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Fans of baking, eating hit Crozet pie fest



Frank Crocker—special to The Daily Progress

Said the judges to the pie-men: May we taste your wares? Officials line up at the Charlottesville Pie Fest in Crozet.

By [Brian McNeill](#)

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Kathy Banner, a Martha Jefferson Hospital administrator, was crowned the Charlottesville region's champion pie baker on Saturday.

Banner's lemon chiffon pie was chosen as the best out of dozens of fruit, cream and nut pies entered in the first Charlottesville Pie Fest at the Crozet Mudhouse.

"I just made what I like," Banner said. "I'm not a real big sweets person, so I made a pie that's not real sweet."

Banner, a Charlottesville resident, relied on an old recipe that she tweaked to perfection.

"I tested it out like 50 times on my family and the neighborhood," she said. "They ate a lot of pie." More than 150 pie lovers packed into the Mudhouse for the pie competition that featured entries of every stripe. There was homegrown organic plum cherry, chocolate cream, chocolate mousse, Swedish apple, mom's apple, roadhouse apple, pecan butterscotch, key lime, strawberry rhubarb and countless other varieties.

“Whew,” said Barbara Hutchinson, executive director of the Charlottesville-Albemarle Airport and a member of the festival’s judging panel. “I don’t think I need pie for another year.”

The pie festival grew out of a pie throwdown in May between Marijean Jagers, who blogs at STLWorkingMom.com, and Brian Geiger, who blogs at theFoodGeek.com.

Both Jagers and Geiger claimed via Twitter that they were the best pie baker in Charlottesville, so they organized an impromptu “Pie Down” competition to prove it.

Geiger, who entered his bourbon cream pie and double strawberry open-faced pie, won the duel and earned the title “Best Pie Baker in Charlottesville.”

Geiger, a food science writer for Fine Cooking magazine, served as the head judge at Saturday’s competition, leading a panel that included Del. David J. Toscano; Mollie Cox Bryan, author of “Mrs. Rowe’s Little Book of Southern Pies”; Ann Mallek of the Albemarle County Board of Supervisors; Jim Duncan, a real estate agent and blogger; Coy Barefoot, host of WINA’s “Charlottesville Right Now”; Hutchinson; and several others.

Much like the Pie Down in May, Saturday’s contest was heavily promoted over Twitter. Friday night, for example, Geiger posted: “Dinner has been eaten. The next food I consume will be pie. Lots and lots of pie. And probably some coffee.”

Nichole Curtis entered one of the more unusual pies in Saturday’s competition. Curtis, who works for Teach for America, entered a blueberry walnut cream pie that she invented.

“I really like pecan pie. I love cream pies and I like blueberry pie,” Curtis said. “So I figured, why not? Anytime I can bake something, I’m there.”

Ann Goodson, a Scottsville resident who entered a peanut butter pie, said, “It’s like they say in that John Travolta movie ‘Michael:’ ‘Everybody loves pie.’”

Banner, whose lemon chiffon took first place in the cream pie category and went on to win best in show, was not the only prize-winning pie baker Saturday.

Ryan Looney’s “cheap drunk nut pie” won in the other/nut category. The family of Colleen Keller, executive director of People and Congregations Engaged in Ministry, won in the fruit category for their roadhouse apple pie.

Proceeds from the event went to PACEM, a nonprofit organization that operates homeless shelters in the area. Pies were auctioned and raffled off to raise money for the group.

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