

# THE FOOD NETWORK



Executive chef at La Posta in Santa Cruz, Katherine Stern, right, picks cabbage for the restaurant during the Aptos Farmers Market on Saturday. JON WEIAND/SENTINEL

## Eat Local First Festival builds connections

By SAMANTHA CLARK

sclark@santacruzsentinel.com

APTOS — Promoting local food may seem like preaching to the choir in Santa Cruz, but sustaining the sustainable takes work.

At her Eat Local First Festival booth on Saturday at the Aptos Farmers Market at Cabrillo College, Kelly Dearie had the buzz on bees.

"Local bees that are raised

sustainably are healing the colonies of conventionally farmed bees used to pollinate fields," said Dearie, owner of local lactofermented beverage-maker Creative Cultures.

One man listening and tasting Dearie's Pollen Up drink said he knows of farmers having trouble with pollination. He got her contact information, so he could learn more for his friends.

"This sort of networking illustrates what we want to foster," said Michael Olson, a board member of the festival's host, business association Think Local Santa Cruz. "It brings the local com-

munity together in one place. It amplifies those relationships."

About a dozen local ice creameries, confectioneries, restaurants, and food and drink distributors participated in the free inaugural event.

The farmers market draws 5,000 people a week, and 2,000 to 5,000 people are expected to have attended the festival located in its own corner of the market, said Kelly Bayer, the event coordinator.

"We want to introduce all the foodies in town to the local eateries, food purveyors and farmers," Bayer said. "The restaurant and

food sector of the association is the smallest."

Jamie Smith, owner of the month-old company Foodsmith, brought 1,000 samples of his Moroccan-style tofu, tomato and pepper dish, made from local Dirty Girl and Route 1 produce — all were gone in two hours.

"Many people, other businesses expressed interest in creating partnerships," Smith said. His company provides healthy, ready-made dinners for families.

The event also was an opportunity for the public to see what

SEE FOOD ON C3

## FOOD

Continued from C1

local food items are available.

"It's too cold, huh?" asked Santa Cruz resident Kumar Lama to the smiling The Penny Ice Creamery worker. Never.

Despite the gray sky and slight breeze, Lama took the herby mint chip in a waffle

cone. He also had tried a kale salad and the probiotic drinks.

"I haven't heard of many of these businesses, but I'll lookout for them and try them again," he said. "These options are what's great about Santa Cruz."

However, local isn't enough, said Maureen Wilmot, executive director of the Santa Cruz-based national Organic Farming Research Foundation, which

tabled at Eat Local First. She said organic farming is better for the environment and creates jobs — businesses are more likely to expand and depend on more labor.

"Many people say 'local' or 'organic'?" she said. "It shouldn't be an 'or' question. It's an 'and' statement."

Follow Sentinel reporter Samantha Clark on Twitter.com/samantabclark.