



XI CHEESE FESTIVAL IN SAND IN TAUFERS, 07-09.03.2014

The 2014 Cheese Festival A celebration among friends comes to an end

Sand in Taufers – with brilliant sunshine, enthusiastic visitors and happy organisers, the 11th edition of the Cheese Festival was marked by one highlight after another and, by Sunday evening, all were agreed that it had been a wonderful celebration among friends.

The opening to the last of the three days was a success in itself, with the brunch held in Market Hall Nine, currently Berlin's hottest food location, completely sold out. The answer to question "What does Berlin taste like?" was convincingly provided by Germany's best goat's cheese, a particularly fine sparkling Riesling and bread from Soluna, Berlin's star bakery.

The so-called "*laboratori del gusto*" were more popular this year than ever. Organiser Martin Pircher was highly pleased: "Guided tastings have been a fixture of the programme right from the beginning of the Cheese Festival. After a slow start, they are now enjoying ever-increasing popularity with locals and outside visitors alike. The idea is to taste and smell selected products under professional guidance, experiencing them with all the senses. In this way people get to know and appreciate the value and the intricacies of hand-crafted foods."

Not just adults, but kids too were able to enjoy learning more about the origins and production of different foods at the Cheese Festival. The exhibitors helped junior visitors make mozzarella and the local speciality grey cheese, preparing curds and making delicious chocolate mousse. It was clearly fun for all participants – perhaps one of those involved will turn out to be one of the top chefs at a future Cheese Festival.

This year however it was once more the turn of top chefs Karl Baumgartner and Wolfgang Kerschbaumer, both recipients of Michelin stars. Together with other colleagues from the South Tyrol Association of Chefs, they impressed the numerous visitors with their exhibition cooking on the HOTEK cookery stage. The masters delighted the audience with their skills, answering questions and offering tips as they worked.

Evidence that South Tyrol is truly a land of culinary delights was also provided by the comparative tasting of products from South Tyrolean farmhouse cheese makers, organised by the Salern Agricultural College and the South Tyrol Alpine Dairy Association. A 10-member jury featuring cheese experts from South Tyrol, Upper Italy and Austria evaluated 49 different cheeses from 20 participating cheese makers. Regional Councillor Arno Schuler then presented the Cheese Festival's "Gold Cheese 2014" award to the Enghorn cheese dairy in Schleis for its "Rims" cheese. The coveted public prize went to the Gatscherhof farm in Kiens for its "Bergkäse" or mountain cheese.

But what would be the Cheese Festival without the "Cheese Party"? On Saturday evening exhibitors, visitors and supporters of the Cheese Festival met at the Ice Bar near the festival area to celebrate together. Physical sustenance was provided by the three barbecue experts, Michele, Haymo and Myrko, with a range of delicacies to delight the assorted cheese enthusiasts. The money collected during the evening was donated to "Rollerkids", the Pustertal Valley self-help group for parents of children with multiple disabilities.

At the official opening, the Cheese Festival was described as an event where the focus is firmly on the people. The 2014 event certainly lived up to this billing and, as the organisers closed the festival gates on Sunday evening, not without a certain wistfulness, one thing was for sure: there would be another Cheese Festival.