

# Tacoma's Ultimate Family Festival

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## Community Festival Spirit Alive and Well at this Year's Taste!

An estimated 240,000 people attended this year's Emerald Queen Casino Taste of Tacoma presented by Crystal Springs Water. According to producers, this is the third year in a row attendance and sales have maintained record growth indicating strong community support and public appeal for this 20-year-old event.

Affordability has been a focus at the Taste and families appreciated the savings. 100,000 Taste It! Discount Meal Tickets sold out by 1:30 p.m. Sunday, a new record. The tickets offers consumers a 15% savings on food and beverages throughout the festival and event producers are confident this program was helpful in the increase in overall food and beverage sales.

The community came together to support both Habitat for Humanity and families affected by the Katrina/Rita disaster by writing heartfelt messages on boards used to assemble a home being sent to the affected area.

In Taste tradition, the 29 participating restaurants were judged based on food presentation, taste and flavor, originality, staff attire and décor. Tacoma restaurants, some first time participants, took home four of the six awards. For the first time years, one restaurant received recognition for two awards. Pac Island Grill won 1st place Best Entrée for their Teriyaki Chicken Kalbi Ribs and Best Booth Design for their outstanding decorating creativity. 3rd place Best Entrée went to Joesepis Italian Restaurant for their Alfredo Tortellini and Chop Chop Salad, and Famous Daves BBQ won for Best BBQ! Other restaurants receiving awards were Cinnamons World Café receiving 2nd place for their Grilled Salmon and Rice Pilaf and Best Dessert went to Mrs. B's for the second year in a row for their Banana Split.

Despite the \$1 fee introduced this year for service on the Pierce Transit Taste Express, producers estimate ridership increased over last year and are convinced this service continues to be the consumers' favorite transportation option.

Wine & Roses surpassed sales and attendance estimates as Tacoma wine enthusiasts sipped and swirled their beverages. Over 140 cases were sampled from the 10 participating wineries, many from Washington state, while record crowds enjoyed music from the Emerald Queen Casino Jazz Stage presented by 98.9 Smooth Jazz. All proceeds from Wine & Roses will be donated to the Metro Parks Foundation. Proceeds will be used to assist replacing aging playground equipment at neighborhood parks in Tacoma. The combination of great weather, entertaining performances on the Jazz Stage and the addition of award winning food from Joesepis Italian Restaurant in the wine tasting area all contributed to this record breaking fundraiser.

Traditionally the beer gardens are a popular hang out for those quenching a thirst or watching musical entertainment from the main stage and this year was no exception. With new sponsors Coors and Bacardi, event goers enjoyed an estimated 17,000 cups of beer and 4,000 Bacardi Mango Slushies. With hot weather come thirsty people and an estimated 21,600 bottles of Crystal Springs Water and 14,200 A & W products were consumed by event goers throughout the weekend.

Emerald Queen Casino gave visitors a chance to win prizes by playing a hand of blackjack. Over 14,000 blackjack hands were dealt over the weekend.

The VERB Tour was a popular area for kids and families. The focus of the exhibit was to promote exercise and active lifestyles to kids 9-14 years of age. The exhibit was an obstacle course where kids

paired off and competed with each other or just for fun. The theme of the promotion was "Pass it on" and kids would receive a yellow ball upon completion.

Red Wing Boots displayed the world's largest hand-made leather boot at the Taste this weekend and it came in at a whopping size of 165 ½!

Four entertainment stages kept the crowds entertained with the variety of music. The Saturn of Puyallup/KZOK 102.5 Stage kept the Bowl area of the park rocking with classic rock hits. For one visitor this stage became home for the three-days as he played air guitar to a huge audience all weekend. The Dex/ 94.1 KMPS Stage offered country music and the best picnic spot in the park, as well as being the home to the Danish Dancers who traveled all the way from Denmark to perform. The Click! Network/ KISS 106.1 Stage offered everything from contemporary hits to acappella, providing entertainment to the huge grass area and the beer garden. Laughs kept coming from the Bacardi Comedy Club presented by 96.5 JACK FM where visitors could enjoy food, beer, and quality stand-up comedy.

The Taste of Tacoma, celebrating its 20th year, once again offered visitors good food, great entertainment, and an affordable festival for the whole family to enjoy.

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