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First "Taste of Buffalo" an appetizing affair

By Sara Duane

Nearly 300 people descended upon the first annual Taste of Buffalo, held on September 24th, 2009, at the Buffalo Civic Center. Organized by the Buffalo Area Chamber of Commerce and sponsored by Bankwest, Coborn's and McDonald's of Buffalo, the name might be a little misleading. Restaurants, caterers, bar and grills, even grocery stores and gas stations from throughout Wright County and beyond were there to share their culinary creations with the public.

The Taste of Buffalo was born out of a desire to promote the 280 local businesses involved with the Chamber. At other big events that happen in Wright County, like the fair and the Arts & Crafts Festival, area businesses can get overshadowed by vendors that come from all over the Midwest region. This was a chance to highlight products and services offered by organizations located here in the community.

For three hours, the civic center's main room was a grand dining hall. Booths bedecked in maroon and white lined the length of the walls, each one offering attendees everything from bruschetta and Reubens to brownies and cheesecake. At the center of the hall, people could sit down to eat at dozens of tables adorned with linen tablecloths and floral centerpieces. Musicians took stage at the center and far end of the room, supplying diners with entertainment while they ate. White holiday lights were strung across the ceiling, providing some twinkling mood lighting for the occasion.

The 27 local vendors that participated in the Taste of Buffalo showcased samples of their most craved cuisine. The grand total added up to about 200 tasty treats, accounting for breakfast, lunch, dinner, drinks, and desert. There were scones, muffins, pie, and coffee from Elegant Entrees, Waverly Cafe & Catering, Coffee Connection, and Custom Roasting. Pastas, pizza, wings, sandwiches and other lunch faire were featured by Crostini's Grille, Angeno's Pizza & Pasta, Bison Creek Bar & Dining, Norm's Wayside, and Buffalo Bar & Grill. Barbecued ribs, chicken parmesan, potatoes, hand-cut smoked turkey, and dinner-style foods were



available from Red's Cafe & Catering, Bj's Deli, Bryan John's Grill Works, Petty Brothers Meats, and el Molcajete Mexican Restaurante and Bar. Bernick's Pepsi, Thorpe Distributing, Buffalo Wine & Spirits, and Woodland Hill Winery were there to quench thirst with soda, juice, beer, and wine. To appeal to the sweet-tooth, cookies, cakes, apple cobbler, and a "walking s'mores" could be found from Kwik Trip, Tastefully Simple, Deer Lake Orchard, and A Catered Event. Heavyweights Cub Foods, Coborns and Wal-Mart were there promoting their delis and bakeries. Even Herbalife and Gold's Gym made healthy food fit in along with all the salty snacks and rich deserts.

While attendees dined on their delectable delights, they were treated to music provided by local talent. For the first hour beginning at 5:30, they were soothed by the tinkling keys of pianist Mary Lynne Wolfe. During the second hour, the room was filled with the sounds of the beloved Annandale Community Band. Wrapping up the last hour was the lively rhythm of the Maple Lake Jazz Band.

The Taste of Buffalo event had a cozy ambiance thanks in part to the transformation of the Buffalo Civic Center into a fine dining hall. The low lighting and the strings of white lights created an intimate environment like one would find at a nice restaurant. White linen table cloths added a touch of class. And a floral centerpiece of Hydrangea Limelights in a simple glass vase completed the image.

The delicious food, great music, and attractive surroundings combined to encourage a relaxed and jovial atmosphere at this adult-only event. Throughout the civic center, people were chatting, laughing, and enjoying the experience. This of course resulted more eating and talking, more lingering and giggling.

Special recognition awards were given by the Buffalo Area Chamber to two of the vendors offering food items at the Taste of Buffalo.

An award for the most interesting food item at the event was presented to Huikko's Bowling and Entertainment Center of Buffalo for their delicious dill pickle soup.

The award for the best overall display at the event went to Crostini Grille of Monticello.

Vendors had more to give than samples. It was a chance for them to draw attention to their skills and display to the public what they have to offer. Many handed out coupons or grab bags. There were even a few drawings for prizes held by the Chamber and some individual vendors.

All in all, the turnout of vendors and visitors made the very first Taste of Buffalo a smashing success. For those who may have missed it, the Buffalo Area Chamber of Commerce has confirmed that there will definitely be a second installment of this event next year. There are even hopes to expand it with more vendors and great food in the years to come. That should be easy to accomplish, as its positive reception means the Taste of Buffalo is sure to become another beloved local tradition.