

A berry good time at festival

Events

Strawberry Festival draws thousands to downtown

By ERIK CHALHOUB
OF THE REGISTER-PAJARONIAN

WATSONVILLE — Diane Broomfield of Hanford stood in the middle of Strawberry Lane in downtown Watsonville Saturday, contemplating out loud what she should try out.

Would it be strawberry waffles? Perhaps strawberry pizza? Or maybe she should test the strawberry shortcake?

Indecisive, Broomfield was probably going to try them all, she said.

Broomfield joined thousands of others who were faced with the same question as the 20th annual Watsonville Strawberry Festival took over downtown Saturday and Sunday.

"I know I'm going to go home with some strawberries," she

said. "I have some yogurt that's yearning for strawberries."

Charlie and Gerri Gray of Cupertino attend the Strawberry Festival nearly every year.

"It's our home away from home," Gerri Gray said.

Charlie Gray said he liked the layout of the festival, with wide pathways and easy to navigate food vendors. He had also just tried out some Hawaiian barbecue ribs, but wasn't done yet with his culinary journey.

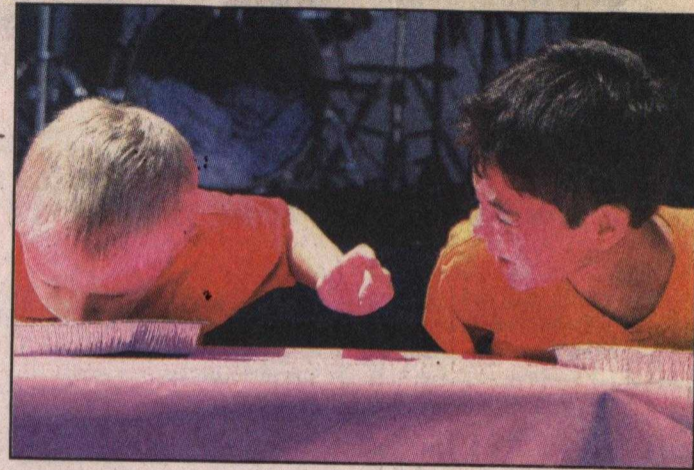
"We're looking for more

food," he said.

David, Brittney and Adam Lint of Watsonville were also looking for more "strawberry goodies" as well, Adam Lint said.

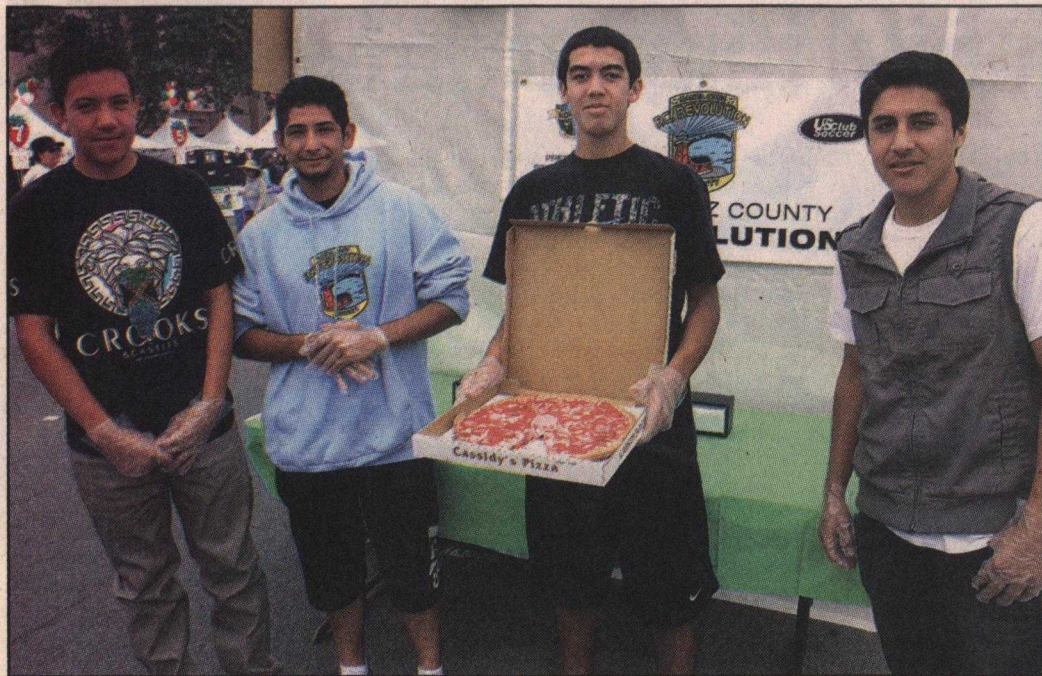
Joel Mijares of Azteca TV 43, who emceed the entertainment with Victor Garcia of Clear Channel, said the Strawberry Festival is a boost for Watsonville's economy, helping people discover the stores downtown.

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Two friends from Morgan Hill, Xander (left) and Adrian, compete in a pie eating contest during the Watsonville Strawberry Festival Saturday.



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David Ramirez (from left), Angel Fernandez, Sandor Rodriguez and Eric Fernandez, members of Santa Cruz County F.C. Revolution, teamed up with Cassidy's Pizza to sell strawberry pizza.

“
It's our home
away from
home.”
”

— Gerri Gray
on Strawberry Festival

FESTIVAL

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“It's one of the most important events in our area,” he said, noting that strawberries are the highest valued crop in Santa Cruz County. “It's huge for the city because it brings a lot of visitors from out of town.”

During a break in a performance by Tropicalismo Impacto 5, Mijares and Garcia asked the audience where they were from. A quick survey revealed that some traveled from a range of cities and states, including Seattle, Fresno and San Francisco.

Besides food, the festival also had more than 60 non-profit organizations distributing information as well as fundraising to support their programs.

New this year, seven cottage industries had a space to sell



Erik Chalhoub/Register-Pajaronian

Joann Borbolla helped sell strawberry salsa for the Kawakami-Watsonville Sister City Association.

their wares, including mole, strawberry jam, strawberry candy and more.

Live music filled both days

of the festival, including performances by Victory Lane Band, Banda Escuela de Rancho, Viry y su Grupo Dinova and The



Erik Chalhoub/Register-Pajaronian

A crowd navigates its way through the festival on East Beach Street.



Erik Chalhoub/Register-Pajaronian

Tropicalismo Impacto 5 perform tunes for the audience Saturday.

Sledge Grits Band.

A carnival area was set up in front of the Civic Plaza. In addition, strawberry pie eating contests were held throughout both days.

The festival typically draws around 40,000-50,000 people yearly, according to Israel Tirado, recreation supervisor of the city.

“Happy Swing” was one of the many rides in the festival's carnival area.

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