

Pride of New York Harvest Fest 2009

Contributed by Karli Petrovic

Get a Belly Full

Enjoy unlimited samples of New York's finest foodstuffs at Harvest Fest

If chowing down and wetting your whistle adequately describe two favorite pastimes, the Pride of New York Harvest Fest promises more than 100 different food, wine and beer options of products grown or produced in the state. That's the good news. The better news is you can partake in unlimited sampling of those products. Held previously in Albany, the 13th annual edition debuts this weekend in Syracuse at the New York State Fairgrounds.

Here's the pitch: Cooperstown Cookie Company brings its shortbread goodness to Harvest Fest.

"I would suggest that nobody eat a big breakfast before they come," says Fred Pierce, director of public relations for the New York State Fair. "Everyone there will be doing a lot of eating and drinking."

The event runs Saturday, Nov. 14, 10 a.m. to 5 p.m., and Sunday, Nov. 15, noon to 5 p.m. Pride of New York Harvest Fest advance sale tickets are available for \$20 by calling 487-7711, Ext. 0 from 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. or online through Ticketmaster. Advance sale tickets will be sold through Thursday, Nov. 12; tickets will be sold at the gate for \$25. Each ticket includes unlimited sampling and admission to one cooking seminar given by chefs like Paul Midgley of Cutting Edge Catering or Anand "A.J." Jayapal, executive chef at Panza's on the Lake, who will, as the Harvest Fest Web site states, "demonstrate how to create delectable dishes using fresh, quality foods grown and produced close to home."

From Thousand Islands Winery to Go Veggies Inc., the food and beverages featured at Harvest Fest will range from soups and desserts to wines sauces and marinades. Pierce expects the range of products that come from New York to surprise many people.

"Harvest Fest was created to introduce New Yorkers to a variety of food and wine," he explains. "We want people to think about where their food comes from."

The concept of being food-conscious stems from the locavore mentality, in which buying locally grown foodstuffs reduce one's carbon footprint. Locally grown products also

travel a shorter distance, ensuring a fresher tomato or sausage than those shipped from overseas or across the country. Buying local also supports the local economy by increasing income to local businesses.

Pierce says the overall goal, however, involves awareness of what types of products are based in New York. He thinks that as people investigate the various vendor booths, they learn what to look for the next time they go grocery shopping.

For example, next time someone wants a quick and easy soup dinner, one of the vendors, Bes’Dam Soup, and its president and creator Ed Covino hopes the consumer chooses one of his bisques or chowders, made in Long Island, over condensed canned soup varieties.

“We have high standards to make sure we live up to the name,” notes Covino, who with his chef background creates all the company’s soup recipes, and will be offering samples of at least three seasonal favorites, pumpkin bisque, lobster bisque and Cajun crab corn chowder, at the booth.

Covino says participants in the event also have the opportunity to purchase a hot cup of soup, frozen pouches that can be given as gifts or used for dinner and gift certificates.

Another vendor, Pati Grady, of Cooperstown Cookie Company, will be offering the company’s “flagship product,” their five-ingredient, all-natural bundt, a “classic baseball shortbread” cookie. Grady sees the festival as a chance to showcase their many products retailing at less than \$10, as well as to be “face to face” with her customers. “We are an Internet business. This is our way to reach out to people,” says Grady. “People want to know who is behind the products.”

The hope of reaching out to new customers and businesses seems to be a common mentality among the vendors. Katie Camarro, of Sundae’s Best Hot Fudge Sauce of Saratoga Springs, says she looks forward to new wholesale accounts and different businesses that want to buy the company’s sauces, which are made with New York state dairy products and real sugar. The Sundae’s Best booth promises a new sauce introduction of Chazzy’s Cherry, a cherry chocolate sauce named after Camarro’s nephew, which she trusts will be a winner.

Other winning products people can expect to sample include Long Island’s Deer Park Ravioli’s cheese, lobster and mushroom raviolis, butternut squash in semolina pasta and florentine ravioli with roasted garlic in spinach pasta. For dessert taste a variety of the company’s cakes such as their Raspberry Linzer or the Boston Chocolate Cheese.

If any of the products seem tempting, festivalgoers rejoice. Participants may taste test as many products as their stomachs can hold. Pierce, who thinks unlimited sampling at festivals is something New Yorkers are unaccustomed to, will be “in awe” of all the choices. “I expect people to be smiling an awful lot,” says Pierce. “It should be a wonderful time.”

For more information on Harvest Fest, call (518) 457-7229 or visit www.harvestfestny.com.