Other Viewpoints

Connect the dots: local food has value

Growers in northeast Kansas and northwest Missouri have an expanding opportunity to market their produce to willing buyers.

Buying local is becoming a higher priority among consumers. For farmers, it creates a new, largely untapped niche, a study by a Kansas State University researcher has found.

"The theme of supporting local agriculture found appeal across all ages, genders and income levels," researcher Sarah Bernard says.

The appeal of buying locally grown food includes supporting the community, environment and better health. Women are more motivated on these factors, as well as shoppers over age 55. Since women tend to be the primary shoppers for food products, local growers have a chance to reach new customers, Bernard says.

Price, inconvenience and an unfamiliar brand were barriers to buying local food. But once people try local beef, as one example, those factors fade away. The taste and quality apparently make up for any inconvenience and price gap. K-State research suggests producers should give people a chance to sample their food or offer an incentive for a small purchase.

Some local brands have overcome the odds by becoming household names. Shatto Milk Co. and Schweizer Orchard are just two examples. Also, several greenhouses around the region have established reputations of excellence.

Traditional agriculture produces abundant, affordable food for people here and around the world. Local businesses can fill in the gaps with fresh, high-quality meat and produce that meet consumer needs.

Escalating fuel prices likely will make local foodstuffs more competitive. These products also contribute to the regional economy.

The road to value-added agriculture has been a rocky one, but the time appears ripe for farmers to capitalize on their location and help shoppers keep it local.

– St. Joseph News-Press, via the Associated Press

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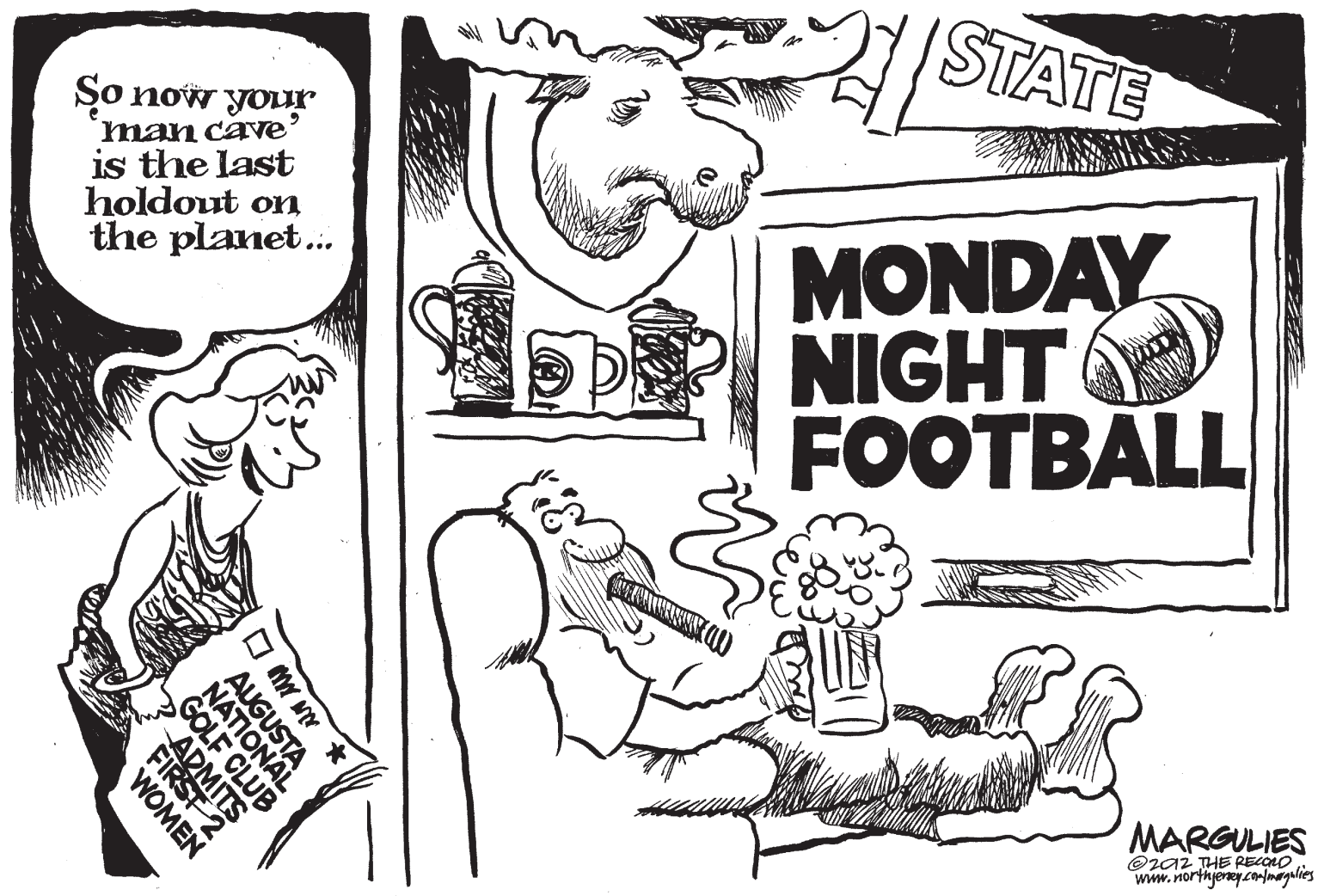

End of fair fine – until next year

Steve Haynes

• Along the Sappa

The last corn dog has been eaten, the last funnel cake bought, the last porkburgers slathered with mustard and sauerkraut.

The seats from the Ferris wheel have been put away for the winter, the train parked in its tunnel and the swings brought down and put away in the storage containers.

The 4-H animals have gone home or off to auction, the exhibits are judged and gone, the money counted and the tickets put away.

The 2012 Decatur County Fair has trundled off to history, its week, as always, altogether too short. Around the county, housewives have begun cooking at home again and people are trying to figure out how to get rid of the five pounds they put on after the cake sale, the funnel cakes and the other fair food. At least until Thanksgiving.

Not that we could stand a two-week fair. The volunteers tend to be plumb tuckered out by the end of a single week, especially the Amusement Authority and Fair Board members, Extension agents and the volunteers who work either every night, or almost every night.

Give us another week of fair, and it might get pretty difficult to staff the Sinko game, the ring toss and the big slide, let alone the Ferris wheel and the Tilt-a-Whirl. The cooks might revolt at the porkburger stand, and how would anyone be able to come up with cars for another Demolition Derby?

Admitting that a week might be all we can stand, though, the fair and carnival make the first week of August one of the best, maybe the best, of the year. Holidays are nice, of course, especially when you can take two or three days off. Other events entertain and please; I'm thinking here of Mini-Sappa, Thanksgiving and Christmas and the days in between, the Fourth of July and a few others.

But fair, oh fair; fair is our favorite week. It's so different from fairs in big towns, which feature many of the same elements, but not the same atmosphere. There's no way to describe a small-town fair and carnival other than family: family fun, family learning, family togetherness.

But the week is great, even if your kids are grown and the grandkids not yet on the scene, or old enough to enjoy the fair. You can run a ride or a game or a booth, and have all the fun you need watching other people's kids.

Just show up at the fair and talk with everyone you know and haven't seen for weeks or months, or who's visiting home from Colorado, or who's just snuck in with a grandson from McCook to run around and enjoy the little fair where no one worries about their kids getting into trouble or into harm's way.

We've learned not to book much of anything for fair week because there's so much to do. It's a holiday from the kitchen and from ordinary work, though there's plenty of work for us at the fair. If we're not working the fair, we take pictures. We track down, or bump into, old friends.

And there's always another shift you can volunteer for, and time to ride the train and maybe one last chance for some fair food.

And then it's over, not soon enough, but all too soon. The fairground is quiet, the colorful rides disappear, slumbering for the next 51 weeks.

We'll be ready.

Steve Haynes is president of Nor'West Newspapers. When he has the time, he'd rather be reading a good book or casting a fly.

What if Supreme Court falls short?

Other Opinions

• Harold Pease
Liberty Under Fire

What if the Supreme Court became an arbitrator trying to please both sides rather than "letting the cards fall where they may," ruling on constitutionality alone as designed?

In the end, neither side is happy, and the court's function is blurred or discredited. What if preserving the court's image became more important to justices than defending the Constitution? Or worse, what if the Court forced a round peg into a square hole, so to speak, to force a decision not intended or argued for by either side, therefore creating new law – a function of Congress alone?

What if all of the above were in one decision, such as the one on national health care? How can the states or people keep the Supreme Court in line with the Constitution? The answer is in the Constitution.

Our Constitution first divided power between the states and the federal government, with the powers given to the federal government listed, defined and limited and those of the states left undefined and not listed, as per Amendment 10. This is known as federalism and is sometimes thought of as a marriage – shared and equal – neither the state nor federal government the master nor slave of the other.

The power left to the federal government is then divided among the legislative, executive and judicial branches. The down side of federalism is that the umpire is one of the three branches of federal government and is likely to rule in favor of a strengthened federal government were it to arbitrate between the states and the federal government. It is equivalent to two adversarial teams playing basketball with the referee a member of the federal team. The balancing component to this lopsided division of power is the doctrine of nullification.

Is it constitutional to say "no" to the federal government when a state believes a Supreme Court decision to be unconstitutional? One with a limited knowledge of the Constitution would say no, and cite Article VI, the supremacy clause. On matters listed in the Constitution he would be right, but this time the Supreme Court has ruled on something where it lacks authority to rule, clearly a state issue, and if left unchallenged damages, perhaps even nullifies, the 10th Amendment, which leaves to the states all areas not delegated to the federal government. This understanding pre-existed any law on health by a couple of centuries.

To curb the umpire – the Supreme Court – should he clearly favor one side, the founders supported the doctrine of nullification. Rather than sue the federal government for exceeding its constitutional power, the 26 states so doing should instead have followed the Idaho example and in essence said "not in our state." The effort to grow the federal government beyond the listed bounds would have been unenforceable if enough states did so.

This has two historical precedents. Thomas Jefferson in 1798 attempted to nullify the Alien and Sedition Acts created by his Federalist Party predecessors. These raised residency requirements for citizenship from five years to 14. Moreover, the law allowed the president to deport "dangerous" foreigners during times of peace and imprison them during times of hostilities. Anyone defaming or impeding government officials, including the president, was subject to heavy fines and/or imprisonment.

Jeffersonians objected on the basis of the unreasonable empowerment of the president and the attack on the First Amendment, particularly freedoms of speech and press. They too said, "no." Because nullification was better understood as part of the "balance formula" of the Constitution and because the offending law was designed to last only until 1801, (Federalists did not want it used against them should they lose the next election), nullification stayed in place.

Next to use the Nullification Doctrine was South Carolina with respect to the 1828 "Tariff of Abominations," believed by them to be unconstitutional. Opponents declared it to be "null and void" within their border and threatened to take South Carolina out of the Union if Washington attempted to collect duties by force. President Andrew Jackson prepared to invade the state. The compromise Tariff of 1833 lowered the tariff and the issue faded.

One might argue that the Civil War ended the Nullification Doctrine, but the real root cause of the Civil War was slavery – I am aware that the immediate cause was keeping the union together – which made a mockery of liberty. The slave issue predated the Declaration of Independence, and I would need another column to show why the war did not exempt the nullification argument.

Critical to the success of the Nullification Doctrine is the number of states committed to it. Obviously one state or a few, unable to prevail at least a majority to follow, would be easily overpowered by federal government power. But if the 26 states which sued the federal government on the mandate now said, "we will not comply," the federal government would be forced to find a face-saving exit and back down. That is the final constitutional check on overreaching federal power. If, at this time, the states do not care enough to preserve their power, they deserve not to have it, or liberty.

Dr. Harold Pease teaches history and political science at Taft College. To read more of his weekly articles, go to www.LibertyUnderFire.org.

Mallard Fillmore

• Bruce Tinsley