

# Taste! tantalizes 2,300 with fresh flavours

*Food and wine lovers converge on Crystal Palace to taste county treats*

By Sean Tomlinson  
Gazette Staff

Word of mouth travels fast, and the good word on Prince Edward County and the *Taste!* celebration event travelled to Emil Keaton, a resident of Oshawa.

"I don't think we would have known about this had a friend not told us," said Keaton at the event last Saturday afternoon as he sipped on a glass of white wine.

Keaton's next thought perhaps shows how Taste the County and its many initiatives have helped tourism grow in Prince Edward.

"I'll have to take a wine tour here sometime," he said, pondering the county as a future destination.

More than a few food and wine lovers were licking their lips at the annual *Taste!* event held Saturday afternoon at the Crystal Palace in Picton. More than 40 wine and culinary exhibits showcased the unique and growing flavour of Prince Edward County.

Throughout the day the scent of fine wine and delectable, home-grown county culinary goods competed for the attention of the nostrils. The estimated 2,300 who were in attendance likely left with full stomachs and new-found appre-

ciation for the rapidly expanding wine industry here in the county.

"It was a fabulous day," said Rebecca LeHeup-Bucknell, executive director of Taste the County.

It was the seventh year Taste the County has organized the event, and by exposing the county to visitors from outside areas a tourist study in 2005 estimated the annual *Taste!* fall event generates \$500,000 for the local economy and the county's culinary and wine industries.

"It's a great place to show what you're all about," said Cheryl Peddlesden of Angeline's Inn and Spa, which won the award for best savoury ingredient last year.

Exhibits were staged in the Crystal Palace itself and outside under the cover of three tents. The crowd mingled and enjoyed more than just the wine and food, with live music and cooking seminars held as well.

"It's a great event and it just seems to be getting better and better all the time," said Peddlesden.

Rainy and overcast skies hovered above the festivities for most of the afternoon, but it wasn't enough to slow down any appetites. Visitors came from as far as Ottawa and Montreal.

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Gazette photo by Sean Tomlinson

**A tasty treat** – Volunteers Bob Cowan and Brandy Miracle hand out some fine cuisine from the Harvest Restaurant booth at the Taste the County Saturday afternoon. An estimated 2,300 people attended the seventh annual event that showcases the finest wine and food of Prince Edward County.

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A tour bus from Toronto brought in more visitors from the big city. In the past *Taste!* had been held on the Thanksgiving long weekend in October, and organizers were worried the change in date combined with the questionable weather would bring less traffic to the event. But all worries were quickly put to rest as visitors were unable to resist the smell of the county's many treats.

Virginia Merritt, chair of Taste the County, said the event "markets the county to the county" while also providing vital exposure to other large centres in south-eastern Ontario and Quebec.

"A significant number of people who are walking around here are visitors, and a lot of them have come for the first time, and they'll come back," said Merritt.

Merritt said throughout the day the common refrain was advertisement through word of mouth

"There are so many people I've met who said 'We were told to come here', it's amazing," she said.

Amongst the exhibitors there were both seasoned veterans who have set up a booth since the beginning of the event and those showing for the first time.

Home grown food and wine outlets like Buddha Dog, The Grange of Prince

Edward Vineyards and Estate Winery, Huff Estates and Graham Farms, to name only a few, were ready to have their product sampled.

David Bergeron, owner of the recently-established Bergeron Estate Winery on the shores of Adolphus

Reach, is a first-timer looking to use *Taste!* to kick start his business.

He brought six cases of wine and by 1p.m. he was already worried about running out with four hours left in the event.

It was a good sign for a

growing business trying to get off the ground, said Bergeron.

"We're getting people telling us they are coming in tomorrow to buy a half-case or a case," he said.

"The people who are attending are here to try

wines, they're really checking out the area," added Bergeron.

An added bonus to this year's event was the farmers market, which sold produce from 10 Prince Edward County farms. All proceeds

from the market went to the Picton United Church County Food Bank.

Exact figures were not immediately available but LeHeup-Bucknell said the market generated a "substantial" donation.