



ILLUSTRATION BY MARK STIVERS

Swine tasting

BY JEREMY WINSLOW

For nearly a decade, Sacramento Bacon Fest has graced our tree-lined streets as an event dedicated to all things bacon. The five-day event kicked off February 6 with an opening party at Urban Roots Brewing & Smokehouse and ends February 10 with a chef competition at Mulvaney's B&L, where industry professionals will fire up pork in various creative ways.

"We preceded the whole Farm-to-Fork movement in the city. I initially did this, not just for bacon, but to support restaurants and businesses that I thought did the right thing in terms of sourcing great ingredients, working with local farms, practicing seasonal and regional cuisines and menus," says Sac Bacon Fest co-organizer Brian Guido.

That sentiment is shared by Empress Tavern and Mother Restaurant co-owner, Ryan Donahue, who says he believes accessibility is what separates Sac Bacon Fest from other food festivals throughout the year.

"I always like to try to price [events] not ... super expensive

because I think it prices people out of these experiences, especially when it's something that's ultimately accessible for everybody," Donahue says.

Accessibility is the cornerstone of Sac Bacon Fest for Guido who says the event is about inviting people to new places they haven't patronized before that showcase a true Farm-to-Fork ethos with seasonal eating and regional ingredients.

Sure, Sac Bacon Fest features coveted breweries and restaurants such as Alaro Craft Brewing and Mulvaney's B&L, but Guido wants to ensure that people from all backgrounds attend and enjoy themselves.

"We just want to promote the bounty that Sacramento has," he says. So just what *is* Sac Bacon Fest all about?

Calling it an event that celebrates bacon is accurate, but it's more than that. It's a series of events spanning several restaurants and breweries throughout Sacramento. Patrons can also participate in a Skee-Ball tournament at Two Rivers Cider, a Kevin Bacon soundtrack tribute

show at The Torch Club, a bacon waffle breakfast at Bike Dog's Broadway location or a luau lunch buffet at Empress Tavern.

It all culminates with the final event on Sunday at Mulvaney's, where 12 local chefs will use a half-hog sourced from Rancho Llano Seco in Chico to compete for the best bacon dish. While tickets to the competition have sold out, the winner of the Two Rivers Cider Skee-Ball tournament can score two tickets.

For all involved, whether its organizers such as Guido or participants such as Donahue, Sac Bacon Fest is more than just some "silly thing about bacon."

"Over time, I think it morphed into something more important to where [everyone is] very much looking more at sustainable sourcing," Donahue says. "I think it's as Sacramento as you can kind of get." □

Got a bacon craving? Stop by any Sacramento Bacon Fest event through February 10. Visit facebook.com/sacramentobaconfest for more information on dates and times.

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