

INSIDE

**Lots of New
Year's Eve fun**

W
weekender

**THE
YEAR
IN
FOOD**

**Lots of trends emerged during
Siouxland's year of gastronomy**

MANY EVENTS THIS WEEK

QUESTION OF THE WEEK

What trend would you like to see go away in 2024?



Jared McNett
Online editor/Reporter
mcnett@siouxland.net
"I'd be pleased as punch if the Marvel movies just went away completely in 2024."



Earl Horlyk
Staff Writer
earl.horlyk@lee.net
"For Pete's sake, let Elon Musk's 15 minutes of fame be over in 2024!"



Mason Dockter
Staff Writer
mdockter@siouxland.net
"Those steel or rubber wedding bands. And yes, I've heard all the justifications for why people wear them, so spare me."

Have a question you'd like us to answer? Send it to events@siouxland.net and it may end up on this page.

CALENDAR

MUSIC

Five Cent Ride - A Night of Jazz, 8 p.m., Dec. 29; Vangarde Arts, 416 Pierce St. Information: <http://www.vangardearts.com/events>.

New Year's Eve Bash
Featuring: The Spazmatics, 9 p.m., Dec. 31; Hard Rock Casino, 111 3rd St. Information: 712-226-7600.

Bob Merchant & The Shadows - Winter Dance Party, 8 p.m., Jan. 13; Vangarde Arts, 416 Pierce St. Information: <http://www.vangardearts.com/events>.

NMM Live - Rawlins Piano Trio, 2 p.m., Jan. 28; National Music Museum, 414 East Clark St., Vermillion, S.D. Information: 605-658-3450.

Casey Donahew, 8 p.m., Feb. 10; Hard Rock Casino, 111 3rd St. Information: 712-226-7600.

NMM Live - Andrea Ross & Robbie Erhard, 12 p.m., Feb. 16; National Music Museum, 414 East Clark St., Vermillion, S.D. Information: 605-658-3450.

Sioux City Symphony Orchestra Elgar: Symphony No. 1, 7:30 p.m., Feb. 17; Orpheum Theater, 528 Pierce St. Information: 712-277-2111.

Journey, 7:30 p.m., Feb. 28; Tyson Events Center, 401 Gordon Drive. Information: 712-279-4850.

NMM Live - Humbletown, 12 p.m., March 1; National Music Museum, 414 East Clark St.,

Vermillion, S.D. Information: 605-658-3450.

That Arena Rock Show, 8 p.m., March 1; Hard Rock Casino, 111 3rd St. Information: 712-226-7600.

Sam Hunt Outskirts Tour 2024, 7:30 p.m., March 14; Tyson Events Center, 401 Gordon Drive. Information: 712-279-4850.

NMM Live - Molly Haddad & Logan Wadley, 12 p.m., March 15; National Music Museum, 414 East Clark St., Vermillion, S.D. Information: 605-658-3450.

Sioux City Symphony Orchestra Windborne's Music Of Led Zeppelin, 7:30 p.m., March 16; Orpheum Theater, 528 Pierce St. Information: 712-277-2111.

NMM Live - Jason Laczkoski & Brett Cooper, 12 p.m., March 29; National Music Museum, 414 East Clark St., Vermillion, S.D. Information: 605-658-3450.

Mania - The ABBA Tribute, 7 p.m., March 30; Orpheum Theater, 528 Pierce St. Information: 712-279-4850.

Sioux City Symphony Orchestra Sarah Change And Copland, 7:30 p.m., April 20; Orpheum Theater, 528 Pierce St. Information: 712-277-2111.

ART

Sioux City Art Center: Teo Nguyen: Việt Nam Peace

Project, Aug. 17 to Jan. 14; Judy Onofrio: Deep Dive, Sept. 21 to Feb. 11; Therman Statom: Novella, Feb. 1 to July 14; Youth Art Month Exhibition: Elementary School Students, Feb. 24 to April 21; ARTcetera 2024, March 22 to April 12; Grant Wood's Corn Room mural, ongoing; Earth-Water-Light, ongoing.

OUTDOORS

Totally Turtles!, 10 a.m., Dec. 28; Dorothy Pecaut Nature Center, 4500 Sioux River Road. Information: 712-258-0838.

THEATER

Joe Gatto's Night of Comedy, 7 p.m., Jan. 12; Orpheum Theater, 528 Pierce St. Information: 712-279-4850.

Baby Shark's Big Broadway Tour, 10 a.m., Feb. 3; Orpheum Theater, 528 Pierce St. Information: 712-279-4850.

Jesus Christ Superstar, 7:30 p.m., Feb. 13; Orpheum Theater, 528 Pierce St. Information: 712-279-4850.

Charlie Behrens Good Old Fashioned Tour, 8 p.m., Feb. 23; Orpheum Theater, 528 Pierce St. Information: 712-279-4850.

Blippi: The Wonderful World Tour, 6 p.m., April 5; Orpheum Theater, 528 Pierce St. Information: 712-279-4850.

PLEASE SEE CALENDAR, PAGE 3



X @SCWeekender

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The Weekender is published every Thursday by Sioux City Journal Communications, 2802 Castles Gate Drive, Sioux City, Iowa, 712-293-4313, email, events@siouxland.net. The Weekender welcomes unsolicited submissions, but is in no way responsible for their safety, return or publication. Opinions expressed herein are those of the writer(s) and may not reflect the opinion of the Weekender, its management and employees or its advertisers. Please recycle.

Your comments welcome

Have something to say? We'd like to hear it. Seriously. Call 712-293-4229 or email events@siouxland.net

Contributors

Tim Hynds and Jesse Brothers



CARTOON



ON THE COVER: Chef Reggie Frazier went from a food vendor at the Ho-Chunk Village Farmers Market to the owner of R-EATZ, a brick-and-mortar eatery in Winnebago, Nebraska, in less than a year's time. He credited a menu of comfort food like steak nachos for his success. Photo by Earl Horlyk.

Calendar

Come From Away, 7:30 p.m., April 24; Orpheum Theater, 528 Pierce St. Information: 712-279-4850.

The Cher Show, 7 p.m., June 3; Orpheum Theater, 528 Pierce St. Information: 712-279-4850.

COMMUNITY

"Restored" Young Adult ABIDE Retreat at Okoboji, Dec. 29-Dec. 31; Okoboji Lutheran Bible Camp, 1203 Inwan St., Milford, Iowa. Information: 712-337-3306.

Ann Rehan Goebel Foundation Winter Gala, 6 p.m., Feb. 24; South Sioux City Marriott Riverfront, 385 East 4th St., South Sioux City. Information: 712-898-1043.

SPORTING

World Championship Motorcycle Ice Racing, 7 p.m., Jan. 13; Tyson Events Center, 401 Gordon Drive. Information: 712-279-4850.

Sioux City Stampede Rodeo, 7 p.m., Feb. 9, 10; Tyson Events Center, 401 Gordon Drive. Information: 712-279-4850.

Harlem Globetrotters, 7 p.m., March 28; Tyson Events Center, 401 Gordon Drive. Information: 712-279-4850.

Hot Wheels Monster Trucks, 12:30 p.m., 7:30 p.m., May 11; 2:30 p.m., May 12; Tyson Events Center, 401 Gordon Drive. Information: 712-279-4850.

HISTORICAL

NMM Special Exhibition "As Good As Gold: The First 50 Years", Jan. 20 to Dec. 30; National Music Museum, 414 E. Clark St., Vermillion, S.D. Information: 605-658-3450.

CONTINUING EVENTS

Breathe Yoga & Meditation Class, 5:30 p.m., Dec. 28, Jan. 2, 4, 9, 11, 16, 18, 23, 25, 30; 9 a.m. Dec. 30, Jan. 6, 13, 20, 27; Breathe Yoga & Meditation Center, 1551 Indian Hills Dr. Building C. Information: 712-293-4900.

Siouxland Discovery Barbershop Chorus Rehearsal, 7 p.m., Jan. 8, 15, 22, 29; St. Mark Lutheran Church, ELCA, 5200 Glenn Ave. Information: 712-212-3633.

Saturday Crafting in the Studio, 1 p.m., Dec. 30, Jan. 27, Feb. 24, March 23; Gilchrist Learning Center, 220 Pierce St. Information: 712-279-6580.

Imagination Station Open Studio, 10 a.m., Jan. 29, Feb. 26, March 25, April 29; Gilchrist Learning Center, 220 Pierce St. Information: 712-279-6580.

New car museum to debut at Le Mars Art Center fundraiser

LE MARS, Iowa — The Le Mars Art Center will host "That's Amore," a Valentine's Day red carpet fundraising event celebrating 50 years of the Art Center, while featuring the debut of a new one-of-a-kind car museum from 6 - 10 p.m. Feb. 10, 2024.

The event will take place at The Garage at 800, 800 Prospect St.

SW, which features a collection of classic automobiles, vintage gas/oil and automotive signs and other memorabilia.

The Garage at 800 is owned by Mike and Cheryl Wells, who say the space can be used as a venue for corporate events and other special occasions.

"I love cars and I love Le Mars,"

said Mike Wells, who added that the car museum will recreate downtown Le Mars in the 1950s, including a Chevy dealership, Standard gas station, the Royal movie theater and more.

The "That's Amore" part of the program will feature live music, dancing and authentic Italian cuisine by Steve Papero and

restaurateur Joe Sitzmann.

"That's Amore" will also feature a live auction with proceeds going toward supporting the Le Mars Art Center and its programs.

For more information about the Le Mars Art Center, go to lemarsart.com. Ticket information on "That's Amore" can be found at eventbrite.com/e/774098097247.

Nature Center collects trees



Jim Henning, a resource naturalist at the Dorothy Pecaut Nature Center, removes a garbage bag from one of the Christmas trees piled up at the entrance of the Sioux City nature center. The center is at 4500 Sioux River Road. TIM HYND, SIOUX CITY JOURNAL

The Woodbury County Conservation Board will be collecting undecorated Christmas trees, now Jan. 17, at the Dorothy Pecaut Nature Center, 4500 Sioux River Road.

Trees should be clean with no ornaments, tinsel,

lights price tags stands or plastic bags and may be placed in the nature center's parking lot.

The nature center contains two miles of hiking trails. The trees will be chipped and placed on the trails to provide a better walking surface to prevent erosion.



Dordt releases holiday song

SIOUX CENTER, Iowa – Dordt University's Dordt Worship recently released a Christmas song called "Free (This Joy)," which is now available on Spotify and Apple.

The song, a mashup of "Joy to the World" and Life Church Worship's "Free (This Joy)," begins somberly before making a hairpin turn into classic rock and roll.

In addition to featuring musician and producer Carey Luce on keyboard, "Free (This Joy)," features many Dordt student musicians including sophomore David Condor, senior Deborah Nogueira Cordeiro, junior Joana Franca Correlia, junior Nicole Mahoney and sophomore Clair Wiart.

Director of production arts Alex Priore produced the song.

"I love Christmas music," Priore said. "In fact, I've put out Christmas music every year for the past nine years. This year, it was great to make our Christmas music more focused on Dordt students to highlight their talents and abilities. It was also fun to take a familiar song and introduce something new to it."

Located in Sioux Center, Iowa, Dordt University is an institution of higher education committed to the Reformed Christian perspective.

UScellular donates to LAMB

This holiday season, UScellular donated a variety of items to LAMB Arts Regional Theatre to help with "behind the scenes" needs.

With its "Gift of Connection" program, UScellular donated \$5,000 worth of tools and other supplies to support LAMB's mission to enrich the arts in Siouxland through performance and education.

This donation includes tools to build sets and props for upcoming shows, as well as several clothing racks to accommodate LAMB's large collection of costumes.

"For more than 40 years, LAMB Arts Regional Theatre has brought quality theatrical



productions and educational programs to Siouxland, so this donation of tools and equipment will help to keep the theatre going behind the scenes," UScellular Agent Development Manager Chris Conley said. "At UScellular, we strive to unleash the power of our communities and are excited to help connect people to what matters most this holiday season."

The contribution is among 40 "Gift of Connection" nonprofit donations to organizations across the country in honor of UScellular's 40th anniversary.

The company will help organizations that bring people and communities together to enjoy genuine connections through arts, music, sports and food with needed supplies.

"UScellular's donation will be used to prepare almost all of LAMB Theatre's upcoming shows," LAMB Arts Regional Theatre Administrator Brock Bourek said. "We appreciate UScellular's support for our theatre."

Since 2009, UScellular has invested more than \$35 million in monetary donations, technology resources and countless experiences to nonprofit organizations across the country.

SUX 6

THE BEST THINGS TO DO IN SIOUXLAND

1 Go Muskies on NYE!

The traditional symbol of New Year's is a baby with a sash that says "2024." Why can't the symbol for New Year's Eve be a hockey player with a few teeth knocked out of his mouth? Meh, we're just workshoping the idea. BTW: The Sioux City Musketeers will be taking on the Omaha Lancers at 7:05 pm. Sunday at the Tyson Events Center, 401 Gordon Drive.



2 New Year's Nerds!

Is it hip to be square? If you're one of The Spazmatics, it is probably quite lucrative. The geeky guys will be welcoming in the new year with an 8 p.m. Sunday concert at Hard Rock Hotel & Casino's Anthem, 111 Third St.

3 Two rockin' bands, one rockin' night!

What's better than seeing the Siouxland's Choice award-winning Ben Grillet & the Black Bloods? Well, seeing them on the same stage as the Travis Barnes Band. See this double-header beginning at 8 p.m. Sunday at The Marquee, 1225 Fourth St.



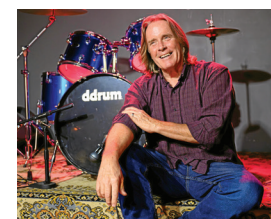
4 'Mad' times on Fourth St.!

Nope, Madison Avenue isn't simply a street in New York. It is also a band headed by Sioux Cityan Madison Zeller. The group will be playing an 8 p.m. Sunday show at Beer Can Alley, 1109 Fourth St.



5 Jazz, funk & rap?

Leave it to Vangarde Arts impresario Brent Stockton for stacking the deck when it comes to NYE variety. Coming to the 416 Pierce St. venue will be Five Cent Ride, a quintet that performs swing, funk, Latin and soul. Opening up the 8 p.m. show will be the rap/jazz duo Soul Storm. Do all of these different genres of music really go together? We don't know and we're more interested in the Champagne.



6 Will 2023 end swimmingly?

The band Above the Ground Pool Party will be playing a NYE show at 9 p.m. Sunday at the Ickey Nickel, 4700 41st St. Must you wear swimming attire if you decide to go? Well, that's what we'll be wearing.

MOVIES

THURSDAY, DEC. 28, 2023 - WEDNESDAY, JAN. 3, 2024



'THE COLOR PURPLE'

(Rated PG-13 for mature thematic content, sexual content, violence and language)
A woman faces many hardships in her life, but ultimately finds extraordinary strength and hope in the unbreakable bonds of sisterhood.



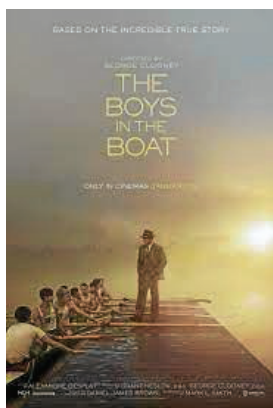
'FERRARI'

(Rated R for some violent content/graphic images, sexual content and language)
Set in the summer of 1957, with Enzo Ferrari's auto empire in crisis, the ex-racer turned entrepreneur pushes himself and his drivers to the edge as they launch into the Mille Miglia, a treacherous 1,000-mile race across Italy.



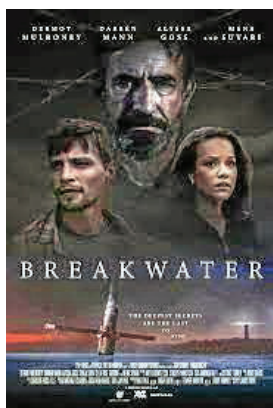
'GOOD GRIEF'

(Rated R for language and brief drug use)
When his husband unexpectedly dies, Marc's world shatters, sending him and his two best friends on a soul-searching trip to Paris that reveals some hard truths they each needed to face.



'THE BOYS IN THE BOAT'

(Rated PG-13 for language and smoking)
A 1930s-set story centered on the University of Washington's rowing team, from their Depression-era beginnings to winning gold at the 1936 Berlin Olympics.



'BREAKWATER'

(Rated R for violence, language and some sexual material)
A young ex-con risks his newfound freedom to track down the estranged daughter of a fellow inmate, and unknowingly brings a devil from her past straight to her doorstep.

NEW DVD RELEASES FOR THE WEEK

'Butcher's Crossing'
'Hitman'
'The Other Zoey'
'Token Taverns'
'The Wandering Earth'

SHOWTIMES

LOCAL THEATERS

Promenade 14

924 Fourth St., 712-277-8300
Wonka 1:00 1:20 1:40 3:40 4:10
4:20 6:40 7:20 7:40
Maestro 1:15 4:10 7:05
Godzilla Minus One 1:00 4:00
7:00
Hunger Games: The Ballad of
Songbirds and Snakes 12:50
4:10 7:50
The Boy and the Heron 1:10
4:15 7:15
Napoleon 12:50 6:40
Wish 1:50 4:15 6:50 9:20
Thanksgiving 4:10
Trolls Band Together 1:30 4:15
6:45

AMC Southern Hills 12

4400 Sergeant Road, 712-276-3062
Wonka 1:00 4:00 7:00
Aquaman and the Lost
Kingdom 12:10 2:05 3:05 5:00
6:00 8:00 8:50
Migration 12:00 12:30 2:30
3:00

Anyone But You 2:30 5:00

7:30

Godzilla Minus One 3:15 6:10

The Iron Claw 1:00

www.amctheatres.com

Royal 3 Cinema

33 Central Ave SW., Le Mars, IA, 712-564-1778

Wonka 7:00

Trolls Band Together 7:10

Napoleon 6:50

www.royal3cinema.com

Pioneer 3 Theater

110 S. 11th St., Nebraska City, NE 402-873-6487

Wonka 7:05 9:45

Migration 7:00 9:35

Aquaman and the Lost

Kingdom 6:30 9:30

www.acxcinemas.com

Main Street 7

866 E. 23rd St., Fremont, NE 402-727-8986

www.acxcinemas.com

See website for showtimes

Majestic Theatre

310 Main St., Wayne, NE 402-833-1833

www.majesticonmain.org

See website for showtimes

Coyote Twin

10 E Main St., Vermillion, SD 605-624-3331

vermilliontheaters.com See website for showtimes

Holland Plaza Theater

717 Eighth St. SE Orange City, IA 712-737-8866

The Hunger Games: The Ballad of Songbirds and Snakes 7:00

Wonka 7:20

Wish 7:30

krullcinemas.com

Main St. 3

401 Ninth St., Sheldon, IA Trolls Band Together 6:30 9:00

Wonka 6:20 9:10

Wish 6:40 9:00

krullcinemas.com

STI testing: It's snow big deal.

Sexually transmitted infections (STIs) like gonorrhea and chlamydia are both more common and easier to get than you might think. Many people experience no symptoms. If you are sexually active, make STI testing part of your regular health routine!



Find a testing location near you:
[gettested.cdc.gov](https://www.gettested.cdc.gov)

Public Health
IOWA HHS



THE YEAR IN EATS

From Scooby snacks to spicy drinks to meaty Mexi-fries, here are our favorite 2023 foods

BY EARL HORLYK

2023 will go down as the year we discovered beer and tacos can become BFFs, that the tastiest Cajun cuisine can be found on Native American reservations, and that blueberry vanilla goat cheese was actually, you know, like a thing.

Yes, this year has truly been an eventful one for Siouxland foodies and the Weekender has been your opinionated dinner companion during the past twelve months.

Grab a knife, a fork, and some antacid as we relive some of the favorite food from moments from 2023.

PO' BOYS & FRY BREAD

In a small restaurant located inside the Ho-Chunk Plaza, Reggie Frazier makes the most mouth-watering food on the Winnebago Reservation.

So, what was on the menu on a Friday in June? It was an Alaskan Po' Boy Sandwich, served with a zesty Cajun sauce and a Creole-inspired Cole slaw.

"The Po' Boy is one of the most popular lunchtime offerings," Frazier said. He owns R-EATZ, a 504 Ho-Chunk Plaza cafe with his wife Rita. "It's almost as popular as our Chinese Beef and Broccoli our Pulled Pork Nachos."

Wait, N'Awlins-style Po' Boys, Asian cuisine and south-of-the-border fare? That wasn't what we were expecting from an eatery inside of a Native American Reservation in Northern Thurston County, Nebraska.

"I can also make Indian fry bread," Frazier, a culinary school-trained chef, said. "But I like to experiment."

A member of both the Winnebago and Santee Sioux Tribes, Frazier originally opened R-EATZ as a once-every-Friday stall at the Ho-Chunk Village Farmers Market before moving into a more permanent storefront location in February 2023.

"People found out that Reggie

can cook anything," Too Sharpback, on-site manager of the Ho-Chunk Village Farmers Market, said. "R-EATZ quickly acquired a cult following."

Indeed, you'll see a line of customers all the way out of the door of Frazier's small diner around lunchtime.

BURRITOS & BREWSKIS

Jackson Street Brewing's Dave Winslow is betting a freshly made carne asada taco will make you reach for one of his craft brew creations.

That's why El Comal, an eatery featuring authentic Mexican food, opened up inside Jackson Street Brewing's 607 Fifth St.'s tasting room.

When Winslow opened El Comal – or "The Griddle" in Spanish – back in July, he enlisted Leo Mendez, a food industry veteran.

Self-trained, Mendez started cooking at the ripe old age of 8.

"Leo's family owns La Victoria, a grocery store which is known for having the best meat department in Sioux City," Winslow said. "Leo was the store's butcher."

In addition to tacos, burritos and tortas, Mendez recommended El Comal's Carne Asada Fries, which is a loaded plate of French fries buried in a sea of beef, tomatoes, peppers



EARL HORLYK, THE WEEKENDER

PLEASE SEE EATS, PAGE 7

You don't expect to find a New Orleans-inspired Po' Boy – featuring Alaskan Cod and a Cajun sauce – on a Winnebago, Neb. restaurant menu, but R-EATZ's Reggie Frazier believes in giving his customers plenty of variety.



JESSE BROTHERS. THE WEEKENDER
Leo Mendez holds a plate of asada fries on the left and tacos on the right both of which he makes for customers at El Comal inside Jackson Street Brewing in Sioux City, Iowa.



JESSE BROTHERS
A pair of tacos, one beef, the other pork are shown on the counter at Jackson Street Brewing where customers can order Mexican food.

Eats

FROM 6

and a zesty sauce.

"The Carne Asada Fries is a perfect meal for you to share with someone else," Winslow said. "But it is so good, you'll probably eat it all by yourself."

A NEW TAKE ON THE MEAT-AND-CHEESE TRAY

Is there anything more "Midwestern" than a meat-and-cheese tray?

Riley Sawyer didn't think so. Growing up, the Dakota Dunes resident remembered the elaborate platters her mom would make, containing a multitude of prepared meats, cheeses and crackers.

"They were always delicious and people loved 'em," she said. "Personally, I thought they could be a bit prettier."

Learning the art of charcuterie – a French term that basically means fancy meat-and-cheese tray, Sawyer started Dunes Cheese Gal in 2019.

"I started out doing trays for family," she told the Weekender



TIM HYNDY, THE WEEKENDER
Riley Sawyer display one of her artistic charcuterie board. A fulltime Dakota Valley High School English teacher, Sawyer started her home-based Dunes Cheese Gal business in 2019.

in November. "Then, they'd recommend me to their friends."

When creating a Dunes Cheese Gal charcuterie board, Sawyer makes sure to include meats like prosciutto as well as regular and peppered salami.

In addition, she'll add visual interest with fresh fruits and jams as well as savory and salty stuff to activate a person's taste buds.

So, what is the Dunes Cheese



TIM HYNDY, THE WEEKENDER
How can you give a meat-and-cheese tray more panache? Arrange food in an artistic manner, said Dunes Cheese Gal's Riley Sawyer.

PLEASE SEE EATS, PAGE 8



JESSE BROTHERS, SIOUX CITY JOURNAL

Karley Morris prepares sandwich samples for the “Mouth Watering Mystery” food truck.

Eats

FROM 7

Gal’s secret weapon? Believe it nor, it is blueberry vanilla goat cheese.

“My blueberry vanilla goat cheese is one of my go-to cheeses,” Sawyer said. “It is purple and delicious and everyone seems to like it.”

SCOOBY DOO-APPROVED SNACKAGE

You may not be able to find a multi-meaty “Mouth Watering Mystery” sandwich at a food truck yet, but the Scooby Doo-inspired snack was the big winner during ProStart’s third annual Food Truck Competition held at North High School in March.

A partnership between the Iowa Restaurant Association and the National Restaurant Association Education Foundation, ProStart gives culinary and/or business-minded students the skills needed to make it in the food service industry.

That included creating a “Shark Tank”-like contest where students concocted a concept for a food truck, a marketing plan and a menu proposal which will be evaluated by a panel of industry experts.

“The students had less than a



JESSE BROTHERS, SIOUX CITY JOURNAL

A sandwich sample from “Mouth Watering Mystery.”

month to come up with their ideas,” instructor Kelsey Miller explained. “Some of their plans were so imaginative.”

Ruh-roh, it was the “Mouth Watering Mystery Sandwich” – a meal created by a team headed up by North senior Karli Morris – that won the approval of the judges.

Though your “Shaggy-like” friends at the Weekender had no say in the matter, this sandwich was, indeed, spectacular.

NIGHTTIME IS THE RIGHT TIME FOR NOSHING

For three months, the Yummi Blox food truck lot was filled with food trucks featuring different

types of international cuisine, face-painting, arts and crafts and, even a live DJ.

It was something that Alejandra Amezcua has always wanted.

“Big cities often have these exciting outdoor night markets with plenty of good food, a variety of vendors and family friendly activities,” she said right before the launch of the 712 Night Market at 700 W. Seventh St., “We wanted Sioux City to have its own night market.”

Alejandra and her husband German Amezcua were already veteran food truck entrepreneur, having started La Palapa, which features sweet, spicy and savory drinks, snacks and snow cones similar to the ones found at authentic snack bars in Mexico.

“(The Night Market) is a one-stop shop when it comes to food,” Alejandra Amezcua said. “You can have Mexican, American, Thai and Korean-infused food all in one setting.”

However, the 712 Night Market was much more than just food. She said it was more like a weekly neighborhood festival.

“The food is what brings people to the night market,” Amezcua said. “It is the fun that keeps them coming back.”



Above: Alejandra Amezcua, co-owner of the La Palapa food truck, makes a strawberry snow cone in her truck at the Yummi Blox food truck lot in Sioux City. The La Palapa food truck is sponsoring the 712 Night Market, an entertainment and multicultural food event scheduled for every Saturday night at Yummi Blox, 700 W. Seventh St. in Sioux City

Left: Alejandra Amezcua, co-owner of the La Palapa food truck makes a tamarind diablito in her truck at the Yummi Blox food truck lot in Sioux City. TIM HYND'S PHOTOS, THE WEEKENDER

ADVICE

ANSWERS FOR ALL YOUR WOES



DEAR ANNIE
ANNIE LANE

Uninvited guests threaten wedding day fun

Dear Annie: My nephew will be getting married in a couple of months. They are trying to stick to a budget. On their wedding website, there is a “question-and-answer” page with details for the big day. It clearly states that although they love children, it is an adults only event. It also states that plus ones are not invited.

My youngest brother has asked my sister — the mother of the groom — if he could bring his two kids as well as a guest of one of the children. My sister said yes, which understandably upset my nephew. I also hear that a sister of the bride plans to attend, along with uninvited children, because she does not have a babysitter.

How do you think things like this should be handled? I have no children, but I think it is disrespectful to go against the couple’s wishes. I personally think my sister needs to get in touch with my youngest brother and tell him she misspoke. I’d say his daughters are welcome to come visit but not to come to the wedding. What thoughts might you have on the subject? — **Hoping for a Respectful Wedding**

Dear Hoping: You are absolutely right that the couple’s wishes are to be respected. I’m not sure why your sister felt she had authority over the guest list, but you should tell her exactly what you told me in this letter. It’s your nephew’s special day, and if his guests cannot

follow the rules he so clearly laid out, they shouldn’t attend. Hopefully your sister can reach out to everyone she misinformed and let them know she was mistaken before the news has time to reach the couple and inevitably cause them stress.

Dear Annie: My girlfriend has a 36-year-old son who refuses to work. He has every excuse in the book. No job is right for him. Without any education or training, he wants to make \$20 per hour. Even then, he either quits or gets fired. He has lived off family for all of the five years I’ve known him and currently lives with us. He never found any job, even part-time, last year and never paid any rent. We were forced to move.

Now we are in a 55-plus community that does not allow anyone younger. He has been hiding in the living room and porch. If discovered, the community can evict us. How do we get him out? — **Stuck With GF’s Son**

Dear Stuck: The first step is making sure you and your girlfriend are on the same page. Is she OK with her son living with you? Does she think his behavior is a problem? Assuming she agrees with you, the next step would be to initiate a loving yet honest conversation between the three of you. Give him a timeline to move out, and you can even help him try to find a job. Better late than never.



TWEEN 12 AND 20
DR. ROBERT WALLACE

I’m an excellent student but it never seems to be good enough

DR. WALLACE: My parents are both very successful professionals, and each have what I’d classify as “brainiac” jobs. They’re both bright, responsible and well-regarded in their careers and our local community.

Unfortunately for me, I’m an only child. I say “unfortunately” because this puts all of their focus on me. If I had one brother and one sister, for example, there would only be one-third as much pressure on me.

So even though I’m an excellent student and I study hard, if I’m not perfect, they are very disappointed. I know I’m lucky that I have a good base of intelligence to work with, but at the same time I’m human and will not be perfect, no matter how hard I try.

And beyond this, I need a bit of a social life too. I can only study so long and so hard before I want to take a break and be a typical 16-year-old girl who wants to laugh and be silly for a few hours with her close friends. Thank goodness I have some great friends, because I’d be in big trouble without them to help me cope with the pressure I feel in my life.

I can also add that I was born here in America but my parents each came from a different foreign country, and they met here in the United States at a prestigious graduate school.

What can I do to convince my parents to not be so hard on me and to let me breathe a little? I have a really good GPA and I am ready soon to apply to several great colleges plus I have a very reputable career planned for my future.

But for now, I crave balance in my life, and I crave supportive parents who are nonjudgmental. Is this too much to ask? — **Under Pressure, via email**

UNDER PRESSURE: Your request is not too much to ask, and in fact is quite normal and reasonable. I suggest you explain your situation with both a counselor at your school and one of your favorite teachers.

Perhaps they can assuage some of your parents’ pressure by singing your praises to them and explaining just how responsible and hardworking you already are, especially

compared to your peers.

Sometimes parents take very responsible teenagers for granted and this seems to be the case with yours in my opinion, based on what I’ve gathered. It’s fantastic that your parents are both very successful and I trust you will follow in their footsteps, but in your own way, and they should both be supportive of that. Getting this message through is at times difficult, but sometimes having an independent third party like a counselor or teacher state your case can really help. Give this a try as a first step.

I don’t get asked out enough and I’m lonely

DR. WALLACE: I’m a shy girl in my junior year of high school; I have never asked a boy I like out on a date. I’ve been asked out on dates only twice in my life, and both times I broke things off within two months because I could see that the guys were not right for me.

One started talking down to me and telling me how to dress and how to act, and the other one started to pressure me physically and then he grew distant and cold when I rebuffed his crude advances.

At least I have my self-esteem intact somewhat since I knew to extract myself from situations I knew were not right, even though each time I felt lonely and a bit depressed for several weeks when I resumed my “single” life. My question is, how can I get more compatible guys to ask me out in the future? I’m not bad looking but I’m no beauty queen either. I see myself as a normal, average-looking girl with an above-average heart and mind. What can I do from here? — **Stuck Being Single, via email**

STUCK BEING SINGLE: I commend you for moving on quickly once you knew a relationship was not compatible for you nor in your best interest. That mindset and skill is a very valuable one for anyone of any age to possess, and for you to have developed it quite well at your young age is an excellent accomplishment.

From here, seek out compatibility via commonality in advance as much as you can. Think about what hobbies, skills and interests you have. Then look to network in those areas, both at your school and in your community.

Managing holiday returns

As retailers change policies, here's how to pay less on fees

KIMBERLY PALMER

NerdWallet

If you're someone who likes to return and exchange gifts after the holidays, prepare yourself: Making returns could feel a little different this year.

"It's going to be hard for consumers to navigate," says shopping expert Trae Bodge. "The return policies are all over the place." The biggest change, she adds, is that more retailers are charging fees for returned merchandise.

About 40% of online and brick-and-mortar retailers are charging fees for returns this year compared with 31% last year, according to David Morin, vice president of customer strategy at Narvar, which handles shipping, tracking and returns information post-purchase for online retailers. Those return shipping or restocking fees are generally \$3.99 to \$9.99, he says.

The good news is there are ways to minimize return fees and in some cases avoid them altogether. Here's what experts recommend:

REVIEW RETURN POLICIES IN ADVANCE

Because retailer return policies vary so much and many have recently changed, Morin recommends checking the return policy before you make any purchases, even if it's at a store you've bought from before. "Many retailers are offering an extended return window during the holiday gift season, but always look at the fine print," he says.

In many cases, says Samantha Gordon, deals editor for Consumer Reports, return windows are shorter than in previous years. "A lot of retailers extended their return policies because of the pandemic, and we're seeing those



accommodations go away," she says.

JOIN THE LOYALTY PROGRAM

One of the easiest ways to avoid fees is to join a retailer or brand's loyalty program, which often comes with perks like free returns.

The only downside? Doing so means being on the receiving end of promotional emails about sales and discounts. If you want to limit the amount of marketing going into your primary email account, Bodge suggests setting up a separate email for shopping-related messages.

For Bodge, the pros of joining loyalty programs outweigh the cons. "You can earn points to get free things, you get access to exclusive sales and free merchandise. It's a good practice," she says.

DO THE LEGWORK YOURSELF

Shoppers can also often avoid

return fees by taking the item to the store themselves. "Most retailers are happy to have consumers visit their store," Morin says, so they generally make in-store returns free. Drop-off locations have become more prevalent, he says, for example with Whole Foods and Kohl's accepting Amazon returns for free.

Always keep the receipts, tags and original packaging until you know whether you'll be making a return.

RESEARCH ITEMS MORE BEFORE PURCHASING

Taking the time to select the correct item in the first place can negate the need for returns altogether, Bodge says. "If you're not sure about something, go into the store so you're not taking a chance," she says.

Gordon agrees: "Before you buy it, make sure you want it. Don't just buy the thing that's on sale."

Similarly, if you're buying a gift, think carefully about the recipient's sizing and preferences before making your selection.

BUDGET FOR EXTRA FEES

Return fees are likely here to stay, so Bodge recommends preparing yourself, and your budget, for them. "Ultimately, you may have to pay a return shipping fee between \$5 and \$10 each time," she says. "We should expect to pay for returns for most retailers eventually."

Morin agrees. "Free returns for everyone all the time is likely an unsustainable proposition," he says, especially given the widespread and growing prevalence of online shopping.

Factoring in those fees when making purchases can help reduce surprises later. "If you're placing an order online, you need to get into a different head space about

returning," and go in knowing that free returns are less likely going forward, Bodge says.

CONSIDER SELLING OR REGIFTING INSTEAD

Andrea Woroch, a money-saving expert, says that if making a return isn't possible or if you want to avoid the return fee, another option is to regift the item or sell it online. People can sell clothing and accessories on Poshmark, gadgets on eBay and toys or other goods on OfferUp or Facebook Marketplace, she says.

If you're regifting, just make sure the person actually would enjoy the item. Woroch adds: "Don't just pass something on to get rid of it."



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