

WIDE WORLD OF WINGS

Wing Fest continues this week with food

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Residents of State College, loosen your belts and prepare to chow down: This year's Tussey Mountain Wing Fest Challenge is already underway, and round two starts tonight.

For those unfamiliar with the event, Wing Fest is more than just a wing-eating competition. There is plenty of food — and wings — to go around, but that is only a small part of the festival.

"This is our twelfth annual event," Events Manager Christie Hume said. "It's grown tremendously."

Great food, a diverse selection of live music and a family-friendly party atmosphere are the main draws of Wing Fest, Hume said.

But Wing Fest isn't just fun and games — it's a serious competition.

This year, WingFest is returning to competition, Hume said.

WING FEST FEAST

The first of the six Wing Fest events kicked off last Thursday at Tussey Mountain. In the wing competition, local restaurants squared off against each other to determine who has the best chicken wing recipe.

"We provide the fryers, wings, oils and serving materials," Hume said. "We provide them with everything they need except for the sauces."

At each weekly event, three or four restaurants compete for the chance to move on to the final round — Sunday, August 22. For the weekly competitions, each restaurant brings its own sauces to the festival and prepares wings on-site to be judged by

the crowd in attendance, Hume said.

Visitors to the Tussey Mountain Wing Fest pay \$5 to get in (children 12 and under are free), and are given a voting card to select their favorite wings at the event.

To sample the different wings, visitors must purchase tickets from Tussey Mountain at the festival, Hume said. One ticket is good for three chicken wings, which allows everyone to sample the different types of wings. Hume said.

One local restaurant didn't make it past last Thursday's elimination round on their maiden excursion at Wing Fest — but in defeat praised the event anyway.

Dave Krauth, co-owner of Rotelli's, 250 E. Calder Way, attended Wing Fest several times before. But the restaurant itself approached Tussey Mountain about getting involved in the competition for the first time this year, Krauth said.

"I thought it was a great chance to showcase new flavors to other people," Krauth said.

Rotelli's debuted at Wing Fest with three new flavors: a buffalo flavor, a spicy BBQ sauce, and the "Italian Stallion," an Italian-based mix of different spices. Krauth said. Wing Fest was the first time Rotelli's offered the new flavors — all of which will appear on the restaurant's new menu in the fall — Krauth said.

This week, Canyon Wings, 219 E. Beaver Ave., takes on Olde New York, 2298 E. College Ave., and The Hublersburg Inn & Family Tavern of Howard, Pa.

Even though the competition for supremacy in the wing contest is a

major part of Wing Fest, the food is only half the party — the rest involves the entertainment.

SMOKIN' ENTERTAINMENT

One of the best parts of Wing Fest is the party atmosphere and the live music at the event, which is set to cater to a diverse crowd of fans. Hume said.

One of the theme music nights is the August 12 wing challenge. August 12 is the first time Wing Fest is having country music night for the competition, Hume said.

The other nights in the competition will feature numerous other bands, including local bands.

Tonight, Skytop Blues was originally scheduled to open for Fat Girl Slim. But the lineup changed to feature JR and Natalie Band as the headliner after Fat Girl Slim had to drop out of Wing Fest, Hume said.

My Hero Zero is headlining the July 29 competition at Wing Fest. Other headliners for the coming weeks include The Earthtones, Chris Rubble & Friends and The Screaming Ducks.

For the final wing contest on August 26, local band Velveeta is set to rock out on Tussey Mountain to their mix of 1980s "cheesy" classics.

"We've done it every year since they've had it," Brent Martin said.

Martin, the keyboard and rhythm guitar player, said the band is excited to play for a different type of crowd at Wing Fest with the family-friendly orientation of the festival.

"It's just a great opportunity for us to play for an all-ages crowd," Martin said. "It's a different vibe entirely."

Hume, a fan of the local band, was

also excited for its performance at Wing Fest.

"Velveeta is always our headliner," Hume said.

Apart from the live music, a radio station had also been involved in the music behind Wing Fest.

QWIK Rock 105.9/106.9 FM has sponsored the Tussey Mountain Wing Challenge for six years. QWIK General Manager Diana Stapleford said.

"Wing Fest is one of the events of State College in the summer time and one of the most attended," Stapleford said.

This year, a record crowd opened the week and a great atmosphere added to the event, Stapleford said.

In between the music, there will be another competition apart from the restaurant's wing-eating contest.

BATTLE OF THE WING FEAST

Even though individuals compete in the Wing Fest competition, anyone can get involved in the action of the wing-eating contest.

Between the music and the wing-eating contest, six randomly selected individuals will be chosen each week to compete on stage and participate in the wing-eating contest.

The six contestants are given six wings that they must devour as fast as they can to win their prize: a QWIK prize-pack with a custom Wing shirt, Stapleford said.

The winner from each weekly WingFest wing-eating challenge also moves on to the final of the competition on August 26, Stapleford said.

QWIK Rock qualified people

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