

Sample the Sierra sells out – surpasses expectations

By Kathryn Reed

South Lake Tahoe suddenly became walkable Saturday.

“I’m at a wine walk,” one guy said to the person on the other end of his cell phone.

A block of Ski Run Boulevard was closed off for the inaugural Sample the Sierra. It was all about blending wine and food together to make a feast of sorts for much of the afternoon Aug. 21. Art and jewelry were for sale. Other local businesses had booths as well.



A mix of locals and out-of-towners enjoy Sample the Sierra on Aug. 21. Photos/Kathryn Reed

It far exceeded most people’s expectations. With the 500 \$20 wristbands selling out, it left some without the opportunity to Sample the Sierra. Another 200-plus food-only tickets were sold. Organizers are hoping to break even.

For the South Shore, this was a unique event because so few are outdoors unless it's an athletic competition. Most are indoors at one of the casinos.

People could ride their bikes. Even the intermittent rain and brief hail didn't send people away. Restaurants along the route were doing a brisk business from people who wanted a more complete meal.

Music filled the air. People worked off their food and wine indulgence by dancing to the various musical groups. Stages at both ends of the food booths kept people entertained as they ate and drank.

Lake Tahoe South Shore Chamber of Commerce, Lake Tahoe Visitors Authority and El Dorado Community Foundation are the forces behind the event, along with a slew of other sponsors.

"It was better than we expected. It will be bigger next year," Isabella Mill with the chamber said.

Booths with nothing to consume formed the perimeter, while the food and wine were in the center of the boulevard. Wineries were paired with restaurants, while growers were paired with restaurants to make the sampling complete. Mt. Tallac Brewery was the lone beer purveyor.

Alex Elsaesser from the Black Bear Inn was using blueberries in his dessert that were supplied by an El Dorado County farmer. The dessert was paired with port from Latcham Vineyards in Fair Play.

People were going back for seconds and thirds at the various booths, the food and wine were that yummy.

"The layout will definitely be different next year," said Tina Bruess with the chamber. This will be to spread the consumption lines out a bit.

Already organizers are considering expanding the venue beyond

one block. With more than 700 wristbands given out, that would be understandable. It was free to walk the street. It only cost money to eat and drink.

“An informal survey of vendors says they will be back next year,” Bruess said.

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