

Taste of Perth Amboy Draws Record Attendance, Celebrates City's Spirit and Raises Funds for YMCA's Homeless Initiative

The Taste highlights Perth Amboy's exceptional culinary style and the city's growing role as a destination for international cuisine in New Jersey.

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/EINPresswire.com/ -- The spirit of [Perth Amboy](#) flowed through the more than 350 people who attended the City's most successful Taste event on October 18. This is a record turnout for The Taste of Perth Amboy.

A group of 20 restaurants, bakers and food artisans supported the 2018 Taste event, which was held aboard the Cornucopia Cruise Line's St. Charles vessel. Local chefs, their teams, bakers, culinary arts students and a group of volunteers were busy preparing food and serving guests all evening.

Enthusiastic attendees at The Taste sampled a variety of delicious appetizers, entrees, and desserts, and they sipped a variety of specialty beverages.



Chef Jose Marte (second from right) with the team from Paila Y Leña Restaurant, which prepares exceptional Dominican cuisine, is one of the most popular dining stations at the Taste of Perth Amboy.

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Perth Amboy Mayor Wilda Diaz

The Taste is presented by the City of Perth Amboy and Mayor Wilda Diaz and sponsored by the Business Improvement District (BID). All proceeds from The Taste will be donated to [Raritan Bay Area YMCA](#)'s homeless initiative. The YMCA's President and CEO Steve Jobin and Pastor Bernadette Falcon-Lopez, who coordinates the YMCA's homeless services, thanked everyone for their generosity. Pastor Bernadette explained that earlier in the day she helped find temporary housing for a single mother with two children, who were without a home.

In discussing the value of The Taste to promote local businesses and raise funds, Mayor Diaz said, “Participating

restaurants donated their time, resources, talent and an incredible amount of energy to create a wonderful evening. I want to congratulate all the winners, especially the culinary arts students who represent our next generation of restauranteurs. Our community consistently comes together to assist people in need, and I'm grateful we are making a generous contribution to the YMCA's efforts to serve the homeless.”

Throughout the evening, the Taste of Perth Amboy's judges – Ana Maria Zevallos and Douglas Dzema – visited each serving station. The judges sampled the cuisine or desserts that each restaurant or bakery prepared. The judges also reviewed each venue's decorations, which enhanced the tasting experience. Many servers wore bright, colorful outfits or they were dressing in traditional clothing from countries in Latin and South America or the Caribbean.

Here are the judge's selections:

- Best Taste: El Gran Valle Restaurant, 323 State Street; Culinary Arts Students, Middlesex County Vocational High School, 457 High Street; and Cornucopia Cruise Lines' St. Charles Vessel, 401 Riverview Drive (all in Perth Amboy).

- Best Presentation: 1st – Paila y Leña Restaurant, 342 Washington Street; 2nd – Torres Café, 431 High Street, and 3rd – Sabor A Mexico fresh Mexican Restaurant, 347 Smith Street (all in Perth Amboy).

- Best Dessert: 1st – Seasons 52 that presented "mini indulgences;" 2nd – Cazadores Restaurant, 236 New Brunswick Avenue, Perth Amboy, and 3rd – Dunkin' Donuts, representing all four locations in the city.

The Taste: Absolutely Fantastic in Everyway

As the evening drew to a close, BID Director Jason Conway, who chaired The Taste committee, said, "This event was absolutely fantastic! We had the best turnout in terms of participating restaurants and people attending."

Mr. Conway also said, "We have so many people to thank for our success, especially Mayor Diaz for all of her support. We also thank Pastor Bernadette and Steve Jobin for spearheading the homeless initiative of which the proceeds of this event will be distributed. Next, I want to thank the [Perth Amboy BID](#)'s Board for their help in putting on this event, the BID Chairman Barry Rosengarten for his leadership, and fellow BID Vice Chairman Sergio Diaz, who was the best emcee. I thank Junel Hutchinson and Randy Convery for their tireless work putting this event together. And last, but not least, I want to thank everyone who attended the event and helped the Perth Amboy BID raise support for this great cause. Overall, I hope that everyone enjoyed themselves and is happy to see the City host such great events for our community."



High school students from the culinary arts program at Middlesex County Vocational H.S. earned the Second Place trophy in the Best Taste category. Shown on the right are Mayor Wilda Diaz and culinary arts teacher Stephen J. Moir.



Perth Amboy Police Chief Roman McKeon (center) and his officers stopped by the Dunkin' Donuts display, sipped coffee and tasted the specialty-crafted donuts.

As the BID begins planning for the next Taste, Mr. Rosengarten said, "This was an excellent event in every way. The spirit of Perth Amboy filled the room and everyone who joined us was passionate about being there."

BID is grateful for the key role that was provided by student volunteers and the city's departments. Volunteers from Perth Amboy High School helped restaurants, bakeries and food artisans by quickly and politely serving guests. The officers from Perth Amboy's Police Department coordinated parking and managed event security. Materials to keep the space clean and neat were generously supplied by the Department of Public Works.

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