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Orinda Restaurant Tour: One more bite for the roads

By Sora O'Doherty

Food, wine, art and music will be the stars of the 2017 Orinda Restaurant Tour, which kicks off at 5:30 p.m. on Tuesday, May 2.

With several innovations, this year will see more involvement by restaurants from Orinda Village and, for the first time, a street fair will feature Orinda merchants, so it will be possible to also pick up a gift for Mothers' Day.

Participants will gather at 51 Moraga Way, next to Peet's Coffee in a large parking area, to collect their ticket booklets. For a half hour they can enjoy a complimentary glass of fine wine from the Lamorinda Wine Growers Association and appetizers offered by the restaurants from the village side, including newcomers Genuine Goodness and Baja Cali. (Latecomers can also enjoy the wine and appetizers, supplies permitting.) Then, from 6 to 8:30 p.m. guests can use their tickets at the 16 participating Orinda restaurants who will be offering samples. Among the restaurants participating are Casa Orinda, La Piazza, Shelby's, Sushi Island, Piccolo Napoli, Lava Pit Hawaiian Grill, Petra Café, and Europa Hof Brau, with dessert being provided by Republic of Cake, including Peet's coffee. Also returning to the tour are Cine Cuvée, Taverna Pellegrini, and Fourth Bore, restaurants that opened last year. New participants include Wild Magnolia and Reem's Steaks (change of ownership).

Last year the event was capped at 150 tickets, which sold out. This year the Chamber of Commerce hopes to offer at least 200 tickets. But, according to Sophie Braccini, executive director of the chamber, the number of tickets will need to be capped about a week before the event so that the restaurants know how many guests to expect.

Another first for this year is an invitation from the Orinda Chamber of Commerce to local artists to showcase their art. Sanvitalia will be open, and Hilton House will be among the shops offering wares for sale. In addition some Orinda nonprofit organizations will participate, including CalShakes, whose 2017 season will open on May 24 with Shakespeare's "As You Like It."

There will also be live music to kick off the festivities and throughout the tour, with four live performing locations. The chamber of commerce is partnering with Orinda Schools who are selling tickets to the tour and the Educational Foundation of Orinda that is also supporting the event.

Oh, and why one for the road? Because Orinda restaurants top the list of sales tax revenue contributors, and that includes the half-cent tax that funds Orinda's road repairs, so when you dine in Orinda, you also contribute to improving the community and building better roads.

Tickets are \$40 and are available online at www.orindachamber.org. If there are any available, tickets may also be purchased onsite at the beginning of the tour.

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