



Friendly warring at Woodland's Tomato Festival

By **JIM SMITH**

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The cooking competition was hot this year at the Third Annual Woodland Tomato Festival, and the daylong event was ripe for a lot of fun at Freeman Park.

The celebration of Yolo County's No. 1 crop drew more people to downtown Woodland than in previous years, undoubtedly because of cooler weather but also due to greater public support.

There was a lot of tomato tasting as well as education exhibits, crafts displays, salsa tasting, and the popular "Tomato Wars" challenge among competing restaurants. A number of community groups and local businesses were present showcasing their products and services, such as the United Way, Pacific Coast Producers, First Northern Bank, Tri-Counties Bank, the Food Bank and others.

The free tomato



Chef Arturo Vargas of the Yolo County Food Bank presents a tomato and berry dessert during a cooking competition at the Third Annual Woodland Tomato Festival in Freeman Park Saturday. Vargas and the Food Bank took Second Place in the competition. (Jim Smith/Democrat)

tasting was hosted by Yolo County Cooperative Extension Master Gardeners and allowed people to pick their favorites among heirloom varieties such as Black Prince, Green Zebra, Cherokee Purple and Big Beef among others

The "Tomato Wars" challenge featured seven chefs vying for top cooking honors.

Competitors were Chef Chris Cook and Owner Jeremy Martinez of the Capitol Saloon, Justin Severson of Tazzina's Bistro, Mark Wagner of the Main Street Cafe, Olga Chavez and Jeff Brehmer of Le Cordon Blue Culinary Academy, Debra Chase of Silvina's Basket, Chef Arturo Vargas with the Yolo county Food Bank, and Carla Bohon of the Fat Cat Cafe.

Four judges sampled three courses from each restaurant to determine the winning entry. Samples were

also passed out to passers-by. Each course had to contain tomatoes as the main ingredient.

Chef Justin Severson of Tazzina Bistro took first place, Chef Arturo Vargas of the Food Bank took second place, and Mark Wagner of Main Street Cafe was third.

Severson served a tomato soup trio as his appetizer, a stuffed and baked tomato as his main course and "Southern Style" green tomato pie as his dessert. All the courses contained tomatoes with the heirloom tomatoes locally grown and provided



Cook Debra Chase of Sylvia's Basket in Woodland prepares for the annual tomato wars cooking competition at the Third Annual Woodland Tomato Festival in Freeman Park Saturday. (Jim Smith/Democrat)

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The Tomato Festival itself was hosted by the Hispanic Chamber of Commerce and Woodland Farmer's Market.

Editor's Note: Jim Smith served as one of the four judges at the "Tomato Wars" competition.



Carla Bohon of the Fat Cat Cafe offers her main course during the tomato wars cooking competition at the Third Annual Woodland Tomato Festival in Freeman Park Saturday. (Jim Smith/Democrat)

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Judges evaluate "tomato shooters" prepared by Sylvania's Basket at Saturday's Tomato Festival. (Jim Smith/Democrat)

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