

Our Town

ence at the University of Wisconsin, disputes this: “If I put bad bacteria into raw milk, is it capable of killing bad bacteria? Yes. Does it always happen? No. A preponderance of evidence shows that, in general, raw milk is routinely a source of pathogens.”

What’s inarguable, however, is that raw milk tastes better: there are no defenders of the gastronomic superiority of pasteurized milk (although dairy scientists will point out that raw milk can carry the taste of whatever a cow has eaten, good or bad). Louis Pasteur, who originally invented his process for beer and wine, held that it altered the taste insignificantly. No one would agree today, and people may eventually feel the same way about pasteurized milk. Even when it’s gently heated to the lowest possible temperature, it’s next to impossible to avoid altering the taste.

Setting aside the larger debate, a look at raw milk’s recent history suggests that if it’s treated conscientiously and consumed locally, it’s safer than restrictions on it imply. Raw milk is legal for retail sale in California, Pennsylvania (whose Amish population drinks only raw milk), and Connecticut, and those states have reported few incidents. Raw milk is also legal in Oregon and Florida, but only if labeled as pet food. A cow-share program in northern Wisconsin was shut down in 2001 after being implicated in a local campylobacteriosis outbreak, but the farmer, Tim Wightman, denies the connection, saying that his tests showed the milk was safe and that state officials refused to show him their results. He has since restarted his program without problems.

Choosing to drink raw milk is a matter of conviction and desire. Even Rankin, the food scientist, says, “It’s sort of like oysters. They’re routinely full of bacteria. We put lots of things into our bodies that are bad for us.” And ultimately the movement may be as much about small farms like Amelong’s as it is about the health claims. After all, any agricultural model that directly connects farmers and consumers is so old that it looks new again. “We want people to be able to come to the farm,” says Sally Fallon. “Milk is the absolute best way to do it.”

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Public Displays

Never Mind LimeWire

Is there a mix tape in that tree stump?

By Jessica Hopper

I would be easy to assume the two figures hanging out in a vacant North Avenue lot on a recent rainy evening are up to something nefarious—possibly illegal. He’s holding a plastic stencil in one hand and a can of silver spray paint in the other, while she consults from a few feet away.

“No, the other side, to the left.” She peers back at traffic to see if anyone’s noticed them, then looks back.

“Yeah, there. Perfect.”

The man quickly stencils a slanty drawing of a cassette and an arrow onto the side of a tall tree stump and slips a cassette tape, in a plastic case, into the hollow of the stump.

Aay Preston-Myint, a student and tour guide at the Art Institute, and Ilana Percher, an applications engi-

Support for a health plan covering all Americans and financed by taxpayers can vary depending on question wording,” reports the nonpartisan public-opinion monitor Public Agenda, “a typical warning sign that views on this issue may be unstable.” That’s the polite adjective. “About two-thirds go so far as to say the government should guarantee health insurance for every American... But 51 percent say they would not be willing to pay either higher taxes or higher insurance premiums to cover more of the uninsured.” — HH

Aay Preston-Myint and Ilana Percher
neer, are the founders of the Chicago Tapes Project, a participatory art endeavor launched in April as part of Version>05. Part secret Santa, part public-space reclamation, the project has so far planted at least 30 anonymous mix tapes around the city. The pair start by creating tapes around varying themes—Preston-Myint’s recent batch of 90-minute dubs is organized around “Songs about the sea or sky”; Percher is halfway through a showcase of “male singers with high voices,” though she’s stalled out temporarily because she can’t find a copy of A-Ha’s “Take On Me.”

Once completed, the mixes are installed in one of 20-odd public “tape stations,” which range from a spot just inside the doorway of Quimby’s to a stone wall in Bridgeport to the ceiling of the Rogers Park art space Mess Hall, where a Chicago Tapes Project display was part of the recent Open Source/Open Ear exhibition. Each is just big enough shelter the tape from the elements and is flagged by a small arrow-and-cassette sticker or stencil. Inside every cassette case are brief instructions and a stencil and sticker—to help finders set up their own stations. Information and downloadable stencils can also be found at illcutyou.com/tapes.

The project got off to a rocky start. “The first tape and tape station I made,” says Percher, “I went back two days later, and found that the place had been demolished with a bulldozer. That one did not work out so well.”

But tonight, as they make the rounds of the three stations just west of Wicker Park, they’re giddy with excitement. “Aay found a tape today. Our first one back,” Percher says. “I’m not sure if this is the first time it’s happened, like, if some people have found other people’s tapes in the stations, but today was a triumph—it was the first time either of us found one placed by someone else.”

“The tape, says Preston-Myint, was found under the Bloomingdale viaduct at Western, in a hole in one of the supports, about a foot off the ground. “I haven’t listened to the whole thing,” he says, “but it’s kind of experimental, a guy talking or reading over sounds. Or maybe people having a meeting. I’m not sure.”

“My fantasy is that I one day discover a tape station that I had nothing to do with,” says Percher. “I would love to see people taking tapes and putting tapes in, people making friends or secret, anonymous pen-pal-ships. For the station to be something people are using; for it to become part of the neighborhood it’s in.”

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The Worldwatch Institute reports that “on a per-kilometer and per-trip basis, U.S. cyclists are twice as likely to die on the road as German cyclists, and more than three times as likely as Dutch cyclists. While cycling fatalities in all of these countries have fallen in the last 15 years, U.S. cycling deaths have declined largely because of a drop in cycling...[hereina] in the Netherlands and Germany investment in infrastructure that makes cycling safer accounts for much of the decline.” —HH

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[snip] I’d be happy to bike to work... in Amsterdam. The Worldwatch Institute reports that “on a per-kilometer and per-trip basis, U.S. cyclists are twice as likely to die on the road as German cyclists, and more than three times as likely as Dutch cyclists. While cycling fatalities in all of these countries have fallen in the last 15 years, U.S. cycling deaths have declined largely because of a drop in cycling... [hereina] in the Netherlands and Germany investment in infrastructure that makes cycling safer accounts for much of the decline.” —HH