

TORONTO STAR

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REVEL IN BAD BREATH

More than 5,000 visitors took over Wychwood Barns for the fifth annual Garlic Festival, **GT2**

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A fresh take on bad breath

Lovers of the stinking rose celebrate their passion at Wychwood Barns Garlic Fest

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Once a year, garlic breath is a point of pride in Toronto rather than a source of shame.

Toronto's fifth annual Garlic Festival took over Wychwood Barns on Sunday, perfuming the air with the strong scent of freedom.

"Garlic is part of every cuisine," said event organizer Peter McClusky. "For years it was kind of hidden and people didn't always admit to eating garlic, but it's out in the open now." More than 5,000 visitors swarmed the former streetcar repair site to sample the creations of garlic gurus, including such delicacies as black garlic butterscotch bourbon ice cream and doughnuts with garlic sprinkled on top.

"I pick up five pounds every time; it lasts me the winter," said Chris Rowlinson, as he sipped on a pint of black garlic beer.

Ontario grows seven varieties of garlic, each of which can have dozens, if not hundreds, of different strains.

"It's a very complicated family tree," said McClusky. "There's no end to what you can do with it. We've been trying but we haven't found a limit yet."

The 54-year-old quit a jet-setting job for a New York digital media company five years ago in search of something more.

What he found was garlic. "I'm devoted to garlic and I'm devoted to what garlic represents," he said. "I like the underdog."

In 2010 McClusky started an internship at a farm to rediscover life's simple pleasures, but it wasn't until he was offered his first taste of Ontario garlic that he unearthed his true passion.

"The garlic here is so different that I started a garlic festival — seriously," he said.

For those willing to brave the bulbs in their purest form, the festival offered free "shots" of raw, pressed garlic.



RICK MADONIK/TORONTO STAR

About 70 vendors took part in the Garlic Festival, offering creations such as black garlic butterscotch bourbon ice cream.

Kira Goodman said she uses a "tremendous" amount of garlic when she cooks, but the festival was her first time tasting it raw.

"It's spicier but it's really good," she said. "The second it touches your tongue it tingles."

Not everyone was a fan. Mike Eby fed his 7-month-old daughter Abigail a piece of raw garlic and watched as she dissolved into tears.

"Looks like we found the first thing she didn't want to put in her mouth," he said.

Those who gave raw garlic a chance were also invited to have their breath tested using a chromatograph. Participants breathed into a syringe for 30 seconds.

The breath samples will be analyzed to measure three compounds found in garlic, with a winner to be announced when that's completed.

The contest was all in good taste. The prize: a large supply of fresh garlic, delivered right to the winner's door.