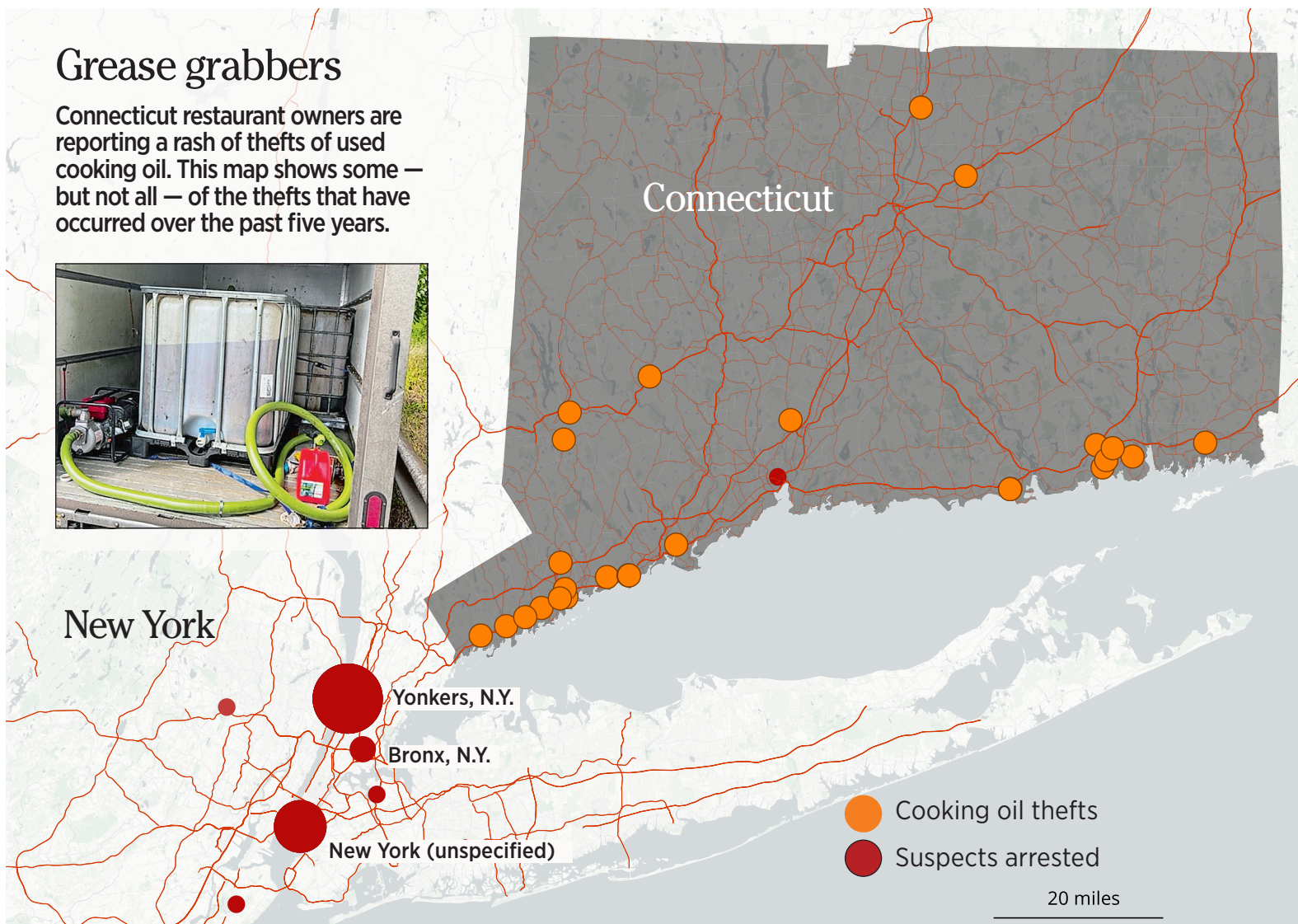


Grease grabbers

Connecticut restaurant owners are reporting a rash of thefts of used cooking oil. This map shows some — but not all — of the thefts that have occurred over the past five years.



MAP BY SCOTT RITTER/THE DAY | MAP DATA: NEWS REPORTS, U.S. CENSUS BUREAU, CT DEEP, CARTODB, OPENSTREETMAP CONTRIBUTORS | PHOTO: OLD SAYBROOK POLICE DEPARTMENT

A pump and a container of used cooking oil sit in the back of a truck seized last week by the Old Saybrook Police Department. Thieves are selling the valuable grease on the black market, say oil recyclers. “There is a market for the secondary use of the oils as heating oil in places, so I think certainly the economy and that situation and the price of heating oil and diesel fuel certainly factor into it,” says East Lyme Police Chief Michael Finkelstein.

Those in U.S. buying less

Consumers also tapping brakes on dining out, vacations, even services

By ABHA BHATTARAI
The Washington Post

More Americans are beginning to hold off on booking flights, getting haircuts, building backyard pools and replacing old leaky roofs — in some of the new signs that the consumer engine of U.S. economic growth could be losing steam.

Over the past several weeks, households had already cut back on big-ticket purchase because of soaring prices, but in a worrisome twist, data suggests consumers are also beginning to tap the brakes on dining out, vacation plans and even routine services like manicures, haircuts and home-cleaning appointments. Business owners around the country say rising prices, dwindling savings and concerns of a souring economy are taking a toll on household spending decisions.

At Olentangy Maids in Columbus, Ohio, more customers are putting off or canceling home-cleaning appointments. Some regulars are trying to negotiate lower prices, while others have stopped tipping altogether, co-owner Keith Troyer said.

“It hasn’t been a massive drop off, but enough that it’s been noticeable,” Troyer said. “Quite a few clients have called saying, ‘Hey, my wife got laid off. We need to cancel,’ or ‘Can I switch from biweekly to monthly?’ Prior to this month, that’s something that hardly happened.”

Consumer spending, which makes up more than two-thirds of the U.S. economy, has held strong through April even with inflation at historic highs. But there are growing signs **SEE AMERICANS PAGE A6**

THE CROOKS AND THE COOKING OIL

Inside the world of grease thefts from restaurants

By ERICA MOSER
Day Staff Writer

For those not saturated in the multimillion-dollar world of used cooking oil thefts from restaurants, such acts of larceny may seem perplexing.

Grease grabbers in recent years have sent police on a 50-mile chase, claimed to be working on behalf of “Russian bosses” in New York City, and been arrested in connection with cooking oil thefts in more than one town before going on to allegedly injure an auto repair shop employee while trying to steal diesel fuel.

And that’s just in Connecticut.

In North Carolina in June 2019, a federal grand jury indicted 21 people on charges of conspiracy to commit interstate transportation of stolen goods and money laundering, for stealing cooking oil in North Carolina, Virginia and Tennessee and transporting it to New Jersey for sale.

Thieves sell used cooking oil on the black market because it can be converted to biodiesel, an alternative to petroleum diesel that can be used for transportation fuel and heating, and for which there is growing demand. Also known as yellow

grease, it can be used in soaps and shampoos, pet food, detergents and more.

Grease thefts are nothing new, but a more high-profile one happened June 9, when police said two men from Yonkers and the Bronx were apprehended with about 1,000 gallons of cooking oil in Westport, after fleeing Old Saybrook and hitting a car along the way.

The next day about 6 a.m., an officer saw a suspicious van in the area of La Llorona restaurant in Niantic and noticed activity consistent

SEE GREASE PAGE A7

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Jan. 6 witnesses push Trump stalwarts back to rabbit hole

By DAVID KLEPPER
Associated Press

One by one, several of Donald Trump’s former top advisers have told a special House committee investigating his role in the Jan. 6 insurrection that they didn’t believe his lies about the 2020 election, and that the former president knew he lost to Joe Biden.

But instead of convincing Trump’s most stalwart supporters, testimony from former Attorney General Bill Barr and Trump’s daughter Ivanka about the election and the attack on the U.S. Capitol is prompting many of them to simply reassert their views that the former

“It’s cognitive dissonance. If you believe what Trump says, and now Bill Barr and Trump’s own daughter are saying these other things, it creates a crack, and people have to fill it.”

JENNIFER STROMER-GALLEY, A SYRACUSE UNIVERSITY PROFESSOR WHO HAS STUDIED HOW TRUMP USED SOCIAL MEDIA AND ADVERTISING TO MOBILIZE HIS BASE

president was correct in his false claim of victory.

Barr’s testimony that Trump was repeatedly told there was no election fraud? He was paid off by a voting machine company, according to one false claim that went viral this past week. Ivanka Trump

saying she didn’t believe Trump either? It’s all part of Trump’s grand plan to confuse his enemies and save America.

The claims again demonstrate **SEE WITNESSES PAGE A7**

Editorial: How Fox News is betraying America. **B4**

Town, city review tax incentive agreement for Branford Manor

Groton officials plan to outline expectations after complaints

By KIMBERLY DRELICH
Day Staff Writer

Groton — Branford Manor resident Christina Rotharmel said the mold in her former apartment began behind a switch plate in 2019, and by the time she moved out of the unit last summer, mold was everywhere.

Rotharmel said she developed pulmonary arterial hypertension in 2020, which her doctor says is directly related to the mold, and spent 29 days in the intensive care unit in April 2021.

She said she noticed black

mold in the back of her kitchen cabinet, and when a maintenance worker took the cabinet off the wall at the end of June 2021, it was oozing with mold. When she moved out, mold was discovered lurking in more places, from inside the closet to behind pictures.

She was moved to a new apartment at Branford Manor, but Rotharmel said the floors are buckling from moisture and mold.

“I’m concerned about the mold,” said Rotharmel, who said she has filed a lawsuit against Branford Manor, but

a court date has not yet been scheduled. “I think everybody’s concerned about the mold.”

Related Affordable, which owns Branford Manor, said challenges over the pandemic contributed to current issues, and it is working to fix failing pipes, which led to mold and moisture issues, and bring in additional resources and staff to address issues and rebuild trust with residents.

Ramonita Ramos, another Branford Manor resident, said she has complained about the **SEE TOWN PAGE A6**

WEATHER

Today, breezy, chance for showers early, then partly cloudy. High 69. Monday, mostly sunny. High 75. **E6**

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BUFFETT’S LAST CHARITY LUNCH DRAWS RECORD \$19 MILLION BID

Omaha, Neb. — An anonymous bidder has shelled out a record \$19 million for a private lunch with billionaire Warren Buffet at a steakhouse in New York City.

The meal with the Berkshire Hathaway CEO was offered on an eBay auction to benefit the San-Francisco-based charity GLIDE, which helps homeless people and those in poverty. The winner can bring up to seven guests.

Buffett has raised \$53 million for GLIDE since the auction began in 2000. The charity earned the philanthropist billionaire’s support when his first wife, Susie, introduced him to it after she started volunteering there. She died in 2004.

This year’s event will be the first private lunch offered with the 91-year-old billionaire since the previous record-setting bid of \$4.5 million by cryptocurrency entrepreneur Justin Sun in 2019. — Associated Press

BIDEN TAKES SPILL ON MORNING BIKE RIDE AT THE BEACH

Rehoboth Beach, Del. — President Joe Biden tumbled to the ground while on a morning bike ride near his vacation home here Saturday, falling as his shoes apparently got caught in the toe cages as he tried to stop.

“I’m good,” he quickly declared, as Secret Service agents came to his aid.

He fell while approaching a waiting crowd and, after popping back up, he spent several minutes talking with onlookers and then answered a few questions from reporters.

The president and the first lady, Jill Biden, are in Rehoboth Beach, where they have a vacation home, as they mark their 45th wedding anniversary.

The two were bike riding together Saturday morning on paths around Cape Henlopen State Park, but the first lady had gone ahead before the president fell.

— The Washington Post

Pride in Mexico City



FERNANDO LLANO/AP PHOTO

An attendee poses Saturday at the 2nd annual Lencha March in celebration of Pride Month in Mexico City.

