We gathered, we tasted, we explored food connections at the first Cascadia Food Festival 2019!

Vancouver, WA – Slow Food Cascadia hosted a regional food festival for the International Slow Food movement this weekend. The Cascadia Food Festival included 2,000 attendees at the Food and Cider Festival, 200 at the Slow Food Summit, and 300 at the Lu’au.

“As someone that was born and raised in Vancouver, WA, it’s pretty exciting to see our little town host the International Slow Food movement, celebrate our regional foods, and local food system accomplishments,” says Warren Neth, Slow Food Cascadia event director. “We were the first gateway for the Oregon Territory, and now we get to be the first host for Cascadia Food Festival.”

Charity Kenyon, co-chair of the Equity, Inclusion & Justice Working Group of the Slow Food California board, traveled up from San Francisco to be part of the inaugural event. “Slow Food Cascadia showed us what a regional food festival should be,” she says, “a mix of history, calls to action, inspiration, and deliciousness. Where else could you learn both about gathering lamprey and the connections between native Hawaiians and Columbia River salmon?”

Attendees came from as far as Hawaii, San Francisco, Seattle, and Walla Walla.

At the Cascadia Food Festival: Old Apple Tree Park, 2000 attended for music, cider pressing, a Taste Marketplace, and to enjoy a sunny fall day at the feet of the oldest apple tree on the west coast.

Lynsey Horne, Slow Food AMERICORP member, notes that the traditional yearly cider pressing was a fitting way to celebrate the change of seasons and the region's abundance and food history.

“Urban Abundance’s free community cider pressing tent had 150 participants bring apples from home and press them into cider," she says. “Pressing cider at the base of the Old Apple Tree herself, celebrating the origins of Washington's apple industry to share with our community is a
great fall tradition. We were lucky to have a Boy Scout troop harvest apples from Fort Vancouver National Historic Site's heritage orchard during the event, which we pressed with apples from clones of the matriarch tree herself, and made a fantastic heritage cider to taste. It was neat to bring these pieces of our community's history together, and offer a community cider pressing that minimizes some food waste from hundreds of apple trees around Vancouver.”

Cascadia Food Festival vendor manager Ben Johnson helped bring together an eclectic group of small-scale producers that highlighted some of the most unique products coming out of the Cascadia region.

“Visitors to the Taste Marketplace were welcomed by a delicious array of value-added food and drink products, locally harvested shellfish, baked goods, and simply decadent vegetable spreads. From fruit trees to geoduck, kombucha to cookies, from the far reaches of Cascadia to Old Apple Tree Park, the Taste Marketplace offered a perfect foray into the Cascadia Food Festival, putting the simplistic yet delicious products from our unique bioregion front and center for everyone to enjoy,” he says. “We cannot wait for next year to expand and explore more of what Cascadia producers have to offer!” The day ended with four chefs preparing a meal for the evening lu‘au. Three hundred attendees came together at the Historic Hangar to celebrate the history of the Hawaiian people in Vancouver, through foods, talks, and traditional dance.

“It was an honor to serve lomi salmon at the inaugural Slow Food Cascadia Food Festival,” says Chef Michael Miyahara, of Food Saint. “In the late 1700s, salmon was brought back to Hawaii from this very part of the land - salted and cured in order to preserve the product. Hawaiians mixed the salted salmon with tomato and sweet onion to create what is still a popular side dish today. I stayed true to this traditional preparation and also added PNW touches such as using local farmed heirloom tomatoes, baby gem lettuces and purple daikon.”

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