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Jury members talk around a table on which are displayed Epiphany cakes (galette des rois) during the 'Best epiphany cakes' contest.



Photo shows Epiphany cakes (galette des rois) displayed during the 'Best epiphany cakes' contest organized by the Vaucluse's association of bakers and pastry chefs in Apt. — AFP photos



Epiphany cakes (galette des rois) is displayed during the 'Best epiphany cakes' contest.

French bakers fume at cut-price supermarket baguettes

French bakers have taken aim at a major supermarket chain that is offering inflation-busting low prices for baguettes, saying the move would undermine competition in one of the country's prized industries. The Leclerc group said in newspaper ads on Tuesday that "because of inflation, the average price of baguettes could increase significantly. That's unthinkable," vowing to cut into its profit margins to cap the cost of the signature French loaf at 29 euro cents (\$0.33). But bakers, farmers and millers came together the following day to attack Leclerc for its campaign.

In a joint statement, industry organizations said the average price for a baguette, an everyday staple in French households, had reached 90 cents, driven by rising costs for flour, electricity and labor. "Just when the government and all our professions are working to pay farmers fairly, Leclerc launches this



A jury member cuts Epiphany cakes (galette des rois) during the 'Best epiphany cakes' contest.

campaign that destroys values," they said, accusing the supermarket of "demagoguery." Competitors "are asking themselves... who can live with dignity

from these prices?" the statement continued, also noting that traditional baguette-making is in the running for UNESCO cultural heritage recognition.

"We're trying to keep up jobs and quality, there's a price for that," the head of the ANMF millers' association, Jean-Francois Loiseau, told AFP. "We

have to pay people properly, those who plant, harvest, who gather the grain and make flour, those who make the bread. What Leclerc is doing is shameful," he said. Christiane Lambert, head of the FNSEA farmers' union, said that "Monsieur Leclerc will have to explain to us how and how much he pays his bakers" given the rock-bottom prices.

Leclerc boss Michel-Edouard Leclerc told business magazine Capital that prices for baguettes in his shops has been around 30 cents "for at least a year." "In an environment where (prices for) everything are going up and will keep going up, we wanted to send a signal that Leclerc will keep prices accessible for consumers," he said. "Players in this sector have to accept that Leclerc shops have control over their relationship with consumers," he added. — AFP

'Power of the Dog,' 'House of Gucci' top SAG nominations

Jane Campion's gothic Western "The Power of the Dog" and campy true-crime drama "House of Gucci" on Wednesday jointly topped the film nominations from Hollywood's Screen Actors Guild - usually a key indicator in the race to the Oscars. Days after "The Power of the Dog" won the Golden Globe for best drama, the film's stars Benedict Cumberbatch, Kirsten Dunst and Kodi Smith-McPhee each received nods from the actors' union, tying the film with Ridley Scott's "House of Gucci" on three.



English actor Benedict Cumberbatch

But offering hope to its rivals, Campion's presumed frontrunner failed to land a nomination for best cast - the top prize at the SAG ceremony on February 27. "The Power of the Dog," a tale of two feuding brothers in 1920s Montana, first screened at September's prestigious Venice film festival, where Campion won the best director award. It has since drawn rave reviews, and was released by Netflix with a limited theatrical run.

SAG overlooked widespread mockery of Jared Leto's exuberant Italian accent to nominate him for best supporting actor in "House of Gucci," alongside Lady Gaga and the ensemble cast, which also

includes Adam Driver and Al Pacino. Also nominated for best cast — the SAG equivalent of the best picture Oscar - were "Belfast," "CODA," "Don't Look Up" and "King Richard." But Kenneth Branagh's "Belfast" - which depicts the violence of late-1960s Northern Ireland from a child's view and had been seen by pundits as a strong awards contender - landed only one individual nod, for Caitriona Balfe.

Other surprising snubs included Kristen Stewart's much-touted portrayal of Princess Diana in "Spencer," and "West Side Story" Golden Globe-winning star Rachel Zegler. Voted for by actors, the SAG awards are seen as a strong indicator of Oscars glory, since actors represent the largest branch of the roughly 10,000 Oscar voters in the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences. The SAG awards will be unveiled in Santa Monica, California exactly one month before the Oscars.

"Succession" and "Ted Lasso" top TV noms - On the television side, SAG handed five nominations apiece to "Succession" and "Ted Lasso." Netflix's South Korean smash hit "Squid Game" became the first non-English-language series nominated by SAG for best cast in a TV drama. Stars Jung Ho-Yeon and Lee Jung-Jae also earned individual nominations. It comes two years after "Parasite" - also from South Korea - became the first non-English-language winner of SAG's best cast film prize, a key step on its way to Oscars success.

"Yellowstone," the hugely popular cable series about a wealthy ranch-owning family in Montana which has been largely overlooked by tastemakers on the US coasts, finally earned its first SAG nomination for best cast. Starring Kevin Costner, its fourth season finale was watched by more than 11 million people earlier this month - numbers comparable to "Game of Thrones" in its heyday. And Cynthia Erivo was nominated for her portrayal of Aretha Franklin in the limited TV series "Genius: Aretha" — on the same day that SAG recognized Jennifer Hudson for playing the Queen of Soul in the film "Respect." — AFP

'Rust' armorer sues film ammunition supplier over death on set

The armorer on the set of "Rust" sued the film's ammunition supplier Wednesday, accusing him of leaving real bullets among the dummy cartridges, resulting in the fatal shooting of a cinematographer. Hannah Gutierrez-Reed was the armorer in charge of weapons on the Western movie set in New Mexico, where actor Alec Baldwin fatally shot Halyna Hutchins in October after being told his firearm was safe.

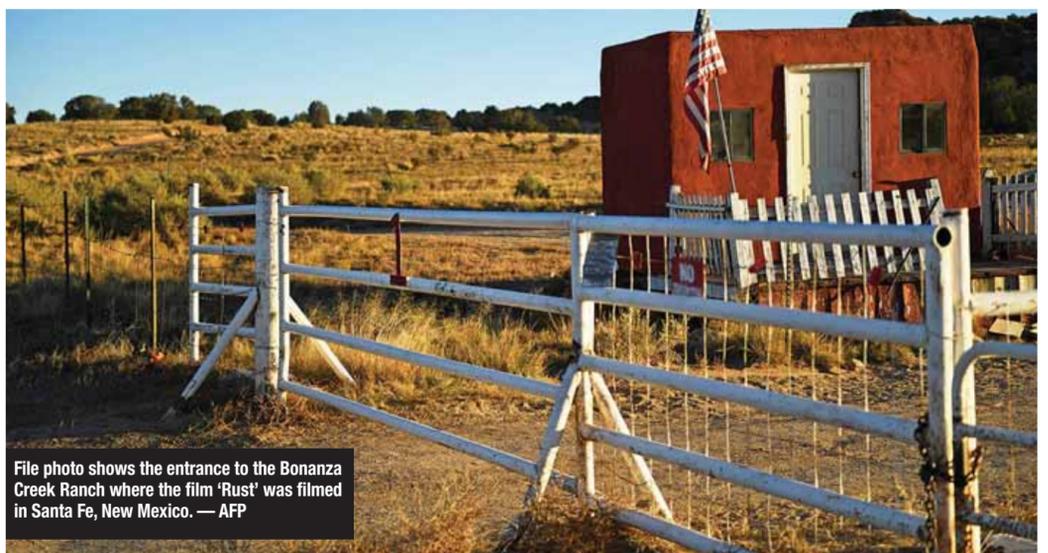
Film industry safety rules completely prohibit live ammunition on sets, precisely to avoid such an accident. In her civil suit filed Wednesday in a New Mexico court, Gutierrez-Reed accused supplier Seth Kenney of providing the production of "Rust" with ammunition that was "misrepresented as only dummy ammunition," meaning it had no gunpowder and was inert, "when it contained both dummy and live ammunition."

According to the case documents, Gutierrez-Reed said police had discovered seven bullets suspected of being live after the tragedy. They were distributed among a box of cartridges, a cart with other ammunition and cartridge belts intended for the actors to use as accessories. The armorer and her lawyers believe that Kenney and his company "created a dangerous condition on the movie set, unbeknownst to Hannah Gutierrez Reed."

Their negligence "caused live rounds to be introduced on set, resulting in a foreseeable catastrophic outcome," the lawsuit said, seeking damages but without specifying the amount. Kenney told investigators he could have potentially sold the film production homemade ammunition, possibly made from recycled components, marked with a logo that matched the one on the fatal round. But he later ruled out that possibility during an inter-

view with ABC. Baldwin was brandishing a Colt gun during a rehearsal for the film when it discharged a live round, killing Hutchins.

Investigators have not yet filed criminal charges over the tragedy, and have refused to rule out charges against anyone involved, including Baldwin. In his first major interview since the shooting, Baldwin said in December he had been told the gun contained no live ammunition, and had been instructed by Hutchins to point the gun in her direction as she prepared to film the scene. Baldwin told ABC he does not feel guilty for Hutchins' death, adding that he had started cocking the gun when the bullet fired, but did not pull the trigger. — AFP



File photo shows the entrance to the Bonanza Creek Ranch where the film 'Rust' was filmed in Santa Fe, New Mexico. — AFP