

# "A TASTE OF ORANGE" SATISFIES PARK-GOERS

BY WALTER ELLIOTT

ORANGE - The city's inaugural "A Taste of Orange" may well have become a fitting kickoff to its Aug. 1-5 Restaurant Week, even if the weather tried not to cooperate, here at Monte Irvin Orange Park July 30.

the big music festival in Newark - but I don't think I'll get there tonight," said Ramirez. "I grew up in Orange and each song brings back a memory. This is a good event to listen to some music, have some food and bring people together in the park."

have been a steady amount of people since it opened at 10 a.m.

Hawkins explained that Restaurant Week has been bringing new customers to a variety of participating city restaurants in recent years. The eateries offer fixed price menus and discounts on lunch and dinner entrees as a draw.

"We were looking for something to help start Restaurant Week," said Hawkins, "when we came up with 'Taste.'"

"Taste" has the same Restaurant Week participants on hand, offering representative food for \$6 or less.

"I'm focused on the entertainment part," said Councilman At-Large Rayfield Morton. "It took two or three months to put that together."

Two of Morton's colleagues - Donna Williams and Elroy Corbitt - were also seen at "Taste" at that time.

Both Morton, as musical

by music-loving spectators. "Local Talk," for example, found a take-out menu for the just-departed Columbian-based Las Palmeras Restaurante in the park.

"Local Talk" began an unscientific polling of the chefs and owners, starting with Lana May, owner of the Orange Golden Krust. May opened the Caribbean-fare franchise about six years ago.

Randy West was meanwhile overseeing three employees cook their sample fare. West and Sandwiches, instead of serving their signature submarines, were grilling hamburgers, hot dogs and fish.

"I was watching what the others here were serving and did something different," said West. "You can get hamburgers and hot dogs at our restaurants - or you can try grilled whitefish and



"Local Talk" found the taste still going strong with an hour to go despite the summer heat reaching into the high 90s that Saturday afternoon. Only a dozen people braved the sunshine to sit among the 40 lawn chairs before the Essex County-supplied portable bandstand to hear Kenny Bobbin, of Newark, perform at 4 p.m.

Most of the estimated 200 people were watching - and eating - from nearby shade. Many took seats from under a large white tent a few feet east of the lawn chairs. Some more were either standing beneath tree shades or were using their own chairs and umbrellas.

Orange native Yolanda Ramirez was standing from under a tree, listening to Bobbin's music while eating a paper boat full of french fries.

"I was planning on going to

Mayor Eldridge Hawkins, Jr. walked by, greeting visitors and taking the taste's pulse while waiting to draw some raffle prizes. The mayor rated "Taste" as "so far, so good," at the time.



"What I've been hearing from the vendors and the public is that they're liking it," said Hawkins. "It's hot out but there

promoter, and Al Bundy, as master of ceremonies, said that the performances had gone well even though they started at 10 a.m. - two hours earlier than planned.

"People have been staying," said Bundy. "We had a DJ from (WRKS) 98.7 KISS FM and there have been no long pauses."

Other scheduled performers included Colonel Abrams, Hunter Hayes, Force MD's and the jazz band Anonymous.

Semi-circling the large white tent was 13 smaller tents for the vending restaurants. Only four were devoid of participating restaurateurs, their space taken



"It's been busy," said May while watching a staff of four cooking and selling. "There's been a steady crowd."

Vernon Rampersad, owner of Island BBQ, was offering a variation of Caribbean cuisine. Rampersad and his staff of two were offering stewed, barbecued and jerk chicken.

"We're selling to a changing demographic in Orange," said Rampersad while taking a brief break. "Orange is a great city -

tilapia here."

West, who bought what started out as "The Little King" franchise in 1968 from a Morris Plains entrepreneur named Harold in 1974, then let "Local Talk" in on two of his preparation secrets. The first was that he uses Poland Spring water to cook food with at his Orange and East Orange locations.

"I think Poland Spring would be too expensive for Harold," smiled West.



I own a home on Beech Street and have Island BBQ. I also come out to support the annual Caribbean festival here (at Irvin Orange Park)."

SandwichesUnlimitedowner

The other secret came with a sampling of french fries.

"These french fries are not coated with cellulose," said West. "I think people can taste the difference."



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*Photos Courtesy: Isaias Rivera*