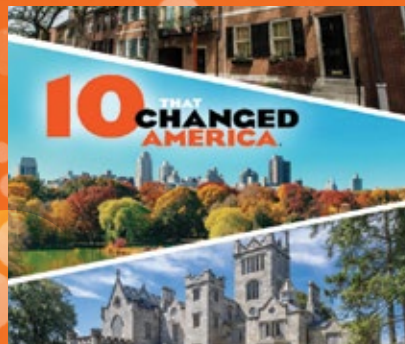
New Series Premiere!

# Nevada Week



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Channel 10

**Tuesdays at 7:30 p.m., premiering July 10**  
Encore Broadcasts Tuesdays at 11 p.m. & Sundays at 5:30 p.m.

**10 That Changed America**

Tuesdays at 8 p.m.,  
premiering July 10

**Earth's Natural Wonders - Life at the Extremes**

Wednesdays at 8 p.m.,  
premiering July 11

**Death in Paradise, Season 7**

Saturdays at 9 p.m.,  
premiering July 21

**Ted Williams: American Masters**

Monday, July 23 at 9 p.m.

VegasPBS.org | 3050 E Flamingo Road, Las Vegas, NV 89121 | 702.799.1010

# THINGS WE'RE OBSESSING OVER NOW THAT THE GOLDEN KNIGHTS' SEASON IS OVER

1. Golden nights
2. Golden lights
3. Foldin' tights
4. Field hockey
5. Floor hockey
6. Tonsil hockey
7. David Hockney
8. Our newfound anticipation for *Mighty Ducks 5: Basically a Fundraiser for Emilio Estevez*
9. Politics
10. What does a county assessor, in fact, assess?
11. Clowns (see also number 9)
12. Endlessly recapping the Golden Knights' first season, not naming any names but c'mon Joe enough already
13. Whether the Democratic candidate for Congressional District 3 who nicknamed himself "The Mensch" is, in fact, a mensch
14. "Barbecue" or "BBQ"?
15. Because would a true mensch advertise his menschness on a ballot?
16. Why *wouldn't* a Marilyn Monroe-themed musical work in Vegas?
17. Puck, from *A Midsummer Night's Dream*
18. Puck, from *Glee*
19. The etymology of puck: "The Oxford English Dictionary favored a Scandinavian origin, but the most recent scholarly study argues for an Irish origin ..."
20. Looking at the Neon Museum on Google Satellite
21. "Where can I buy a rum cask for my St. Bernard?"
22. Finally having a place to put all these plausibly humorous thoughts.
23. Recognizing the meta-ness of 22. Whoa.
24. [THIS LINE INTENTIONALLY LEFT BLANK.]
25. Whether Fugazi was actually a good band or just a bunch of angsty clamor that fooled our younger selves into mistaking sincere intensity for talent
26. The movie *Hereditary*
27. Reading articles about how scary *Hereditary* is and whether it's the scariest movie ever
28. Reading fan theories on the *Hereditary* subreddit about the significance of the repeated image of the [SPOILER REDACTED], especially during the part when [SPOILER REDACTED]
29. Oh my god have you seen *Hereditary* yet?
30. IT IS SO SCARY
31. Can men have "side-boob"?
32. The state of public education in Clark County loljk
33. Oh, and also that scene where the creepy little girl is [SPOILER REDACTED] but it turns out that actually [SPOILER REDACTED]
34. What if Steve Wynn was secretly relieved at being ousted from his casino empire because now he has more time to play Fortnite?
35. The phrase "tater mitt"
36. Hangnails
37. Other people's hangnails
- 37a. Whether Hangnail would serve better as a band name or a supervillain name
38. The finality of death, specifically, the terrifying but obsessively compelling conundrum of trying to imagine the annihilation of your being and subjectivity, which necessarily entails trying to imagine the annihilation of the very activity of *imagining itself*
39. Surreptitiously checking Facebook on your phone even though publicly you're always sanctimoniously groaning, "I'm so over Facebook!"
40. Our ambition to be a social-media influencer
41. Going to marijuana dispensaries just to marvel at the bewildering range of cannabis products to sort of familiarize yourself with this strange new world, but you feel guilty just browsing so you always end up buying something nominal, but you don't actually partake that often, so you've got his awkward home drug shrine with a growing hoard of gummies, tinctures, pre-rolls, vape pens, and edibles that will take years to consume, and so perhaps ironically the thought of cannabis now fills you with anxiety and low-grade dread
42. Your secret longing to be able to turn off your accumulated carapace-like force-field of defensive cynicism long enough to read one of those of famous self-help books like *The Power of Now* with earnest open-mindedness and a true desire to change and grow as a person
43. Speculating about the best Weezer song for Toto to remake
44. Whether you're unhappy because the notions of happiness you're chasing are false, or you're unhappy because you're chasing perfectly valid notions of happiness and the *chasing* is the problem, or you're unhappy because you're actually happy but are a victim of late capitalism-induced systematic programmed holistic dissatisfaction
45. How there are so many podcasts and it's like this exciting new era of storytelling and journalism and you've listened to like three
46. Now that I think about it, Undertow would also make a cool band name or supervillain name
47. Futzin' around with the font size and style of your purported novel-in-progress that currently stands at 2,073 words
48. How these days you play video games not to enjoy the games but to test and monitor whether you're actually *enjoying* playing them, a sort of hedonically neutral meta-game
49. The need for shorter and funnier items in this list right about now
50. The August issue of *Desert Companion*, obv
51. The now impending

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