

A weekend for Nibbles and Bites

Popular food sampling festival returns for 12th year



Food for Thought

Arlene Kroeker

I sat down at Tapenade in Steveston with Gina Lowden to discuss the happenings at Nibbles & Bites this year.

Just in case you haven't stumbled across this annual food festival during the past 11 years, mark your calendar for this weekend, Sept. 6-7, and drop by the Thompson Community Centre (Granville and Railway) and taste your way through 25 of Richmond's eateries.

From its inception, community volunteers like Gina are responsible for the festival's success. Gina recruits and organizes the restaurant portion of the festival, but she's quick to point out that eating is only part of the celebration.

Entertainment (including Matthew Presidente and Los Nacos), a silent auction, an extensive craft fair, the children's festival, beer garden, as well as basketball and volleyball, guarantee a fun-filled day for all ages.

Gina estimated that some 15,000 people attended last year.

"And that's despite the rain on Sunday," she says. "By the end of the day restaurants were running out of everything."



Mark Patrick file photo

A Globe@YVR staffer whipped up some frappuccinos at last year's Nibbles & Bites.

Just how do the restaurants decide how much to make? And what to make?

Vince Morlet, owner of Tapenade, will be participating for the first time and joins veteran restaurants like Milestones, Globe @YVR, Allies American Grille, Boathouse, Moxies,

and Carmichaels.

Vince says he chose three items that can be easily prepped and transported to the site. The hand-held appetizer-sized grilled marinated pork, panini, and marinated cheese and olives can then be assembled quickly at the fair.

"I want to serve items that are a representation of what we do," Vince says. "And at the same time I want to serve something different than the other participants."

Vince will make 1,000 portions but says that he is not there to sell portions.

"Ideally, we are there to talk and chat," he explains. "The festival atmosphere is not as formal as a restaurant and we want to enjoy ourselves as well. Everyone here wants to work there."

"It's not about money either. There's no money made that weekend. It's about promotion."

Tapenade is a new restaurant, an urban bistro in the heart of the city, and Nibbles & Bites will provide exposure.

Also new this year are two wineries. Robin Yang of Richmond's Blossoms Winery will be showcasing their new vintage of 2002 Raspberry Wine as well as their Blueberry Late Harvest Wine. A big supporter of local events, Blossoms Winery produces fruit and grape wine that represents Richmond, using local blueberries and Abbotsford raspberries.

Says Robin, "Our wines will do a lot of talking for themselves."

Thankfully, Lang Vineyards from Naramata escaped the raging fire and will be showcasing their best selling wine, Grand Pinot, a blend of three white pinots, and their newly released Red Grand Pinot. Don Pfeffer says that he has attended Nibbles & Bites, but has never been part of it.

"We are a small winery that has wonderful support from private shops and restaurants in Richmond," Don says. "We think Nibbles and Bites is a great opportunity to show off these wines to the rest of Richmond."

And that's what Nibbles & Bites celebrates—the encounters between restaurants, wineries, and the community.

■ The 12th annual Nibbles & Bites Food Festival runs on Saturday, Sept. 6, 11 a.m.-8 p.m. and Sunday, Sept. 7, 11 a.m.-7 p.m. at Thompson