

COVER STORIES

Put The "Petal to the Metal" At This Year's Hall Of Flowers

From its earliest beginnings with the Model-T to the "bigger is better" '57 Chevy to the environmentally conscious hybrid, the automobile helped define the 20th century. This year, the Sonoma County Fair invites you to embark on a road trip through the history of the automobile at the "Petal to the Metal" exhibit in the Hall of Flowers. Explore the mountains in a '42 Willys Jeep. Get a little saucy in a '62 Corvette in sultry South Beach. Snuggle with your sweetheart at the drive-in in a '50s hot rod. Whatever your favorite wheels, the 2006 Flower Show is sure to excite your memories and your imagination.

Elaborate and exquisite floral displays are nothing new to the largest themed flower show in the country. For twenty years, coordinator and designer Greg Duncan has made magical retreats for fairgoers, inviting them into a

world where imagination and creativity reign. With the help of artist John Michener, planning was begun nearly a year in advance. But the massive hall was decorated with wall-to-wall murals in just three weeks time, with blank walls and mounds of soil transformed into a breathtaking masterpiece.

Entering the Hall of Flowers from the main doors on the west side of the building, you'll see the captivating centerpiece: a posh mansion with sturdy ivory pillars, a luxury auto and a babbling fountain overlooking enchanting gardens. It's reminiscent of Gatsby and summer soirees. A contrast waits a bit farther down the road, where you will find a rickety garage and a rusty pick-up -- a little worse for wear, but any mechanic's delight.

If you're in the mood for a rustic getaway, why not explore California's redwoods in a Model-A? Or, take a trip

through the mountains in a vintage Jeep? If you have surfer roots, be sure to spend some time lounging by the ocean in a Woody Wagon. Grab a glass of Chardonnay from the wine bar and relax to the sounds of the Beach Boys in the shade of a palm tree during the day and the crackle of a bonfire in the moonlight. All this traveling is sure to wear you out, but don't worry. If you're too tired to drive home, the exhibit includes a motel where you'll find a pink Cadillac parked in the lot. Before you end your trip through automotive history, be sure to fill up at this year's featured exhibit: the Men's Garden Club's 50s-style gas station. The prices will make you swoon.

Admission to the "Petal to the Metal" exhibit in the Hall of Flowers is free with fair admission. It's open every day of the Fair, July 25th through August 7th, from 10 AM until 9 PM.

The Sonoma County Fair: "WOW! What a Ride"

Opening July 25th and running through the 7th of August, this year's edition of the Sonoma County Fair will feature Grammy-winning music, the annual PRCA rodeo, a rough-and-rowdy Demolition Derby, turf track horse racing, veggie car races, an ugliest pick-up contest and much more.

This year's hit musical headliners are Kris Kristofferson, Josh Turner, Darryl Worley, SheDaisy, Loverboy and Better Than Ezra. Other entertainment to pencil in includes the Motorsports Spectacular with the legendary "Grave Digger", the always-popular Blues Festival and

the Charreada Mexicana. Reserved tickets to these events are limited so act early to ensure the best seats.

The over-all theme of the 2006 fair is "Wow! What A Ride!" You can expect displays of classic cars and auto-themed exhibits like "Petal to the Metal" in the Hall of Flowers. See the separate story on this exhibit on page 5.

Of course, the primary goal of this traditional county fair is to celebrate local artists and artisans, farmers and ranchers, and the region's rich agricultural tradition... and no county fair is complete without the classic midway carnival rides and games.

This year, there will not be a special kids' day. Instead, ev-

ery day will be kids' day. Children under 12 can enjoy every day of the fair for free. Senior days, where admission is free to those 60 and over, have been moved to Wednesdays. Tuesdays are now free for all fairgoers before 3 PM.

Ticket order forms may already have arrived in your mailbox. If not, advance ticket order forms may be downloaded online or requested for delivery via mail or fax by calling the Fair office at 707.545.4200. To download order forms, find a complete schedule of this year's Fair entertainment, or for more information, visit sonomacountyfair.com.

Petaluma Art & Garden Festival Celebrates Abundance

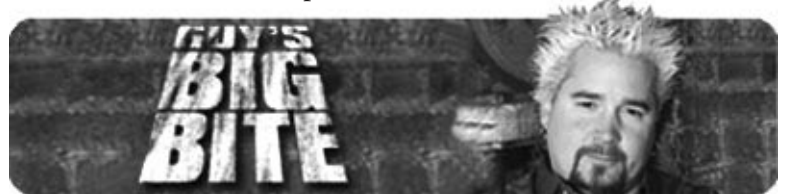
One of Petaluma's most stimulating events celebrates the arts -- whether "fine", folksy or flavorful. It's a celebration of creativity on canvas and in the garden, with the added abundance of tasty food, great wine and brews, and the sound of music. The Petaluma Art & Garden Festival takes place in the streets of Historic Downtown Petaluma from 11 AM to 5 PM on Sunday, July 9th. This year's event will be the biggest ever in terms of exhibitors and promises to continue the festival's reputation as a premiere Bay Area summer outing.

The sensuous showcase stretches from the A Street parking lot to Fourth Street between B Street and Western Avenue. Visitors can enjoy the smooth sounds of jazz and other music, taste fine wine and eat delicious delicacies against a backdrop of historic buildings. In addition, scores of local artists will exhibit their works for sale at this special

event which is co-sponsored by the Petaluma Downtown Association and the Petaluma Arts Association.

Admission is free. Further details are available by calling 707.762.9348 or by visiting petalumadowntown.com or petalumafestivals.com on the web.

Petaluma's Historic Downtown area is on the National Register of Historic Places. It's home to nearly 30 antique shops, numerous art galleries, specialty shops and more than 140 restaurants. Featured in the free Petaluma Visitor Guide are self-guided walking tours through the streets of Historic Downtown and the Victorian Homes District, along with the locations of Petaluma's city parks, retail centers, restaurants, lodgings and more. The guide also features a complete Calendar of Annual Events, including the Art & Garden Festival, and is available by calling 707.769.0429 or at visitpetaluma.com.



Hometown TV Star Back At The Fair

Guy Fieri is no newcomer to Sonoma County. He's been serving up zesty dishes at Johnny Garlic's and Tex Wasabi's since 1996. But this year, there's something a little different about this Guy. He's the star of his own show on television's Food Network after beating out seven other contestants from around the country during a reality TV cook-off and winning the second season of "The Next Food Network Star". Now he's hosting his own cooking show on the network, "Guy's Big Bite".

Fieri is known around Sonoma County for combining unique flavors and adding a little bit of flair to wine country cuisine. How many other chefs operate a BBQ

Sushi joint? Aside from his tremendous culinary talents and his restaurants' vibrant twists, the most admirable thing about this hometown boy is that he's still just that. Fieri hasn't forgotten where he comes from, nor does he take for granted the dedicated patrons and fans that he feels have helped propel him to stardom.

Fieri will be at the Sonoma County Fair this year, as he has been for the last ten, serving up his now-famous, mouth-watering cuisine. Follow your nose to the new Johnny Garlic's Garlic Fry Booth and be sure to stop by and sample some of Fieri's "off the hook" fare from Tex Wasabi's BBQ Sushi Grill and Johnny Garlic's California Pasta Kitchen.