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The Economics of a Festival

By Sophie Braccini



Moragans raised their hands when prompted on opening night Photo Doug Kohen

It cost about \$100,000 to put on the California Independent Film Festival (CAIFF). According to Program Director Beau Behan, this 13th edition of a Festival was the biggest ever and one of the most successful. There are a few secrets behind that cultural and economic success – the enthusiasm of what Behan calls a troop of highly skilled volunteers, and the fact that this year the facility was given to the Festival by the managers of the Rheem Theater.

“This year was the most ‘black’ of the past several years,” says Behan, “and the one with the biggest attendance, with more than 3000 people coming to events and showings.” The Festival suffered like the rest of the entertainment industry the past few years, and deciding to move it to remote Moraga could have seemed a risky business decision. But the community lived up to the expectations of the CAIFF Board. “We had 70 volunteers and more calling in to help,” said Behan.

Community and Target Marketing Chair Carol Haag started working on outreach in November. Haag and her volunteers toured all the businesses in Lamorinda, contacted all the social clubs and reach out to everyone from Rossmoor to local day

care centers. “It was a real grassroots effort,” says Haag, “and we got an outpouring of support from the community.”

“During our opening and closing nights, 75% of the people who came were local,” said Behan, “and all our events were sold out.” It seems that when it is time to party, residents are willing and able. The other showings attracted moviegoers from across the Bay Area, according to the CAIFF management. Ticket sales represented 55% of the total income of the Festival.

The local business community played a large role in supporting the Festival. For opening night all the food was donated by local restaurants, Amoroma, Chef Chow, China Moon, and Terzetto Cuisine. Captain Vineyards sold the wine at wholesale prices, and so did Pennini’s on Closing Night. The return on their investment varied depending on where they were located. “The restaurants close to the Theater had some of their busiest times,” said Chamber of Commerce President Edy Schwartz. On the other side of Town however, in the Moraga Center, Terzetto’s Roos Pal reported a very disappointing outcome. “I will continue to back the Festival in the name of community

support,” said the business owner, “but it was not a boost for my business.”

Additional income came from generous donors. One of them is The New Rheem Theater.

“The CAIFF Association is a non-profit and is the operator of the New Rheem Theater,” explains Behan. “The Association is a venue sponsor for the Festival.” In the past the non-profit had to pay the venue, the projectionist, the projector and all those are very costly. Behan explains that one of the motivations of the Board to become the operator of the theater was that cost factor.

Behan believes that the Festival benefits the Theater as well. “Some of the proceeds from the Festival are going into the improvements of the New Rheem, such as the sofas and the new projector,” says Behan, “now we can put more into the renovation of the theater, like upgrading the sound system, and finishing the upgrade of the projection system.”

CAIFF Board members, along with most of the volunteers, pledged to do it again in Moraga next year. “What is important is that we were involved in the Festival, that the theater shows some life, and that people know that we are here,” said Haag.

FOOD TRIALS

By Mona Miller, DVM

With few exceptions, there is nothing inherent in a food source that makes it good or bad for a species. Just as some individual humans have dietary intolerances (lactose, gluten, etc), so do individual animals. Likewise, some individuals can eat all varieties of foods, no matter the fat or spice content, and have no trouble with digestion. I keep in mind whether the individual is experiencing any symptoms that might be related to food intolerance before calling it “good” or “bad” for that particular pet. For instance, from a physiologic standpoint (leaving out cultural or ethical issues, and I’m willing to risk some raised eyebrows here) there is nothing “better” about a grain-free diet as a general diet for an entire group/species.

Some disorders may call for a trial change in diet to determine if symptoms resolve. The main culprits in food intolerance are usually the protein and/or carbohydrate source, rather than preservatives, vitamins or minerals. Food trials are important for food allergy problems manifesting as chronic itchy skin and ear inflammation, and for intestinal intolerance manifesting as stomach noises, flatulence, vomit or diarrhea.

There are three main factors to consider when changing a food for a trial: the ingredients of the diet, the length of time feeding the new diet and awareness of all foods entering the animal’s mouth. This takes real commitment involved on the part of the pet owner, as you will read. I like to have an in-depth conversation with my clients before starting a food trial so that all factors are understood.

When changing the protein or carbohydrate ingredients, one must change ALL the ingredients. To do so, you should read the entire list on the

back of the bag or can. For example, let’s say that Diet A states “lamb and rice” on the front label but actually contains lamb, rice, soy, chicken and egg as stated in the ingredient list. Diet B states “venison and potato” on the front label and contains venison, potato, lamb, soy and egg on the ingredient list. A change from Diet A to Diet B will still provide exposure to lamb, soy and egg; thus the entire diet hasn’t actually changed. This is often where veterinary prescription diets come in handy – because these are formulated to be limited in the ingredients to just a couple of food sources.

For a dog, it is recommended to feed a new diet for six to ten weeks before deciding its effectiveness; and four to eight weeks for a cat. In a true food trial, one should follow this time frame with a challenge of the previously-fed food for a couple weeks to determine if the symptoms return.

ALL food that goes into the pet’s mouth should be considered when changing to a limited ingredient trial. This includes dry, can, dog cookies, cat treats and table scraps. Even indigestible items that can still provide allergens might need to be excluded, such as Greenies and rawhide chews.



Dr. Mona Miller lives in Lafayette with her young son and two cats. She has worked at Four Seasons Animal Hospital in Lafayette since moving here in 2001. She attended Cal as an undergrad, and received her DVM from U.C. Davis. She can be reached at Four Seasons, 938-7700, or by email to MonaSDVM@aol.com.

business briefs

Theater Square Brings More Success to Living Lean

Living Lean moved to Theater Square six months ago and things have been developing very positively for Orinda resident and business owner Sheena Lakhota. “I love the esthetics of the new place,” says Lakhota, “it is very convenient, the parking structure right there, my place is very visible, and more and more vibrant businesses are moving into the Square.” Lakhota certainly adds to the new vibe of Theater Square with the hip music that starts at 5:30 am for the bravest of her clients, the laser lights and high energy that circulates there all day long. As more people come in, Lakhota needs to think about expanding again. “I have so many clients coming from the Alamo-Danville area,” says Lakhota, “it made sense to expand in that direction.” The Danville studio is scheduled to open in May and will operate on the same model as Lakhota’s second location in Montclair.



Sheena Lakhota at her new Theater Square location Photo Sophie Braccini

nola, offering a healthy snack that tastes good. “The recipe actually comes from Dan Miskie, David’s father,” says Teichmann. “Some 15 years ago I was looking to healthier food and was frustrated by the high calories, high sugar, granola that was on the market,” says Dan Miskie, “so I developed my own recipe.” Miskie credits his granola for the 40 lbs he lost and never put back on. Teichmann explains that most granolas are based on oats that have little natural flavor, “a lot of fat and sugar needs to be added to make it taste good,” he says. Instead they base their recipe on flax seeds and almonds that have a high nutrient content and a lot of flavor, especially when roasted, which Teichmann and Miskie do in their commercial kitchen in Alameda. “We believe that the desire for a healthier life style and healthy food is a macro-trend,” says Teichmann, “our San Franola Granola business will grow. We see ourselves as a start-up, not a small business.” Teichmann and Miskie have big dreams and want to become a national consumer foods company. They made their Lamorinda debut on Saturday, February 12 with tastings at Diablo Foods, which will carry San Franola Granola.

Tri-Chamber Meeting – Make Your Movie

Lafayette, Moraga, and Orinda will hold a Tri Chamber Mixer at The New Rheem Theatre, 350 Park Ave, Moraga, on Tuesday, April 26. Since the meeting will be in a movie theater, the Chambers are asking residents to shoot a video (three minutes or less in length) or create a PowerPoint presentation or slide show about how much they love their town/city. “I thought, we are in a theater and we are all proud of our city – and hey, let’s have some fun,” said Lafayette Chamber Executive Director Jay Lifson. Winners from each community will be shown on the big screen and win prizes. Moraga residents should send their submissions to Mary Lloyd Coe, 216-8904, coemary@aol.com. Lafayette submissions can be sent to Karen Rose, 284-7404, Karen@lafayettechamber.org. And submission from Orinda should go to Candy Kattenburg at 254-3909, Candis333@aol.com.

Lafayette’s 2011 Citizen of the Year

Nominations are being accepted for Lafayette’s Citizen of the Year. The Citizen of the Year criteria include being a current Lafayette resident; someone who has given of their time, money or energy to help make Lafayette a healthy community, where people will want to live, work and shop; someone who models excellence in everything they do; someone who brings this community together and/or makes us proud to be a member of the community. Nominations should be sent by February 17 to jay@lafayettechamber.org or faxed to (925) 284-7404. Indicate who your candidate is and why they should be recognized. The winner will be honored at a special dinner held on Friday, March 25 at the

Lafayette Park Hotel & Spa. Cocktails will be served at 6:00pm and dinner begins at 8:00pm. “Help us celebrate the greatness we have in those around us,” said Lifson. The winner will be announced by March 1st.

News from the three Chambers of Commerce Lafayette

- Entrepreneur’s Club, February 17, 8:30am in the Lafayette Library & Learning Center
- Green Committee Open Meeting February 22, noon-1pm in the Lafayette Chamber Conference Room
- Business Issues/Government Affairs Committee Open Meeting, February 25 8-9am in the Lafayette Chamber Conference Room
- Big Band Dance on February 25th from 7-10pm at the Veteran’s Memorial Building in Lafayette. Dance lessons by Gail Enright from 7-8pm and dancing with music by The Big Band of Rossmoor from 8-10pm. Tickets are \$10 and available at the Lafayette Chamber of Commerce, 284-7404.

Moraga

Tuesday, February 22, 2011 - 6pm, the Chamber and Mechanics Bank are sponsoring the 2011 Business Person of the Year Dinner at the China Moon Restaurant, 380 Park St. All Chamber members and their guests are invited. RSVP to Kathel Nelson at kathelnelson@gmail.com.

Orinda

First Annual State of the City Address and Special Recognition Awards Dinner on Thursday, February 24, 2011 at the Orinda Country Club. Cocktails: 6-6:30pm; dinner 6:30-8:15pm, 315 Camino Sobrante, Orinda. RSVP required by Feb. 22. at www.orindachamber.com, cost is \$65 per person. The event will recognize as Best Small Business in Orinda. Orinda Taxi: Julian Juricevic. The State of the Town Address will be given by Mayor Victoria Smith. The Chamber will also give Special Recognition Awards to Sally Hogarty, Editor of the Orinda News and columnist Valerie Hotz.

Local Kids with Great Granola Ambition

Matt Teichmann and his childhood friend and now business partner, David Miskie, grew up in Lafayette and graduated from Acalanes High School in 1999. Leveraging lessons learned in previous careers of web starts up and private equity, the two recently started San Franola Gra-



Matt Teichmann and Dan Miskie offer samples of their granola to customers at Diablo Foods Photo Sophie Braccini

If you have a business brief to share, please contact **Sophie Braccini** at sophie@lamorindaweekly.com or call the office 925-377-0977