



Event organizer Oscar Rios salutes the crowd during the Cinco de Mayo festivities on Watsonville's Main St. Sunday afternoon. Photos by Peter Nichols/Register-Pajaronian

# Cinco de Mayo celebrated

*(Holiday - Cinco de Mayo)*  
Thousands attend event in downtown Watsonville *RP 5-6-02*

By PETER NICHOLS

FOR THE REGISTER-PAJARONIAN

A huge crowd packed Main Street and the downtown plaza Sunday afternoon for Watsonville's 13th annual Cinco de Mayo celebration. The weather was perfect; the music was upbeat, and people from all over the Central Coast — and beyond — enjoyed the day.

Former Mayor Oscar Rios, whose group Fiestas Patrias organized and orchestrated the event, said the celebration gets bigger and better every year.

"We started in 1990 after the earthquake because this place was dead," he said. "Now we have over 10,000 people attending."

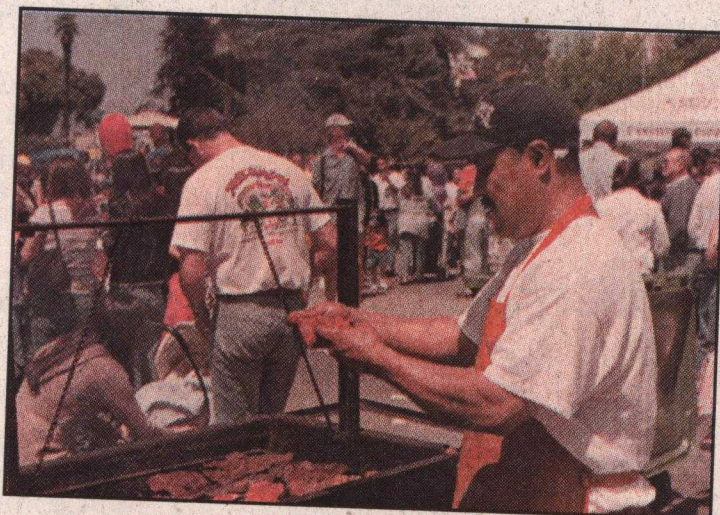
Rios said it was the lineup of bands that drew revelers from far and wide. Peligro Norteno and Banda Sausalito headlined a bill featuring six bands.

More than a dozen food concessions, most in support of local non-profit groups, served everything from pizza to tacos to cheese-smothered potatoes. Kids worked-out in two air-inflated, vinyl jump-

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Los Sismos de Michoacan entertain thousands at Watsonville's 13th annual Cinco de Mayo celebration.



Angel Ramos barbecues beef in front of the Plaza for hungry Cinco de Mayo celebrants.





Peter Nichols/Register-Pajaronian

Pizza is the favorite for Sandy and Jaime Cruz as they enjoy the day.

## CELEBRATE

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ing stations; dancers danced; activists promoted their causes and registered voters, and cars cruised by on neighboring streets.

David Carrillo of Salinas has come to Watsonville for the last four Cinco de Mayo celebrations. Standing in one of the lines that appeared to meander in front of each and every booth at the make-shift food court, he wasn't sure where his line was going or what he was going to eat.

"It's a really long line," he said. "So it must be good."

Rios said he was pleased to see the local event gain broad appeal throughout the greater Bay Area.

"People feel it's safe to come here," He said. "It's a family event; we don't serve liquor, and our reputation is getting better every year."

He said the lack of commercial vendors was by design.

"You won't see Budweiser here," Rios said. "But you will see the many non-profits that do so much work for the community."

Elizar Andre and Celia Fernandez came from San Jose for the music.

"We come to all the festivals

"People feel it's safe to come here. It's a family event; we don't serve liquor, and our reputation is getting better every year."

— Oscar Rios

here." Fernandez said. "We help the people start dancing. They don't come out until we do."

Cinco de Mayo, often referred to as Mexican Independence Day, actually celebrates a different historical event. According to Mexico Online, the holiday commemorates the victory of the Mexicans over the French army at The Battle of Puebla in 1862. The French, using the excuse of unpaid debts owed by the Mexican government, sought to expand their empire and invaded the Gulf Coast of Mexico. Visit [www.mexonline.com/cinco.htm](http://www.mexonline.com/cinco.htm) for more information.



Peter Nichols/Register-Pajaronian

Assemblyman Simon Salinas addresses the Cinco de Mayo crowd Sunday afternoon.



Celia Hernandez and Elizar Andre dance on Main Street to the music of Los Sismos de Michoacan.

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