

The "Garden Strangler"

STORY: DAN REYES
PHOTOS: DAYNA ALPINE



Latina businesswoman helps annual Castroville Artichoke festival thrive and put money back into the community.

With a name that translates as "garden strangler" you wouldn't think there would be too much to celebrate. But for the past 48 years, this edible thistle has been at the center of a festival that has brought fame to the Central Coast town of Castroville. This year, the Castroville Artichoke Festival will be held on the weekend of May 19 and 20. The word artichoke comes from the Middle English words "hortus" and "chokt" which, according to the festival's literature, translates as "a garden stranger".

The artichoke was first brought to Castroville in 1921 by immigrants from the Italian city of Ladispoli. Since then, it has grown to be Castroville's largest export and Castroville is one of the largest growers of artichokes in the world. "The festival is a celebration of what the artichoke means to Castroville and is also a tribute to the people who put their blood and sweat into harvesting it," said

Jennifer Roybal, the festival's director of marketing.

Today, Ladispoli is one of Castroville's sister cities and it holds an artichoke festival of its own.

"We have dignitaries from their festival to our festival," said Roybal. "Some of our dignitaries are there now, attending their festival."

Roybal began working with the festival five years ago, when she was working at K-TOM and K-OCEAN and starting her own marketing company SealRock. Today, SealRock Marketing is the Central Coast's largest, privately-owned, Hispanic media and marketing agency.

As marketing director for the festival, one of Roybal's goals has been to make the festival's entertainment as appealing to as many people as possible.

"I think the secret of Castroville's success is appealing to everyone," she said. "For younger

children there are jump houses, stilt-walkers and clowns. For people who are more interested in food, there are food and wine events, a farmers market and field tours. We have three entertainment stages with a wide range of entertainment. We also have a vintage car show. And all of this takes place outdoors, in downtown Castroville."

According to the festival's website there will also be an Agro Art competition, parade and two days of live music including Swing, Mariachi, and Country to 50s Rock & Roll. There will also be artichokes of all kinds: fried, sautéed, grilled, marinated, pickled, fresh, and creamed in soup. Plus foods from the many ethnic groups that give this area its character.

The festival, which began 48 years ago, now attracts an average of 30,000 people each year to the small town of 12,000 people.

"The festival pretty much shuts down the town for the weekend," said Roybal. "The community really participates. The festival wouldn't be possible without the community and the growers."

As an example of the spirit of cooperation at the festival, Roybal

"The festival started as a tribute to those who put their blood and sweat into harvesting the artichokes."

recalls what happened at last year's festival and how bad weather almost shut the festival down.

"That week it was pouring rain," said Roybal. "Other events, like the Monterey County Fair, closed down on Sunday because of the rain. But acts like Malo, they said a little rain wasn't going to hurt anything. We were out there in a field and the next thing you know men and women were kicking off their shoes, dancing in the mud to Malo, coming out to see William Hung sing. Castroville became a

"I want to bring in musical groups that appeal to different nationalities and different age groups, too."

"Woodstock" of sorts."

The success and reputation of the festival are growing.

"It is quite a feather in our cap to make this small farming town attractive to someone like Martha Stewart," said Jennifer. "Last year, she sent out a crew of photogra-

phers and writers to write a piece for the March edition of Martha Stewart Living magazine.

The growing economic success of the festival translates into success for the town.

"The festival is a non-profit," said Roybal. "We give back to the community. Over 100 community organizations benefit from the festival. Castroville Festivals, Inc. is a well-oiled machine. We've been doing this for so long."

But in addition to the broad range of entertainment, Jennifer says another factor contributes to the festival's success.

"I think what sets us apart from other festivals on the Central Coast is the fact that we are a value - \$6 for adults and \$3 for children. We made a conscious decision to try and keep the price reasonable. There are some attendees on a fixed income, we have groups of senior citizens who get to attend our festivals. And it was started to honor the people who harvest the artichokes. You can bring your entire family. For that much bang, its not much buck. People respond to that."

Information about the festival visit <http://www.artichoke-festival.org>

Business Calendar

Workshops at the San Jose Entrepreneur Center, 84 W. Santa Clara Street, Suite 100, San Jose. Info: www.eccenteronline.org/contact.htm. For a complete listing of Seminars and Events visit: www.acteva.com/go/center

Winning Résumés & Interviews

Tuesday, May 8, 6 - 7:45pm: Learn to market yourself and develop a resume that matches the job requirements.

Tuesday, May 15, 6 - 7:45pm: Learn the basic components of what to do before, during, and after the interview at the Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Library, Computer Classroom 125, 1st floor.

Bring your resume or work history. Receive coaching and feedback.

Cost: Free, Registration required. (408) 808-2397 or visit www.sjlibrary.org

Cosponsored by: Friends of San Jose Public Library, Institute For Business Performance.

Boost Your Sales - Accept Credit Cards Online! Monday, May 7, 6PM to 9PM

Should I Start A Business? Tuesday, May 8, 9:30AM to 11:30AM

Marketing on the Internet: Tuesday, May 8, 5PM to 8PM

How to Start a Small Business: Wednesday, May 9, 10AM to 12PM

Materiales de Mercadotecnia (1): Wednesday, May 9, 6PM to 9PM

Desarrollo Comercial: Temas Wednesday, May 9, 6:15PM to 8:30PM

Basic Bookkeeping I: Accounting & Bookkeeping: Thursday, May 10, 1PM to 4PM

Non-Profit Management Seminar: Thursday, May 10, 5PM to 8PM

Marketing for Pennies: Monday, May 14, 1PM to 3pm

Positions on Google/Yahoo: Monday, May 14, 6PM to 9PM

EDD/IRS Taxpayer Education:

Payroll Taxes: Tuesday, May 15, 9:30AM to 3:30PM

Microloans for Small Businesses: Tuesday, May 15, 10AM to 12PM

Impuestos/Taxes para Negocios: Tuesday, May 15, 10AM to 12PM

Presupuesto y Administracion de su Dinero: Tuesday, May 15, 6:30PM to 8:30PM

Small Business Workshop for Startups and Existing Business: Wednesday, May 16, 8AM to 5PM

Negocio y Responsabilidad Social: Wednesday, May 16, 6PM to 9PM

Desarrollo Comercial: Temas: Wednesday, May 16, 6:15PM to 8:30PM

Management Development for Entrepreneurs: Thursday, May 17, - 05/20/07 2PM to 4PM

SBA Certification Workshop: Tuesday, May 22, 11AM to 12:30PM

The Business Plan: Tuesday, May 22, 5PM to 8PM

Business Taxes: Tuesday, May 22, 6:30PM to 8:30PM

Financiamiento del Negocio: Wednesday, May 23, 6PM to 9PM

Desarrollo Comercial: Temas: Wednesday, May 23, 6:15PM to 8:30PM

Marketing and Sales Explained: Thursday, May 24, 5PM to 8PM

Sole Proprietor Tax Workshop: Tuesday, May 29, 9:30AM to 12PM

Smart Tools to Manage Your Small Business Finances: Tuesday, May 29, 6PM to 8PM

Materiales de Mercadotecnia (2): Wednesday, May 30, 6PM to 9PM

Desarrollo Comercial: Temas: Wednesday, May 30, 6:15PM to 8:30PM

Legal Issues for Start-ups: Thursday, May 31, 5PM to 8PM

Planificacion Financiera y Inversiones: Thursday, May 31, 6:30PM to 8:30PM

