

Sonoma County Fair Extends Dates For 2011

The Sonoma County Fair will celebrate its 75th Anniversary Diamond Jubilee over 17 days in 2011, opening Wednesday, July 27, and continuing through Sunday, August 14, with the fair "dark," or closed on Mondays. The Fair's popular thoroughbred Wine Country Horse Racing meet will be held for 15 days this year in conjunction with the Fair. Horse racing will take place on Wednesdays through Sundays for all three weeks, with no racing on Mondays or Tuesdays.

"The Fair Board voted to add additional days to our annual Fair to coincide with the extra race days that we have been granted by the California Horse Racing Board," said Fair Manager Tawny Tesconi following their decision last week. "The racing industry continually applauds our racing program and facilities, and we are appreciative of the opportunity to run additional race days. This is an exciting change and a great way to celebrate our 75th Fair Anniversary."

The Sonoma County Fair hosts one of the most popular thoroughbred horse racing meets in Northern California. Along with its top-quality dirt track, the fair boasts one of only two turf tracks in the region, attracting some of California's top trainers, jockeys and horses to Sonoma County. 2011

will be the second consecutive year the California Horse Racing Board has granted additional days of racing to the fairgrounds. This past summer, Wine Country Horse Racing held its first Bonus Week of Racing following the closing of the annual fair.

The 75th Sonoma County Fair will once again host popular headlining concert acts in the Chris Beck Arena. "The Chris Beck Concerts fill a need for a summer outdoor concert venue in our area. 2010 was the first year of bringing back the large headline concerts -- we hit a home run with Miranda Lambert and plan to continue with that success," says Tesconi.

To commemorate the Diamond Jubilee Anniversary, Sonoma County Fair plans to celebrate the past 75 years of fairs and showcase the major highlights -- including the past 25 years in the Hall of Flowers. In 2011, designer Greg Duncan will join with prior designer Jacque Giuffre to create a spectacular show in which each of the gardens will represent one of the favorite themes of their past shows.

Pre-sale discount tickets will be available for purchase in the late spring and more information on the 75th Anniversary celebration will be posted as details are available on the Fair's website, sonomacountyfair.com.

Sweethearts Of The Radio

Celebrate Valentine's Day with an evening of musical pairings at KWMR's annual Sweethearts of the Radio concert on February 12 at The Dance Palace in Point Reyes Station. The evening includes folk, bluegrass and swing from Laurie Lewis, Tom Rozum, and Eric & Suzy

Thompson, rhythmic dance and body music from Keith Terry & Evie Ladin, and bluegrass from Deep Elem.

An array of decadent sweets and libations will be available. Proceeds from the event benefit KWMR, West Marin's community radio station. Doors open at 7 PM for pre-show enjoyment and the

Post Notes

Amazing Weekend Lineup Announced for California's Artisan Cheese Festival

The 5th annual California's Artisan Cheese Festival will kick into high gear this year with a slew of new Saturday Seminars, hands-on cheese-making workshops, chef demonstrations, and the bustling sampling of new cheeses, foods, wines and brews under the Sunday Marketplace tent, plus all of the old favorites that keep attendees coming back for more!

One of the most popular events is Saturday night's "Curds, Cooks & Cuvees" roaming feast. This hot ticket event will pair artisan cheesemakers with top Wine Country chefs for a perfect culinary collaboration -- and then it will go one step further and pair each incredible dish with a top vintner for a night of complete cheese and wine satisfaction. Festival favorite chef Duskie Estes (Zazu and Bovolo) will return to join Jeff Mall (Zin Restaurant), Nick Demarest (Harvest Moon), Janine Falvo (The Lodge at Carneros) and Sheamus Feeley (Farmstead) to create cheese-centric dishes paired with wines from sponsoring winemakers: Keller Estate Winery, Handley Cellars,

Fortress Vineyards, Kokomo Winery, Paul Matthew Vineyards and Sonoma Portworks.

There will also be a Panini Station that features Laura Werlin sampling recipes from her upcoming book, "Grilled Cheese, Please!" Laura will be pairing her delectable bites with wines from Gloria Ferrer Winery.

No dining experience would be complete without a sweet ending. The dessert station will feature artisan chocolates, dessert wines, port, bubbly, and for the first time ever -- a Straus Family Creamery soft-serve sundae bar!

Also ranking high on the most-popular events list in the weekend's lineup is Sunday's Marketplace. Each year, the tent has expanded to accommodate more attendees and this year will be no exception. More than 65 artisan producers will sample their local hand-crafted cheeses, delectable accoutrements, boutique wines and artisan-brewed beers. Again this year, the popular Mugnaini wood-fired pizza oven will turn out artisan cheese-topped pies.

Sunday's Marketplace will also feature a variety of chef demonstrations, including Mary Karlin's Fresh Cheesemaking from her soon to be released book, "Artisan Cheesemaking at Home" and Kristine Kidd (former food editor of Bon Appetit) showcasing a recipe from her new book, "Weeknight Fresh and Fast." Chef Jacquelyn Buchanan, Culinary Director of Laura Chenel's Chèvre, shares secrets of easy recipes with goat cheese.

The weekend lineup of Saturday Seminars will feature industry leaders such as Janet Fletcher, Lassa Skinner, Colette Hatch and Daphne Zepos. These interactive, taste-driven seminars will offer an array of educational topics such as the foundational "Cheese and Wine Pairing," the exploratory "California's Rare Beauties," the immensely popular "Cheese and Beer," and the effervescent, yet sophisticated "Bubbles and Brie."

New this year will be an all-day farm-to-table Saturday Seminar that will begin with a farm tour and finish up with a hands-on cheesemaking class. The Friday Farm Tours are always a sold-out success of interest to future cheesemakers and enquiring cheese lovers. "By inviting our festival guests to visit local dairies and cheesemakers, we further the nonprofit festival's mission to support and sustain our state's daily and agricultural community," said Lynne Devereux, executive director of the festival.

The festival will close out with Monday's Trade Day (for professionals; invitation only), which will feature Ruth Reichl sharing her vision of cheese in retail, restaurants and homes. Ruth will be interviewed by author, consultant, and cheese expert Clark Wolf.

The full schedule of events is posted on the website and tickets are now on sale! Visit artisancheesefestival.com. The event takes place March 25-28 at the Sheraton Petaluma.