

Kendall-Jackson tomato festival offers breathalyzer test

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Stacey Porter and her husband stopped by one last booth at the end of a sunny afternoon tasting tomatoes, cuisine and wines at Kendall-Jackson's Heirloom Tomato Festival in Santa Rosa.

After a steady breath and a click, the 30-year-old Alameda resident found out how the wine tastes added up: a 0.02 percent breath-alcohol content, below the legal limit of 0.08 percent.

"The designated driver did her job," Porter said.

Good thing, too. Her husband, Brian Porter, 34, tested at 0.10 percent.

Among the Tommy Toes, Hogs Hearts and Old Virginia tomatoes, festival goers also could test how much alcohol was in their system.

About 3,000 people attended the Saturday event, and of those perhaps 200 visited the tent run by Bactrack, a San Francisco-based company that produces consumer breath-alcohol tests.

Perhaps a self-regulating group, many people's breath registered small to low amounts, such as Al Bianchi, 57, of Antioch. He said he opted to stick to the six taste tickets given at the door and not buy more wine.

His breath registered zero alcohol.

"That was better than I expected," Bianchi said.

Some testers felt the results were too high and went back for more water, food and time, said Matthew Sammons, sales vice president for Bactrack.

Others tested below the legal limit, but still received a caution from the test-giver. "You're impaired because you had something to drink," Sammons said.

Kendall-Jackson staff decided to include a breathalyzer tent at Saturday's event after a tragic July 18 crash.

Lyndsay Murray-Mazany, 27, of San Francisco was behind the wheel with a blood-alcohol level of 0.10 when she broadsided a car in Geyserville, killing two Cloverdale women

Mark Osmun, public relations director for Jackson Family Wines, read about a New York winery's long inclusion of a breathalyzer tent, and he contacted KHN Solutions in San Francisco to see if they could include one.



KENT PORTER/The Press Democrat
Mike Verdon, left, takes a breathalyzer test during the 14th annual Kendall-Jackson Heirloom Tomato Festival in Santa Rosa on Saturday. Verdon's blood alcohol was .02., his wife J.J., right, registered a .15. The couple resides in Rohnert Park.

The highest test of the day came from a tall, rowdy lawyer who declined to give his name: 0.20 percent.

Did he think it'd be that high?

"Hell no," the man said.

The legal limit for a drunk driving arrest is .08.

Santa Rosa firefighter Sid Andreis wasn't his group's designated driver, but he thought it'd be instructive to see the effect of four glasses of wine over the course of a day: 0.03 percent.

"Wow, I thought it'd be double that," said Andreis, 29.

Gloria Haddad, an orthopaedic nurse at Santa Rosa Memorial Hospital, volunteered to be the designated driver for her family.

But Haddad had "a few sips" of wine and decided she'd make sure she was safe on the way out.

"We've seen lots of drunk driving accidents, I know blood-alcohol content," Haddad said.

She blew into the hand-held machine until it clicked and the digital screen lit up the result: 0.00 percent.

"Everyone said I'm so glad you guys are doing that," Osmun said after the event. "It might be something we might like to do every year."

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