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THE 2021 LITTLE FALLS CHEESE FESTIVAL TURNED OUT TO BE BIG!

LITTLE FALLS, NY (October 28, 2021) – After its cancelation in 2020, the sixth Little Falls Cheese Festival held on October 2, 2021 exceeded all expectations including its attendance record set in 2019.

Between the lingering COVID pandemic and a date change from steamy and hot mid-July to cooler early October, the Little Falls Cheese Festival committee had been keeping expectations in check. “We just didn’t know,” stated Teri Chace, one of the organizers. “Would people come out? Would our vendors do well enough to make it worth their while? Would the things we’d tried to improve work out?”

Not only did people show up, attendance was way up. Based on data from the two entry booths on each end of East Main Street and analysis of drone footage, this year’s Cheese Festival hosted approximately 8,000 people over the course of the day – shattering the festival’s previous record of approximately 6,000 in 2019. One of the improvements was instituting shuttle parking from Veteran’s baseball park on the east side of the city and from the Industrial Park on the west side—both quick trips into the city. Even with the unexpectedly large crowds, there was space for everyone’s vehicle and the buses, running continuously all day, conveyed cheese-lovers back and forth without a hitch.

Another improvement was a Food Truck Food Court, moved off Main Street, down to the M&T Bank parking lot. There, attendees could order freshly prepared food and drinks, then sit under open-sided tents to savor their snack and listen to live music before returning to the main festival to continue strolling, sampling, and shopping.

The vendors had an incredible day, a welcome and needed boost for many of them after a rough past year. Many vendors began to sell out by mid-afternoon, not just the artisanal and farmstead New York State cheesemakers but also the gourmet food and wines and spirits purveyors. “It was my best show ever,” said Juli Webster of the Mustard Seed. “You knocked it out of the park and made it a fabulous day for us,” declared Laurie Schild of Farm Girl Cider Vinegars. Cheesemakers Cindy and Tim Powers of Poplar Hedge Farm commented “It was amazing talking with so many people and even after selling out, they were stopping and asking questions.”

Live music performed all day the length of the festival added to the festive atmosphere. Some people came in cheese hats, others purchased cheese-festival-themed souvenirs such as keychains, stickers, and t-shirts from the Souvenirs Booth. Local brick-and-mortar shops and city restaurants had a banner day. Melanie Pagan of the Loft 32 West boutique reported that she “made more in one day than what I made in the whole YEAR before,” and Mangia Macrina’s Pizza down in Canal Place reported “a huge day, a sellout Saturday!”

“We plan to keep our festival in autumn, going forward,” Chace confirmed. “It was a wonderful day. The DPW and the police department were so supportive. But big credit goes to our amazing volunteers, who helped the vendors set up and tear down, kept the day running smoothly, and gave visitors to Little Falls a warm welcome. We could not have done it without them!” And as Mayor Mark Blask commented in a widely shared Facebook post that evening, everyone “loved it! The goodwill and publicity Little Falls gets after such a successful event is immeasurable.”

The Little Falls Cheese Festival is New York State’s premier gathering of cheesemakers, running the length of Main Street from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. Keep up to date with future plans by following the Little Falls Cheese Festival on Facebook, Instagram or visiting littlefallscheesefestival.com.

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