

Strawberry Festival celebrates the king of crops

Events - 2000
✓ By ERIK CHALHOUB
OF THE REGISTER-PAJARONIAN

WATSONVILLE — Representing a third of the county's crop value, strawberries play a large role in the area's agricultural makeup.

It is only fitting that the king crop has its own festival.

The 20th annual Watsonville Straw-

berry Festival returns Saturday and Sunday from 10 a.m. to 7 p.m. in downtown Watsonville.

"It's an opportunity for us to celebrate the crop that sustains this community," said Israel Tirado, recreation supervisor of the city.

According to the Santa Cruz County Crop Report, released by the Office

of the County Agricultural Commissioner in June, strawberries represented \$201,792,000 out of the county's \$599,268,000 total value for agricultural commodities.

For the festival's 20th anniversary, the city unveiled a redesigned logo by Watsonville artist Priscilla Martinez in February. The logo made such an

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impression on the city that it decided to use it as the Strawberry Festival's poster as well, Tirado said.

The logo is used on Strawberry Festival souvenirs, such as T-shirts, cups, shopping bags and more.

Also new this year, the Strawberry

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Festival will provide a space for seven cottage industries in Santa Cruz County to sell their wares, including mole, strawberry candy, strawberry jam and more.

An additional five food booth spaces have been added as well, Tirado said, because the main focus of the festival is food.

"What really draws folks is the food," he said.

Strawberry Lane will feature a number of unconventional strawberry concoctions, including strawberry

pizza, strawberry nachos, strawberry salsa and more.

Besides food, the festival will have more than 60 nonprofit organizations who will distribute information as well as fundraise to support their programs.

Live music will fill both days of the festival, including performances by Victory Lane Band, Banda Escuela de Rancho, Viry y su Grupo Dinova and The Sledge Grits Band.

A carnival area will be set up in front of the Civic Plaza.

The festival typically draws around 40,000-50,000 people, according to Tirado.

As the festival takes place

downtown, road closures will be in effect starting tonight. Second Street from Rodriguez to Maple streets will shut down starting at 7 p.m. tonight. On Friday at 3 p.m., Main Street from Riverside Drive to Beach Street will close, and at midnight, Main Street from Beach Street to West Lake Avenue, as well as East Beach Street from Rodriguez to Union streets will close.

All roads will reopen at 3 a.m. Monday morning.

Admission to the Watsonville Strawberry Festival is free. Parking is available for \$5 at the Civic Plaza parking garage on Rodriguez Street. For information, visit www.celebratestrawberries.com.