

A filling lineup for North Shore food and wine festival

The 26th Annual Lake Tahoe Autumn Food and Wine Festival, considered one of Lake Tahoe's premier gourmet events, is scheduled for Sept. 9-11 at the Village at Northstar in Truckee.

The three-day event kicks off Sept. 9 with the 8th Annual Village Grape Stomp and Vineyard Luncheon, with costumed teams furiously stomping fresh-from-the-vineyard grapes trying to extract the most juice. The team entry fee (\$200 for four and \$50 for those solo) includes grape stomping, wine and beer tasting and alfresco luncheon. For those not wanting to get their feet dirty, lunch/tasting only tickets are \$40/person.

Day two of the festival showcases some of the best culinary programs in the region, including three free outdoor seminars in the heart of the Village at Northstar. Mark Estee, chef and owner of Truckee-based Moody's Bistro & Lounge and Burger Me, which was featured on the Food Network's Diners, Drive-Ins and Dives, hosts "Outdoor Grilling" at 11am. Chef Jason Gronlund, senior director of culinary and the executive chef for Hard Rock Café International, hosts "Cookin' Hard Rock Style" at 12:15pm. Local legend Douglas Dale of Wolfdale's Cuisine Unique in Tahoe City wraps up the free programs with "Cuisine Unique Cooking Demo" at 2:45pm as he guides attendees in finding new elements, ingredients, techniques and unconventional food combinations.

Also free to the public is the Gourmet Marketplace Trade Fair, where festival-goers can sample and purchase olive oils, tapenades, olives, vinegars and gourmet products. There will also be artisan jewelry makers, photography exhibits and the North Tahoe Plein Air Art Show and Sale throughout the Village.

Saturday's ticketed events are many and include wine and food events, as well as a distillery party.

Day Three (Sept. 11) is the pinnacle of the festival with the Culinary Competition and Grand Tasting. It's a gastronomic dream as 30 of the area's finest restaurants, caterers and chefs from the Lake Tahoe region are paired with premium world-class wineries charged with creating the best marriage of food and wine. Tickets are \$75/person online through Sept. 9 and \$90/person at the door.

For a complete list of festival programs, event descriptions, cost and to purchase tickets, go online.