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## Swim team snack shack profits sink under county regulations

By John T. Miller



Jon Llama, center, of Agave Restaurant in Concord, oversees catering the home meets for Campolindo Cabana Club. Photo John T. Miller

A routine water quality check by the county health department at the Sun Valley pool in Lafayette a couple of years ago turned disastrous for the team's snack bar, essentially forcing its closure.

The health department official discovered that not only were the facilities inadequate, but they didn't have an operation permit for it. Adding to these troubles was the discovery that they had never filed a use permit.

The use permit had never been filed because the pool was in operation before the city was incorporated. It was brought under question when a neighbor complained about noise at the pool. The permits, along with an Environmental Impact Report, lawyers' fees and other expenditures, ended up costing over \$100,000.

The person in charge of the snack shack, Beth Kring, says, "We used to net about \$1,200 at each home meet and provide food for the coaches. Now, we have a food truck come in, and all we get are eight free meals for the coaches and long lines at the truck."

The team had to set up a fundraising arm to try to make up for the lost money. They've held lapathons, raffles - with donated prizes from community members - and numerous other fundraisers, in addition to selling magnets and team apparel at the pool.

A spokesperson for another pool in the Lamorinda area, who asked to remain anonymous, said, "The snack shack has become a four-letter word! We had to spend over \$20,000 in facility improvements. The county makes it nearly impossible to run a snack shack."

Some clubs have let outside restaurants take over the snack shack, essentially having their home meets catered. One such case is Campolindo Cabana Club in Moraga, which, after having a food truck sell at the curb - with the attendant long lines - has its home meets catered by Jon Llama of Agave Restaurant in Concord.

"We have the license and insurance and everything else covered, so the pool just provides the volunteers in the snack shack," says Llama. "The restaurant kicks back 4% to the club as a community service."

The Cabana Club had to remodel and upgrade the kitchen, and the monetary kickback is a far cry from what the snack bar used to make.

One swim team that's been able to continue business as usual at its meets is the Moraga Country Club, since it has a full commercial kitchen to accommodate the 81 points of the county health code that must be followed.

Al Ranganian, the director of food and beverages for the MCC, says, "Depending on whether it's a morning or night meet, we sell pancakes, breakfast burritos, salads, sodas, ice cream, and more. We have warmers to hold the temperatures at appropriate levels and post sell-by dates on the salads."

The money from the sales goes into the general fund for the MCC, while profits from the team's sale of wrapped candies go to help pay for bonuses to the coaches.

At Sun Valley, Kring says, "We are considering converting the coaches' room at the pool into a quality snack shack and finding somewhere else for them to meet, but it would be costly."

Although this article represents only a small sample size of the numerous swim clubs in the Lamorinda area, it becomes apparent that the county health regulations have made it prohibitive for many of them to continue to fundraise at former levels unless they upgrade to commercial quality kitchens.

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