

Tomato Festival wraps with cooking contest winners posted

By [Susan Hiland](#) Aug 21, 2017

FAIRFIELD — Sunday wrapped up the two-day Tomato Festival in downtown Fairfield but not before the winners of the Tomato Cooking Competition were announced.

The cooking competition was moved from downtown to Il Fiorello Olive Oil Company in Suisun Valley for judging, and will be the new home of the competition from now on, according to Margaret Manzo, executive director for Fairfield Main Street Association.

There were four categories – salad, sauce, salsa and soup – and two age groups – Junior Chef Competition (12 and younger) and Open Competition (13 and older).

Samples were dropped off Saturday morning for judging by five judges: Dr. Deborah Murray of NorthBay Healthcare, Peter Halikas of Mankas Steakhouse, Il Fiorello's executive chef and culinary curator Gloria Ciccarone-Nehls, Il Fiorello's sous chef Genevieve Upp and Mark Sievers, Il Fiorello's co-owner.

“We had eight contestants,” Ann Sievers, co-owner of Il Fiorello, said.

Lauren Nolasco of Fairfield took first place in the salsa open competition. She took home \$75 and commemorative wine glasses. She also took home first place for her vegetarian soup.

The other salsa winners were Keith Hanson, who took home \$50 for second place, and Joseph Madison, who came in third, with a \$25 prize.

Ezra Cremo of Fairfield took first place in the Junior Chef Competition for his salsa. His twin brother, Eli Cremo, took first place for his BLT salad. Both boys received cash and an apron.

It was the first time Nolasco entered a contest, and she was surprised to win.

“I have made it my own over the years,” Nolasco said. “It's hot, because I like it spicy.”

The idea of entering the contest came at the spur of the moment.

“It sounded fun, so I thought, ‘Why not?’ ” she said.

Her husband, Michael Watson, cheered her from the sidelines and, according to his wife, should enter his salsa next year for the competition.

“He's got a really good salsa,” Nolasco said.

He likes her salsa better.

“It’s tangy and spicy. It’s really unique,” Watson said.

Maybe next year they both will bring something for the Tomato Festival Cooking Competition.

Reach Susan Hiland at 427-6981 or shiland@dailyrepublic.net.