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Take Me Out to the Ballgame Reflecting on the National Pastime

I normally like to keep my newsletter topics on the lighter side. I've talked a lot about cooking, music, books, and my family, but for this edition, I'm going to say something that might be a little contentious ... especially if you're a Twins fan.

That's right, despite making my home in Minnesota for a few years now, I can't shake my East Coast roots. I'm a huge New York Yankees fan. I know this is much to the chagrin of my friends here in Minnesota as the Twins have gotten booted from the MLB playoffs many times by the Yankees. I apologize in advance to any die-hard Twins fans out there! But, hey, at least we all love baseball. And with opening day on April 1, we all have something to celebrate.

While the Yankees are my team, the truth is that I'm a big baseball fan in general. If I travel to a city in the summer, I always check the schedule to see if the home team is in town. I have fond memories of going to Phillies games with my grandfather when I was younger and, before the pandemic shut things down, an annual trip to watch spring training games in Florida was always the highlight of March.

I moved back to New York in '99 during the team's last great dynasty and attended many games during my time there. Even if you aren't a Yankees fan, you can probably relate to the thrill



of watching a game live in person. Especially these days, a quiet sunny afternoon in the upper decks of a baseball stadium sounds like the perfect antidote to the past 12 months. Or for a more energizing experience, an October game at the old Yankee Stadium where I remember being able to actually feel the stadium shake during the playoff games. The new stadium doesn't have quite the same magic, but it's probably better built!

I will say that I'm happy the Minnesota Twins are here. Without them, where would I go to get my baseball fix? Of course, in a normal year, I'm most apt to attend games when the Yanks are in town. Our family tradition is to take the kids to the day games and attend night games with my friends or my wife, as those games tend to go late. We have no hesitation showing up at the stadium in downtown Minneapolis with our Yankees jerseys on. In fact, when the Yankees are on the road, they still tend to draw plenty of support, as evidenced by the signature navy blue jerseys in the stands. I appreciate that Twins fans are accommodating as my family and I show up decked out to support the opposing team.

Between owner-player negotiations and the pandemic, 2020 wasn't baseball's greatest year. I'm really hoping that 2021 will be different, more like previous years. Spring training is already in full swing, so I'm hopeful that bodes well for the regular season. If we could, we'd do as we have in past years and travel to Florida to see my parents, catch a few spring training games, and see how the Yankees are looking this year. In the past, we didn't always last the whole game. If the beating sun didn't drive us out, the kids would start to get antsy. Nowadays, I book the seats with some shade, and as the kids have gotten older — and my sons are playing baseball themselves — we tend to make it most of the way through.

Whether or not fans will be able to attend games in person this year, I know that I'll get to continue a favorite summertime tradition of mine: putting a game on TV and having an afternoon nap. The games are also great background noise when I'm working. Some people like to work with music on, but I prefer hearing the roar of the crowd, the crack of the bat hitting the ball, and the voices of my favorite commentators.

No matter who your team is, enjoy opening day this month!

- Andrew M. Ayers

For the First Time, a Vegan Restaurant Gets a Michelin Star

It's difficult to take animal products out of French cuisine and replace them with lemongrass, seaweed, and fir (yes, the tree). French meals are generally meat-centric, featuring vegetables solely as a side dish. And, even with no meat, how do you cut out cheese and cream?

Claire Vallee, owner of the vegan restaurant ONA, found a way. The name is an acronym, standing for "origine non-animale." And her restaurant, located near Bordeaux, France, was among the 54 restaurants to earn their first Michelin star in 2021. Although a few restaurants in the U.S. and Germany featuring vegan dishes have earned Michelin stars in the past, no restaurant that was 100% vegan has been honored with a star.

ONA had a bumpy start despite this amazing honor. After crowdfunding and securing a loan from La Nef, which specializes in loans for ethical and eco-friendly businesses, Vallee still ran out of money to complete construction. Undaunted, she used social media to rally 80 volunteers to help finish the job over the course of two months. She finally opened ONA in 2016.

"This is a good thing for the vegan community, as this star is evidence that French gastronomy is becoming more inclusive, that plant-based dishes belong there, too," Vallee told CNN.



During the initial phases of the COVID-19 pandemic, ONA went to takeout only. With the rise in popularity of plant-based diets, demand for vegan restaurants has been growing, but ONA still struggled. Last fall, its seven-course menu featured dishes with intriguing combinations of fir, boletus and sake shiitake mushrooms, dulce seaweed, lemongrass, and galangal (also known as Thai ginger).

Today, the restaurant is currently closed because of the pandemic, but the victory is huge for French cuisine. Gwendal Poullennec, the international head of the Michelin Guides, told The New York Times, "The general public might not associate pure veganism with a gastronomical experience." But a Michelin star could liberate chefs who are still reluctant to explore plant-based cooking.

For most of us, international travel won't be on the menu anytime soon — but we hope ONA opens its doors again soon. The world deserves to enjoy ONA's award-winning menu!

Up in Flames

The Fyre Festival's Legal Fallout for Influencers

Influencer marketing has long been a legal gray area, but recently settled celebrity lawsuits related to the Fyre Festival — a failed luxury musical festival — have definitely added some color to the debate.

The idea for the Fyre Festival came from rapper Ja Rule and his business partner Billy McFarland, a 25-year-old CEO of a luxury concierge service. The duo created the event together and touted it as the world's most expensive music festival. They'd also launched an attractive marketing campaign which included celebrity promotions by Kendall Jenner, Bella Hadid, and other influencers. All the while, the organizers knew the Fyre Festival was doomed from the start. In lieu of a multiday, luxury experience, thousands of people were scammed and left stranded in the Bahamas instead.

"[The organizers] had six to eight weeks to pull off something that should have taken close to a year," says Chris Smith, who directed a Netflix documentary on the festival. "But what was most surprising to me was going to the Bahamas and seeing the aftermath of what was left behind and the effect on the people there."

The local economy was devastated. "They had engaged with so much of the local community to try and pull this off. There were hundreds of day laborers working," says Smith. "Fyre had such a high profile that I don't think anyone could have assumed that it wouldn't work out."

As the Fyre Festival fell apart, Gregory Messer — the trustee in charge of overseeing the bankruptcy for Fyre Media — looked into the finances. He began to suspect that there had been "fraudulent

transfers" between the founders and many of the event's promoters, and he began to sue the celebrities and influencers that drove the hype behind the festival.

For example, McFarland and Ja Rule reportedly paid Kendall Jenner over \$275,000 to publish an Instagram post promoting the festival. Although Jenner denied liability, she did not disclose on the post that it was paid and sponsored. Messer's attorney further argued that Jenner had not told her Instagram followers that she'd pulled out of the festival after learning of its disastrous problems.

Although more legal parameters will likely spring up in the future to further define the limits of influencer marketing, this will certainly make any celebrity think twice about accepting money to promote events and brands. And that's definitely for the best!

TAKE A BREAK



SPRING VEGETABLE AND CHICKEN PASTA BAKE

Inspired by TheSeasonedMom.com

Ingredients

- 1 cup cooked chicken, diced
- 1 14-oz can artichokes, drained and quartered
- 1 cup fresh asparagus pieces
- 1/2 cup carrots, grated
- 1 1/2 cups uncooked penne pasta
- 1 3/4 cups chicken broth
- 1/2 cup fresh chives, chopped and divided
- 1/4 cup fresh parsley, chopped and divided
- 2 tsp minced garlic
- 1/4 tsp salt
- 1/4 cup grated Parmesan cheese, divided

Directions

1. Preheat oven to 425 F and grease an 8-inch square baking dish with cooking spray.
2. In the prepared dish, stir together cooked chicken, artichokes, asparagus, carrots, uncooked pasta, chicken broth, half the chives, half the parsley, garlic, salt, and 2 tbsp Parmesan.
3. Cover the dish tightly with foil and bake for 35 minutes.
4. Uncover and stir. At this point, check the pasta to make sure it is al dente. If it's undercooked, cover the dish and return to the oven until pasta is tender.
5. Remove from oven and garnish with remaining Parmesan, chives, and parsley.

TRENDING RAINCOAT STYLES FOR 2021

As April showers arrive, how do you stay dry when dashing from place to place? Luckily, wearing a raincoat doesn't mean looking like Paddington Bear anymore. Here are several raincoat styles you'll love so much you'll be praying for rain.

No. 1: The Everyday, Lightweight Hoodie Raincoat

There's something satisfying about wearing a black hoodie and not having to make other decisions about an outfit that day. The same applies to your everyday, lightweight black hoodie raincoat. Beautifully simple, you can wear it over anything you own — but until the rain comes, you can leave it rolled in your bag or pocket. Yes, it's that compact! Check out Rain's Ultralight Jacket on US.Rains.com, which fits the bill perfectly.

No. 2: The Confident, Classic Trench Raincoat

Just because you have a trenchcoat doesn't mean it's rainproof anymore — so why not buy a fashionable, elegant trenchcoat you can wear rain or shine? A high-quality trenchcoat is super practical, and it'll also give you a classic, on-trend look for years to come. Find yours on Zappos.com, which has beautiful coats that'll last a lifetime at a decent price.

No. 3: The Practical, Stylish Poncho

Ponchos are a rainy day favorite because they're affordable, easy to put on no matter how bulky your clothes are, and generally easy to store once you're done wearing them. If you live somewhere that doesn't rain often or you just prefer the feeling of a loose wrap, then a light poncho might be your best option. Some even include pockets, making your life a little easier wherever you're headed! Try Amazon.com to find diverse styles at various price points.

Of course, we cannot ignore the popularity of Sherlock Holmes. Will his raincoat, the Inverness cape, be the next sensation? Combining elements from a poncho and trenchcoat, the Inverness cape is a unique style that's fashionable and practical! No matter which style you prefer, these coats prove that looking good while staying dry is possible.





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Genius Technology

3 Ways AI Is Changing Our Lives for the Better

Artificial intelligence (AI) became a household feature when Apple introduced us to Siri, and it expanded with Amazon's Alexa and Google Home. However, AI can do so much more than tell us the weather or answer our customer service questions.

Today, AI is more advanced than ever, and as engineers continue to tweak its capabilities, it continues to shape the way we think about the future. Here are three ways AI is expanding beyond computer programs.

Exploring Mars

Putting humans on Mars is NASA's ultimate goal, so it's probing for safe landing sites on the big red planet with the help of AI. For the past 15 years, scientists have relied on the Mars Reconnaissance Orbiter to send photos and other valuable data to NASA. One of the crucial aspects of the planet that NASA needs to study is the craters, both old and new. But expecting the orbiter to find these with precision hasn't always been easy. In 2020, NASA scientists developed an AI software that could detect fresh craters on Mars' surface in the photos that the orbiter sends back. This has already led to the discovery of dozens of once-hidden craters in the orbiter's photos.

Detecting Disease

Our health has never been more in focus than it is today, and innovators know that. Some AI devices now can detect illness just by smelling someone's breath. The bots are designed to pick up on certain odor cues that the body gives off while fighting diseases, like cancer or diabetes. While these machines are still in the implementation and development phases, they have the potential to improve diagnostic testing and find diseases in the near future.

Creating Better Engineering Platforms

Engineers have thankless, albeit powerful, jobs. While they're often responsible for some of our biggest achievements, much of their job is spent tinkering with existing models to improve small components for greater success. Thanks to AI, Stanford University professor Chris Re surmises that engineers may be able to spend more time playing with greater ideas instead. Machine-learning technology is capable of understanding where the pitfalls in a device lie and how it would need to be improved. This can cut down on time spent doing mundane work, and instead, engineers can move innovation along faster than ever.