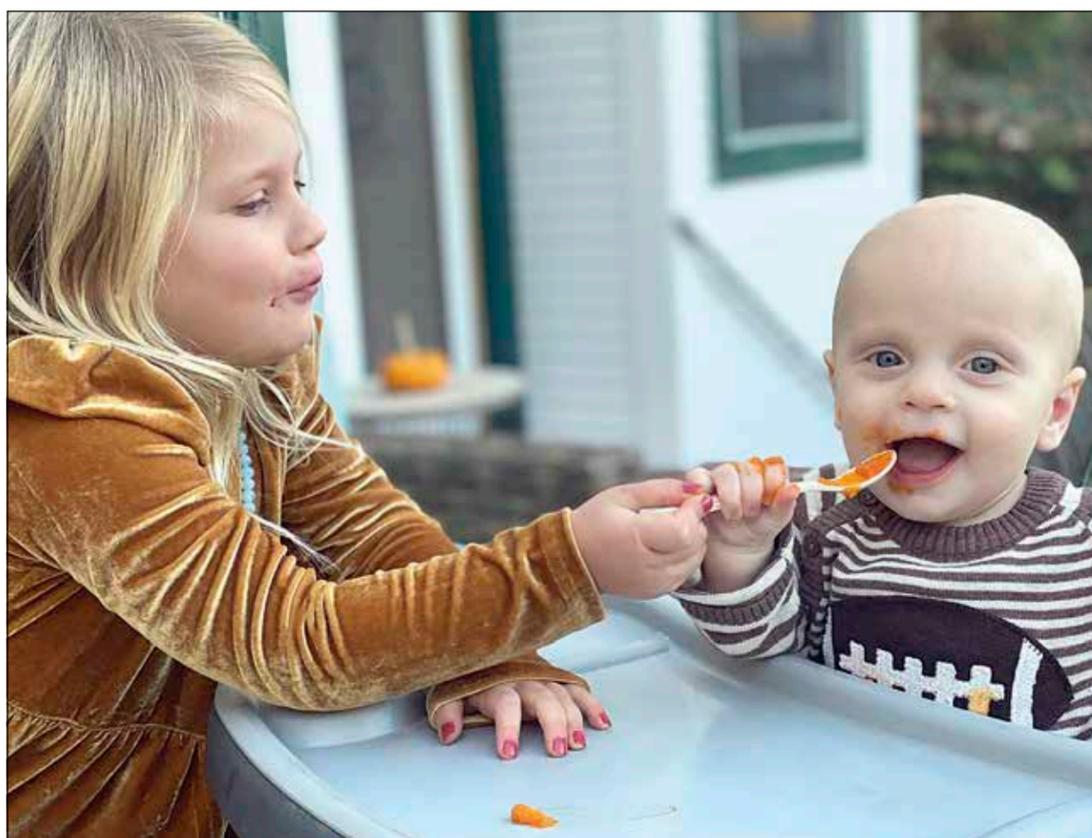


Eye Street



PHOTOS BY LAUREN BENHAM

Nora Benham gets the honors of feeding her brother, Henry, his first bowl of orange mush.

It's not love at first bite — but we'll get there

You're a baby and you don't know anything about anything except that your mother occasionally dresses you as a unicorn ("that's a narwhal") and puts you in a funny hat (newsboy cap) that makes you look like a miniature Babe Ruth. Sartorial splendor aside, Babe, if you were given the choice, what would you like to have for your first solid food?

Recently, this was Henry's dilemma, the 7-month-old little man on the cusp of a new culinary life. "Today we're going to feed him his first bite of solid food," said his mother, Lauren.

Her voice had a catch in it. Milestones. Who knows when we will pass this way again.

If this had been Rotary, Henry and his first bite of solid food would have been what service clubs call the program. The "program" was a person of interest, someone who had a story, to tell and Henry's story was that he was growing up. Growing into a future that may or may not include dressing like a narwhal.

For the program, Henry's mother had filled a small Tupperware container with orange mush, sort of a colorful counterpart to the traditional PowerPoint production. Mush



Henry has fun playing with his food, enjoying his first bites of solid food.

is one of those things you eat in the first part of your life and perhaps in the latter stages and blessedly not often in between.

The orange mush could have been made from a lot of things starting with pumpkins, pumpkins being a principal player in the most recent of seasons. If it were pumpkin mush I hoped, for Henry's sake, that it was the sort of mush that is heaped into a pumpkin pie crust made from sugar, pumpkin pie spice, cinnamon and salt.

Perhaps the mush was sweet potatoes, which would have been my first choice had I any say in the matter. Henry's mom wisely decided against knowing that had I been able to make Cheetos or circus peanuts into an orange mush for a 7-month-old's first solid food, I would have at least considered it.

Turns out, the orange mush was neither sweet potato nor pumpkin, but sensibly something carrot-based.



HERB BENHAM
THE CALIFORNIAN

While applauding its health benefits, part of me felt for Henry, imagining his thoughts as "I wait this long and you give me carrots. Is this how it's going to be?"

Carrots have an identity problem: They're big, they're small, horses like them, we're never sure whether we should skin them because the skin is sometimes bitter but probably contains some invaluable carrot vitamin so we're pretty much toast either way.

In certain iterations and if you're lucky to get a sweet bunch, carrots can be quite delicious. Take carrot cake for instance, especially with soft raisins burrowed in its soft walls and covered with a roof of thick, white icing.

Carrot sticks chilled in cold, salty water and served as an appetizer before a good football game are a fresh, bracing snack. Thank you, Harry.

Please see **BENHAM** | E2

DINING OUT

Sold on sauce, spice of Teriyaki Madness

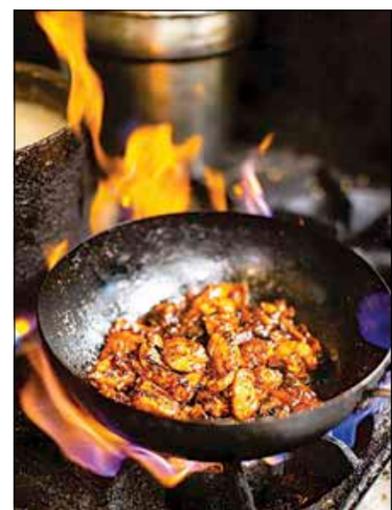
Regular readers of this column know how big a fan I am of Flame Broiler, a once small chain founded in 1984 that we first encountered in visits to Orange County. Thankfully, some smart entrepreneur brought the healthy-eating fast-food restaurant to Bakersfield and we visit their outlets around town regularly.

PETE TITTL
FOR THE CALIFORNIAN

Founder Young Lee founded the chain in Orange County after graduating from UCLA and finding few restaurants serving healthy food. The chain has grown to 180 restaurants in California, Arizona, Florida, Nevada and Oklahoma, with a simple menu of beef, chicken or tofu with or without rice and blanched vegetables.

Now the northeast has a similar chain restaurant, Teriyaki Madness, which opened near Lowe's on Columbus Street,

Please see **DINING OUT** | E2



COURTESY OF TERIYAKI MADNESS

Spicy chicken anyone? Spice up your meal with this protein option at fast-casual spot Teriyaki Madness.

CSUB announces 2021 inductees for Hall of Fame

BY CHRISTINE BEDELL
CSUB Office of Alumni Engagement

The CSUB Alumni Association will induct five standout graduates, leaders in education, business, sports and philanthropy, into its Alumni Hall of Fame in February, during the university's 50th anniversary year.

The five will be inducted during a virtual event kicking off Homecoming Week. The ceremony will not only honor and celebrate the best of Cal State Bakersfield's more than 56,000 alumni but also raise money for alumni programs.

Here is the 2021 CSUB Alumni Hall of Fame class:

MARY BARLOW
EDUCATIONAL LEADER

CSUB degree earned: Bachelor of Arts in psychology, 1994

Mary Barlow has devoted her career to making sure schools are a place where kids can reach their full potential, the

Please see **CSUB** | E2

THE DISH

Give this holiday season the sip with themed beverages

BY STEFANI DIAS
sdias@bakersfield.com

It wouldn't be the holiday season without something to sip on, whether it's a festive coffee, mixed drink or even a soothing tea. Here are a few options to check out this month.

If you've been in a Walmart this fall, you may have already spotted (and enjoyed) this gem. The chain is offering a way to up your eggnog game with **Fireball Holiday Nog**, which is offered exclusively at Walmart.

Having received a sample, I can tell you it definitely tastes like there is Fireball Cinnamon Whisky in it, but the drink is completely nonalcoholic — until you decide to change that.

It's nice to have a drink that's OK for the whole family, just don't

get the kids' cups mixed up with Grandma's spiked 'nog.

It sells for \$2.98 a carton and should be available through the end of the year.

Readers of this column shouldn't be surprised **Tiki-Ko** is on this list, but giving credit where credit is due, the downtown bar is good for a theme and a season.

New offerings to its to-go menu include I Saw Gabby Kissing Santa Claus, which they say is "the best, most Christmas-ey cold drink" the bar has ever made. Starting with gingerbread syrup from bartender Gabby Ossdale, the cocktail also has coconut cream, orange and pineapple juices and Kraken Black Spiced Rum. It comes with a gingersnap cookie garnish.

The whips also get a seasonal makeover with 'nog whips. Eggnog-flavored soft serve is available with Frangelico or Kahlua liqueur or Kraken rum.

All drinks are \$10, available to order at tiki-ko.com. Pickup is available Wednesdays, Fridays and Saturdays from 6 to 8 p.m. (order by noon the day of pickup) at 1919 K St.

Cloud 9 Coffee Co. has kicked off its holiday menu with an Andes mint mocha, eggnog latte and chaidar, described as "Christmas in a cup" with a combination of chai and hot apple cider.

Check out the coffee shop's expanded digs at 5060 California Ave., Suite 130, or enjoy curbside pickup by with online ordering at cloud9coffeeco.com.

Blue Oak Coffee Roasting



COURTESY OF TIKI-KO

The whips continue at Tiki-Ko, this time a festive eggnog flavor with choice of Kraken Rum, Frangelico (seen here) or Kahlua.

(717 20th St.) hasn't advertised its holiday drinks, but I can recommend one that's on the fall menu: the sugar-free sugar cookie latte.

Stick with me here; you'd think a sugar-free syrup for what is a

Please see **THE DISH** | E2

STARGAZING

Big discoveries fuel peer reviews, scrutiny

The Sept. 20 column covered the surprising discovery of large quantities of phosphine in Venus' atmosphere, which could be produced by microbial life living in the clouds. At the end of the column I noted the peer review process of science was going to work finding alternate reasons for the strong phosphine signal.

Study co-author Clara Sousa-Silva noted, "My science tells me the detection is true, but it's pretty wild. I hope that everyone will get their models running and try and find alternatives that explain this. I have reached the limits of my knowledge and welcome the rest of the scientific community to join in the fun."

Well, one thing scientists learn in the process is humility because sometimes a major discovery turns out to be wrong. The physical universe doesn't care about our beliefs or how we wish things would behave. Scientists can misinterpret what the data mean or there is something wrong with the instrumentation that measured the signal or some other process or phenomenon was overlooked in the analysis.

For a discovery as extraordinary as life on another planet, extraordinary evidence is required, and there will be an extraordinary amount of peer review work to try to find an alternate, less extraordinary (prosaic) explanation of the data. More often than not, the physical universe ultimately says the boring prosaic explanation is the correct one, so when you publish an extraordinary scientific claim, you have to be willing to admit when you're wrong.

Now it's looking like, after a lot of scrutiny by other research teams and a re-analysis of the original data by the team who announced the discovery, that the phosphine (and possible life) detection is not so firm. It turns out there was a calibration error with the radio observatory used to study Venus, the huge Atacama Large Mil-

limeter/submillimeter Array (ALMA), the world's largest radio telescope consisting of 66 high-precision antennas installed at a high elevation of more than 16,500 feet in the Atacama Desert in Chile.

ALMA is normally used to study very small, very faint, very distant objects, so observing really bright, big, nearby Venus presented some unique challenges with really noisy data. The original discovery team, led by Jane Greaves, had to push the limits of ALMA to pick out the phosphine signal in the noisy data and now, with the corrected calibration, the phosphine signal has been lowered by a factor of seven.

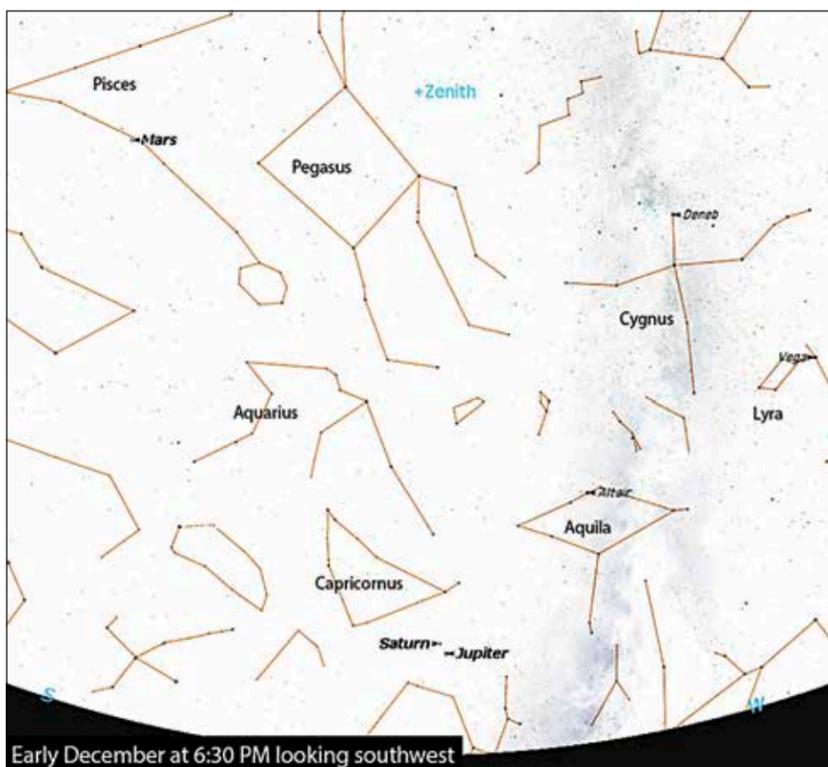
Four other teams have critically examined Greaves' conclusions on the Venus phosphine. One looked for a phosphine signal in the infrared and didn't find it. Another team suggested that the phosphine signal Greaves found could be due to sulfur dioxide, something we know exists in abundance in Venus' atmosphere. Two other teams took issue with the statistical analysis Greaves used to pick out the phosphine signal from the noisy data.

Greaves' team's transparency with their work, putting it all out there for the world to critique has been good for science, but Greaves admits the careful scrutiny by her colleagues has also been a bit bruising: "This process has sometimes been painful, but it's also been good for getting the data right."

With the experience gained from properly calibrating ALMA for big, bright solar system objects, Greaves will be using the radio telescope this spring to take another longer, more detailed look at Venus, focusing on parts of the planet to see if the phosphine amount varies over Venus' face. Even if the phosphine signal turns out to be truly there, other research teams are going to be working on possible ways phos-



NICK STROBEL
FOR THE CALIFORNIAN



Early December at 6:30 PM looking southwest

COURTESY OF NICK STROBEL

The evening sky in early December looking southwest.

phine could be generated via some strange Venus geology. Research continues!

IN THE NIGHT SKY

A bit farther out from the sun, Jupiter and Saturn continue to draw closer together in the evening sky. Tonight they are just 1.5 degrees apart, slightly more than the width of your thumb at arm's length low in the southwest shortly after sunset. By the time the evening twilight is over, they will be slightly more than a hand's width above the horizon. Hopefully, Bakersfield's dust-smog layer doesn't cover them up. On the evening of Dec. 21, they will be just one-tenth of a degree apart and you might have a hard time seeing them as two distinct objects.

Mars is still quite bright but it is no longer as bright as Jupiter. Mars is high in the southeast at sunset among the dim stars of Pisces and it will be highest due south shortly before 8 p.m. The waning gibbous moon doesn't become visible until 11 p.m. as it rises with Leo. By 5:15 a.m., you

should be able to see Venus rising in the east with the stars of Libra.

MIGHTY METEOR SHOWER

The night of Dec. 13/14 is the peak of the Geminid meteor shower. This meteor shower is usually the strongest one of the year and it usually provides good activity all night long. This year should be especially good because there won't be the moon washing out the view.

Unlike most meteor showers, the Geminids are not associated with a comet. Instead, the Geminids are associated with the asteroid 3200 Phaethon, which may be a former comet that has lost its volatiles. The bits of 3200 Phaethon hit our atmosphere at 22 miles per second. Enjoy the show!

Contributing columnist Nick Strobel is director of the William M. Thomas Planetarium at Bakersfield College and author of the award-winning website *Astronomy-Notes.com*.

CSUB

Continued from PAGE E1

way they were for her growing up in a loving but unstable home, and in and out of poverty.

Barlow, 58, is the Kern County superintendent of schools, where her focus has been boosting student achievement, ensuring education equity and access, and implementing technology that helps children learn.

Barlow started out teaching in Weldon and Kernville in the 1990s. At the Kernville Union School District, she founded the Kern River Valley Collaborative, a network of agencies, schools, nonprofits and businesses that provides social services to children and families.

Barlow served as Kernville superintendent from 2002 to 2009 before joining KCSOS. She became superintendent in 2017.

Barlow created the Kern Education Pledge, a collaboration among school districts, CSUB and the Kern Community College District to steer kids from cradle to career, and was instrumental to the growth of the Kern County Network for Children and the success of the Dream Center, which serves foster youth.

RAJI BRAR
BUSINESSWOMAN AND PHILANTHROPIST
CSUB degrees earned: Bachelor of Science in biology, 2000; Master of

Science in health care administration, 2002

Raji Brar is a self-made businesswoman, groundbreaking political leader, and advocate for her community, including CSUB.

Brar, 45, is chief operating officer of Countryside Market & Restaurants, a company she operates with her family and that employs more than 450 people in Kern County.

She is also the first Sikh woman elected to a city council in California, a member of the CSUB Foundation Board and co-founder of the Sikh Women's Association, which awards scholarships, organizes health screenings and operates a hotline for members of the Sikh community.

Brar is a San Joaquin Valley native whose parents came here in the 1970s to escape tumult in northern India. The hard work her parents put into providing a good life for their family, starting with farm work and now running a chain of markets, gas stations, restaurants and more, inspired her to help other Sikh families do the same.

She's served on the Arvin City Council and boards of the Kern County Fair, San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District and Central Valley Regional Water Quality Control Board.

JEREMY GUNN
SOCCER COACH
CSUB degrees earned: Bachelor of

Science in business administration, 1993; MBA, 1999

Jeremy Gunn is one of the NCAA's all-time great soccer coaches, among only a few with titles at both the Division I and II levels and just the second to win three consecutive men's championships. Gunn, head men's soccer coach at Stanford University, has a career record of 297-93-59 in 21 seasons, which by percentage makes him the fifth winnigest active coach in Division I.

Gunn, 49, played soccer at CSUB from 1989 to 1992, becoming a top California Collegiate Athletic Association goal scorer. He served as an assistant coach for CSUB's men's and women's soccer programs for several years then became head coach at Fort Lewis College in Colorado, where his team won the 2005 Division II Championship.

At the University of North Carolina at Charlotte, Gunn led his men's squad to the school's first Division I championship game, and in 2011 he received his second National Coach of the Year honors.

CLARK JENSEN
NONPROFIT ENTREPRENEUR
CSUB degrees earned: Bachelor of Arts in anthropology, 1992; Master of Arts in anthropology, 1999
Clark Jensen is the founder of charitable enterprises that rescue children from trafficking, care

for survivors of modern slavery, and implement transformative community-development programs.

Jensen, 55, founded Global Family Care Network, an organization working in nine countries that protects children and preserves families through prevention, intervention, therapeutic counseling, and alternative aftercare and reintegration. He is director of St. James Research Centre in Scotland, which he founded to research and train practitioners in evidence-based social interventions.

He also founded Hope Alliance India to provide disaster relief after the Indian Ocean tsunami in late 2004; Direct Good, an online crowd funding platform that connects donors to initiatives in the developing world; Purnaa, a manufacturing business that employs survivors of exploitation in Nepal; and the Daughter Project/Bhatri Sundarta girls' empowerment clubs and curriculum.

Jensen's first efforts working with at-risk children was starting Kids Clubs in partnership with Teen Challenge in Bakersfield during the early 1990s.

JOHN MEANS
EDUCATIONAL LEADER
CSUB degree earned: Master of Science in psychology, 1975
John Means is a son of Taft who

went on to become an environmental justice advocate, leader in elected and party politics, and innovator of programs that expand educational opportunities for disadvantaged students.

Today, Means is vice chancellor of educational services for the Kern Community College District.

Means, 73, got his start in community service organizing support groups for farmworkers, then took on local environmental battles against toxic waste, suspected cancer clusters and polluted drinking water. On the Bakersfield City Council, he secured funds for the bike path, and in the Democratic Party made politics more inclusive.

Means spent his early educational career helping Kern High School District students grapple with emotional and behavioral problems and teaching part time at Bakersfield College and CSUB. In 1978 he began teaching full time at BC.

After serving as a dean at El Camino College, he returned to the KCCD to become associate chancellor of economic and workforce development. In his current role, Means pays particular attention to helping Latinos, single mothers and disabled students succeed in higher ed.

Christine Bedell is the senior alumni engagement specialist at Cal State Bakersfield.

DINING OUT

Continued from PAGE E1

right next door to the busy new Dutch Bros. coffee place. I haven't been to Dutch Bros. yet, but my companion looked up the menu online while we were dealing with our Madness up here and found it full of sugary coffee drinks. No wonder there's a line at the drive-thru, even at night.

Teriyaki Madness has a founding story similar to Flame Broiler, originating in 2003 in Seattle, where this kind of food is pretty common. The Teriyaki Madness menu is more versatile than Flame Broiler, and orange chicken and orange chicken as options as well as teriyaki salmon and chicken katsu, and appetizers such as chicken pot stickers, edamame, crab Rangoon and chicken egg rolls. They brag that the teriyaki sauce is house-made and the poultry is hand-trimmed and never frozen.

Like Flame Broiler, it has only limited seating and most get the food to go. If you order it on the app, you can get it delivered.

My companion selected the spicy chicken bowl (\$10.99 for a large) and I chose the steak teriyaki (\$12.49 for a large) and we also got pot stickers (\$4.69) and two chicken egg rolls (\$1.99 each).

By far the best item we sampled on the menu was the spicy chicken bowl, which in my view had the perfect kick, cut into these chunks tinged with red spicy sauce. The poster near the counter said it was addicting and I believe it. My companion thought it all too salty, but I did not agree.

The power bowl can be customized to include only the veggies, which is what she got, but you can also get it with white rice, brown rice or noodles, and even yakisoba style, with the protein, noodles and vegetables tossed together in a wok. Next time. I was less impressed

TERIYAKI MADNESS

1525 Columbus St., 742-1650, teriyakimadness.com

Hours: 10 a.m. to 9 p.m. every day

Prices: Bowls \$7.29-\$12.49, combo \$10.99, appetizers \$1.99-\$4.69

Payment: Mastercard, Visa, American Express, Discover

Dress: Casual

Noise level: Moderate

with my steak teriyaki, because the beef had a steamy sort of taste and texture and didn't have the lively punch of the beef we've enjoyed at Flame Broiler. Perhaps I was put off by the vegetables being overcooked. Very limp, though I did like the variety (broccoli, onions, zucchini, cabbage, julienne carrot strips). The rice was perfect, and the whole bowl did taste better after being doused with that house-made sauce.

The pot stickers and egg rolls were a bit limp and not as impressive as the

spicy chicken. In future visits we will be trying the chicken katsu and the teriyaki salmon, probably in a yakisoba-style bowl.

Food is made to order so be sure to bring your patience. Although dining indoors was allowed on the night we visited, it didn't seem like anyone was planning to eat their meal there.

Pete Tittl's Dining Out column appears in The Californian on Sundays. Email him at ptittl@yahoo.com or follow him on Twitter: @ptittl.

BENHAM

Continued from PAGE E1

I was not sure about carrot mush and I looked to Henry, or more specifically, Henry's face, to see whether carrot mush was an underrated category in the carrot constellation.

A child's face does not lie when it comes to food. Mastery of language does not matter. A child's face will give an instant smile up or frown down.

Nora, his sister, had the honor of feeding him his first bite of orange mush. Henry's mom is keen on photo ops and there is not a much better one than a 4-year-old feeding a baby unless Henry were capable of burying his face into the orange mush himself.

The face does not lie and Henry's didn't either. His was a solid no. The orange mush died on his lips. If this had been a military operation, the orange mush troops were stalled, traveling neither forward or backward.

"I'd better warm it up," Lauren said.

Good idea. Cold carrot mush might work under certain situations but requires a 40-day fast and perhaps the absence of almost any other available foods.

Warm was better. Warm got a look. Warm broke the stalemate enough for carrots to be logged in Henry's baby book as his first food.

Life changes daily and never more than for a baby. Leave town for a minute, or not visit, and kids are on to the next thing, the next bit of wonder and the next taste.

Orange mush is a good start but fun lies ahead. Meatballs, mozzarella and mocha. Henry can look forward to the meals and the memories those meals engender. This program is one for all ages.

Contact Herb Benham at 661-395-7279 or hbenham@bakersfield.com. His column appears on *Sundays*, *Tuesdays* and *Fridays*; the views expressed are his own.