



BOB'S THOUGHTS

BOB BAUM

Super Bowl memories

The Super Bowl, that national celebration of everything football, food and drink, is nearly upon us again.

As a spectacle, maybe the Olympic opening ceremony exceeds it, but not much else in sports does. The game even occasionally lives up to those countless hours of pre-game hype.

I managed to witness three Super Bowls in my two decades of covering the NFL's Arizona Cardinals: 2004 at Reliant Stadium in Houston, 2009 at Raymond James Stadium in Tampa and 2015 at what was then University of Phoenix Stadium in Glendale, Arizona.

And every one of them was a thriller. Nothing in sports quite matches the carnival atmosphere at the Super Bowl Media Day. Many so-called "journalists" show up in costumes or ask ridiculous questions. It's a circus.

We made a major tactical error when we decided to drive our rental car to the media day in Houston rather than ride the bus. We parked far from the stadium and I wandered for hours trying to find an entrance that would allow me inside. I lost my temper, fortunately not enough to get arrested, and wandered that sea of concrete like a drunken sailor on shore leave before I finally found my way inside.

Halftime shows are a big deal these days. I saw Bruce Springsteen and the E Street Band rock the house at halftime in Tampa and Katy Perry perform at the game in Glendale.

I don't recall who performed in Houston, probably because I was wandering the bowels of Reliant Stadium in search of whatever happened to a guy who ran onto the field dressed in a referee's shirt. He was hauled off the field but I never found out what happened to him and simply missed a lot of a very good game. New England beat Carolina 32-29.

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BETWEEN THE ROWS

WENDY SCHMIDT

Snow drops and dreams of spring

It's not easy to think of spring and gentle warm breezes in the middle of snow and howling wind. But last week I was reminded that it is time for the snow drop foliage to be up, as they bloom in early February.

Snow drop (*Galanthus*, amaryllidaceae) is suitable for Zones 1-9, and grows from bulbs. Best adapted to cold climates. They have white, nodding, bell-shaped flowers (1 per stalk) with green tips on inner segments; larger outer segments. When needed, divide right after bloom. There is a double-flowered form.

Other varieties include:

- *Galanthus elwesii*, giant snow drop. It has 1 1/2-inch-long bells on 1-foot stems. Blooms March-April in cold climates
- *Galanthus invidiosus*, common snow drop. Dainty 1-inch-long bells on 6- to 9-inch stems, blooms in earliest spring.

Garden chores

- Gently brush off heavy snow from tree and shrub branches. To reduce injury, let ice melt naturally from plants.
- Limbs damaged by ice or snow should be pruned off promptly to prevent bark from tearing.
- * Begin pruning deciduous plants.
- * Swap seed and plant information with your gardening friends.

If you have garden questions or comments, please write to greengardencolumn@yahoo.com. Thanks for reading!

Handling Late-Night Cravings



Abel Uribe/ChicagoTribune-TNS

Cheese cubes marinated in piri piri hot sauce answer the late-night munchies. Mixing in kalamata olives and toasted pistachios might sound like a teenager thought it up, but trust us.

SATISFYING SNACKS

By **JeanMarie Brownson**
Chicago Tribune

Munchies, snacks, treats, whatever you call them, have them ready. For my late-night cravings, I stock a kitchen drawer with dark chocolate bars, spicy jerky, peanut butter protein bars and individual packets of spice cookies and nuts.

Better yet are the containers of spicy marinated cheese cubes and pickled eggs in the refrigerator. High in protein, these bold snacks satisfy without an excess of guilt and regret.

I feel young again when we pull up to the

late-night taqueria after seeing a concert or comedy show. It's fun to enjoy rich, greasy tacos and endless baskets of tortilla chips with mind-numbing hot salsa. I always over-order, over-garnish and then spill on my clothes.

Better to have made the recipe here for short-rib taco soup instead. You'll impress friends who join in on a bowl. No matter the hour, a quick reheat and a few easy garnishes more than satisfies any craving.

Taco soup — what a concept. I first heard of it at a diner in the South. Turns out, the internet offers up dozens of recipes. For good reason. This bowl of soup sports all the luscious

flavors of beefy tacos, but can be made ahead and eaten out of a bowl. I use a combination of beef short ribs and meaty-tasting flank or skirt steak for the deepest possible flavor. Pulling the cooked meat into large shreds proves reminiscent of carne asada tacos.

Set out garnishes like you would see at a taqueria: Bowls of crunchy tortilla chips, minced green chile, diced white onion with cilantro, cubes of avocado and tomato. Shredded cheese boosts richness. Tangy hot sauce and squeezes of fresh lime add spice and a bright finish.

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Mocktails: Fun without aftereffects

By **Genevieve Ko**
Los Angeles Times

My sister took me out for my first drink. It was great until we realized our bodies can't handle alcohol. We both flushed crimson from head to toe, then her heart began to beat too rapidly. That part was not great at all. And neither were the killer headaches the next day. Since then, we've learned we have plenty of fun drinking together without any booze.

We initially experienced the high of sipping delicious mocktails at State Bird Provisions in San Francisco. It was the first cocktail menu we saw that listed nonalcoholic options more exciting than a Shirley Temple. And they were. With the brightness of citrus and berries, our drinks weren't too sweet but balanced sharp, spicy and smooth elements like any well-made cocktail. Fizzy and fresh, they gave us a pleasure high not unlike a nice buzz.

It's easy to get that same good-bar vibe at home. To start, make simple syrup from scratch. It takes only a few minutes and lasts a few weeks. While simple syrup can be infused with anything from spices to chiles, it's especially tasty when it reflects the season and the place. This wintry L.A. version combines the pine notes of rosemary with the scent of eucalyptus in bay leaves. It works just as well in a refreshing citrus spritzer as it does in a warming mug of mulled juice. The former gets the night started and the latter helps end it.

And in both cases, you'll wake up the next morning feeling totally refreshed.

ROSEMARY-BAY SIMPLE SYRUP

5 minutes, plus cooling. Makes about 1 cup.

- 1/2 cup granulated sugar
- 2 sprigs rosemary
- 1 fresh bay leaf

Combine the sugar and 1/2 cup water in a small saucepan. Bring to a boil, stirring to dissolve the sugar.

Remove from the heat and immediately add the rosemary and bay leaf. Cool to room temperature.



Mariah Tauger/Los AngelesTimes-TNS

From left, a fresh yuzu fruit; rosemary-bay simple syrup; yuzu spritzer; mulled juice.

Make ahead: The simple syrup can be refrigerated in an airtight container for up to 2 weeks.

YUZU SPRITZER

5 minutes. Makes 1 drink.

Yuzu is a citrus fruit that tastes like a blend of lemon, lime and grapefruit. Fresh ones or the bottled juice are available online and may be at farmers markets or Japanese or Korean groceries. You can substitute a mix that's 2 parts grapefruit juice to 1 part each lemon and lime juice to get a similar effect, and use the zest of any of the fruits for garnish.

- 1 fresh yuzu, scrubbed
- 1 tablespoon Rosemary-Bay Simple Syrup
- Sparkling water, to serve

Using a vegetable peeler or sharp paring knife, remove the yuzu zest in a long, winding strip. Spiral the zest up the sides of a highball glass, then fill the glass with ice.

Squeeze 2 tablespoons juice from the yuzu and pour into the glass. Add the simple syrup, then top off with sparkling water. Serve immediately with a stirrer for mixing.

MULLED POMEGRANATE JUICE

10 minutes. Makes 1 drink.

You can substitute unsweetened tart cherry juice or cranberry juice.

- 1 cup unsweetened pomegranate juice
- 1 tablespoon Rosemary-Bay Simple Syrup, plus more to taste
- 1 cinnamon stick
- 1 star anise
- 3 allspice berries

Combine the juice, simple syrup, cinnamon, star anise and allspice in a small saucepan. Bring to a simmer over medium-low heat. Taste and add more syrup if desired. Reduce the heat to low and let steep for 5 minutes.

Transfer to a mug and serve warm.