

LifeStyle Newsletter

April 2011

So Many Vacations, So Little Time

Are you ready for a vacation? Does your ultimate holiday include de-stressing while listening to the soothing rhythms of ocean waves? Taking your mind off everyday issues by immersing yourself in a new culture? Re-energizing by taking on a challenging physical adventure? Here are a few opportunities that may satisfy your vacation cravings – no matter what they are!

Bike or hike the Czech Greenways: Travel from Vienna to Prague, or Prague to Vienna, through some of Europe's most pristine countryside. The Czech Greenways are a web of country roads and trails, many of which follow the former Iron Curtain. The trail is filled with historic towns, picturesque villages, romantic castles, and medieval churches.

Observe the Pacific Flyway: If you know that Black Turnstone, Marbled Godwit, and Verdin are not varieties of granite, then you might want to try bird watching in Southern California. Playa del Rey, the Bolsa Chica wetlands, and the Salton Sea are great areas to watch migration.

Hone your culinary skills: If you're passionate about food, why not travel to Paris and spend some time at one of the most esteemed cooking schools in the world? Le Cordon Bleu Academie d'Art Culinaire offers short programs, lasting from two hours to four days, that will help refine the way you prepare desserts, sauces, breads, and other dishes.

Meditate silently: Researchers have found that meditation increases gray matter in the parts of the brain that are responsible for learning and memory, and reduces regions that are responsible for anxiety and stress.¹ If a few days of meditation and quiet appeal to you, look online for retreat options.

As Mark Twain once said, "Twenty years from now you will be more disappointed by the things you didn't do than by the ones you did do. So throw off the bowlines, sail away from the safe harbor. Catch the trade winds in your sails. Explore. Dream. Discover."

Pizza!

Rumor has it that Americans eat about 100 acres of pizza a day. If you love pizza, pick up some fresh dough at the grocery store and try making one at home. If you have a pizza stone, you've probably already baked some masterpieces. If you don't have a pizza stone, here is an alternative method for making delicious pizza on the grill.

¹ New York Times, "How Meditation May Change the Brain," January 28, 2011

Grilled Pizza

Fresh pizza dough

1 large package mozzarella cheese, shredded (Romano and other cheeses may be used, as well)

½ cup of your favorite pasta sauce

Your favorite pizza toppings (garlic, pepperoni, sausage, mushrooms, onions, etc.)

Divide the dough into six pieces. On a floured surface roll or shape each piece until it is about one-quarter inch thick and round, then let the dough rest. Preheat a grill pan or your barbecue.

Brush one side of each piece of dough with oil and cook it on the grill, oiled side down, for about 2 to 4 minutes. Brush the raw side with oil and flip the dough. Put a spoonful of pasta sauce on the cooked side and spread it around. Add mozzarella and your favorite pizza toppings. Cook until the cheese is bubbling and the crust is done.

What Do You Know About Baseball?

The season is upon us! If you're a fan, you've probably already got your glove oiled and your season tickets in hand. Before you head to the ballpark, test your knowledge of the game by completing this brief quiz.

1. Who is credited with inventing baseball?
 - a. Abner Doubleday
 - b. Henry Chadwick
 - c. Alexander Cartwright
 - d. Bob Uecker
2. What was the first professional baseball team called?
 - a. Chicago White Sox
 - b. Cincinnati Red Stockings
 - c. Cleveland Spiders
 - d. New York Giants
3. In 1968, the pitching mound was lowered. How high was it before the change?
 - a. Six inches
 - b. Fifteen inches
 - c. Ten inches
 - d. Twelve inches
4. What was the term for the stitching used on the first baseballs?
 - a. Lemon peel

- b. Rose pedal
- c. Figure eight
- d. A or B

The Human Brain and Metaphors

The human brain has a hard time distinguishing “between being a dirty scoundrel and being in need of a bath,”² according to Robert Sapolsky, a Professor of Biology, Neurology, and Neurosurgery at Stanford University. That’s because our brains process real and symbolic versions of concepts in the same region – and that can create confusion.

In one experiment, researchers at Northwestern University and University of Toronto asked volunteers to recall a moral or an immoral act from their past. When the session was finished, the researchers offered a parting gift. Volunteers could select either a pencil or a package of antiseptic wipes. A majority of those who had recalled immoral acts chose the wipes. Researchers interpreted this to mean they felt a need to ‘clean up’ after discussing dirty or bad acts.

In another study, researchers from University of Colorado and Yale greeted study volunteers while overburdened with files. On each occasion, the researcher would ask the volunteer to hold his or her coffee. Sometimes the coffee was hot; other times it was iced. Next, volunteers were asked to read a description of a person they did not know. If the volunteer had been asked to hold warm coffee, he or she generally perceived the person described as having a warmer personality!

If you would like to know more about how the human brain processes metaphors, read Dr. Sapolsky’s article, *This Is Your Brain on Metaphors*. You can find it online at <http://opinionator.blogs.nytimes.com/2010/11/14/this-is-your-brain-on-metaphors/>.

Answers:

1. **C.** According to the Columbia Encyclopedia, Alexander Cartwright of the New York Knickerbocker Club set the standards for the field features and dimensions that are used today. The first rule book is believed to have been written by Henry Chadwick, a sportswriter, in 1858.
2. **B.** The Cincinnati Red Stockings was the first professional baseball team.
3. **B.** Pitching mounds were originally 15 inches high. They were lowered to 10 inches to help batters.
4. **D.** A single piece of leather was stitched around a core to form early baseballs. The "x" configuration was called a lemon peel or rose pedal.

²Robert Sapolsky, “This Is Your Brain on Metaphors,” *The New York Times*, November 14, 2010.

Best regards,

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P.S. Please feel free to forward this newsletter to family, friends, or colleagues. If you would like us to add them to the list, please reply to this e-mail with their e-mail address and we will ask for their permission to be added.

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