

The
Counter

Thinly Sliced



01 Wiped out: Safeway sued for price gouging toilet paper and other supplies

Where is the line between basic laws of supply and demand and predatory

price hikes that hurt poor shoppers the most?

by Jessica McKenzie [Read more](#)



02 Gulf fishers brace for a "dead zone" the size of Connecticut and Delaware

The annual event is caused by farm runoff upstream. Between that and ever-increasing floods, some worry the Gulf's shellfish industry will never recover.

by Sam Bloch [Read more](#)



03 In apparent rejection of federal court, EPA allows continued dicamba use

A federal court ruling banned the controversial herbicide last week, but Trump's Environmental Protection Agency is pushing back.

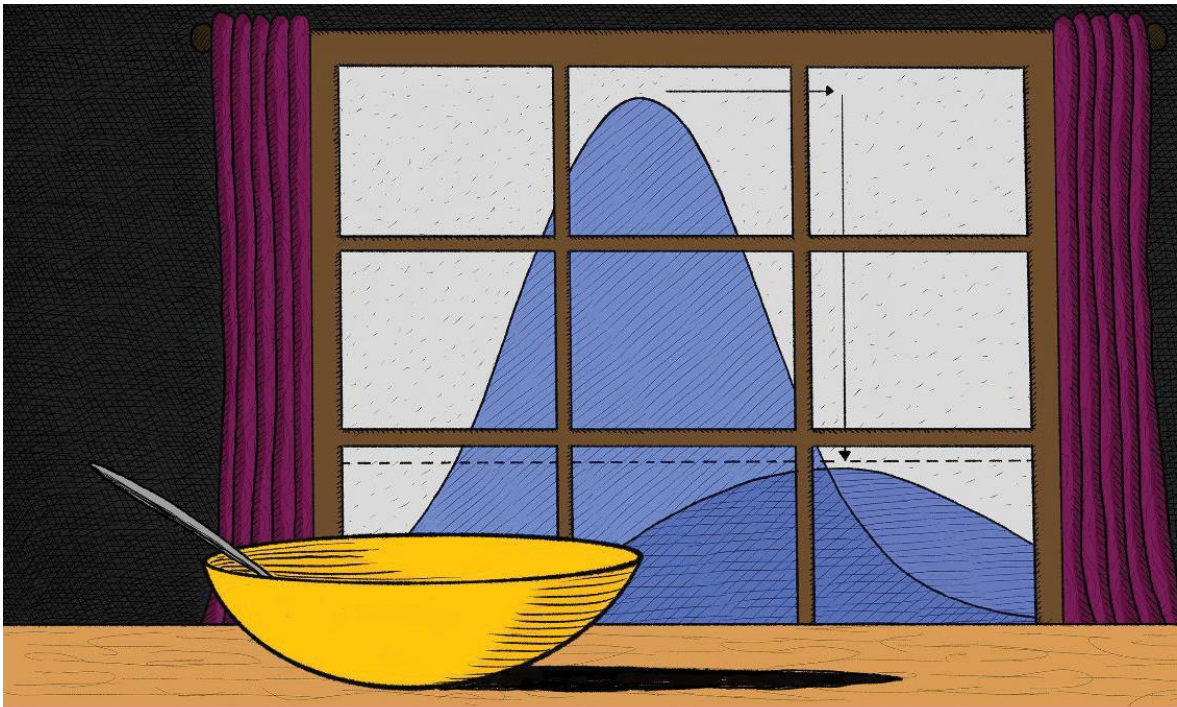
by Johnathan Hettinger [Read more](#)



04 The Shutdown Notebook: Rebuilding, dismantling, and the ticking clock of restaurant relief: Gavin Kaysen prepares to open on governor's OK

Read the latest in our weekly series about one chef who closed three restaurants during the pandemic—and intends to get them back.

by Karen Stabiner + Gavin Kaysen [Read more](#)



Eating In

First-person, personal accounts of the American eating experience during the Covid-19 pandemic—as it unfolds through fear, isolation, loss, fortitude, and renewal.

- [I was duped into believing I could eat anything I wanted. But the best foods are born of struggle.](#)
by Hannah Selinger
- [Why I've been eating offal during the pandemic](#)
by Amber Gibson
- [I'm breastfeeding an infant during a pandemic, and I'm starting to panic](#)
by Ilana Sichel

The Latest

Short dispatches from food's front lines, selected by our editors each week.

Weight of the world. “Before and after Covid-19” memes, where the second image is a disheveled and bulkier reflection of the first, have amplified the weight gain phenomenon known as #quarantine15 (similar to the dreaded “freshman 15”). Though some would say that concern over gaining weight while death tolls mount is superficial and/or fatphobic, others may find it soothing to discuss the added anxiety, stress, and isolation during a pandemic—not to mention interrupted fitness routines. “People have been socialized to commiserate about their weight as a way to connect and bond with other people,” author [Virgie Tovar](#) told *The San Francisco Chronicle*, and it may be an easier issue to be vocal about than, say, one’s mental health. She added: “People have always turned to weight loss as a way to feel like they’re in control of factors that they’re largely not in control of.”

Come together. As protesters nationwide continue taking to the streets to demand justice for Black lives, community members are uniting to provide supplies like water, masks, gloves, and food to those in need. Mutual aid groups, built on a horizontal support system of solidarity, have responded by providing for protesters and communities of color who were facing food insecurity even before the spread of Covid-19. [Black Earth](#)

[Farms](#), an Oakland-based collective is delivering food to those arrested, injured, or traumatized during protests. In Washington D.C., the [East of the River Mutual Aid Fund](#) has distributed hygiene bags and sack lunches and more than 55,000 hot meals since March. These networks will continue to ensure those in need have access to food beyond the current moment. Eater [has the story](#).

Uber fool. What good is a grocery delivery app without access to grocery stores? As rideshare giant Uber moves to expand its reach in the grocery industry, lack of cooperation from supermarkets might gum up the move. Currently, the company is trying to strike deals for grocery delivery arrangements—where customers order online, stores do the packing, and Uber drivers manage delivery. Word from inside the company, however, is that many employees working on that initiative have been laid off recently. Meanwhile, Uber is also forging ahead in an attempt to acquire an [Instacart](#)-like app called Cornershop, but that deal has been tied up in antitrust investigations. The Information [has the details](#).

Not special. For some restaurants, giving free food and expedited service to police has long been framed a way to thank them—while also representing an underlying quid pro quo. That preferential treatment may be winding down, though, Eater [reports](#). Police brutality has been an issue for decades but as demonstrations continue, it is no surprise that food service workers are also taking action. Minority workers disproportionately make up the retail workforce and many are speaking out against even serving identifiable police officers, never mind giving them a free coffee.

Shut out. We've [written](#) about formerly incarcerated people who open their own food businesses, because it's nearly impossible for them to find jobs elsewhere. Many employers simply won't accept applications from

people with criminal backgrounds. Now these people are being shut out again. The Intercept [reports](#) the Small Business Administration refuses to issue Paycheck Protection Program loans to any business owner who has been convicted of a felony in the last five years, anyone on probation or parole, or even to anyone who's been charged and is awaiting trial. In the criminal justice system, that latter group is presumed innocent until proven guilty—but not, evidently, in the world of small business.

Fruitless efforts. With farmers [dumping milk](#) and leaving unpicked produce on fields to rot, some experts fear that the world is facing prospects of food insecurity comparable to Depression-era levels of mass hunger. In the early 1930s, Americans took to the street via “[hunger marches](#)” to demand financial relief and a stronger social safety net, as well as to protest the related issues of segregation and oppression of Black people. Around the same time, President Franklin D. Roosevelt instituted a New Deal program that paid farmers to scale back production, and ostensibly boost their prices and income, despite outrage from the public at the idea of crop destruction amid widespread hunger. The government also bought surplus foods to redistribute among the people, though just how effective these efforts were is up for debate—kind of like [USDA's Farmers to Families Food Box program today](#). History, it appears, may be repeating itself. *Time has the story.*