

Sierra salsa winners not divulging ingredients

By Kathryn Reed

TWIN BRIDGES – Sierra's Salsa Showdown is shrouded in secrecy. The winners are not revealing their recipes. And the judges need more to eat than just a tiny tasting cup in order to dissect the edibles.



Lara Weiss of Incline made the best fruit salsa in the March 24 competition at Sierra. Photo/Kathryn Reed

"I can't share all the secret ingredients," Lara Weiss of Incline Village told *Lake Tahoe News* on Sunday after winning the fruit contest.

She is no rookie to this sixth annual competition. Three years ago she also won. Her efforts earned her a season pass to Sierra-at-Tahoe for 2013-14.

Weiss did reveal that grilled pineapple, mango, habaneros and jalapeños go into her award-winning salsa.

Judges in both categories rated each salsa from 1 – being weak to 5 – being bomb-diggity! Each was judged on appearance-color, aroma, flavor-taste, spice blend, originality and overall impression.

Marking the judge's sheet on March 24 were this reporter, Mike from Lake Tahoe TV, Dennis the lift operations supervisor, Munchie who is the on mountain food and beverage manager, Jeff who supervises security (and is a past salsa winner), and Evan the risk manager.

I gave Weiss the most number of points out of any contestant for her Fire Fruit Fusion. I kept wanting more. From the start it was great – the aroma, look and then that kick of spice at the end blended perfectly with the fruits.

Kopa's Fruit Salad, which came in second on my scorecard and with all the judges, was named after Sierra's avalanche dog. It's hard to know if that may have won over some of the Sierra judges.



It was a tough day of work for the judges of the Sierra Salsa Showdown. Photo/Susan Wood

The concoction was definitely the prettiest of all submitted. The strawberries added a great sweetness. Another nice thing about this fruit salsa is that it had no spice – just fruit to make it so yummy.

I was not in sync with my fellow judges when it came to the traditional category.

The Gringo came in third, but was first with my taste buds. The smoky aroma was unique and the avocado brought balance.

The judges, though, awarded the season pass to No BPA made by Allen Evangelista of Antioch. This was the first time he has competed in this contest.

“It’s all fresh ingredients ... cilantro, onions, tomatoes, garlic,” he said. The recipe is his mother-in-law’s and because Evangelista wants to stay on her good side, he’s not giving out any more details.

This was my No. 3 pick in this category.

Later there was a taco eating contest. Aaron Hughes of Manteca won a Burton Bud Light snowboard for being the fastest to finish the five spicy tacos.

A couple contestants walked away from the table shaking their heads about how spicy the tacos were. Hughes was just all smiles and didn’t care that sauce covered his cheeks.