

Continued from Page 4

The festival, coordinated by the chamber and sponsored by Fred Meyer, will celebrate its 40th anniversary this year, returning to the Clatsop County Fair and Expo Center on Friday, Saturday and Sunday. Established in 1982, the festival has grown to include more than 150 vendors offering coastal cuisine, Oregon wine, local brews and spirits, alongside hand-crafted art and local goods.

Some iconic Northwest flavors offered at this year's festival will include crab macaroni and cheese, seafood ramen, crab and shrimp melts, crab cakes and fried oysters. The event will also feature nearly 40 wineries, offering a taste of the Northwest. "It's a great representation of our area and our culture," Willkie said. "It's for locals, it's for folks out of town. It is bringing people together to celebrate what we are," she added.

Festival attendees are encouraged to eat, drink and be merry, with live music scheduled throughout the weekend across two stages. Friday's lineup will begin with Portland based singer-songwriter Katelyn Convery and the Grammy-nominated Ellen Whyte Ensemble Trio. Saturday's lineup will include Steve Hale, Andrea Algieri, Al Hare, Stacy Jones Band, The Junebugs and Infamous Soul.

Wrapping up the set on Sunday will be Vancouver, Washington, based rock group Flying Whammy, following performances by keyboardist Nathan Olson, singer-songwriter Bruce Thomas Smith and maritime bluegrass group Brownsmead Flats. "There's a lot of excitement," event coordinator Kristen Klein said. "That's been the ongoing conversation: people amped up to return."

A month of celebration The festival is a longstanding tradition for not only the North Coast community but also for many visitors who travel to Astoria each year. The event was last held in-person in 2019, going virtual during the COVID pandemic.

Last year, the festival featured virtual interviews with vendors, as well as artist demonstrations and music. The chamber also introduced a new element designed to highlight the area's restaurants, cafes and coffee shops, the festival feast dining passport. According to Willkie, the passport gave people something in-person to do in conjunction with the virtual festival. Well received in 2021, the dining passport has returned for this year's festival.

Throughout the month of April, individuals can experience a restaurant trail inspired by the festival, featuring nearly two dozen local restaurants, breweries and cafes. With each visit, pass holders have access to special offers and menu items. "One lady



The Crab, Seafood & Wine festival will feature a full schedule of performers across two stages throughout the weekend.



Vendors and visitors gather in a large tent at the Crab, Seafood & Wine Festival in 2019.

called it a 'scavenger hunt of deliciousness,' which I thought was great," Willkie said.

Participants also receive an automatic entry into weekly drawings for dining gift certificates, festival merchandise and other prizes, as well as entry into a grand prize drawing, which includes an overnight stay at the Cannery Pier Hotel and Spa, gift certificates, museum passes, a sampling of Oregon wine and more.

'Quite an endeavor'

This year's festival will welcome about 40 new vendors, about 25% of the festival's total participants. Klein looks forward to seeing some fresh faces and selections, but is also appreciative of the dedicated vendors who have participated in the event for many years.

"I want to really applaud those vendors that are returning, because they've gone

'IT'S A GREAT REPRESENTATION OF OUR AREA AND OUR CULTURE. IT'S FOR LOCALS, IT'S FOR FOLKS OUT OF TOWN. IT IS BRINGING PEOPLE TOGETHER TO CELEBRATE WHAT WE ARE.'

through a lot, and they've stuck it out," Klein said. "They've been with us even through the virtual festivals we've done." She is also grateful for the volunteers who contribute to operating the festival by filling the necessary 300 volunteer shifts. The festival is a major fundraiser, for not only the chamber but also for dozens of participating organizations.

"Our community coming together to pull this off is quite an endeavor," Klein said. "The excitement and support from the community to do this event are overwhelming. It's very, very cool," she added. Organizers recommend that patrons purchase festival tickets in advance.

Not only do advance tickets offer a discount, but it's a good idea as parking at the fairgrounds will be limited during the event. Attendees are also encouraged to take advantage of the festival shuttle, with convenient stops near lodging facilities in Astoria and Warrenton.