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Small Town Fun at the Moraga Pear and Wine Festival

By Sophie Braccini



A fair young maiden stomps grapes while Parks and Rec Director Jay Ingram kneels to capture the juice

Under last Saturday's deliciously mild sun, families and older residents alike came to the Pear and Wine Festival at the Moraga Commons Park for a good time, rejoicing in the simple pleasures of living in a community with a small-town ambience.

For the first time, Moraga's famous pears were joined by grapes at the annual fall event. An easygoing tone was set for the day by Mayor Karen Mendonca when she rolled up her pants and went on stage to crush grapes with her bare feet. The pear recipe and pear pie-eating contests were rivaled in fun by a wine-pairing mini-class and the Lamorinda Winegrower Association's (LWGA) wine tasting. "It was one of our most successful Festivals," commented proud organizer John Haffner.

"This is something I always wanted to do, since I was a child and saw Lucille Ball do it on I Love Lucy," said the mayor, when offered the opportunity to crush grapes provided by the LWGA. Mendonca confided that it had felt wonderful, "like a foot massage." LWGA's Tony Rollo organized the crushing, along with Parks and Recreation staff. "I cut some of my own barrels and brought them here," said Rollo, who owns Vincenza Ranch Vineyard, the

town's third bonded winery, "that's the way it's always been done."

The theme of pears and wine was picked up by one of the contestants in the pear recipe contest. Robin Valentine created a pear in wine sorbet dessert that tasted delicious and won her 4th prize. In the meantime, Monica Chappell was teaching a wine and food pairing class with three wines (two of them local): a Parkmon Vineyard Sauvignon Blanc was paired with goat cheese; Captain Vineyard's Petite Sirah went with rare beef; and a Washington State Riesling met chips and salsa. Chappell, who usually teaches a two-hour class, said, "The Town of Moraga asked me to create a shorter class to do outside during the festival. It worked very well, with mostly local wines."

Artists, community service groups, representatives from the Town and inflatable jumpies for the kids completed the scene in which neighbors, friends and families met and mingled. There was nothing pretentious, nothing outrageous - just nice, fruitful fun.

The winners of the Pear Recipe contest are:

1st place: Elaine Cable's Savory Pear Tartlets with Chevre 2nd place: Sharon Metcalf's Fresh Pear Upside Down Cake 3rd place: Robin Valentine's Pear and Red Wine Sorbet 4th place: Brian Pergamit's Cinnamon Pear Pockets

Front page photo: On the left, Mayor Karen Mendonca jumps in with both feet; right, a fair young maiden stomps grapes while Parks and Rec Director Jay Ingram kneels to capture the juice.





Mayor Karen Mendonca jumps in with both feet

Left to right: Mina Lucacher, Grant Stubbelfield, Virginia Smith and Bob Gardner Photo Ohlen Alexander

Reach the reporter at: sophie@lamorindaweekly.com

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