



Coffee Expo creates strong brew of community

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As the leaves begin to change and fall, the aroma of freshly roasted coffee will soon drift along Ralph and Depot streets in Asheville's River Arts District.

Stu Helm, Asheville food writer and host of the radio show "The Food Fan," and Angie Rainey, owner of the online coffee subscription service Coffee Crate, created the Asheville Coffee Expo last year to provide a place for people to experience the coffee scene in Asheville and western North Carolina.

Helm and Rainey will present the second annual festival from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. on Sept. 30. It allows attendees to taste a variety of roasts, meet the roasters, and learn more about coffee roasting.

"I noticed, because I go to a lot of food festivals, that there was no coffee festival. I decided to see if I could start one," Helm said.



The second annual Asheville Coffee Expo is Saturday, Sept. 30, from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m.

Both Helm and Rainey develop and maintain connections in the community with local roasters and

bakers through their personal and professional lives, making them a strong team to put the festival together.

"We had limited experience and we didn't really know what to expect the first year when we applied for our application with the city," Helm said. "We estimated that maybe 400 people might show up to our festival and afterward we took a poll of people who had been there and we all agreed that probably about 2,000 people cycled through the event during the entire four hours."

After last year's success, Helm said this year's expo will feature more vendors, extend from Ralph Street in the River Arts District to Depot Street and host an after-party at Burial Beer Company. PennyCup Coffee Company will host again, providing its roasting machine and other equipment for the event.

Jonathon Flaum, founder of Farm to Home Milk, will also help

the festival by providing milk so vendors do not have to bring and refrigerate their own.

"We serve a lot of coffee shops and see them as partners. We're close, so we support and honor these shops," Flaum said.

Flaum said he will also make some new changes for this year's event. He will supply goat's milk in addition to cow's milk for a goat's milk latte art contest.

The expo features three competitions for baristas to participate in to win prize packages including latte art, cappuccino and freestyle contests and a ballot to vote for the best cup of coffee, Helm said. A panel of three judges determines the winners of the barista competitions, while the public decides which vendor will receive the "Best House Cup" trophy.

Black Mountain's Dynamite Roasting Company currently holds

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