

VARIETY



Minnesota Ma: Raised in Somalia, Ma Halima of Minneapolis "embodies the essence of a Somali woman."

Bibis know best

To tell the story of East African cuisine, Somali chef Hawa Hassan went right to the experts: grandmothers.

By SHARYN JACKSON
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Hawa Hassan clears something up right away in her first cookbook, "In Bibi's Kitchen."

The book is "not about what is new and next," she writes in the introduction, a daring departure for a food entrepreneur and recipe developer whose YouTube videos garner hundreds of thousands of views.

Instead, Hassan decided to go back, way back, to the kitchen wisdom of grandmothers.

"In Bibi's Kitchen," which Hassan co-authored with Julia Turshen, is a primer on the dishes that originate in the African countries bordering the Indian Ocean, from Eritrea to South Africa, as seen through the lens of the matriarchs who pass those recipes down from generation to generation.



Researching the food and stories of East Africa's matriarchs led chef and author Hawa Hassan to Minneapolis.

Photo by KHADIJA M. FARAH and JENNIFER MAY

"I want to preserve the stories that have always preserved me," Hassan said in an interview. "I want to pay homage to the people who've taken care of me, and I want to share our food with people."

But sharing the food of eight countries that hug thousands of miles of coastline was a daunting task for the founder and CEO of Basbaas Sauce, a line of Somali condiments.

So, she turned to the experts: 16 bibis (that's Swahili for grandmother) with a combined "gazillion" years of experience, who share their stories and cooking techniques in interviews at the start of every chapter.

"I kept wondering why grandmothers were being left out of the narrative," Hassan said about the framework for her book. "Why was no one speaking to grandmothers anywhere? Why was it that when men traveled far away to

See **BIBIS** on E6 ▶

Planning a holiday in pandemic

It's possible to limit the risks of a large gathering and still keep some of the magic.

By ERICA PEARSON
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Turkey dinners alfresco, bundled up around a fire pit. Rounds of dreidel over Zoom. Face masks decked with holly patterns and ornaments showing Santa in PPE.

A holiday season unlike any other is approaching.

As Minnesotans begin making plans amid a flaring pandemic, they're trying to find ways to make the upcoming holidays both safe and meaningful. Making them "normal," however, may be out of reach for many families.

Bill Kinney's parents were set to host his family in North Carolina over Thanksgiving — a much-desired get together, especially for the grandkids. But after hearing University of Minnesota epidemiologist Michael Osterholm talk about the risks, Kinney's mom admitted she was worried. They decided to call it off.

"From a nonemotional standpoint, it was an easy decision," said Kinney, a Minneapolis accountant. "My parents and aunt are high-risk and we

See **HOLIDAY** on E10 ▶



KELLY SMITH • Star Tribune

The five mini-cabins at Cuyuna Cove about a popular state recreation area.

New escape options: silos, tiny cabins

By KELLY SMITH
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In a tiny cabin next to Cuyuna Country State Recreation Area, floor-to-ceiling windows framed a forest of maples and oaks. On the mini-deck, I sipped coffee from an Adirondack chair while gazing at the falling leaves. My sleek Scandinavian-style cabin offered a peaceful retreat from the city for a recent weekend of kayaking and hiking.

Friends made the two-hour drive on their own and rented a separate 215-square-foot cabin, giving us our own spaces, kitchenettes and bathrooms. In the crisp fall air, we met up outside to grill burgers or sit around a fire pit.

For recent getaways in central Minnesota, I found the mini-cabins and a room in a grain silo well suited for our times — private escapes away from crowds with easy access to the restorative power of nature.

Kelsey Braun and her husband, See **ESCAPE** on E4 ▶

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SUMMIT ORTHOPEDICS

TRAVEL



Photos by KELLY SMITH • Star Tribune

A Minnesota couple opened luxury mini rooms in revamped grain bins in 2019 near Alexandria. The four bins were repurposed into eight rooms.

New escape options: silos, tiny cabins

◀ **ESCAPE** from El Chris Austin, opened Cuyuna Cove in July in the mountain biking mecca of Crosby, Minn., 120 miles north of the Twin Cities. The pandemic hit the state just as the couple were putting the finishing touches on the luxury cabins, and they feared COVID-19 would scuttle hopes of attracting tourists. The opposite happened: Twin Cities residents snatched up bookings.

“I think COVID helped in the way that people just need to get out of the cities ... a lot of people just need a reset during this time of incredible stress,” Braun said.

The five minimalist-style cabins nestled in woods with queen beds, modern bathrooms and kitchenettes are stocked with utensils, spices and organic coffee beans to freshly grind. During my stay, a path carpeted with crimson maple leaves glowed under white lights strung up along a pond and through the woods, a magical trail leading to a fire pit.

Braun and Austin were inspired by glamping spots, such as a Texas campground they visited with yurts, tepees, retro RVs and safari tents.

Cuyuna options

The 33-year-olds, who grew up in St. Cloud, reconnected four years ago and shared a vision. Drawn to Crosby by friends and the affordable living, they renovated a 30-foot RV and a former mining house for themselves and bought 3 acres of wooded land, one of the last pieces in Crosby connected to the state recreation area. Braun, who started a cleaning business, and Austin, a physical therapist, did most of the two years of construction themselves for Cuyuna Cove and spread the word on Instagram.

The couple plan to add canvas safari tents with queen beds next spring.

The state also offers yurts at

Cuyuna and nearby, True North Basecamp has 275-square-foot cabins.

Cuyuna, which became a state recreation area in 1993, has been reinvented as a mountain biking destination. My friends and I explored on foot and by boat instead, hiking Milford Mine Memorial Park, which honors 41 miners who died in the state's worst mining disaster. Two scuba divers waded in one of the 15 former mining pits filled with crystal clear water as we kayaked past orange and yellow trees on the shoreline, stained in its signature red dirt.

Night in a grain bin

A week before, I had embarked on a solo trip to Alexandria, Minn., about 130 miles northwest of the Twin Cities. There, the landscape flattens into cornfields — a fitting place for grain bin silos revamped for lodging. Last year, Anne Larson and her husband, David, transformed four silos from a family farm into eight minimalist rooms.

I arrived, no other person in sight, unlocking my room with a keycode and collapsing into bed, staring at the circular wood-paneled ceiling overhead. Windows overlook trees and a little lake.

Some farmers shake their

heads at grain bins turned into bedrooms, but Larson said most people are intrigued. She grew up on a nearby turkey farm and after reading an article about converting grain bins into living spaces, she embraced the challenge of creating stylish rooms in the unusual space. “It’s just not a normal build ... most builders build in squares,” she said of the 13-sided bins, at one of the two event venues she runs in Moorhead and Alexandria. She began offering them on Airbnb this year when she’s not hosting events (mostly in the winter and Sundays through Wednesdays).

“So many people, especially couples ... have just found a little refuge there,” Larson said of guests, about half of whom are from the Twin Cities.

I stopped for a pint and pizza at Carlos Creek Winery, which opened a viking-themed brewery, 22 Northmen, last year. Later I visited the Runestone Museum, which houses the controversial slab of sandstone said to have been left by eight Swedes and 22 Norwegians in 1362. Next door, the Legacy of the Lakes Museum showcased Minnesota’s lake resort and boating history.

Then I retreated back to the woods, exploring the trails at Lake Carlos State Park, relishing the serene woodland and the empty path away from the crowds.

Kelly Smith • 612-673-4141Nonsulis, ca



The 13-sided grain bins presented a construction challenge in being converted to lodging rooms.



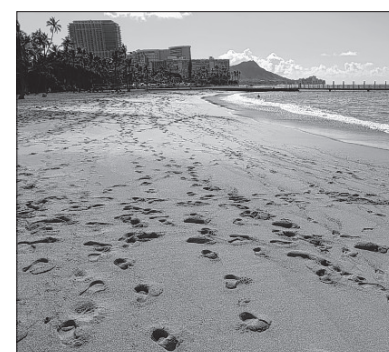
Source: OpenStreetMap

KNOW & GO

Air travel rebound at MSP

Air travel out of Minneapolis-St. Paul International Airport has crept back slightly since spring. The annual Minnesota Educator Academy (MEA) four-day break saw the biggest increase in passenger travel last weekend since the pandemic struck. On Oct. 15, nearly 17,500 passengers cleared TSA checkpoints at MSP, making it the busiest day since the week of March 16, said the Metropolitan Airports Commission (MAC). Over one week that included the MEA break, MSP averaged 14,177 travelers passing through checkpoints, a 20% increase over the previous week and 17% higher than Labor Day week, when it averaged 12,124 passengers. Nationally, the TSA said it screened more than 1 million passengers on Oct. 18, representing the highest level since March 17. “I think there’s a pent-up demand to travel again, and it’s merging with the public’s increased confidence about traveling safely,” said MAC CEO Brian Ryks.

JANET MOORE



MARCO GARCIA • Associated Press
A nearly empty Waikiki Beach in Honolulu on Oct. 15.

Hawaii is open

Hawaii reopened to tourism Oct. 15, an occasion that featured ubiquitous face masks, very few leis and thousands of arriving passengers, most of whom had passed preflight coronavirus tests in order to avoid quarantine requirements. Unlike the trickle of passengers who arrived in the islands over the past six months, this new group of visitors is free to move among hotels (though many remain closed), roam most beaches or dine in restaurants whose dining rooms are approved for 50% capacity. Instead of staying put and isolating for 14 days, as previously required, these visitors can leave when they like. The state’s coronavirus infection rates fell dramatically in early September and have been relatively flat in recent weeks.

LOS ANGELES TIMES

Record drop in fares

Domestic U.S. fares fell by the most on record in the second quarter of 2020 — another illustration of how the coronavirus pandemic gutted demand for flights. Average one-way ticket prices plummeted 26% from the same period last year to \$151, including taxes and fees, according to 20 years of fare figures compiled by Cirium. Previously, the largest decline was 14% in late 2001, following the Sept. 11 terrorist attacks. U.S. travel demand all but vanished in March, plunging airlines into their worst-ever crisis less than two months after the first U.S. coronavirus case was identified.

BLOOMBERG NEWS



WILFREDO LEE • Associated Press
Southwest Airlines will begin filling middle seats on Dec. 1.

Southwest alters seat policy

Southwest Airlines said it will end its pandemic-driven policy of blocking middle seats Dec. 1. Gary Kelly, CEO of the Dallas-based airline, made the announcement Thursday while reporting the company’s financial results, saying “This practice of effectively keeping middle seats open bridged us from the early days of the pandemic, when we had little knowledge about the behavior of the virus, to now.” His written statement continued, “Today, aligned with science-based findings from trusted medical and aviation organizations, we will resume selling all available seats for travel beginning December 1, 2020.” Southwest said customers on “fuller flights” can rebook to another flight if desired. Atlanta-based Delta Air Lines has said it plans to block middle seats through at least Jan. 6, making it the only major network carrier to block middle seats through the holiday travel season.

COX NEWSPAPERS

TRAVEL TROUBLESHOOTER CHRISTOPHER ELLIOTT

50,000 miles are stolen, and the airline shrugs

Q: Someone stole 50,000 miles from my American Airlines AAdvantage account. The points were redeemed for a flight.

I reported the theft to the Internet Crime Complaint Center and filed a police report, as requested by American Airlines. The airline provided the names of the two passengers who flew using my miles. I gave these names in my police report. But now, American says the suspects’ names must show on the police report before it reinstates my miles.

The sheriff’s department says the suspects’ names must be redacted because there were no arrests. So I find myself caught in the middle with nowhere to go. Could you help me get my 50,000 miles back?

A: I’m sorry someone stole your American Airlines miles. The airline is under no obligation to return the awards, if I’m reading its terms and conditions correctly. But a representative assured you in writing that you’d get the miles back, so the airline should do what it said.

You kept a terrific paper trail. It shows that the American representative would not accept the police report you filed, because it redacted the names of the suspects. What a maddening bureaucratic problem.

I can’t pass up the opportunity to say something about the value of participating in a loyalty program. According to American’s terms, your miles have “no cash value.” How refreshingly honest! Many travelers are bet-

ter off booking the best airline ticket for their money instead of playing the miles game. You may be among them.

When you’re caught in a bureaucratic Catch-22, you can sometimes request additional documentation from one of the parties. Maybe American would have accepted something in writing from the sheriff’s department, verifying that it had recorded the names of the suspects but explaining why it couldn’t list the names on its crime report. Bottom line: There might have been a way to negotiate a solution.

Finally, I think you could have appealed this to an American Airlines executive. I list the names, numbers and e-mail addresses of the key managers at elliott.org.

Your case is a cautionary tale about computer security. Remember to change your passwords often and never share a password between accounts. Security breaches happen all the time. Passwords are compromised. And then you end up paying for a thief’s vacation trip.

I contacted American Airlines on your behalf. It says it never received a separate form filed with the Internet Crime Complaint Center. Once you supplied American with that form, the airline returned your 50,000 miles.



Christopher Elliott is the chief advocacy officer of Elliott Advocacy, a nonprofit consumer organization. Contact him at elliott.org/help or chris@elliott.org.

VIEWFINDERS WILL RETURN NEXT WEEK.