

Burrito Bash a weekend full of food, music and derring-do

By EMILIO ALVARADO
STAFF WRITER

SOMEWHERE in Watsonville is a man who can eat 35 jalapeno peppers in 60 seconds.

This remarkable individual is Fred Cordova, 30, who along with 17 others, participated in the jalapeno-eating contest yesterday at the Eighth Annual Burrito Bash at the Santa Cruz County Fairgrounds.

Cordova emerged from the contest victorious and very much in need of a cold beer, cold water, cold anything. What's his secret?

"It's just natural," he said. "You're just born that way, I guess."

His closest competitors were two men from Salinas. Taking second place was Barnabe Torres, who ate 27 peppers. In third place was Jaime Jaramillo, who munched 26 peppers. The winners received trophies and all the cold water they could drink.

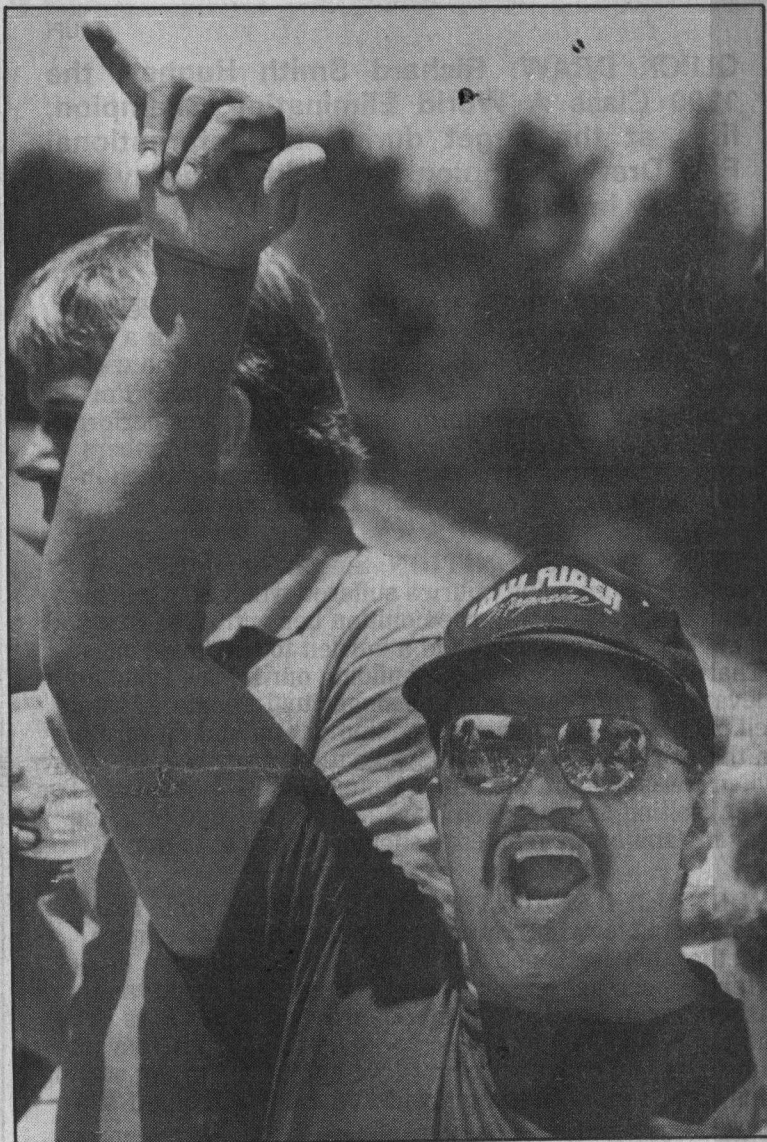
Last year's champ, Ken Thomas, whose record of 20 peppers was crunched, knew what he was doing later that day — "having a Maalox chaser."

The jalapeno-eating contest was just one of the many events that punctuated the two-day event. There were also crafts, pony rides, music and plenty of burritos.

Musical headliner yesterday was Eddie and the Tide, who played at the main stage around 4 p.m. to a crowd basking in the warm sun.

It was yesterday's perfect weather that helped draw about 10,000 people to the fairgrounds. A total of about 19,000 people attended the event on both days, event coordinator Annette Baldwin said.

Last year the Bash drew about 10,000 people. Baldwin



Mike McCollum

Fred Cordova raises a cheer after winning the jalapeno-pepper-eating contest. More photos on page 11

said there was more advertising this year. The event is expected to make about \$12,000. All proceeds go to the Watsonville Recreation Department, who sponsored the event.

Baldwin said there were no serious problems at the event.

"It's been real mellow," Baldwin said.

She said having the FEMA trailers at the fairgrounds did not cause any parking problems.

Around 5 p.m. yesterday, the award was given for the best burrito at the event. First prize was a cruise aboard a Royal Cruise luxury liner.

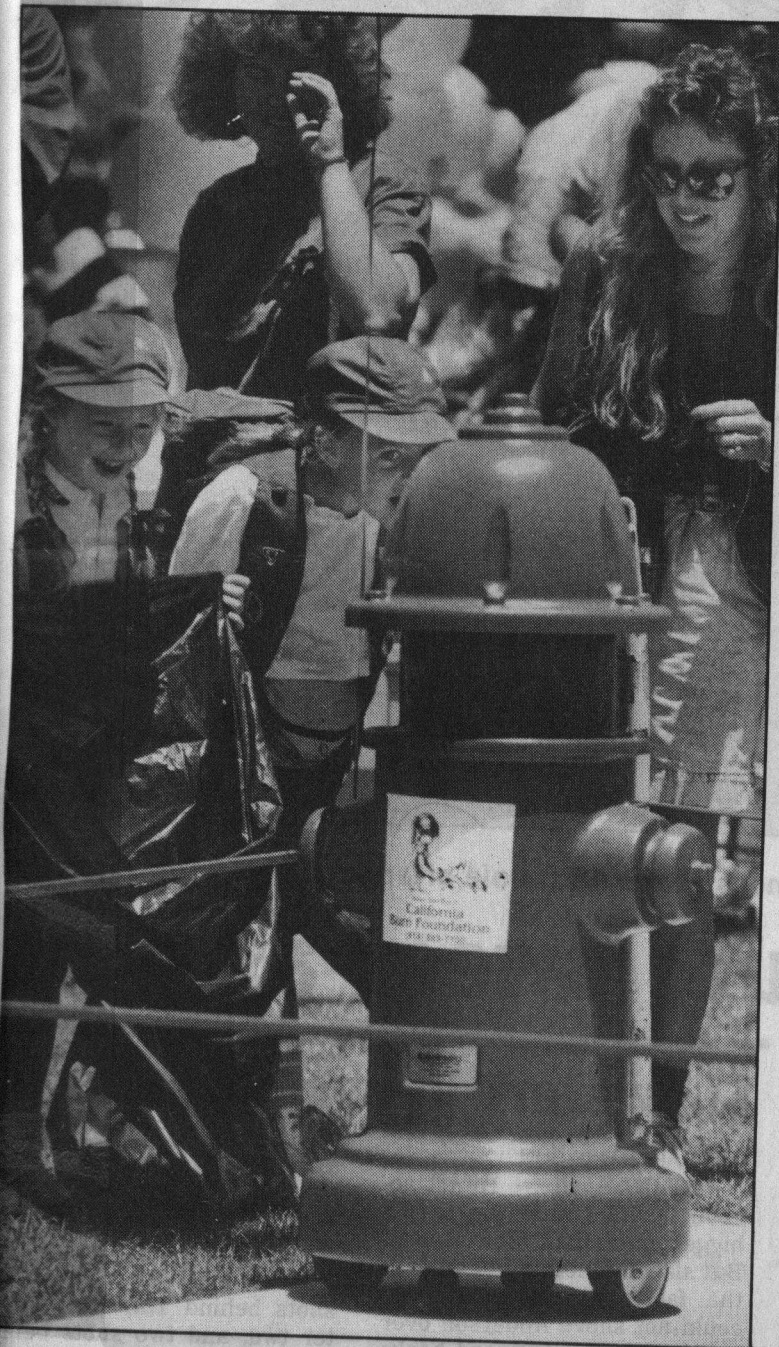
See BASH page 9 ►

Burrito Bash draws big crowd

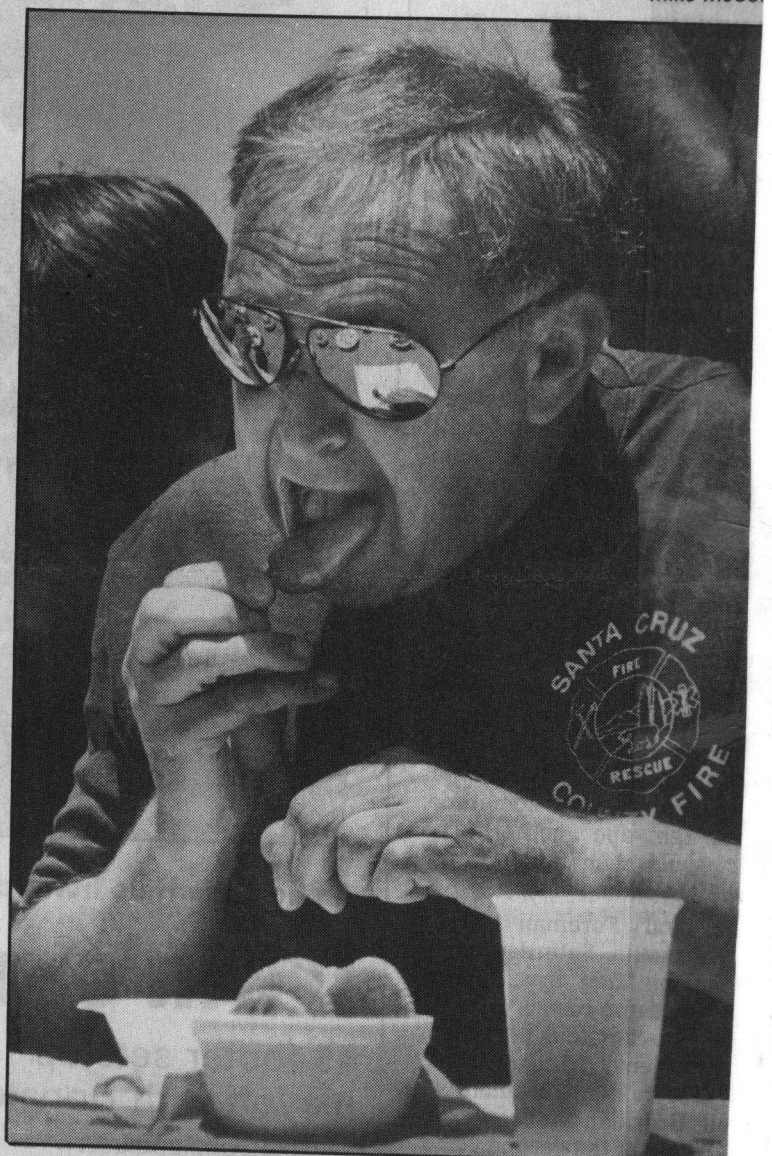


The rock group Eddie and the Tide entertained crowds Sunday.

Mike McCol



Mike McCollum



Mike McCol

Above, Ken Thomas of the Corralitos state fire station, last year's jalapeno-eating champ, competed again this year. At left, the Salispuedes fire station sent along a walking, talking fire hydrant to the delight of Tera Hunt, left, her friend Sara Jackson, and her mother, Tina Hunt.