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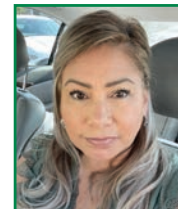
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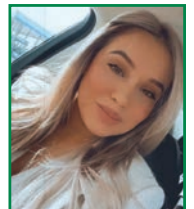
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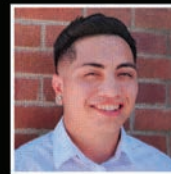
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Garlic Festivities: A Summer Tradition Comes to Los Banos



BY SHAWN PINTOR-DAY
The Westside Express

The California Garlic Festival is making its annual return, and this year Los Banos will be hosting the event from Aug. 30 through Sept. 1. After being moved from Gilroy in 2019 and experiencing a lot of uncertainty and reworking due to the pandemic in the years following, the festival has finally found a home in Los Banos.

The California Garlic Festival has had a fluctuating history over the past few years. With some setbacks bringing a halt to the event in 2019 and the pandemic prohibiting attendance in 2020, the festival saw a cautious revival in 2021 with attendees be-

ing urged to drive through rather than experiencing the festivities on foot.

In April of 2022, the Garlic Festival Association announced that the event would be suspended, and, just a month later, canceled the event indefinitely. Not wanting to see a nearly 50-year tradition fall, local vendors, farmers, and even some community members were vocal about their disappointment over the lack of a yearly Garlic celebration and the Noceti Group stepped in to try their hand at a revival in Stockton.

Being composed mainly of farmers and motorsports enthusiasts, the group was more than familiar with the promotion and production of large-scale events, and, to the delight of the Central Valley, the Garlic Festival was held in Stockton in 2023 and went off without a hitch.

Now, on the tail of this success, Los Banos gets its chance to host one of the longest-running events in Central Valley history.

Alan Sanchez, the media manager for the Garlic Festival and longtime resident of Los Banos and the Noceti organization, said that hosting the event close to home

will affect both local morale and agriculture in an overwhelmingly positive way.

“We’re blessed to be in California where we have a lot of agricultural celebrations,” Sanchez said. “It’s about farmers supporting local farmers.”

This emphasis on farming and agriculture is one of the key points of the Garlic Festival. Because garlic is a crop that can be (and is) grown year-round, events like the Garlic Festival help local growers utilize every ounce of their product, preventing a great deal of waste and food loss in the process.

This loss prevention, Sanchez said, also provides the culinary artists of the community the opportunity to get creative and experiment with their food, producing specialty concoctions like garlic hot sauce, garlic catfish, and the exclusive (and eccentric) garlic ice cream.

In addition to a lot of garlic, there will be no shortage of events, excitement, or entertainment this year, as Sanchez and staff have been providing a stage for local artists and musicians.

To help celebrate during the festivities,



Commemorative T-shirts will be for sale at the festival.

the local legendary group The Moonshine Bandits will be returning to their roots for their first hometown performance in 10 years.

As Los Banos natives, Dusty “Tex” Dahlgren and Brett “Bird” Brooks will be hitting the main stage during the second night of the festival, and both are excited to be celebrating the return of the event alongside their friends and neighbors.

The festival at the Merced County Spring Fairgrounds in Los Banos promises to be a safe, family-friendly event with all of the fun that music, rides and garlic has to offer.



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Meet the Reigning Queens of the Festival Scholarship Pageant

BY SHIM LACY

The California Garlic Festival Scholarship Pageant has a profound impact on the community, offering significant scholarships that help young women pursue their educational dreams.

The reigning queens of the festival are not just titleholders, they are media influencers, ambassadors of goodwill, role models and inspirations to their peers and community. This year, we shine a spotlight on these remarkable young women and their journeys.

Molly Dua's reign as Miss California Garlic Festival this year has been marked by her commitment to community service and academic excellence. A recent graduate of the University of California Santa Barbara with a degree in Economics, this Manteca native recently completed a summer abroad in Japan teaching English as a Second Language courses.

She plans to work as a substitute teacher in Manteca before continuing her education next year attending law school. "Participating in the California Garlic Festival pageant was a life-changing experience," says Dua, "It gave me the confidence to pursue my dreams and the financial support to make them a reality. I'm forever grateful for the opportunities the Noceti family and this pageant have provided."

Tatiana Castañeda, our Teen Miss California Garlic Festival, is a junior high school student from Ceres in Stanislaus County, with a passion for STEM. She excels in both academics and extracurricular activities, participating in numerous clubs.

Castañeda recently completed a week-long camp for girls in STEM at CSU Fresno. "The pageant has taught me so much about leadership and self-confi-

dence," Castañeda says. "I'm grateful for the opportunities it has provided and am thankful for the scholarship I will receive."

Tamicia Wakefield, our Ms. California Garlic Festival, is an Oakland resident who directs a scholarship foundation in that region and has spent the past year attending numerous community events to raise awareness about the festival in the greater East Bay region.

She has enjoyed the opportunity to learn about local agriculture in the Central Valley and spread the word about the bounty that our community provides. "Being Ms. California Garlic Festival has given me a platform to promote sustainability and the importance of local farming," she shares.

"Molly, Tati, and Tamicia exemplify the values of the California Garlic Festival Scholarship Pageant: integrity, respect and kindness," shared Shim Lacy, pageant director, "As their historic reign comes to a close, we are so proud of them for the tremendous work they have done this year on behalf of the festival. They inspire each of us to pursue our dreams and contribute to the communities."

Dua, Castañeda and Wakefield have been assisting the directors and contestants with preparations for the competition and will be featured in the scholarship pageant and prince and princess program taking place Live on Aug. 31 and Sept. 1 at 1 p.m. in the Germino Building at the fairgrounds in Los Banos. Your ticket to the festival includes free entry to watch both shows and witness the crowning of the next historic queens.

For more information on the California Garlic Festival Scholarship Pageant and Princess Program please contact Shim Lacy at 209-518-3915 or email at ShimLacy@gmail.com



Who will be one of five new queens chosen at the 2024 California Garlic Festival this Labor Day Weekend? Current reigning 2023 California Garlic Festival Royalty (pictured L to R) Tatiana Castañeda - Teen Miss California Garlic Festival, Molly Dua - Miss California Garlic Festival, Tamicia Wakefield - Ms. California Garlic Festival, and Mandie Mason - Miss California Garlic Festival Spirit



LEFT: Miss California Garlic Festival Molly Dua, pictured left here, with her sister queen, Miss Asparagus Festival Dallas Pollard, recently celebrated Independence Day at the Manteca 4th of July Parade; RIGHT: Teen Miss California Garlic Festival 2023, Tatiana Castañeda

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Contestants of the California Garlic Festival Scholarship Pageants

SHIM LACY

The California Garlic Festival Scholarship Pageant, a cornerstone of the festival, has a vibrant history of recognizing and supporting the educational ambitions of women from all over the state.

The contestants come from diverse backgrounds, each bringing their unique talents and aspirations. This year's group is no exception, with women of all ages poised to influence their communities and beyond.

The pageant takes place live on Aug. 31 at 1 p.m. in the Germino Building and will include the contestants competing in three areas of competition: fun-fashion, formal wear and on-stage interview.

Four queens will be chosen and will receive custom embroidered sashes and crowns. Additional awards include a \$1,000 cash scholarship for the Miss division winner and \$250 for the Teen division winner. Adult division winners earn other special prizes.

The program also offers special awards, such as spirit, congeniality and photogenic. New awards have been introduced, including a "People's Choice Award," with the winner earning a cash prize and a donation to the non-

profit of their choice.

A special "Sunshine Award" has been added to recognize differently abled contestants, demonstrating the program's commitment to integrity, respect and kindness to women and girls of all ages, sizes and abilities.

"This year, we have the largest group of contestants in our history," shared Shim Lacy, the pageant and prince and princess program director. "We are thrilled to offer an exciting and inspiring show for the community featuring 25 outstanding women of achievement."

This year, there are eight contestants in the Teen division for ages 12 to 15, including the following: T1 Lilyana Flores of Los Banos, age 12; T2 Kylie Anderson of Manteca, age 15; T3 Nancy Poore of Lodi, age 13; T4 Molly Lares of Linden, age 15; T5 Nayeli Pulido of Los Banos, age 13; T6 Kennedy McLeod of Manteca, age 15; T7 Tammana Grewal of Manteca, age 13; and T8 Morgan Williamson of Placerville, age 14.

There are five contestants in the Miss division for ages 16 to 21, including the following: Q1 Autumn Nava of Manteca, age 18; Q2 Tenaya Spikes of Tracy, age 19; Q3 McKenzie Cousins of Paterson, age 18; Q4 Saige Carstensen of

Manteca, age 17; and Q5 Yasmin Martinez of Los Banos, age 21.

The Elite Ms. division is new for 2024, featuring women between 22 and 49. There are five contestants: EM 1 Ciarra Nuno of Los Banos; EM2 Misti McLeod of Manteca; EM3 Richa Lalit Kumar of Manteca; EM 4 Sybil Spikes of Tracy; and EM5 Carley Hager of Ripon.

The Classic Ms. division is another brand new addition for 2024, featuring women ages 50 and better. There are seven contestants: CM1 Bridget Montalvo of Manteca; CM2 Tammy Slade of Auburn; CM3 Susan Nuno of Los Banos; CM4 Francine Turner of Los Banos; CM5 Katherine Lacy of Manteca; CM6 Karleen Kurys of Manteca; and CM7 Tammy Carstensen of Manteca.

The contestants of the California Garlic Festival Scholarship Pageant are truly inspiring. Their dedication, talent and vision for the future make them role models for their peers. They also build lifelong skills and friendships as they compete for the title.

The pageant is unique in many ways. For one, there are several mother-daughter duos participating, including Tammy and Saige Carstensen of Manteca, who are competing in the Classic

Ms. and Miss divisions, respectively.

Susan and Ciarra Nuno of Los Banos are competing in the Classic Ms. and Elite Ms. divisions, respectively. Sybil and Tenaya Spikes of Tracy are also competing in the Classic Ms. and Miss divisions, respectively.

And at 78 years young, Katherine Lacy of Manteca is proud to be the oldest contestant in the pageant!

The show will feature all 25 contestants and feature entertainment provided by the current queens—Molly Dua (Miss California Garlic Festival), Tatiana Castaneda (Teen Miss California Garlic Festival), and Tamicia Wakefield (Ms. California Garlic Festival)—as well as guest emcees and mother-daughter duo, Kristan Vaughan and Makenzie Vaughan St. Cyr.

The festival entry includes access to the pageant and prince and princess program. Tickets and complete information on the pageant, prince and princess program, entertainment schedule, parking and other details are available on the festival website, cagarlicfestival.com.

For more information on the California Garlic Festival Scholarship Pageant and Prince and Princess Program, please contact Shim Lacy at 209-518-3915 or ShimLacy@gmail.com.



Littlest stars shine the brightest

SHIM LACY

The Prince and Princess Program at the California Garlic Festival is a delightful tradition that brings the youngest members of our community into the spotlight.

The wildly popular program has been expanded for 2024 to include the "Prince Program" and is open to little boys and girls ages 11 and under.

The Prince and Princess Program is not a competitive pageant or even a competition at all but a recreational youth activity that allows young children to experience the fun and excitement of being on stage without the pressure of the competition.

The program emphasizes fun, confidence-building and community pride. Ages eight and under are named Garlic Prince and Princess, and ages nine to 11 are named Mini Miss and Mr. Garlic. The girls receive a custom ribbon sash and tiara, and the boys receive a custom medallion.

Under the direction of Shim Lacy, who also serves as the pageant coordinator, the program encourages children to express themselves and participate in festival activities.

Participants take part in a pre-festival team building playdate and a special show during the festival that includes a fashion runway and on-stage questions. It ends with each of

them crowned live on stage by the brand new California Garlic Festival Queens during the Prince and Princess Showcase on Sept. 1 at 1 p.m. in the Germino Building.

"The California Garlic Festival Prince and Princess Program is designed to be an inclusive and supportive experience, fostering a sense of camaraderie and self-esteem among the children," shared Lacy.

"We are thrilled to welcome young boys into the program so that all children can experience the positive aspects of pageantry and learn more about our program values of integrity, respect and kindness. This show is such a treat for the entire community, and we can't wait to get 'Footloose at the Festival.'"

Five boys are participating in the new Garlic Prince Program for ages eight and under: Colton Garcia of Modesto, age 3; Kiaan Gupta of Manteca, age 4; Maverick Coit of Los Banos, age 5; Ishaan Kethinedi of Manteca, age 7; and Viyan Pattanashetti of Manteca, age 7.

Thirteen girls are participating in the third annual Garlic Princess Program for ages eight and under: Capri Cabales of Pleasanton, age three months; Olivia McDonald of Stockton,

age 3; Addilynn Garcia of Los Banos, age 4; Jayla Martinez of Los Banos, age 4; Pehel Dwivedi of Lathrop, age 5; Kiara Sahu of Manteca, age 6; Ridhwi Verma of Manteca, age 6; Bianca Pandit of Manteca, age 7; Lola Arzate of Los Banos, age 7; Nairita Saha of Lathrop, age 7; Shivika Joshi of Manteca, age 7; Tapasya ArunGowda of Manteca, age 7; and Saanvi Aravind of Manteca, age 8.

Yajurva ArunGowda of Manteca, age 9, is the only boy participating in the new Mini Mr. Garlic Program for ages nine to 11.

Eleven girls are participating in the third annual Mini Miss Garlic Program for ages nine to 11: Charlie Rae Gomez of Los Banos, age 9; Karishma Kumar of Manteca, age 9; Kassidy Belasco of Los Banos, age 9; Layla Rose Castillo of Patterson, age 9; Nayra Gupta of Manteca, age 9; Saachi Sood of Stockton, age 9; Samaira Jain of Manteca, age 9; Shanaya Jain of Manteca, age 9; Aahana Sahu of Manteca, age 10; Siddhisikha Das of Manteca, age 10; and Srijishna Chatterjee of Manteca, age 10.

The Prince and Princess Program is a heartwarming aspect of the California Garlic Festi-

val that celebrates the joy and potential of our youngest community members.

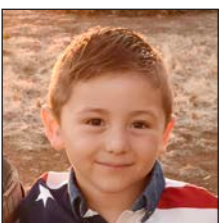
As they take part in the festivities, these little stars shine brightly, reminding us of the importance of nurturing confidence and kindness from an early age.

The festival entry includes access to the Prince and Princess program, entertainment, a classic car show and hundreds of vendors in a safe, family-friendly atmosphere. There will be plenty of safe, family fun, including games, a petting zoo, camel rides, monster trucks and more.

Delicious food vendors featuring the signature ingredient of garlic will offer loads of temptations along with the Garlic Alley building, serving up delicious garlic fries, garlic mushroom bread bowls, and the hit festival novelty: the roasted garlic and maple ice cream!

Tickets and complete information on the pageant, the prince and princess program, entertainment schedule, parking and other details are available on the festival website, cagarlicfestival.com.

For more information on the California Garlic Festival Scholarship Pageant and the Prince and Princess Program, please contact Shim Lacy at 209-518-3915 or ShimLacy@gmail.com.



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Celebrating Talent and Tradition in the Scholarship Pageants

THE WESTSIDE EXPRESS

As the California Garlic Festival moves to its vibrant new home at the Merced County Spring Fairgrounds in Los Banos, the community eagerly anticipates the celebration of agriculture, community spirit and the unforgettable aroma of garlic.

Among the festival's many highlights, the prestigious Miss California Garlic Festival Scholarship Pageant and Prince/Princess Program stands out as an opportunity for empowerment for young boys and girls as well as women of all ages.

Since its inception, the California Garlic Festival Scholarship Pageant has been more than just a beauty pageant; it's a platform for women and girls of all ages to showcase their personal talents and community involvement.

Over the past three years, the pageant has grown in prestige and expanded its scholarships and age divisions. A cornerstone of the festival, the pageant is under the thoughtful direction of Shim Lacy, who has brought together a team of incredible volunteers to help celebrate women and children in our community via the pageant and prince/princess programs.

"We are delighted to welcome back Shim Lacy, to coordinate this great pageant program for us," stated Danica Noceti-Keleher, the marketing director for the festival and Noceti Group, Inc., a motorsports and entertainment company that includes the Stockton 99 Speedway, Stockton Dirt Track, Little 99 Kart & Moto Track as well as the San Joaquin Asparagus Festival.

"Shim had unprecedented success reviving the Asparagus Festival queen program in 2022 and she continues to grow our scholarship programs in her 3rd year at the helm. She and her amazing team with Judi Horton, Julia Martegani along with the wonderful caring pageant committee volunteers have helped our pageant program stand out as one of the best in the state," Noceti-Keleher explained.

Lacy works as a senior administrative assistant with the Port of Stockton. She is a life-long resident of Manteca. Her passion is community engagement and she looks forward to working with the queens in the community in the coming year.



LEFT: California Garlic Festival Scholarship Pageant and Princess Program Director, Shim Lacy; CENTER: California Garlic Festival Scholarship Pageant Technical Director, Judi Horton; LEFT: California Garlic Festival Scholarship Pageant Assistant Director, Julia Martegani

She has over 30 years of experience in the pageant industry. In addition to her volunteer work as the coordinator for the garlic and asparagus festival queen programs, Lacy is also the co-founder and co-director of Manteca Youth Focus, a non-profit youth leadership program which hosts the annual Miss Manteca & Manteca City Ambassador competition.

She volunteers as a judge and auditor for local programs throughout the central valley and northern California including Escalon, Gustine, Yuba-Sutter Fair, Lassen County Fair, Tehama County Fair, El Dorado County Fair and the local Miss America preliminary in San Joaquin County.

She is also a past local, state, regional and national titleholder with several pageant systems including Pure International Pageants and the former Youth Focus Inc. of San Jose. She has fond memories of the fairgrounds having judged in the past for several years at the annual Miss May Day Pageant in the early 2000's.

Horton serves as the technical director of the show and has a passion for agriculture. She is a graduate of Chico State with a degree in Agricultural Business and lives on her farm in Lock-

eford. Horton works as an elementary school teacher with Manteca Unified School District.

Her pageant experience includes competing, directing and coaching for pageant systems including the Miss America Organization and Pure International Pageants. Lacy refers to Horton as her "partner in crown" and together the duo created the "Sparkle Sisters" to be a force for good in the pageant industry, starting a grassroots movement to promote positivity and inclusion.

Together they host annual workshops to help build pageant prep skills. She volunteers as the President of the Board of Directors for Manteca Youth Focus, is a member of Kiwanis International and is also the current reigning Elite Ms. Asparagus Festival and is the first woman to hold the title awarded at the 2024 San Joaquin Asparagus Festival last April.

Martegani is the choreographer and assistant technical director. She brings a wealth of experience in the competitive realm of dance arts. She is a resident of Stockton and recent graduate of the University of the Pacific with a degree in Political Science and served as a member of the famous Tiger

Dance Team.

She has over 10 years of experience in competitive dance and gymnastics. She recently completed an internship with the San Joaquin County District Attorney's office and is currently employed with O'Connor Woods Senior Living. She also volunteers her time as a choreographer and volunteer with Manteca Youth Focus.

Together, the trio embodies the program values of integrity, respect and kindness. They lead the contestants through preparation for the rigorous selection process, in which candidates receive scores based upon their poise, communication and marketing skills.

The competition takes place live during the festival and includes a fun-fashion runway, which has a unique "boots and bling" western theme, formal wear modeling and impromptu question segments, all designed to highlight the well-rounded capabilities of the contestants and provide positive brand ambassadors for the festival.

This year's pageant promises to be unlike any other, with the new fairgrounds providing a stunning backdrop for the festivities and the largest group of contestants to date with twenty-six women and girls entered in the »

pageant.

New events and opportunities have been introduced, including a "People's Choice Award" with the winner earning a cash prize as well as a donation to the non-profit of their choosing and a new special "Sunshine" award has been added to recognize differently-abled contestants, making this a truly unique experience for both contestants and attendees.

The scholarship pageant will take place on Aug. 31, and the prince and princess program will be on Sept. 1. Both shows begin at 1 pm in the Germino Building.

"As the California Garlic Festival enters a new chapter in Los Banos, the California Garlic Festival royalty stand ready and are excited to spread the message of the festival's commitment to local agriculture, celebrating the heart and soul of our community," shared Lacy, "We invite everyone to join us in supporting these talented women and children enjoying all the festival has to offer. Together, we can make this year at the Merced County Spring Fairgrounds a cherished tradition we can all enjoy for years to come."

Under the guidance of Keleher, Lacy, Horton and Martegani, the California

Garlic Festival Scholarship Pageant continues to thrive, providing invaluable opportunities for women of all ages. As we look forward to this year's pageant at the new fairgrounds, we celebrate the vision and dedication of its directors.

The festival entry includes access to the pageant, prince and princess program, entertainment, classic car show and hundreds of vendors all in a safe, family-friendly atmosphere. There will be plenty of safe, family fun including games, a petting zoo, camel rides, monster trucks and more. Delicious food vendors featuring the signature ingredient of garlic, will be offering loads of temptations along with the Garlic Alley building serving up delicious garlic fries, garlic mushroom bread bowls and the hit festival novelty: the roasted garlic and maple ice cream!

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The Noceti Group

Keeping Traditions Going

BY SHAWN PINTOR-DAY
The Westside Express

gus Festival, or what he calls “the Crown Jewel of Stockton.”

Inspired by the decades of farming tradition that went into hosting the festival and worried about an increasingly uncertain future for one of the Valley’s oldest traditions, Noceti rallied hundreds of volunteers and organizations that helped support the festival and provided it a permanent home in Stockton.

Volunteers and patrons alike were grateful for the Noceti Group’s involvement, and the aptly rebranded “San Joaquin Asparagus Festival” has remained rooted in its hometown since 2015 and continues to be a yearly event.

By 2019, the Noceti Group had made a real name for itself among the traditions of the Central Valley, and Tony Noceti remained ever vigilant of new opportunities to further cultivate the culture of the San Joaquin.

After hearing of the turbulent history of the Garlic Festival, Noceti decided in 2023 to reach out to Guy Gary, the late manager of the Merced County Spring Fair in Los Banos, hoping to secure a more stable future for yet another produce-based celebration.

“A lot of people from in and out of

The California Garlic Festival has migrated a lot over the past few years, and thanks to the efforts of dedicated Valley natives, it looks to have finally found a home in Los Banos. Moving from Gilroy to Stockton to our own backyard does not just happen on its own, however, and the recent stability of the celebration stems from an organization known as the Noceti Group.

Migrating from Italy and settling in the town of French Camp near Stockton in 1905, the Noceti family utilized their knowledge and skill of farming to quickly become a staple of the community. By the mid-1900s, the Nocetis had become deeply involved with the racing scene of the Central Valley.

When the Stockton Speedway closed in 2007, Tony Noceti, a skilled farmer and entrepreneur, started construction on a brand-new racetrack that would open in 2009, reinvigorating the community’s interest in racing events.

Now backed by a significant portion of the Central Valley for his work on the Stockton Speedway, in 2014 Tony Noceti turned his attention to the Aspara-



Tony Noceti



Guy Gary

town come out to enjoy the festivals,” reasons Noceti, “I don’t think it’s fair to let such a longstanding tradition just... fall apart.” It is with this spirit in mind that the Noceti Group began to plan their vision for the California Garlic Festival, with Tony Noceti doing everything possible to respect and uphold the agricultural spirit of the festival.

After another year of planning, the Noceti Group is proud to have had a hand in

yet another weekend--in 2024--celebrating the Valley and those that contribute to it. “We’re all just farmers, we work hard” Noceti said. “We’re trying to keep the tradition of farming and agriculture going here.”

All are welcome to enjoy the fruits of the Noceti Group’s labor. Whether it be garlic ice cream or the Stockton Speedway, the Nocetis have made bounding strides to keep our San Joaquin traditions going strong since 1905.

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Merced County Sheriff's Office will ensure a safe festival

CATHERINE A. AZEVEDO
The Westside Express

Have you ever thought about what makes a festival enjoyable and relaxing? While food, music and lively performances are essential, most people probably don't immediately list security, a top priority that puts festivalgoers at ease, leaving them free to unwind and have fun.

To ensure attendees have a safe and pleasant time, the Merced County Sheriff's Office will oversee the California Garlic Festival's security with the help of private security teams and local law enforcement, according to Lt. Brankel Nobari.

Even though the garlic festival is coming to Merced County for the first time this year, it's not the sheriff's office's first rodeo, as it has previously managed the safety and security of outdoor events.

Nobari affirms the sheriff's office and the remainder of the security team will establish several measures to safeguard festivalgoers, beginning with a wide-ranging network of surveillance cameras throughout the festival grounds.

Uniformed and plain-clothed officers will also be on patrol, maintaining constant vigilance to keep everyone safe. Moreover, Nobari states, "Security personnel will conduct bag checks and use metal detectors at all entry points."

Since the sweltering summer heat is here to stay for the time being, the sheriff's office and the rest of the security

corps have a plan of action to prevent and mitigate the occurrence of heat-related illnesses.

Attendees can stay cool by going to designated cooling stations set up throughout the festival grounds to get water and lounge in the refreshing spray of misting fans. Nobari guarantees that medical teams will also be on-site to assist medically anyone experiencing the onset of a heat-related illness.

Security personnel will also relay frequent public announcements that urge festivalgoers to drink plenty of water and seek refuge from the sun in shaded areas before resuming festival activities.

Additionally, officers will enforce a no-pets policy, a clear bag policy and a no ins and outs policy for added safety. Regarding the no-pets policy, Nobari says, "For the safety and comfort of all guests, pets are not allowed on the festival grounds, except for service animals."

The clear bag policy only permits attendees to bring clear bags into the festival grounds. This measure will reinforce security and hasten admittance by facilitating simpler and faster inspection at entry points.

The no ins and outs policy will certify that festivalgoers don't leave and reenter festival grounds upon first gaining admittance. Once applied, the policy will help officers bolster the festival's security and ensure all bags and belongings pass the initial inspection.

Nobari states that the sheriff's office and its security team members will enhance its communication with attendees



Merced County Sheriff Officers will be keeping the Garlic Festival safe just as they do each year for the Merced County Spring Fair.

by employing digital signage and social media updates to inform everyone about emergency exits, safety procedures and changes to event logistics.

"While security personnel will be focused on ensuring a safe event, many are looking forward to experiencing the vibrant atmosphere of the festival, enjoying the diverse garlic-themed foods, and seeing the community come together to celebrate this unique local event," Nobari concludes.

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Noceti brings Cali Garlic Alley to Los Banos

BY JANET I. MILLER
The Westside Express

The Noceti Group brings the Cali Garlic Alley at the California Garlic Festival to Los Banos. While numerous food vendors offer garlic specialties at the festival, Cali Garlic Alley features delights created especially for the festival.

For the third year, Cali Garlic Alley presents several traditional garlic favorites—all from uniquely created recipes. Individuals can only find these exact tastes at the California Garlic Festival.

Noceti family members and friends developed the recipes utilizing the process used by major manufacturers. Local chefs, who experimented with various ingredients and did taste tests, honed each recipe.

Garlic fries are a California favorite. The Noceti Group considers theirs the best of the best. For those “bacon makes everything better” folks, there is a bacon garlic fries option.

Tony Queirolo, a Noceti family friend, created the garlic pesto pasta recipe based on an old Italian tradition passed down through generations.



People will be able to enjoy a variety of garlic foods at this year's festival by roaming the Cali Garlic Alley.

Garlic bread has been a favorite at garlic festivals for generations. The Noceti Group's food specialists created a recipe to honor the garlic bread traditions of times past.

The delicious mushroom and onion

CONTINUED ON PAGE 14 >>



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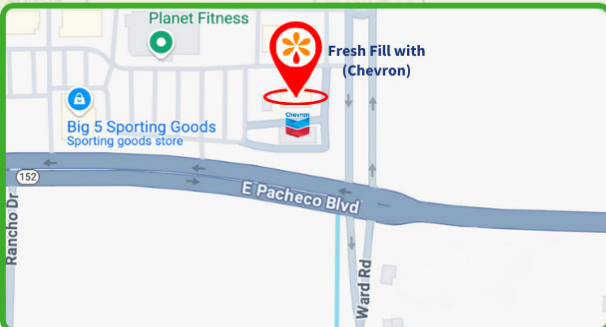
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CONTINUED FROM PAGE 13

bowl has become a garlic festival specialty. This treat goes wonderfully well with a favorite beverage.

Promoters describe the scrumptious maple brown sugar garlic ice cream as "perfect for a hot summer day." This special garlic ice cream was created for Cali Garlic Alley.

Individuals can find it at a designated stand-alone hut on Food Row, where the frozen treat is served separately from the Cali Garlic Alley hot foods.

Julie Linesburgh, currently working for Sysco, has more than 30 years of experience in the food industry. She is the coordinator of Cali Garlic Alley.

With taste testing experience, Linesburgh works closely with the Noceti family and the garlic festival board to create deli-

icious, incomparable garlic-infused dishes.

Then, she manages local chefs and volunteers who make Cali Garlic Alley a great success. To discover the scrumptious garlic delights, Linesburgh advises, "Just follow the smell!"

Led by Danica Noceti, the Noceti Group is an event organizer with a special interest in the Central Valley. The family combines its love of motorsports and delicious food to sponsor events regionally.

Tony Noceti and his family were originally farmers and then motorsports enthusiasts and promoters. They became involved in food events with the San Joaquin Asparagus Festival in 2014.

The Noceti Group presented scrumptious treats at the California Garlic Festival in Stockton for two years. Now, it's anxious to

share its passion in Los Banos.

Apart from the Cali Garlic Alley, many local vendors offer irresistible garlic treats. Look for delectables like garlic noodles, sausage, wings and popcorn. Seafood garlic selections include shrimp or catfish.

The festival is excellent for those beginning to expand their garlic palate. Try garlic on grilled cheese or in a sauce over fruit.

The Noceti Group is excited to bring tasty, garlicky treats to Los Banos and share them at this fun festival. Linesburgh concludes, "Coming to Los Banos is a good thing."

Enjoy delectable selections at ample settings under cooling misters placed around the grounds. Cali Garlic Alley closes at 7 p.m. daily. Other vendors are open until 10 p.m.



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Delightful entertainment for the entire family

BY CAMRYN CARPENTER

The annual California Garlic Festival, renowned for its celebration of the pungent and flavorful ingredient, is making a grand return with a host of exciting attractions. This year's festival promises to deliver an unforgettable experience for visitors of all ages.

In addition to the many talented performers and food vendors that have become synonymous with the festival, organizers have introduced other attrac-

tions for those interested in experiencing more than the flavor of garlic.

Thanks to Oliver Livestock, families can take a leisurely ride on a camel and experience the festival from a unique perspective. These desert-dwelling, gentle giants will provide a memorable experience for the whole family.

For younger children, Charles Howell with the Pony Up Express will offer kids the opportunity to create a new memory with these beautiful animals, as they can go for a pony ride.

Another exciting feature at the festival is the petting zoo, where families can interact with various friendly and adorable animals. This interactive experience will allow children to learn about different species while getting up close and personal with them.

The petting zoo is not just for kids since adults can also enjoy the therapeutic benefits of interacting with these gentle creatures.

Some of the animals that might be featured at the petting zoo include goats,

ducks, sheep, rabbits, ostriches, turkeys, chickens, a mini donkey, a llama, a mini cow, an emu, baby pigs, peacocks and possibly a baby zebra.

The California Garlic Festival is more than just a celebration of garlic: it's a celebration of community, culture and family. With the addition of camel and pony rides, a petting zoo and a lineup of talented performers and food vendors, this year's festival promises to provide days of unforgettable fun and adventure for all attendees.



LEFT TO RIGHT: Sheep will be only one of many animals to pet in the petting zoo; the goats are friendly and will be available for petting; Camel rides will be available during the festival; Children love to ride ponies and this year's festival will have many.

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The Swan Bros. (Almost World-Famous) Circus

THE WESTSIDE EXPRESS

The Swan Bros. Circus is not your average circus. You won't find any elephants or tigers, but you will find slapstick comedy, clowns and fantastic juggling. The self-described zany duo, Andy and Mike Swan have been performing together for over 35 years, until Mike's passing in 2010.

It all began when their oldest brother, George, taught Andy how to juggle back in 1966. At first Andy says he would visit the circuses just to see the jugglers, once he saw what else the circus had to offer, he fell in love.

After high school he went off to join the circus, the DeWayne Bros. Circus in Oregon to be exact. During his year with them he learned just about everything there was to learn about circus life.

In 1973, Andy approached his brother, Mike, with the idea of starting their own circus. Mike thought it was a great idea and they performed their first show in Wichita Falls, Texas, for a small group of 12 children. From there they went on to perform at fairs and festivals all over California, becoming what they call themselves: "The biggest two-man circus in the world."

So what should you expect at a Swan Bros. Circus show? Andy says, "off the wall humor." Families can also expect to see great slapstick clowning from Zippy, juggling acts, balancing rola-bola, comedy magic and of course lots of great audience participation. "The reaction we get is great," Andy continued, "The best thing about what I do is the smiles and laughter from the kids, I enjoy what I do!"

At one show, a man from China told Zippy he had heard of them all the way over in his country. It was then that they declared themselves "The almost world-famous Swan Bros. Circus."

When asked about the best experience he ever had in all of his years in the circus business, Andy replied, "I would have to say it was getting to ride Bertha the Elephant at a show in Reno, awesome!"

But in all the years Andy has been doing this, he says his most unusual experience was winning TV's "The Gong Show" in 1977. On the show he juggled bowling balls, a chain saw, clubs and spun plates over the head of a volunteer from the audience.

So, in words of the words of the "Almost World Famous" duo, may all your days be CIRCUS DAYS! The ever-popular Swan Bros. Circus enchants and



Gene Lieb/The Express

Andy Swan, better known as Zippy the clown, is sure to delight and impress young and old alike as he invites members of the audience to join him during his performance.

charms the audiences with an incredible array of circus feats which they have mastered over the years and fantastic audience participation and much more. Better known as Zippy the clown, he is sure to delight and impress young and old alike.



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GET READY FOR GROUND-POUNGING EXCITEMENT AT THE CALIFORNIA GARLIC FESTIVAL MONSTER TRUCK SHOW

BY JAVIER POWELL
The Westside Express

One of the most exciting performances set to come to the California Garlic Festival is the Monster Truck Show. The show, put on by Straight Up Racing (SUR), will last for only two days, Aug. 30-31. SUR has been doing monster truck shows for 22 years, “We got a whole melting pot of guys,” SUR owner and monster truck driver, Bill Payne, said in a phone interview with the Westside Express. New and Old Drivers will be showcasing their skills in “all kinds of different variations of driving,” Payne said.

Ages 3 and older will pay an admission cost of \$10. Gates to the show will open at 4 p.m. starting a “pit party” according to the Festival’s website.

At the Pit Party attendees can get up close and personal with the truck and their drivers. They will be able to get autographs and photos. The Pit Party will end at 5 p.m. At 5:30 p.m. the show will start and the trucks will begin their roughly two-hour long routine. Attendees can also spend another \$10 to get a ride on the monster trucks, with trucks fitting up to 13 riders each. To set the expectations, the show will start with all trucks driving at once.

“All the monster trucks at one time, crisscrossing, jumping and going in different directions,” Payne stated, “The first opening moment is a ‘wow’ moment.” After the ‘wow’ moment, the National Anthem will be sung, followed by the Best Trick Competition. According to Payne, each truck will compete with its best trick to please the crowd, “Whether it be big air, doing some of the cool stoppies, the balancing on the front tires like you see on TV, doing wheelies or doing donuts.”

Payne continued that drivers focus

on getting their best trick executed in the best way, “That’s why I like the Best Trick because it shows to me, the most skill,” he said. Following the best tricks, the show will move into racing brackets. After the racing, the Monster Truck Freestyle takes over the show. “That’s the pinnacle of the event,” Payne said. The freestyle consists of trying to get in as many tricks as possible before the time runs out. The show will be “Ground pounding, Earth shattering excitement as you witness jaw-dropping stunts with action-packed entertainment for all ages!” according to the Garlic Festival website.

Videos on Facebook for Straight-up Racing show their trucks jumping over ruined cars, breathing fire, tipping over and getting airtime. It takes 30 to 35 people to run the show as it’s happening, according to Payne, not counting the logistics to make it happen. Doing these shows is a “dream come true” to Payne.

“Right place, right time, the opportunity presented itself and I snatched it up. And I’ve never looked back,” Payne said about starting 22 years ago. “Everybody has got something to do, whether you’re that guy who is interested in how the trucks are built, whether you’re just somebody there with your children and you’re just trying to make your children’s dream come true.”

“We are 100 percent there for the fans, there for the people. I try to give them that reason. They can have two hours [where] they don’t have to think about anything except having a good time,” Payne said. “I’m going to do everything I can to wow people, to try to push the truck to its ragged edge every single time.”



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Midway offers family fun at California Garlic Festival

BY JANET I. MILLER
The Westside Express

Brass Ring Amusements' Midway of Fun is the provider for the carnival section of the California Garlic Festival in Los Banos this year. This full-service carnival company offers fantastic rides, games of skill and traditional carnival foods.

Midway of Fun provides spectacular and thrilling rides, including kiddie rides and those for the whole family. The Dive Bomber, Starfish 2000 and the classic Ferris wheel are a few of the fun and exciting ride attractions.

Log on to midwayoffun.com to check the height requirements for rides. Skip the event list and enter the individual's height.

A list of possible rides states the minimum height requirement for a ride. It includes whether adults or teens can go on a children's ride.

Midway of Fun states its mission on its webpage. It promises to "deliver value-priced products with the highest level of safety and customer care."

The company adds, "The safety of our guests is our number one priority, and we go to great lengths to ensure that each and every one of our customers has a safe experience at one of our carnivals."

According to its explanation, the company maintains a ride-specific checklist for safety purposes. After rides are set up at a location, trained managers use the safety checklist to inspect them thoroughly.

Third-party inspectors also inspect attractions. These are from local fire departments and the state ride inspection division.

During the off-season, rides are refurbished at a winter facility. Rides are rebuilt from the ground up.

Brass Ring Amusements understands that games are essential at any carnival. The company knows that participants want entertaining games. Folks also want to win.

Midway of Fun's website states, "Our games are clean, well lit, reasonable prices, professionally operated, and offer degrees of skill for all ages, from small children to adults."

The goal is a wholesome family atmosphere. Game prizes represent variety, tradition and the latest rage.

Each game booth has the rules clearly posted.

According to Brass Ring Amusements' Midway of Fun promoter Harry Mason, "You can't miss the Squirt Gun Water Race or Win a Goldfish." With games like these, many children and adults go home with prizes.

There is always a winner at the squirt gun races. Optionally, many children go home with a prize to refill their fish bowl.

While the California Garlic Festival is certainly about garlicky-tasting foods, the Midway of Fun offers variety with traditional carnival fare.

Carnival foods are often difficult to make at home because they may require special equipment. For many foods, this is a deep frying vat. Foods like cotton candy require a spinning device.

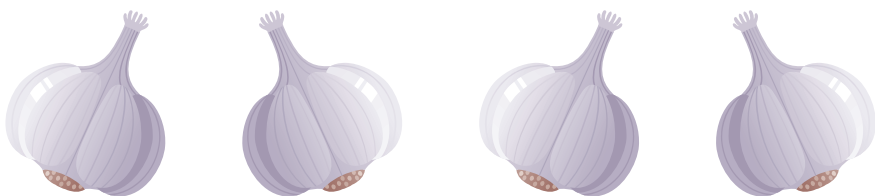
Mason explains, "Corn dogs are always a traditional treat, but we have funnel cakes!" A funnel cake's ingredients are similar to a waffle—except the batter is piped into a hot fryer. The cooked base is given a sweet and often fruity topping.

Brass Ring Amusements' Midway of Fun has quality control for customer satisfaction. Attendees are invited to take a survey on Midway of Fun's website.

Mason concludes, "We are super excited to participate in this event this year."



ABOVE: People can test their skills on the carnival games; BELOW: There will be rides for everyone at this year's festival.



John Pemberton performing at 8 p.m. Friday

BY MARTINA BEKASHA
The Westside Express



ready acquired considerable experience as a musician, performing in his family's musical ensemble. His early introduction into music allowed him to explore his artistry and develop his natural talent to establish a connection with different audiences. Attendees of the California Garlic Festival should anticipate a delightful surprise, as Pemberton intends to showcase a selection of new songs. The theme of these songs is still unknown, keeping audiences guessing. Surprise will surely make Pemberton's performance at the festival memorable. John Pemberton's unique fusion of classic country, rock 'n' roll and contemporary country music is eagerly awaited and predicted to be a standout moment at the California Garlic Festival.

Along with his unwavering commitment to his craft, his unique approach to performing live music sets him apart as an exceptional performer in the local area.

Each performance offers a distinctive experience due to this impromptu approach, allowing him to keep his performances new and guaranteeing that his fans always enjoy an unforgettable show. Pemberton adheres to a demanding schedule, practicing music every day of the week to prepare for his live shows. He is much sought after throughout the central valley, indicating his popularity and the high demand for his engaging performances.

Pemberton's musical career started at a rather young age. His musical journey began at the age of three, and he showcased his talent to the public for the first time when he was five.

By 10 years old, he had al-

The Greg Scudder Band performing at 5:30 p.m. Saturday

BY CHRISTINA ROCHA
The Westside Express



The California Garlic Festival never fails to offer attendees a fun and unforgettable experience. This year's event promises an array of live entertainment, and one of the highlights is the country band Greg Scudder with Weekend @ Jimmy's.

Based in Atwater, California, Weekend @ Jimmy's has come a long way and has recently welcomed Greg Scudder as their frontman. Scudder has his own journey in country music, debuting with Greg Scudder and the Beer 30 in 2010. After nearly 10 years, many of the original members had left, and by 2019, the band was known as Greg Scudder and the Honky Tonk Heroes.

Scudder has been familiar with Weekend @ Jimmy's, as they have played together in the past. The band formed in 2016, but their current lineup has

been together since 2021. Scudder's addition to the band is set to be a great fit, leading to their new name, Greg Scudder with Weekend @ Jimmy's.

According to Scudder, the band's rowdy honky tonk style is sure to get you on your feet. He said the inspiration behind their music is "Hardworking people, people who like to have a good time, and that '90s honky tonk era, like Mark Chesnutt, Alan Jackson, and Merle Haggard."

Scudder's favorite part about performing is the excitement from the crowd and developing relationships with the audience. He

said, "What makes it memorable is afterward when people come up and compliment the whole band. They get what we're trying to do. We're trying to save country music."

Scudder is confident that their performance will fit right in with the festival atmosphere. "The Central Valley is full of country music and that's what we bring to the table," he said.

Greg Scudder with Weekend @ Jimmy's is planning to perform a spectacular set with an addition of new songs. Be sure to catch their performance at this year's Garlic Festival. It's sure to be an event to remember.

That Little Band performing at 5:30 p.m. Friday

THAT LITTLE BAND

Best of

Classic Rock-Country-R&B

Banda La Fantasma performing at 3 p.m. on Sunday



Moonshine Bandits performing at 8 p.m. Saturday

BY SHAWN PINTOR-DAY
The Westside Express

Los Banos natives Dusty “Tex” Dahlgren and Brett “Bird” Brooks, aka the Moonshine Bandits, will be the featured musical performers at the California Garlic Festival, appearing at 8 p.m. Saturday at the Los Banos Fairgrounds.

Bursting onto the music scene in 2003, the Moonshine Bandits have been a staple of California Rap-Rock ever since. Debuting with Soggy Crackerz, the duo immediately seized the unique brand of bravado and unapologetic self-awareness that their breakout record helped establish and would continue to release a steady flow of music since their inception.

Though they have come a long way from Los Banos, the duo sticks true to the roots of their genre (and their hometown). Before Dusty and Bird were tuning guitars and waxing chaotic,

they were elbow-deep in agriculture.

The Dahlgrens had been heavily involved in the bean and seed business in Newman, and Dusty is no stranger to harvesting seasons and horticulture. Bird, similarly, got his start in construction and eventually swapped his day job of roof repair for selling out open air arenas every weekend night.

Despite having one foot firmly in the soil, music was a constant theme in both the Bandits’ lives, and the pair would make a hobby of exploring local record stores for the latest loot of inspiration.

“Fantasia Records, that’s where we got our start,” Dusty recalls fondly, “It was by Gladys Barber shop in downtown Los Banos. I used to get my hair cut and then buy some CDs.”

Fantasia Records may not be around any longer, but it was hallowed

ground for the burgeoning musical marauders, and the Dusty and Bird would spend hours internalizing the anachronistic enthusiasm of The Beastie Boys, the brutally honest poetry of Tupac and the whiskey-soaked gospel anthems of Johnny Cash.

By the time the duo had started creating their own sound with instruments acquired from months of hoarded allowance, their iconic high energy eclecticism was already on full display thanks to the varied mix of sound the Bandits had been drawn to their whole lives.

The young men’s sonic diligence paid off by the time they hit the big stage, and it was exactly this hardcore, homegrown sound that made 2011’s Whiskey and Women such a hit amongst the band’s dedicated followers, the Shiners, and rap-rock fans across the country.

Since Whiskey and Women, the band’s massive success only continued as each new album crept up both Country and Rap charts. 2014 saw Calcountry break into the top 30 Country releases and the top 10 of Rap releases, numbers that would later be far exceeded by 2015’s Blacked Out, which earned the outlaws the prestige of being in the top 20 in both Country and Rap releases for that year.

Their next three releases, Gold Rush, Fire and, most recently, Pour Decisions, have all been released under the group’s own music label, MSB Entertainment.

Despite the title of their latest release, the Bandits have only been making fur-



ther and further strides and good decisions in their endeavors.

In the 20 years since the Bandits started stealing hearts across the nation, they have distilled and distributed their own brand of “moonshine,” performed hundreds of shows on stages across the nation, and

even started up a nonprofit to provide troops overseas with care packages and supplies.

Performing in their hometown for the first time in 10 years at the California Garlic Festival, Dusty and Bird are going to remind Los Banos that nobody steals the show like the Moonshine Bandits.

Banda Escuela de Rancho performing at 5:30 p.m. on Sunday



Los Banos Downtown Association Upcoming Events

FARMERS MARKET

Our Farmers Market is in full swing and will continue through **October 24**. Join us every other **Thursday from 6 to 9 p.m.** to enjoy fresh, local produce, artisanal goods, and live music. It's a perfect way to support local vendors and enjoy the vibrant community atmosphere.

FARM TO TABLE EVENT

Don't miss our Farm to Table event on **September 12 from 6 to 9 p.m.**

This special evening will feature a gourmet dinner made with the finest local ingredients, prepared by España's. It's an opportunity to savor the best flavors our region has to offer while dining under the stars.

LOS BANOS MARIACHI FESTIVAL

Join us for a lively celebration of culture and music at the **Los Banos Mariachi Festival** on **October 6 from 3 to 8 p.m.** Enjoy performances by talented mariachi bands, authentic Mexican cuisine, and a festive atmosphere that will make this a memorable event for all.

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Exploring garlic's health benefits

CATHERINE A. AZEVEDO
The Westside Express

Most acknowledge that eating healthy foods—and maintaining a balanced diet and exercise regimen overall—are indispensable in preventing chronic illnesses and increasing lifespan.

With the California Garlic Festival quickly approaching, it seemed the perfect time to explore the health benefits of garlic and why individuals should consume more of this powerful root vegetable.

According to the National Center for Complementary and Integrative Health (NCCIH), *Allium sativum*, commonly known as garlic, is the edible bulb of a plant from the Amaryllidaceae family that Chinese, Egyptian, Greek, Japanese and Roman individuals used for health purposes in ancient times.

A 2020 Antioxidants journal article states that because antibiotics and other pharmaceutical products didn't exist in 1550 B.C., people used garlic for medical purposes in various epidemics, particularly cholera, dysentery, influenza and typhus.

Subsequently, the article attributes most of garlic's therapeutic effects to "the impressive activity of its bioactive compounds, such as organic sulfides, saponins, phenolic compounds, and polysaccharides." Two of these bioactive compounds—alliin and alliin—stand out.

According to the University of Rochester Medical Center's online health encyclopedia, ground alliin releases allicin, a potent antibacterial agent that gives garlic its characteristic biting aroma.

Health professionals recommend garlic as a dietary supplement because it has antiseptic, antimicrobial and antifungal properties. With a balanced diet and regular exercise, garlic may have several benefits that can help individuals manage some ailments.

In a Cleveland Clinic article about the health benefits of garlic, a 1994 study published in the American Journal of Epidemiology explored the difference having a diet replete with fruits, vegetables and garlic can have on women's immunities.

Involving 41,000 women between the ages 55 and 69, the study found that "those who routinely ate garlic, fruits and vegetables had a 35% lower colon cancer risk."

Cleveland Clinic also says garlic has anti-inflammatory properties: those with sore and inflamed muscles and joints can massage them with garlic oil to alleviate pain.

Moreover, the Arthritis Foundation encourages those with arthritis to follow this regimen, as it may help prevent cartilage damage associated with the disease.

Garlic can also help clear acne. According to Cleveland Clinic, a 2011 study published in Dermatol Reports indicates that rubbing raw garlic on acne may help diminish it.

However, consult your dermatologist or healthcare provider before using it since garlic can irritate skin, especially skin types prone to dryness and sensitivities caused by medications or conditions that may affect the skin.

The NCCIH states that despite conflicting evidence, "the most reliable results

suggest that taking garlic supplements may reduce total cholesterol and low-density lipoprotein (LDL) cholesterol levels in people with high levels of these blood lipids."

However, even if it makes a difference, it's a small one that individuals can take more than eight weeks to notice. On the other hand, garlic doesn't affect high-density lipoprotein (HDL) levels or triglycerides, another blood lipid.

The NCCIH also says that garlic possibly improves high blood pressure and helps treat the common cold, but these claims require further research and study. While most people can enjoy the benefits of consuming healthy amounts of garlic, some side effects are worth considering.

Some include heartburn, upset stomach and breath and body odor, among others—all of which are mainly



associated with raw garlic, according to the NCCIH. Individuals can also experience allergic reactions after using or consuming garlic.

The NCCIH notes that substantiating the safety of applying garlic to the skin and using garlic supplements during pregnancy or while breastfeeding requires more research.

Additionally, it reports that the risk of bleeding increases with the consumption of garlic supplements. Individuals who take anti-coagulants—blood thinners like warfarin (Coumadin)—

or require surgery must inform their healthcare providers about any garlic supplements they take or plan to take.

Garlic supplements may interfere with medications besides blood thinners. According to the NCCIH, garlic supplements can inhibit the efficacy of dietary herbs, other supplements and drugs like saquinavir, a medication used for treating human immunodeficiency virus (HIV)—the virus responsible for acquired immunodeficiency syndrome (AIDS).

While consuming a healthy amount of garlic is essential, remember that incorporating it in a balanced diet filled with many fruits and vegetables increases its potency.

As for garlic supplements, take control of your health by asking your healthcare providers whether you should take any, as they will help you make a responsible, well-informed decision.

Even after the garlic festival's festivities, continue making garlic part of your diet for added health and wellness.

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The Best Bites at the Festival



BY KRISTINA SOLOMITA

The Westside Express

The California Garlic Festival in Los Banos is the ultimate destination for garlic enthusiasts, boasting an impressive lineup of vendors serving up a variety of garlic-infused foods that celebrate the versatility of this beloved ingredient.

Discover the creativity and passion of these talented vendors as they showcase their unique and flavorful garlic dishes. From gourmet garlic entrees to delectable desserts, there's something to satisfy every craving. Here are some of the must-visit vendors you'll find at this year's festival.

◆ **Wetzel's Pretzels:**

Wetzel's Pretzels bring their irresistible snacks to the festival. Their garlic parmesan pretzels are a must-try for garlic lovers, while their classic pretzels, lemonade, Pepsi, and water ensure there's something for everyone in the family to enjoy.

◆ **Pitayas Locas:**

For a refreshing treat, head over to Pitayas Locas. Keeping in theme with the festival, they're adding garlic red hot sauce to fruit cups for a bold and spicy kick. For a hot day, they serve a variety of aguas frescas, fruit cups, and smoothie bowls.

◆ **Fun Fried Foods:**

Fun Fried Foods lives up to its name with many deep-fried delights. Taste their garlic parmesan artichoke hearts, deep-fried garlic calamari and chips, or garlic popcorn chicken with fries. Don't forget to try their churro sundae for a sweet ending to your meal.

◆ **Smoke Shack BBQ & Grill DBA Maktub Espresso Cafe:**

Smoke Shack BBQ & Grill offers hearty and savory feasts. Get a tri-tip sandwich on garlic bread and share their garlic tri-tip nachos. For those who can't decide, they offer a combo platter featuring tri-tip, chicken, and sausage.



FAR LEFT: Philly Cheesesteak offers ten varieties of cheesesteaks, including garlic cheesesteak; MIDDLE: Garlic Bread is a staple at the festival; RIGHT: A twist to the traditional French fries are the garlic fries.

◆ **Shelby D's Pizza:**

Shelby D's Pizza brings classic favorites to the festival with their pizzas, including a must-try garlic pizza for garlic enthusiasts.

◆ **Rice on Wheels:**

Rice on Wheels offers a diverse menu with a fusion of flavors. Don't miss their loaded Korean garlic cheese fries and savory dumplings, paired with a refreshing boba drink. In addition, enjoy their chicken teriyaki, chicken sticks, pork belly sticks, and eggrolls.

◆ **Rocky Mountain Chocolate Factory:**

Indulge your sweet tooth at the Rocky Mountain Chocolate Factory. For a unique treat, try their dark chocolate garlic fudge or chamoy candies. They have something for everybody, even dogs have an opportunity to snack on a sweet treat with their dog-safe dipped bones.

◆ **On A Stick:**

On A Stick serves up fun and tasty treats with their selection of seasonings and sauces, like garlic parmesan and fresh garlic & parsley. Try their twisted potatoes, sweet potatoes, and zucchini,



along with chicken garlic kabobs and mango on a stick.

◆ **Michelagua Queen:**

Michelagua Queen brings a delicious blend of traditional and unique dishes. Try their garlic-infused taquitos, burritos, quesadillas, tortas, and birria ramen. You can even pair these savory items with one of their refreshing smoothies.

◆ **FURY Hot Chicken:**

FURY Hot Chicken offers chicken sandwiches, tenders, nuggets, and loaded fries. For a garlic twist in each bite, you can add their special garlic oil to any of their items.

◆ **LadyJHotdogs:**

LadyJHotdogs serves up flavorful hotdogs and sausages. From their garlic aioli hotdogs, hot links, Polish sausage, garlic nachos, chili dogs, and their unique waffle dogs, there's something for everyone.

◆ **Holly Shay Enterprise:**

Holly Shay Enterprise brings an assortment of fun variations to classic treats. Enjoy their garlic corn dogs, jumbo corn dogs, and Hot Cheetos and Blue Takis corn dogs. Their menu also includes deep-fried Oreos and Twinkies, caramel/candy apples, jumbo pickles, and lemonade.

◆ **Philly Cheesesteak:**

Philly Cheesesteak offers ten varieties of cheesesteaks, including garlic cheesesteak. Their menu also features garlic burgers, garlic gyros, and garlic lumpia, along with classic burgers, fries, onion rings, lumpia, and cheese sticks.

◆ **Thai Chef:**

Thai Chef brings vibrant flavors with a variety of dishes, including their signature garlic fried rice, garlic fried chicken, and garlic noodles. Enjoy veggie rolls, calamari, pot stickers, crispy shrimp, Pad Thai, orange chicken, and Chow Mein. Pair it with other refreshing favorites including Thai tea, Thai coffee, or boba.

◆ **Open Pit Smokehouse:**

Open Pit Smokehouse serves up barbecue delights, including garlicky pulled pork sandwiches, ribs, hot link sandwiches, and BBQ chicken. Pair their dishes with a crowd favorite garlicky super potato, or their jambalaya, rice, and beans.

◆ **1945 Restaurant Lounge:**

1945 Restaurant Lounge offers a garlic feast, including garlic noodles, garlic fried rice, a variety of garlic wings, garlic corn on the cob, and garlic fried fish. ▶

◆ **J.T.'s Superhot Hot Sauce Shop:**

J.T.'s Superhot Hot Sauce Shop is here to spice up your experience. As seen on the show Hot Ones, their sauces are sure to impress. Featuring a special garlic hot sauce and a range of packaged hot sauces, this booth is perfect for those who love a kick.

◆ **Garlish, LLC:**

Garlish, LLC provides gourmet garlic condiments and spreads. With flavors like original, Dracula Slayer, Dragon Breath, and Horsekicker, these spreads add a twist to any dish.

◆ **559 Honey Company:**

559 Honey Company has a sweet and savory twist with their honey and garlic products. Try their unique garlic, rose-

mary, and thyme honey for a flavor combination that's pleasantly unexpected.

◆ **JerkyJerks Jerky Hut:**

Jerky lovers rejoice at JerkyJerks Jerky Hut. Try their garlic beef jerky for a savory snack that packs a punch. With 60 flavors of beef and exotic jerky, sticks, and corn snacks, there's something for every palate.

◆ **That Garlic Stuff:**

That Garlic Stuff's original and spicy garlic condiments will enhance your meals. Available in 8 oz and 16 oz sizes, these condiments are perfect for adding a burst of flavor to your favorite dishes.

◆ **Hi-West Foods:**

Hi-West Foods have a range of BBQ dry rubs, seasonings, and dry soup mixes, including garlic BBQ dry rubs and

garlic seasonings. Perfect for home cooks looking to elevate their dishes.

◆ **Sweets Von Shel'le Homemade Desserts:**

Satisfy your sweet tooth at Sweets Von Shel'le Homemade Desserts with their mini-cakes, jumbo cupcakes, push-up cake pops, cake in a jar, and assorted flavored brownies. Mix in their unique treats like garlic bread Ritz crackers and baked garlic parmesan ranch oyster crackers.

◆ **Let's Get Mini:**

Let's Get Mini provides bite sized treats, their specialty mini donuts including a unique garlic flavor. Enjoy mini specialty funnel cakes, mini soft serve ice cream cones, and mini ice cream cookie sandwiches.



Maple brown sugar garlic ice cream will be available.



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