



Festivalgoers line up for heirloom tomato samples during the Tomato Festival in downtown Fairfield, Saturday. (Aaron Rosenblatt/Daily Republic)

[Fairfield](#)

Changes big, small keep Tomato Festival fresh

By [Susan Hiland From page A1](#) | August 16, 2015

FAIRFIELD — It's likely going to be hard for people to choose which is their favorite thing about the 24th Annual Tomato Festival among the changes that have come to the event, some of which might surprise a few people.

Key among the changes is a new concept for sampling numerous varieties of tomatoes.

"Tomato Alley was always a closed tent which got really hot and stuffy," said Margaret Manzo, executive director for Fairfield Main Street Association. "So we changed it."

Instead of a closed tent, Tomato Alley is an open air farmers market with Capay Organic as the sponsor.

Capay Organic is a California business that raises a huge variety of tomatoes, peppers, free-range chickens and more.

"This is our first year here," said Lola Zyscovich, Capay Organic's farmers market manager.

She personally is allergic to just about everything on the tables, so there's no taste testing for her. She said that some of the favorites Saturday were heirloom tomatoes and cherry heirloom tomatoes.

They brought some free-range eggs, somewhat pricey due to limited supply.

"We just don't have as many eggs as last year," Zyscovich said. "So that is a big change for us."

The tomato tasting table has not really changed. It still includes a large variety of red, golden yellow, green and striped tomatoes for everyone to taste.

"I like the brandywine tomatoes," said Mike Reagan of Vacaville.

More changes include a car show, pet adoption from the Solano County Sheriff's Office and a community stage for the tomato eating contest, salsa competition, youth entertainment and more.

"This is six city blocks filled with vendors," Manzo said. "Those blocks are 300 feet long each, so there are a lot of things to do."

Organizers set up two musical stages so bands could play throughout the day. Bands that played Saturday included the Alive Music Orchestra jazz band, Rhythm Method 4, Matt Applin and the Midnite Band, the Used Blues Band, Terry Sheets Band and the band Mobility from Travis Air Force Base.

The lineup includes Whiskey & Honey, Journey's Edge, Hey Jude and Sapa Guapo.

"We have a Journey cover band which is really exciting and for those who love the Beatles, we got Hey Jude, which sings Beatles songs," Manzo said.

Also new this year is a carnival with rides and games for the the whole family put on by Johnston Amusement.

The carnival will run through the weekend. Rides are open from 11 a.m. to 11 p.m. Sunday. The carnival will actually run longer than the Tomato Festival, which takes place from noon to 5 p.m.

Community and business participation in the downtown event is key to its success.

"Most of our vendors are returning from the previous year," Manzo said. "Without them we wouldn't be able to put this on."

Manzo said that one of the great things about this event is that it's the biggest event that doesn't charge people to park.

Adults, in addition to the family fun, had the chance Saturday to enjoy a sip of wine and beer at the VIP Wine, Food and Brew event, which returned this year and was hosted by the Fairfield-Suisun Chamber of Commerce.

The tomato eating contest will take place from 2 to 2:45 p.m. Sunday with the car show results at 4 p.m. Then the day closes out with some karaoke on the community stage.

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