

Apple pies bring out the kid in me

By RICH JOHNSON
Staff Writer

Ahh, the sights and sounds of the county fair. They are remarkable, only to be outdone by the smells and tastes of a county fair. This thought occurred to me on Saturday as I had the distinct privilege of being one of the judges of the apple pie baking contest at the Luzerne County Fair.

As I arrived Saturday, with my appetite intact, I was quickly overwhelmed by the beautiful pies that I would soon be tasting. As I looked at the pies my mind took me on a trip to the past, back to the first fair that I could ever remember.

I don't know exactly how old I was, I don't even think I knew what the Westmoreland County (near Pittsburgh) Fair was. All I remember is when my mother came in and interrupted Sesame Street to ask me if I wanted to enter some blueberry muffins in the fair.

Being a gambling man, even back then, I said yes and quickly followed mom out to the kitchen where we would make the greatest muffins in the world.

As mom gathered all the ingredients I grabbed a kitchen chair and pulled it up to the counter to supervise the work. I'm not sure what mom's secret ingredient was, in fact, I'm not sure what ingredients she used. All I did was sit and wait for my part in the baking of the muffins.

It didn't take long for my time to come either as mom turned to me and nodded her head. That was my cue and I knew it. I reached over to the bowl of blueberries, which were picked earlier from the blueberry patch in the field behind our house.

I grabbed two handfuls of blueberries and tossed them in the batter. As mom began to mix in the blueberries I reached back into the bowl of blueberries to grab a couple for myself; after all, I had to make sure these were tasty enough to be in my muffins.

After a couple more handfuls of blueberries and a little more mixing I decided that mom could handle everything from, there so I grabbed one last bunch of berries and went back to Sesame Street.

I had forgotten about the muffins until the next day when mom loaded me in the car to go to the fair. I was amazed at all the things to see and was a little upset when she made me go into the exhibit room that had my muffins. As we

looked at all the food items I noticed cute little ribbons alongside some of them. As we got to the muffins mom pointed to our entry. Alongside it was a blue ribbon. Mom smiled and said, "Look we won first prize."

I wasn't quite sure what that meant but the look on her face said that something good had happened.

On Saturday, I was so busy thinking about the past that I didn't notice the other judges in the apple pie contest coming up to me. It was time to get serious as all the entries were in and the tasting was to begin.

We were all given a fork, a plate and our instructions and away we went. The first pie came forward. It was beautiful looking. A nice brown crust with a colorful apple filling. This great looking pie confused me because I'm used to my mother's pies which were burnt on the outside and still gooey on the inside — Mom was great at muffins but a little weak in the pie department.

As I tasted the first pie I let out a low "yummmmm." This was going to be great if all the pies tasted like this. As the competition went on I tasted a wide variety of pies — some good, some not so good, and some a bit different. I tallied the points under each category and noticed that on my scorecard there was a close race between a half-dozen entries.

Then it happened! The pie of my dreams. It looked delicious and tasted even better. As I put a bite in my mouth the crust and filling melted and so did my knees — this was the pie for me.

As the awards were given I watched the contestants waiting to hear if their names would be called. Remembering my job as a reporter I decided to get a picture of the winner. When I realized I could move — tasting 21 pies has a tendency to weigh you down — I grabbed my camera and got hold of the winner. I focused the camera and caught a look on her face, a look that I had seen before.

It was then that I realized that this was the same look that my mother had so many years ago in front of the blueberry muffins. Yes, it is this look of satisfaction that makes the county fair so wonderful.



TAKE YOUR CHOICE - There were 21 entries in the Apple Pie competition at the Luzerne County Fair. (Post Photo/Rich Johnson)



HAPPY AS PIE - Beverly Beasterfield of Dallas displays her award winning apple pie. Beasterfield baked the apple pie that won first prize at the Luzerne County Fair and will now compete in a state competition. (Post Photo/Rich Johnson)

Fair termed 'success'

By RICH JOHNSON
Staff Writer

Despite two days of inclement weather, the 1990 Luzerne County Fair was a big success, according to its general chairman.

As the vendors loaded their trucks and the exhibitors took home their winnings Sunday evening, chairman Hugh Woodward looked around the fairgrounds and beamed with the success of the five days of events.

"I was delighted by the way things went," said Woodward. "This was a great fair because we had a large number of exhibitors and the quality of the entries keeps getting better and better."

Woodward said that the threat of rain on Friday evening and some brief showers on Sunday was the major cause of a decline in attendance from last year's fair. However, he said that Saturday saw one of the largest crowds ever.

"We were near capacity in attendance for most of the day," said Woodward. "Our volunteers and everyone who helped out deserve a lot of credit for handling things in such a smooth manner."

This year's fair brought in approximately 35,000 people, most of whom came on Saturday when about 15,000 went through

the gates.

Woodward said that the fair was a success in many of the exhibits. "We had a large number and we hope that keeps growing in the future," said Woodward.

Another reason for the success is that the fair is becoming a family event, according to Lt. Richard Zeglin of the Luzerne County Sheriff's Department. Zeglin said that there were no major problems associated with the fair and so parents feel safe bringing their children for a day.

"You can watch the crowds on the midway and see more and more children and carriages and you can literally see that this is becoming a family oriented fair," said Zeglin.

Both Zeglin and Woodward praised the work by the large number of volunteers who spend much of their weekend helping with the fair.

"This was one of the smoothest running fairs," said Woodward. "It was great how the volunteers as worked together as a team to put on such a great fair."

As for the volunteers, it will be a couple of weeks of relaxation before starting to plan for next year's fair.

Stull

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she felt that this helped her win the achievement.

This is far from the only achievement award she has earned. This year she also won the Ralph J. Beard Memorial Award in 4-H and in 1985 she was recognized by the state Arabian Horse Association.

She gives a lot of credit for her success to 4-H. "This has really given me a lot," she said. "I think it has helped me handle leadership and responsibility much better than if I hadn't been in 4-H."

"This is the last year I will be allowed to exhibit 4-H projects and show the horses, but I plan on

becoming a club leader and stay with the organization," said Stull.

The list of credits to Stull in her years in 4-H is a long one and got even longer after the Luzerne County Fair, where she won a number of championship ribbons.

Fair week was a busy one for Stull as she raced back and forth from the fairgrounds to classes at Luzerne County Community College where she is pursuing a degree in photography with hopes of someday being a photographer who will take pictures of, what else, horses!



Fair queens

Janine Chest, Mocanaqua this year's County Fair Queen poses with Heather Hand, Dallas, the 1989 queen.



Trimmin the cow's hair

Ruth Baker and Henry Zerby get ready for the judging at the fair.



Fully feathered

Neva Bauer, Dallas, adorns Imashiek Jack for the costume class coming up.



Water monsters

Rachel Landers, 2 1/2 of Dallas, inspects the inhabitants of this popular pool.