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East Sacramento News

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A flavorful return to the fair

pg 2





Photos by Lance Armstrong

Willie Madaus, co-owner of Country Fair Cinnamon Rolls, holds a gourmet cinnamon roll topped with bacon, while the business's co-founder, Eldon Dale, center, prepares to sample a bite of this treat. Janis Dale, the other co-founder of the business, enjoys the moment alongside her husband.



Milo Franks shows off a miniature corn dog during a media day at the fair on July 13. He plans to sell his regular-sized corn dogs at this year's fair.



Poppy, the mascot of the California State Fair, holds a handful of candy at the fair's Candy Maze Selfie Experience.

A flavorful return to the fair

Food vendors are plentiful at first California State Fair since 2019

By Lance Armstrong

After two years of cancellations due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the California State Fair is making its return to Cal Expo, and there will be plenty of food offerings to entice the taste buds.

Freshly cooked corn dogs and turkey legs, and cotton candy spun on site, are just a few of the familiar food items that will make this year's fair a memorable experience for many people.

Darla Givens, spokesperson for the fair, noted that this historic Sacramento event's return is a welcomed sight for many people.

"It's just a good time to be back, because we've all been cooped up for the past two and a half years," she said. "And I think people are just looking for that reset button to come out and enjoy the things that maybe we have taken for granted previously, that we can look back and appreciate again."

Givens spoke about one of the fair's new attractions: the Candy Maze Selfie Experience.

"There are thousands of pounds of candy that you can weave your way through, (including) some of the retro favorites, the root beer barrels or the Chick-O-Sticks," she said. "And then you have selfie (photograph) stations where you can take your picture there. There is one glamour selfie station, and it has the big red lips."

Following her visit to the sweets-filled maze of candy and photography stations, Givens mentioned that she finally had her first Cow Tales candy, a caramel treat with a sugary, cream center.

"It was the Oreo Cow Tale; it was good," she said with a smile.

Candy offered at the Candy Maze Selfie Experience is sold by the pound.

Also making their debut at the fair are food trucks, Givens noted.

"We have four food trucks," she said. "Two are Juicys, one is Wing Mahal. (The latter vendor offers) a fusion between Indian and American food. It is absolutely delicious and flavorful. We also have Soul Ona Roll, and they serve soul food on a roll. And they're going to be serving their chicken and sausage jambalaya during the fair."



The Hot Doggin' food stand offers a variety of hot dogs, including this bacon wrapped hot dog, which is smothered with grilled onions and peppers.



Workers preparing for the opening of the fair pose above a sign for Juicys fresh roasted corn on July 13.

Wing Mahal owner Naresh Virdi spoke to this publication about Wing Mahal, which is another new addition at this fair.

"Wing Mahal is a chicken wings restaurant," he said. "We created our first (brick-and-mortar) restaurant in November 2020 in Folsom. We've got a second one coming right here on Exposition (Boulevard) by Costco, and we are looking to open up a third one in Elk Grove."

Virdi mentioned that this

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Cover by: Lance Armstrong

Flavorful

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business, which also has three food trucks, features high-quality sauce that is made on site.

"For some reason, nobody had taken the Indian curry and turned (it) into sauces," he said. "So, we were the first ones to do it."

Willie Madaus, co-owner of Country Fair Cinnamon Rolls, noted that his parents-in-law, Eldon and Janis Dale, established this business in 1978, and that it has since won multiple prestigious awards. Country Fair Cinnamon Rolls is a longtime vendor at this fair.

"Their product has held itself up for 44 years at the fairs," he said. "People keep coming back, because they are just outstanding. They've only gotten better over the years with our new additions."

Madaus mentioned that the success of this product includes making cream cheese-based frosting in house.

"That's the number one seller of all of (the flavors) is the frosted cinnamon roll," he said.

Among the other longtime State Fair vendors who has once again set up a food stand at the fair is Milo Franks.

"I've been doing this fair consecutively since 1970," said Franks, who is famously known at the fair for his corn dogs. "We started with an ICEE stand and it was just a one-man operation. We got into the corn dog deal in about 1976, and from there, it just kept growing and growing and growing.

"And we got into hamburgers and we got into steak sandwiches and other things. One day, I said, 'You know what? Let's just concentrate on (the basics) and be simple and be good at what we do.'

In addition to corn dogs, Milo's stand offers a limited number of other items: pizza, curly fries and drinks. Pizza has also been part of Frank's offerings since the mid-1970s.



This gyros stand offers gyros, falafels, Greek salads, french fries, Greek fries, and other items for sale.



This year's fair includes two Juicys food vending stands. This stand's featured items include hamburgers, waffle fries, and corns dogs.

Sandy Enright, who is the mother of Juicys, LLC owner Brett Enright, said that her son bought his own food vending stand for this fair when he was 15, and that he is now 52.

The Enrights have been selling food at the California State Fair since 1985, Sandy noted.

"We have the cheesy bacon curly fries," she said. "That's really popular. We have the foot-long sausage on a stick, which is really popular, and, of course, our sausage and are turkey legs. We get them out of Texas. They're preservative free and they're very good quality.

"My son requires quality food, and everything we serve is hot off the grill."

While standing next to her funnel cake stand, Jennifer Simpson told this paper that she is the owner of three food stands at this year's fair.

Simpson spoke about the quality of her funnel cakes.

"We have a proprietary mix that you won't have anywhere else out here," she said. "We chop our strawberries fresh, we have 10 different kinds of funnel cakes, and we make our funnel cakes with love."

Simpson's top three selling funnel cake flavors are strawberry, Nutella, and powdered sugar.

Eddie Barrera, of the Sacramento-based Hot Doggin', said that his business specializes in serving gourmet, premium, all-beef hot dogs.

"We do different styles from bacon wrap to western bacons, guacamole dogs, Chicago dog, Polish, hot links," he said. "The list just goes on and on, (and) anything we can, we bacon wrap it."

Berrera, a self-described "hot dog connoisseur," added that at the State Fair he acquired the nickname, "The Wienie King."

An attraction of this fair is its food festival, which allows fair guests the opportunity to purchase four food items from various vendors at a discounted cost.

After purchasing a food festival pass for $28 online or inside the main gate of the fairgrounds, an attendee of the fair can use that pass to buy four food items from participating vendors. Each of the four festival tickets of the pass has a $10 value.

Festival food items are only available to those who purchase a festival pass.

The items offered at the food festival are those that have been entered in the festival's competition.

Also returning is the $2 Taste of the Fair, which allows fairgoers the opportunity to purchase bite-sized versions of food offered by fair vendors.

Givens invited people to come to this year's fair and enjoy its many offerings, including a wide variety of food.

"Come on out to California State Fair & Food Festival," she said. "You can eat your way through the fair, from one end of the fair to the other end, all the way to our Miller Lite Racetrack Grandstand, where we have food there, as well."

Admission to the fair is $14 for adults/general; $12 for seniors, 62 years old and older; $10 for children, 5 to 12 years old, and free for children, 4 and younger. Parking at the fair is $15.

For additional information, call (916) 263-3000 or visit the website, www.CalExpoStateFair.com.



An interesting garden surprise: Hogweed

By Lance Armstrong

(Editor's Note: This article was first printed on June 17, in the Elk Grove Citizen, a sister publication of Valley Community Newspapers.)

It is not often that a gardener discovers that a weed in their garden is actually edible. This weed can be added to a salad, stir-fried, cooked like spinach, or added to soups.

But such was the case when this reporter recently found a bit of hogweed growing in his backyard garden.

"Hogweed" is a casual term for a summer annual succulent, which has the Latin name, portulaca oleracea.

It is considered a common purslane, and it has green, fleshy leaves and grows in a stretched-out, bunched-up manner. It generally reaches about 6 inches in height at its tallest.

After several years of growing my garden in different soils, I decided to import some soil from a friend who informed me that he desired to give away many yards of quality topsoil from his property along the American River.

After he offered some of that soil to me, I was soon taking many evening trips to his place.

I transported many truckloads of that rich, quality top soil to my property, and then mixed some chicken manure in with it to create a nice soil mixture for planting.

Shortly after Easter, I began planting my summer garden.

Although my variety of vegetable plants grew fast and healthy, I would soon learn that a new and unexpected addition to my garden was also thriving in this quality soil.

Because I wanted to learn more about this foreign addition to my garden, I consulted with knowledgeable staff at Green Acres Nursery & Supply in Elk Grove.

Heather Gaillot, an assistant manager at Green Acres, confirmed that this type of purslane is edible.

"It is edible," she said. "They sell it for $3.50 a bunch over at the farmer's market downtown. You can put it in salads. I believe you can cook with it, but it's better raw. And it's full of omega-3. I think it's higher (in omega-3) than most fish."

I asked Gaillot whether she would call this common purslane a weed.

"I don't really even call it a weed, because they sell it for $3.50 at the farmer's market right now," she said. "I would personally eat it, not pull it, but that's just from my mouth."

But by definition, the common purslane is both a plant and a weed.

Gaillot mentioned that Green Acres does not sell the same type of purslane as what is growing in my garden.

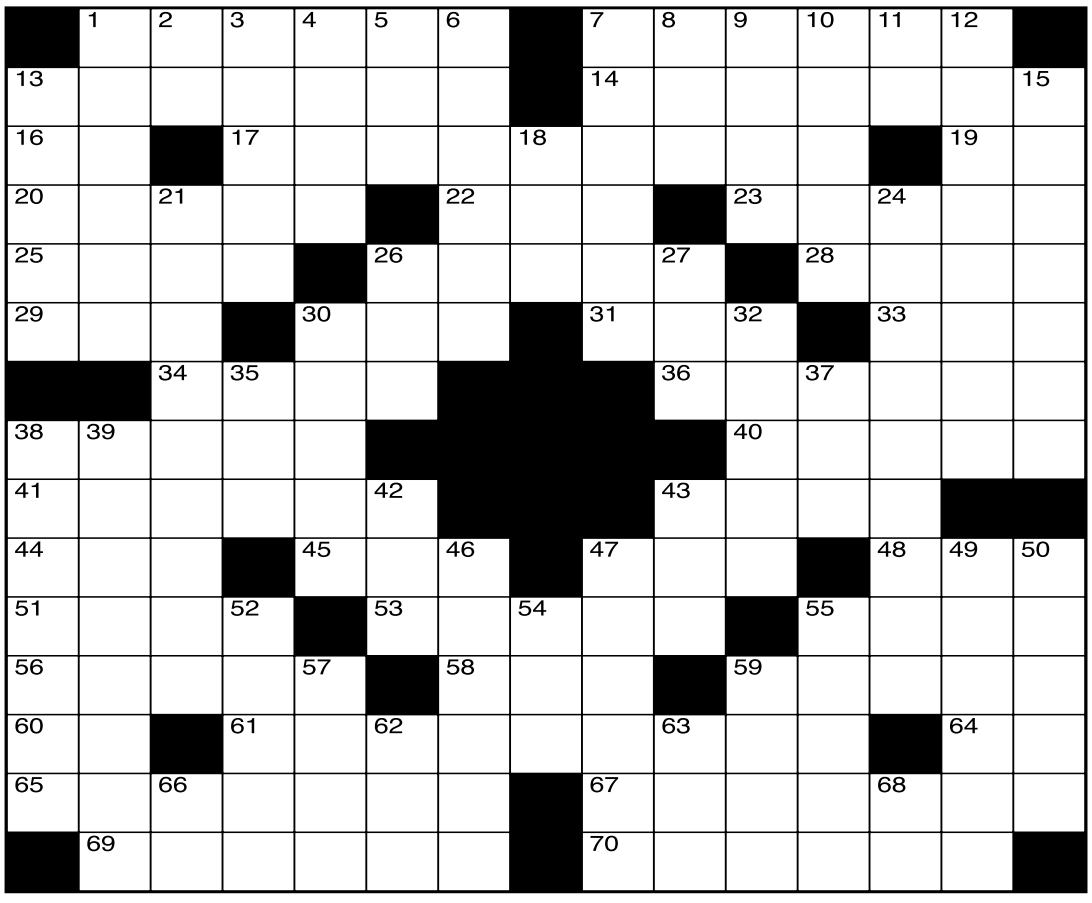
"We carry more of the decorative ones here," she said.

Tina Long, a buyer of dry goods at Green Acres, mentioned that there is no simple way to rid of the common purslane in a garden.

"There's nothing you can

See HOGWEED on Page 5

CROSSWORD



CLUES ACROSS
1. Eurasian shrubs
7. Strikes and rebounds
13. Group of advisers
14. Modern necessity
16. Top lawyer in the land
17. Philadelphia university
19. Of I
20. Functions as a laser
22. Basketball phenomenon Jeremy
23. Famed island
25. Parent-teacher groups
26. Distributes
28. Self-immolation by fire ritual
29. Ad __
30. Circulation problem (abbr.)
31. Brother or sister
33. A famous "Squad"
34. Stage actor Anthony
36. Violent seizure of property
38. Saclike cavities
40. Sound units
41. Counts on
43. Dad
44. Woman (French)
45. A digital tape recording of sound
47. Polish Baltic peninsula
48. Recipe measurement
51. Requests out of dire need
53. Precious stone weight unit
55. The immaterial part of a person
56. Anoint
58. Golf score
59. Supernatural
60. Northwest Territories
61. Can be made suitable
64. A professor's helper
65. Having a toothlike edge
67. Got atop a horse
69. Judged
70. Static balance between opposing forces

CLUES DOWN
1. Flowing
2. Computer department
3. Lasts
4. DiFranco and Samsonyan are two
5. __ de sac
6. Merchant
7. Hosts film festival
8. State of agitation of fuss
9. A way to praise
10. Opaque gems
11. McKinley is one
12. Smallest interval in classical Western music
13. Famed designer Lauren
15. Occupies
18. Small island (British)
21. Misuse of the sacred
24. Covers with a thin sheet
26. Most valuable player
27. Title of respect
30. Investigated discreetly
32. Belonging to the bottom layer
35. Black tropical American cuckoo
37. Music genre
38. Indicates one is in mourning
39. Secured forever
42. Bodily cavity
43. A dog is one
46. Chose to do something
47. Annoy persistently
49. Large hotel rooms
50. Beg
52. Docket
54. Subway dwelling rodent
55. Sources
57. Mild Dutch cheese
59. Spanish city
62. Consumed
63. Ballplayer's tool
66. Midway between north and east
68. Atomic #3

Hogweed

Continued from Page 1

do; you have to pull it," she said. "So, there is nothing. You have to weed it (by hand). I would have to read a label of our pre-emergents for vegetable gardens to see if it lists purslane. But that could be something you do in the spring to prevent it."

Long mentioned that it is fine to drop purslane that is pulled from a garden onto nearby soil outside of a garden, without the fear of it spreading, as long as the plant is not flowering.

"As long as you haven't let it flower, you're fine," she said.

Heather Morehouse, who identified herself as a Green Acres "veggie buyer," spoke more about the type of purslane that is sold at Green Acres.

"It has larger flowers that open and close with the sun," she said. "The (flowers are) probably only like an inch big. We did just get some in (to the Elk Grove store on East Stockton Boulevard).

"There are so many varieties of purslane or portulaca or whatever someone wants to call it. It goes by both. This stuff (at Green Acres), it's not going to make you sick (if eaten). It just doesn't really taste good."

As for my own purslane, I have yet to eat any of it. That will be a new adventure of mine in the near-future.

After spending time speaking to these knowledgeable Green Acres employees, I have a much more positive opinion about the type of purslane I discovered in my garden.



Although I plan to dedicate a container for growing common purslane, I will still work to eradicate it from my vegetable garden, since I do not care for anything competing for ground space in that area but my vegetable plants.

Puzzle Solutions

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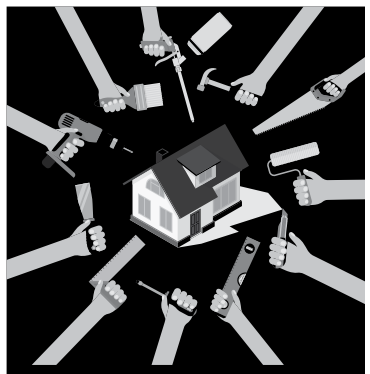
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