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MOLE COMPETITORS ANNOUNCED FOR 3rd ANNUAL MOLE & MARIACHI FESTIVAL

The Sept. 19 festival also features mariachi bands, folklorico dance, chevalas, piñatas every hour, a raffle and more

SEPT. 3, 2015–SANTA CRUZ, CA – Friends of Santa Cruz State Parks (Friends), a non-profit organization dedicated to sustaining the legacy of our local state parks and beaches, today announced the chefs and judges taking part in its third annual Mole & Mariachi Festival.

The festival will be held on Saturday, Sept. 19 from 11 a.m. to 5 p.m. at Santa Cruz Mission State Historic Park (144 School St.) in downtown Santa Cruz. Admission is free.

Six competitors will prepare *mole*, a traditional Mexican sauce, sometimes made using chocolate, for festival-goers to sample. Mole tasting kits will be available for \$10.

Competitors will include:

- El Jardin: the Santa Cruz restaurant, which was a winner at both the 2013 and 2014 Mole & Mariachi Festivals, will prepare "Jorge's Traditional Mole," a red *mole poblano*
- El Chipotle: the Soquel taqueria will serve a rojo Oaxaqueño *mole*
- My Mom's Mole: chef Cesario Ruiz of the Watsonville culinary startup will prepare a 25-ingredient Guanajuato-style sauce that is spicy, not sweet
- Gerald Gonzalez: a home cook from Contra Costa County, will serve "Mole de Paz," a *mole poblano*
- Mariquita's: home cook Emma Pinto Valedex will prepare her grandmother's *mole poblano* recipe
- India Joze: the Santa Cruz restaurant will compete in the cook-off for the first time with a yet-to-be-announced *mole* sauce

Festival attendees and a panel of local celebrity judges will rate the *mole* and awards will be bestowed on the best sauces in two categories: Peoples' Choice and Judges' Choice. The event is a benefit for Friends in support of Santa Cruz Mission State Historic Park restoration projects, educational programming for school children and community cultural events at the park.

Judges for the 2015 festival include Santa Cruz City Councilmember David Terrazas; Patricia Santana, co-owner of Manuel's Mexican Restaurant in Aptos, Judges Choice winner at the 2013 Mole & Mariachi Festival; Jeanne Howard, publisher of the Good Times Newsweekly; Traci Hukill, editor of Hilltromper; and Anthony Solis, a web editor at the Santa Cruz Sentinel.

Festival guests may purchase great local food, beverages — including beer from Discretion Brewing and chavelas, a drink made with beer, tomato juice and spices — and raffle tickets. Free activities for children include piñatas every hour, face painting, crafts, bubbles and a mural project coordinated by the Santa Cruz Museum of Art and History.

In addition to *mole*, attendees will enjoy a wide variety of offerings from food vendors including The Penny Ice Creamery, Garcia Fish Tacos, El Chipotle, Taqueria Lidia and Sazon Mexicano, as well as churros and more.

Four festive folk music bands will perform: Mariachi Gilroy, Mariachi Alma de Mexico, Mariachi Juvenil Alma de Mexico and Trio del Sol. Playing violins, trumpets, guitars and other Mexican varieties of European instruments, Mariachi members sing choruses together and alternate as lead singers. Also performing will be Estrellas de Esperanza, a children's Mexican folklorico dance group from Watsonville, and Centeotl Grupo de Danza y Baile, a Santa Cruz-based dance group that preserves cultural connections with Mexico.

A diverse array of artists will display and sell work at the Mole & Mariachi Festival, including folk art and handmade crafts from Mexico by Hand and Mexican-themed decoupage plates from Creative Women. Printmakers participating in the Ayotzinapa 43 project will offer original prints and postcards. Artesanias, Alejandro's Trade and Sivia's Studio also will have items for sale. Friends' ParkStore will also offer merchandise, with proceeds benefitting local state parks and beaches.

Proceeds from the festival benefit the park, including restoration and improvement projects. For more information, visit <http://www.thatsmypark.org/projects/santa-cruz-mission/mole-andmariachi-festival>.

More about mole: [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mole_\(sauce\)](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mole_(sauce))

About Santa Cruz Mission State Historic Park

The Santa Cruz Mission State Historic Park, "Your State Park Downtown," is home to the oldest building in Santa Cruz County. Built between 1822 and 1824 by local Ohlonean and Yokuts Indians, the park's signature adobe is the only remaining structure from Mission Santa Cruz, founded in 1791. One of just four adobe buildings left in Santa Cruz County — and sometimes confused with the nearby replica mission chapel — it is the only building of its kind preserved as a museum in the State of California. The adobe served as housing for Neophyte families who lived and worked at the Mission, which operated until 1834 when it was secularized. After decades of private ownership, the adobe was sold to the State of

California, extensively restored and finally opened in 1991 to the public as the Santa Cruz Mission SHP.

Friends of Santa Cruz State Parks saved Santa Cruz Mission SHP from closure in 2012. Friends funds interpretation services and a portion of park operations, and also runs the Mission ParkStore. In addition, Friends has implemented key improvements at the park, including a remodel of the patio, the opening of new interpretive exhibits, renovated outdoor cooking facilities and new hours of operation to serve local school children. Friends also established the Summer Series, a popular series of cultural events at the Mission that culminates with the Mole & Mariachi Festival each September. The park is supported by the Mission Committee, members of which include representatives of Friends, State Parks and dedicated community volunteers.

About Friends of Santa Cruz State Parks

Friends of Santa Cruz State Parks is an entrepreneurial nonprofit sustaining the legacy of our state parks and beaches. Through an innovative partnership with California State Parks, and by leveraging local community support, Friends has provided millions of dollars of funding for educational programs, visitor services and capital projects. Founded in 1976, Friends is passionately dedicated to the preservation of our spectacular natural environment and rich cultural history. Friends also operates six ParkStores, offering nature- and history-themed merchandise for sale to benefit local parks and beaches. ParkStore locations include Natural Bridges, New Brighton, Santa Cruz Mission, Seacliff, Wilder Ranch and Online. Learn more at ThatsMyPark.org or via Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, YouTube and Pinterest.

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