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Some Music with your Watermelon?

By Cristina Kim



Scott and Avery Jules listening to musician Drew James jamming Photo Cristina Kim

With a whimsical garland of feathers and flowers on her head and a guitar in her hand, Suzanne Holland fills Moraga's Farmers' Market with her ethereal voice. Like a lullaby wafting in the wind, her music provides a subtle soundtrack for the market's patrons as they shop for fresh produce and a variety of specialty foods. Holland is not the market's sole performer but one of a large group of musicians, chefs and entertainers who appear at the Farmers' Market.

Moraga resident and avid farmer's market shopper Janet Blossil feels that there is no comparison between shopping at the grocery store and farmers' markets. Blossil says she enjoys purchasing seasonal, local produce at the farmer's market but also stresses the importance the market has on building community; it's a place where she can see people she has not seen in a while and find a moment to catch up and talk.

Scott Jules says he and his daughter Avery attend the farmer's market almost every Sunday and are big fans of the live music. "(Avery) loves the music and loves to put a dollar in the box," explains Jules. Going to the farmer's market has become a tradition of sorts where they "always get strawberries and kettle corn," Jules says, and drop by the musician area to listen to some music. "Just today she asked, 'do they have music?'" adds Jules as Avery grins.

According to Jan Taylor, the Regional Market Director for the California Farmers' Market Association and the coordinator of the music at the Moraga Farmers' Market, the music not only serves as a means for local artists to gain exposure but also works to get people to view the market more like a recreational activity than the chore of buying food. Taylor schedules the musical performers on an 8-10 week rotation, in order to ensure that market-goers hear a large variety of musical genres and styles.

The Moraga Farmer's Market has other attractions for kids, such as Cesare the balloon sculptor. Cesare charges for his balloon sculptures but offers so much more than balloon art. His wide array of noisemakers and more importantly his booming personality draw many children to the little seats placed in a semicircle around him. Bess Inzeo and her daughter Abby visit Cesare every week. They don't always purchase a balloon but Inzeo says that Abby "loves coming to say 'hi' to him." Cesare and his wares serve not only as a source of fun but also a lesson in saving money. "Abby comes periodically because she knows she needs to save. Today she brought her own money," notes Inzeo.

The market's entertainment is not solely for kids. Live cooking demonstrations such as Lesley Stiles' lesson on grilling on August 16, 2009, entertain and educate adult market-goers as well. Stiles, an East Bay chef and caterer, offered farmer's market patrons a taste of her delicious concoctions and taught proper grilling techniques to the large crowd that gathered around her.

From music to balloons to cooking, the Moraga Farmer's Market is more than your average shopping trip. Just remember to keep your ears open and get some music with your watermelon.



Lesley Stiles teaches techniques for grilling vegetables Photo Cristina Kim The Moraga Farmer's Market is open year-round from 9AM to 1PM and is located at the Moraga Center between Moraga Way and Moraga Road. Coming Up for your Listening Pleasure: September 6, 2009 Jack Pierre (folk music for the 21st century) September 13, 2009 Eddie Williams (electric guitar and saxophone) September 20, 2009 Ike Cosse (electric guitar blues) Did you miss Lesley Stiles? You can reach her at lesleystiles@comcast.net or visit her blog at <http://lesleystiles.blogspot.com>.

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