

Casino quandry: To bet or not to bet?

Casinos and gamblers weigh virus concerns

By WAYNE PARRY
Associated Press

ATLANTIC CITY, N.J. — Gamblers and vacationers, who had planned to visit U.S. casinos, expressed a mixture of disappointment and relief over a wave of closings in at least 15 states as officials worked on slowing the spread of the coronavirus pandemic.

Some said they still plan to visit casinos.

Many casinos, where hundreds or even thousands of people touch the same slot machines and gambling chips, remain open. The casinos that remain open say they are stepping up cleaning and sanitization efforts.

Sherry Giordano, an Atlantic City casino regular from Willow Grove, Pennsylvania, has a trip booked for this weekend that will be canceled. But she would have been hesitant to go even if the casinos had been open, because of her husband's health history that could make him more susceptible to the virus.

"I'm less concerned with my own safety, and I think a lot of people have a tendency to think that way, which is both kind of stupid and selfish because we can endanger others," she said. "I not only love gambling, I love meeting people and escaping reality."

"Atlantic City is very important to me and my husband," she said. "But I think it's the right thing to do. I would rather err (on the side of) caution rather than jeopardize a life."

For most people, the virus causes only mild or moderate symptoms, such as fever and cough. For some, especially older adults and people with existing health problems, it can cause more severe illness, including pneumonia, and death. The vast majority of people recover.

Tom Brown, of Edison, New Jersey, canceled a Las Vegas trip last week, and then canceled the rebooked trip for late March that



AP Photo/Wayne Parry

A roulette dealer waits for bets to be placed at the Hard Rock Hotel & Casino in Atlantic City, N.J. Hard Rock is canceling live entertainment at all its U.S. properties for 30 days in response to the coronavirus outbreak, one of many steps casinos around the country are taking in response to the outbreak.

would have replaced the first one. He acted because of concerns over the potential for the virus to sicken his wife, who as a cancer patient undergoing infusion therapy has low resistance.

"We will likely wait several months before considering another casino junket," he said.

Troy Wildasin, an Emmaus, Pennsylvania, casino patron, said that even in the best of times, the sanitary state of casinos left a lot to be desired.

"Not only would this help the chance of decreasing the virus outbreak, but this will also give the opportunity to give the casinos a fresh cleanup," he said. "There is not one casino, regardless of city, that is clean. Hard to do properly when they are open 24/7."

Michael Magbaleta, of Jersey City, New Jersey, frequents casinos in Atlantic City, Las Vegas and Pennsylvania but said he won't be going in the



AP Photo/Wayne Parry

Gamblers playing slot machines at the Hard Rock Hotel & Casino in Atlantic City N.J. As of March 16, 2020, casinos in at least 15 states had shut down due to the coronavirus, including Atlantic City's nine casinos, which were due to close that evening.

near future.

"I'd feel a bit antsy and paranoid going on a casino trip now," he said "As it

is, Wind Creek at Bethlehem, Pennsylvania, closed down, and they have a huge customer base traveling

from New York City to that resort. I'm glad they are taking extreme measures to protect the employees

and public."

Sherry Cannon of Toledo, Ohio, is canceling a Las Vegas trip planned for mid-May.

"I am not comfortable going to any casino anywhere in the world right now," she said. "It makes me sad, but I would rather myself and my 80-year-old mother stay alive and not spread anything to anyone else. I am glad the casino here in Toledo closed, and I'm happy the ones in Detroit closed because if they hadn't, my mom would be trying to get me to go."

Don Battista of Austin, Texas, had been due to fly to Laughlin, Nevada, this week, but has since thought better of the trip.

"Our group decided while we are not elderly, and all healthy, it would be irresponsible to possibly spread to someone in that danger range," he said.

Shelly Bittner plans to leave Breezewood, Pennsylvania, in early April to visit Las Vegas, virus or no virus.

"We still plan on going unless they stop the planes from flying," she said. "Just use common sense. Wash your hands, and use sanitizer."

The shutdowns could be a boon to casinos in states where internet gambling is legal, including New Jersey, where online gambling revenue has been soaring for years.

On Monday, New Jersey Gov. Phil Murphy ordered the closure of Atlantic City's nine casinos as of 8 p.m. EST, after days of allowing them to remain open. The governors of New York and Connecticut did likewise, also including bars, restaurants and movie theaters.

It will be the fifth time that Atlantic City's casinos have shut down since gambling began here in 1978; only hurricanes and a government shutdown have caused such closures before.

As of Monday, casino closures also had been implemented or announced in Maryland, Nevada, Michigan, New Mexico, California, Alabama, Rhode Island, Massachusetts, Indiana, Ohio, Illinois, Pennsylvania and New York.

The ABC's of whole grain's satisfying versatility

By KATIE WORKMAN
Associated Press

NEW YORK — We all know by now that whole grains are good for us and that we should be eating more of them. Anyone who has dipped a toe (or spoon) into the world of farro, brown rice and quinoa also knows how satisfying and versatile the arena of whole grains can be.

But what are whole grains exactly, and which ones should you stock in your pantry?

The Whole Grains Council, a nonprofit consumer advocacy group, defines whole grains as those that contain all the essential parts and naturally occurring nutrients of the grain seed. When grain is processed (for example, by cracking, crushing, rolling or cooking it), some of those healthy qualities can be stripped away.

Nutritionists have long touted the health benefits of whole grains. Especially today, when many people are cutting back on meat, whole grains can provide texture, flavor and often protein.

Some of the whole grains you might experiment with are amaranth, barley, corn (including popcorn!), oats, farro, sorghum, millet, spelt, bulgur, wheatberries, cracked wheat, quinoa, rye, teff, and brown and wild rice. Besides eating the



AP Photo/Katie Workman

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whole grains whole, consuming things made with whole grain flours is another way to get at the good stuff.

Read labels carefully: Some products might say "made with whole grains" or "made with whole grain flours" but the amount of whole grains in them might be very small. "Multigrain" is another possibly misleading term — multiple grains

doesn't mean that all or even any of them are whole grains. Look for labeling that says "made with 100% whole grains."

Whole grains can star in a casserole or grain salad, be served up as a side dish, and bolster all kinds of recipes from meatloaves to fritters. The grains are often cooked before they're used in a recipe, usually in water

or broth. They can also be used in baking, both savory and sweet. Whole grains soak up sauces beautifully, and can be made ahead and frozen.

A handful of whole grains to explore

Brown Rice: Switching to more brown rice instead of white is one of the simplest ways to get more

whole grains happening at the table. Brown rice is rice with the inedible outer hull removed but with the germ and outer layer intact. It is more nutritious than white rice, and has a denser, chewier, nuttier grain. It takes longer to cook than white rice, about 45 minutes, and the ratio of water to rice is about 2.5:1.

Quinoa has been a star of the whole grain world for quite some time now. Although it might seem trendy and modern, however, it was a staple in the diet of the ancient Incas. Quinoa is actually a seed, but is treated and cooked like a whole grain. It takes beautifully to all kinds of seasonings and uses. When cooked, it has a light and fluffy texture, and a lightly nutty flavor. It's got a high protein count (8 grams in a half cup of cooked quinoa), a nice dose of fiber, and is gluten-free.

Millet (actually, a member of the grass family) can be cooked as a cereal, made into flour, served as a side dish, made into pilafs or stuffings, you name it. It can even be popped like corn. It's rich in protein, fiber, vitamins and minerals, easy to digest, and has a slightly sweet, nutty flavor. Use millet in soups, salads and stews.

Teff, a mainstay of traditional Ethiopian cooking, is becoming popular worldwide. The grains are

tiny, about the size of poppy seeds, but they are packed with fiber, iron, calcium and protein. You can use teff in many ways, cooked like oatmeal or polenta, or dry-cooked in a pan and sprinkled on salads.

Farro is often called spelt in the United States, where we are just discovering its charms, but the Italians have been creating farro masterpieces for centuries. The grain originated in western Asia. It is similar to barley, but denser and chewier. Farro is low in gluten, but not gluten-free. There is more than one way to cook it, even on the stovetop. Some people prefer cooking it like rice, with just the right amount of liquid to be fully absorbed. Others cook farro in a lot of water, like pasta, and then drain it.

Bulgur Wheat: A staple in Middle Eastern and Mediterranean regions, bulgur wheat is whole wheat grain that has been cracked and partially precooked. It's terrific in side dishes, soup, pilafs, casseroles and salads (grain salads and green salads alike).

It can be added to meat dishes like kibbeh and meatloaf to boost nutrition and bulk them up. Many people have encountered bulgur as the backbone of Middle Eastern Tabbouleh salad. It is high in fiber, low in fat, with a nice amount of protein and a lovely nutty flavor.