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Plan for fun at annual Pear and Wine Fest

By John T. Miller



Last year's pear pie-eating contest. Photo provided

The Town of Moraga will celebrate its 20th Annual Pear and Wine Festival this weekend on Saturday, Sept. 22, from 11 a.m. to 3 p.m. at the Moraga Commons Park. Admission is free to the public.

The family-friendly event will include activities for all ages while celebrating Moraga's pear history. Kids activities will include chalk art, face painting, a petting zoo, inflatable jumpies, and other games and prizes. Local DJ RyanO will provide entertainment.

Three Lamorinda wine growers will be offering tasting at the event, including wines from Captain Vineyards, run by Sal and Susan Captain of Moraga, Meadow View Winery run by Bill English, and Vincenza Ranch Vineyards, owned by Tony Inzerillo.

Captain Vineyards, which has been certified Green since 2009 and uses only dry-farmed organic grapes from the Lamorinda region, will be pouring three varietals from

their wines, which may include Cabernet Sauvignon, Cabernet Franc, Petite Verdot, Petit Syrah and Granache.

Meadow View Winery will offer Chardonnay, Rosé, Pinot Noir, a Tuscan style blend, Cabernet Franc, Cabernet Sauvignon and a Syrah. All grapes except the pinot noir are grown in Lamorinda.

Vincenza varietals include Cabernet Sauvignon, Chardonnay, Meritage, Petite Syrah, Sangiovese, Super Tuscan Blend and Zinfandel. They are also known in the Lamorinda area for their exclusive Pear Wine made annually for the Moraga festival.

Beer will also be offered along with pear cider.

Over 30 community groups will have booths at the festival. Food and drink will be available, along with ice cream, and pear pies by the slice or whole. Families can also bring picnics if they prefer.

Scheduled events include announcing the winners of the pear recipe contest at 1 p.m. and a pear pie-eating contest at 1:30 p.m.

While there are no longer any commercial pear orchards remaining in the Moraga region, the event, says Parks and Recreation Supervisor Breyana Brandt, "is to celebrate the pear history here. In 1913, this was the largest pear growing community in the nation."

Seedlings of pear trees planted by the padres at San Juan Bautista are now, more than 200 years later, the oldest fruit trees in California. According to the Moraga Historical Society, they remain in a fair state of vigor in spite of long neglect, producing large amounts of fruit yearly. Most of the pears in the Moraga Valley are Bartlett pears, planted around 1913 by James Irwin of the Moraga Company.

Brandt reports that the Moraga Park Foundation coordinates an annual pear harvest, gleaning the fruit from the town's many trees and donating them to the Contra Costa and Solano County Food Bank.

Moraga Commons Park is located at the corner of St. Mary's Road and Moraga Road.

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