

# Hacienda Nights: Food trucks a big success again this year

By Sophie Braccini



A recent Hacienda Nights event.

Most cities that have food truck events sign a contract with a company that organizes it for them, such as Off The Grid or Taste of the World. No such company wanted to take the Moraga risk, however, so the Parks and Recreation staff decided to take it upon themselves and organized Hacienda Nights, Moraga's own food truck event. These happenings started last year and continue to be a big success this summer.

Staff members Clinton Calkins and Kimberly Nelson organized the trucks this year. Nelson says one reason why they decided to orga-

clean eating and a healthy lifestyle by offering vegan food that's gluten-free and organic. It is all plant-based, thus the name of Baagan that according to Pal is a Hindi word that means garden.

Moraga resident Ellen Beans tried the burger patty at that truck and reported how tasty it was. Pal recommends staying tuned for news about Baagan's creations, as some will be coming to the Rheem center's New Delhi Bistro in the fall.

The next food truck event on Aug. 11 will be at the Moraga Commons instead of at the Hacienda. Like other nights, it will all be organized by the small city staff – the director left a few weeks ago and has not yet been replaced.

Nelson is not sure what crowd size to expect on Aug. 11, since this is the week after the final swim meet and some families might be out of town. But staff wanted to test how the event would be received at the Moraga Commons, where it would have much more visibility. Nelson says that the trucks typically get about 600 patrons, with a high of 700 at the end of the season last year.

The parks and recreation coordinator explains that it may be a little less stressful for them at the Commons. When the trucks are at the Hacienda, she, Calkins and the town's janitor are in charge of cleanup that night to make the space pristine for the next day's wedding ceremony. She notes, however, that

patrons have been very respectful of the place and that there is very little litter to pick up afterward.

On Aug. 11 the trucks will use part of the parking lot next to the park off St. Mary's Road. Patrons are encouraged to park on the street, in the skate park parking lot, or in the overflow lot on the Bruzzone property across the street. The trucks scheduled to be there are Yummi BBQ, Stuff My Waffle, Q-Craft, United Bites and izzyA's Frozen Custard. Nelson adds that some people follow that specific truck around and come to events just for its thick ice cream.

Hafiz Haidari, owner of Risorante Amoroma in the Rheem center, says he has not noticed any negative impact from the food trucks on his business. The restaurateur indicated that business in general has declined, compared with last summer, but he blames it more on the traffic detour. He believes that the trucks attract a different clientele than the people dining at his place.

There will be two more opportunities to enjoy the trucks this summer after the Aug. 11 event at the Commons: on Aug. 25 and Sept. 8, back at the Hacienda.

Courtesy Moraga Parks & Recreation

nize the nights themselves was because they wanted it to be on a Friday night, something that the truck companies do not typically do. She and Clinton look for trucks that are not in competition with Moraga's own restaurants, Nelson says.

One of the trucks, Baagan, which was at the first event on July 11, has strong ties with Moraga businesswoman Roos Pal, the owner of New Delhi Bistro (and formerly of Terzetto as well) who is friends with Baagan food truck owner Rajbir Randhawa. Pal describes herself as the sales manager for Baagan. Randhawa promotes

## Window of opportunity missed

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This is what happened to the Moraga sinkhole: the minute traffic was restored, it was not an emergency reopening.

The winter of 2016-17 was so detrimental to California's infrastructure that the FHWA decided in March of last year that disasters declared between December of 2016 and February of 2017 would benefit from an emergency treatment of their repairs even for permanent restoration of the damaged infrastructure. This meant that public work agencies were not limited to reopening just one lane of traffic and could completely restore their infrastructure with an expedited approval process. It was a year too late for the Moraga sinkhole.

Kwan says that this program allowed Minor Road in Orinda to be completely repaired relatively quickly, and not subjected to the just-one-lane-restored rule that it would otherwise have had to apply in order to get emergency treatment. Public Works Director Larry Theis added that Orinda's incident did happen during a period eligible for rapid complete restoration, but that the city still had to drive a hard bargain with the administration since the opening of a detour could have been considered as a way to end

the emergency nature of the incident.

Caltrans Robert Haus confirmed that his agency sent the information of the policy change along to all agencies that had repair projects dealing with damage suffered in the winter storms

of 2016-17. The Canyon Bridge could not benefit from this program since it happened later, in the spring of 2017. In order to now fall under the emergency reopening procedure, Moraga can only open one lane of traffic at the bridge.

## Bridge and sinkhole update

Public Works Director Edric Kwan confirmed that the Federal Highway Administration approved the emergency replacement of the Canyon Bridge with a one-lane temporary connection. This means that Moraga should be completely reimbursed from the expense it will incur. The estimated amount approved by the FHWA is \$2.06 million. Meanwhile, the sinkhole is being excavated so the old culvert can be extracted and then replaced – all according to plan, said Kwan.

The old Canyon Bridge needs to be removed first, the director explained, because the one-lane emergency replacement bridge will be set in its place. This will give enough space for the town to start the construction of a new permanent bridge, once that project is approved for funding.

As the town staff prepares the bid documents for the construction of the new bridge abutments and installation of a prefabricated replacement bridge, utilities are relocating lines that would interfere with the demolition and/or construction. As soon as this is complete, demolition will start. Kwan expects the one-lane bridge to be operational by the end of October.

The culvert under Rheem Boulevard should be repaired and the intersection reconstructed at around the same time. The contractor is removing the failed culvert and is also constructing a bypass for the sewage going through the hole.

Kwan added that the town would conduct more outreach using signage to support the retail establishments located around the road-closure area and remind the community that they are all open for business.

— By Sophie Braccini

## Food Trucks

# Moraga Commons

## Friday, 8/11, 5-9pm

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1 + 1 = 2

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