

The Mustard Festival promotion does promote mid-week stayovers, however, and lists special deals at inns and wineries during the week.

Personally, I believe a locally organized off-season festival highlighting Napa Valley wines could attract as many tourists with the same effort and benefit local arts as well as the hotels and restaurants.

More of my views on the subject are posted at www.napalife.com/archives.htm/#mustardfestival.

Arts Council meeting

Speaking of the Arts Council, it presented its draft cultural plan to an appreciative audience at the Opera House Wednesday, and solicited comments and suggestions.

The plan, drafted with the help of consultant Morrie Warsharwshi and about 700 individuals and groups, wisely called for more sharing and coordination, not a new building for community arts, which appears unrealistic. Clearly, a big need is for more resources to implement the many good ideas suggested: One excellent idea was more help for Arts Council director Michelle Williams so her group could match arts group needs with the existing and underutilized facilities. That, however, may not solve the special needs of Dreamweavers Theater, which must leave sets for its plays up and have space for realistic rehearsals.

Other ideas include a yearly art expo and an art and wine festival for the arts instead of the Mustard Festival (not from me in this case).

The new county Arts Commission is also now in place, but much of its role will apparently be coordination and counsel to government agencies on matters like public arts, a hot potato the politicians would probably be happy to toss to artists.

If you'd like to help in any way – especially to make contributions including the use of space or even a building (!), contact Michelle Williams at michelle@artscouncilnapavalley.org or 257-2117. You can read the plan and learn more at www.artscouncilnapavalley.org.

Dinner at Ubuntu

After the meeting of the Arts Council, we stopped in at Ubuntu for an pleasant meal. The menu keeps changing, and what we had was excellent and reasonable. It was a cozy spot on a nasty night, too.

Pizza Azzurro party

Pizza Azzurro tried to clear the cupboards in preparation for its move with a blow out Friday night. It was jammed, including with people spilling out of Back Room Wines, which will be moving later this year, too.

At Pizza Azzurro, Michael even served pepperoni pizza – for the first time after seven years, and he vowed it would be the last.

Pizza Azzurro Pizzeria and Enoteca opens about Feb. 5 at the new, expanded location in Main Street West, the new building across from Vintners Collective and down the street from Uva Trattoria, another favorite informal restaurant.

Whistle Stop coffee not approved yet

I got ahead of myself. The Whistle Stop in Yountville I mentioned is a proposed future agenda item but has not been approved by the town at this time.

The applicant is finalizing her application and will be bringing it forward for planning review and then zoning board and town council approval.

We'll provide details when we can.

Oxbow watch: Model Bakery to open today

I should be leery of predicting openings, for two of the places I said would open at the Oxbow Market haven't made it yet, and the other only halfway.

The Oxbow Cheese Merchants opened with about 75 delicious artisanal (mostly) cheeses and a few other deli items, and the kitchen of the Oxbow Wine Merchants in the same large space has started serving small plates.

Unfortunately, the wine permit hadn't arrived as of this weekend, but should be there soon.

Once it's in, you'll be able to get and consume wine on the patio as well as inside, and you can even bring food from other vendors to enjoy at least on the deck, though they'd naturally prefer for you to buy theirs.

The market has installed temporary tables inside until the weather improves and a few more eateries are open, and it makes a huge difference in both the look of the place and the appeal.

Unfortunately, the wine rules in the Market are a little awkward. You can't take wine from Folio Enoteca to other places and drink it, and Pica Pica doesn't have its wine and beer license yet, either. Its arepas are great, however.

Maybe one day the whole place will have a blanket wine and beer license, which would be a huge help.

In other news, the Model Bakery is opening at Oxbow Public Market today, Monday, Jan. 28, and is offering free coffee and a free freshly baked demi-baguette for anyone mentioning the grand opening celebration.

With it, 12 vendors are now operating with select farm stands open on available weekends.

The original Model Bakery has been part of St. Helena for over 80 years. With all its breads and