

Pie social helps garden grow

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Denise Haviland (left) gives her daughter Mia Haviland a piece a pie for testing, during the fifth annual Pie Social, in the Pavilion at Durham Central Park. The Herald-Sun | Bernard Thomas



Kelly Strickland (from left), Ian Strickland, and Rachel Campbell are eating and testing pies, during the fifth annual Pie Social, in the Pavilion at Durham Central Park. The Herald-Sun | Bernard Thomas



Jenny Elander cuts pies for judging. The Herald-Sun | Bernard Thomas

DURHAM —

Hundreds of pie lovers got a slice of heaven Sunday while supporting a program that helps high school students cultivate garden skills.

The variety of crusty desserts included some far out of the box – garlic, onion and turnips.

But the old standbys were there – chocolate, key lime and strawberry.

It was the fifth annual pie social organized by SEEDS – a nonprofit educational community garden on Gilbert Street near the main Durham County Library downtown.

Money from Sunday's social – expected to reach \$5,000 – goes to the Durham Inner-city Gardener program, a high school program “to cultivate leadership and garden skills,” according to Alexis Mastromichalis, office administrator for SEEDS.

Every year, she said, students grow food in the 2.5-acre garden and sell it at the Durham Farmers' Market.

Tony Sanchez, a 19-year-old senior at Southern School of Engineering in Durham, participates in the garden program and said he likes “the friendly people” there. Sanchez was staffing a table with donated pies that included raspberry, pecan-chocolate, apple crust and blueberry.

Betsy Bickel of Durham was sampling a slice of Death by Chocolate, but said the Grim Reaper had not arrived.

“I'm still alive,” she said. “I'm trying to save some pie for my husband, but I don't know if it's going to make it home.”

Bickel praised the SEEDS program for its “beautiful garden.”

“They’re doing great work teaching kids about growing stuff,” she said. “I’m really proud of them.”

Lucy Roberts of Carrboro sampled five slices of pie, some with vanilla ice cream on top. One was made with turnips, cinnamon and nutmeg.

“I thought that sounded really bizarre and interesting, so I tried it and liked it,” she said. “It’s not too sweet, but good.”

For Jarrod Smith of Durham, the lemon verbena pie was tops.

“They’re all really good, but the lemon verbena one is crazy,” he said.

Smith, who used to tutor SEEDS students, said he likes what the organization does.

“I like that it supports the community, and me and my girlfriend are into local, organic food,” he said.

Sarah Campbell was enjoying buttermilk pie with raspberry syrup and whipped cream while her black Labrador retriever, Molly, was snapping up bits of crust that fell to the ground.

Campbell said SEEDS has made Durham a better place.

“I think what SEEDS is doing is great for food sustainability, and I like how they work with other groups,” she said. “It’s a great organization.”

For more information about SEEDS, visit www.seedsnc.org.