

Paradise City Arts Festival celebrates

*food,
glorious food*

By Adrienne Berard—Gazette Contributing Writer—October 7, 2010

As we ready ourselves for autumn's chilly breezes, we slip into sweaters, settle onto our sofas, and prepare to sustain ourselves with some good New England cooking. With hearty soups and classic casseroles, and other staples of the season, we give thanks and celebrate around our tables.

One might call it - the eating season.

The Paradise City Arts Festival at the Three County Fairgrounds in Northampton this weekend offers a crash course in eating-season basics. The number one rule: food is fantastic.

This year, the festival has teamed up with 10 local museums as part of the Museums10 project. The project brings together local museums and galleries by designating one universal theme for their fall exhibitions. The museums, which range from the Eric Carle Museum of Picture Book Art to the Amherst College Museum of Natural History, have chosen their collective theme for this year's exhibits: food.

"Food has always been such a big part of the festival, so this year's theme came naturally," said Linda Post, founding director of Paradise City Arts Festival.

The festival kicks off Saturday at 10 a.m. and lasts until Monday at 4 pm. It will feature 275 artists and craftsmen from across the nation exhibiting original works in ceramics, painting, decorative fiber, art glass, furniture, jewelry, metal, mixed media, photography, large-scale sculpture, wearable art and wood. The festival offers visitors a chance to browse the art while munching on some local-cuisine specialities and listening to live jazz, swing, Motown and the blues.

Live music will be offered in the dining tent, including performances by Roger Salloom and Friends on Saturday; The O-Tones on Sunday; and Charles Neville and his four-piece band that plays New Orleans-flavored jazz and rhythm and blues, on Monday.



"Pea Pod" earrings by Keith Lewis; layered translucent amber Mica, 23K gold leaf and freshwater pearls



Hand-painted salad bowls by Soli Pierce



"Five Green Pears Still Life" by Jen Violette. Blown glass, stainless steel and mahogany

Festival challenge...

While the festival has a reputation for bringing out the best in local chefs and their restaurants, Post says, this year, in keeping with the Museums10 foodie theme, she has challenged participants to design an entirely new menu for the event. Some of the featured restaurants are Spoleto, Mama Iguana, Amber Waves, India House and Eastside Grill. They will be serving up dishes like chicken etouffee, chocolate praline brownies, fresh lobster rolls, hot apple bread pudding with caramel sauce, boneless bourbon barbecue short ribs, pumpkin coconut flan and saffron cardamom cheesecake.

The season for eating also coincides with the season for giving. The festival will hold a silent auction of donated art and fine craft, with all of the proceeds going to The Food Bank of Western Massachusetts.

"We are keeping with the food theme in this year's auction," said Post. "There will be hundreds of pieces in the auction and all of the art in it has been donated by the artists themselves." In addition, non-perishable food items for the Food Bank can be dropped off at the show's entrance.

The festival also is home to many non-edible food-related items as well.

An "Artist's Table," featured in one of the small buildings, is a celebration of the act of eating together and will feature functional food-themed art. There will be a large table set with place settings created by different artists. Every piece will be handmade and available for purchase from the artists there at the table.

The exhibition "crEATe: Food as Artistic Inspiration" focuses on the relationship between food and art. It will feature a number of paintings, sculptures and crafts with the universal theme of food and its role in society.

"The artists always enjoy the challenge of coming up with something special to fit each year's theme," Post said. "But food has been especially fun. It's a broad subject and encompasses so many media categories, it's a very inclusive theme."



"Pear Bowl" by Linda Jacque. Hand-painted wood, colored pens and airbrush
Angela Shope's "Dressed Up Mugs" are porcelain with stains and underglazes



This footed pitcher was made by
Constance Talbot

About this festival...

WHAT: Paradise City Arts Festival

WHEN: Saturday and Sunday, 10 a.m. to 6 p.m.; Monday, 10 a.m. to 4 p.m.

WHERE: Three County Fairgrounds, Northampton

COST: Adults: \$12; seniors: \$10; students: \$8; children under 12 are free.

MORE INFO: Call 800-511-9725 or visit www.paradisecityarts.com