

SOURCE: Winchester (VA) Star
AUDIENCE: 15,008 [provided by Nielsen//NetRatings]
DATE: 04-30-2010
HEADLINE: Pie Bakers Persistent

Source Website

Pie bakers persistent

By Stephanie M. Mangino

The Winchester Star

Winchester " Taking a second crack at the Shenandoah Apple Blossom Festival (TM)s Apple Pie Baking Contest made all the difference for 10-year-old Madison McMahan, who took top youth honors for her pie during the competition at Marker-Miller Orchards Farm Market.

Madison battled it out with four other contestants in the youth division.

Madison McMahan, 10, of Winchester won the top youth prize at the 83rd Shenandoah Apple Blossom Festival (TM)s Apple Pie Baking Contest Thursday at Marker-Miller Orchards Farm Market. Her parents are Adele and Tom McMahan.

(Photos by Ginger Perry)

She learned from some of her mistakes last year, when she didn't follow her recipe. Last year, Madison, the daughter of Adele and Tom McMahan, said she put eight apples in her pie instead of six and accidentally used water instead lemon juice in her mix.

This year, she paid more attention, but the Orchard View Elementary School student said she still skipped a few steps and made changes on the fly.

What she did obviously worked, bringing her a first-place win and a \$50 prize.

The adult winner was Patricia Brannon of Frederick County.

The winners will ride in the festival (TM)s Firefighters (TM) and Grand Feature parades. The second-place winners were Tamar Mickahail in the youth division and Mary Jo Fitzsimmons in the adult. They won \$25 and \$50, respectively.

Madison said she enjoys baking, particularly brownies. Her mother participated in the contest several years ago, she said, and she wanted to follow in her footsteps.

Madison said she told her mother: "Teach me how to make (an apple pie) and I (TM)ll enter. "

Mom was a kind of an inspiration for another, older contestant, too.

While Elena Patrice of Front Royal has baked for years, she never made an apple pie until Thursday " when she did so as one of 15 adult contestants. She created the pie while standing at a table next to her mother Linda Saker.

Queen Shenandoah LXXXIII-designate Rachel Lynn McDonnell helps Dan Kabler, chef at Village Square in Winchester, check his math Thursday as he wraps up judging one of the apple pie entries at the Apple Pie Baking Contest at Marker-Miller Orchards Farm Market.

Saker, admittedly more of a baking dabbler than her daughter, said she showed Patrice how to make pie crust from scratch Wednesday night, as the two watched "American Idol. "

The mother and daughter decided to bake together because they wanted to do something fun at a festival that is still fairly new to both.

Saker, 64, has lived in Front Royal for about two years, and Patrice, 42, recently came to live with her from Northern Virginia.

But Patrice visited her mother last year and the two traveled to the festival. Patrice loved the experience, and wanted to do more this year.

While they cooked side by side, Saker and Patrice (TM)s recipes were individual. Saker used Granny Smith and Gala apples in her pie, which has a filling that included apple cider.

Patrice (TM)s pie featured Granny Smith and McIntosh varieties and crystallized ginger.

Golden Delicious apples, purchased from Marker–Miller, filled Betty Heishman (TM)s pie.

Heishman, 66, of Middle Road, made a pie a little sweeter than the one she (TM)s made for most of her life. A return contestant, she said she had to adjust the pie a bit because tastes have changed. She found she shouldn't (TM)t make the same recipe she started using 50 years ago.

Heishman spoke as she rolled out her dough with a cast on her left hand " she recently had a joint in her hand replaced.

The entries were judged by last year (TM)s adult division winner Barbara Leathers of Culpeper County, WINC Radio personality Barry Lee, and Village Square Restaurant executive chef Dan Kalber.

Kalber is a huge fan of apple pie, he said. For him, a "big, big, big " element to creating a quality apple pie is a great crust. Also, the cook must cut the apples to a size so that the filling isn't (TM)t mush or raw when the crust reaches the desired doneness.

His mother makes one of his favorite apple pies " and she fashions a crust with lard, he said.

His wife makes a great pie, too. She (TM)s a pastry chef.

Heather McKay, co–chairman of the event with her mother Carolyn Marker, said the market likes to host and sponsor the event because it is the only one focused around apples. It (TM)s "kind of nice to still bring that to the community. "

The event, sponsored by Marker–Miller and *MidAtlantic Farm Credit*, is also a lot of fun, said last year (TM)s winner Leathers.

So much so, she said, that after her judging year, she plans to return and compete again.

" Contact Stephanie M. Mangino at

smangino@winchesterstar.com

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