

# Ramps...continued from Page 1A

something for them," Browning said. "Some people want bird feeders, I make specialty orders too. I love to craft."

"The crafts are really tough; they're tea cups and they look fragile, but, they're tough," she said.

Browning was just one of the many vendors taking part in the annual Ramp Festival.

More than 400 people visited the annual event looking for that just right gift.

They also tested their taste buds as vendors cooked up hot dogs, hamburgers and offered several different recipes featuring the mountain ramps, also known as spring onions, or wild garlic.

The patrons quickly learned if you take a bite of a ramp, cooked, or uncooked, you'll know it pretty quick. The smell stays with you for a while.

"A lot of people have tried a lot of different recipes for ramps today. We've had slaw ramps, we've had pesto made with ramps, squash casserole with ramps, ramps and fried potatoes, hot dogs with sauteed ramps, we've had ramp cornbread and we've had deep fried ramps," Union County Farmers Market Manager Mickey Cummings said.

Brian and Tammy Mason of B&T Trading Post were on hand cooking up bratwurst, hot dogs and hamburgers for eager patrons.

Brian Mason offered pickled tomatoes and pickled ramps as condiments for the



Freya Browning and Company, AKA Cup of Blessings. Photos/Charles Duncan

tasty treats to go along with the traditional ketchup and mustard.

Judy Carpenter was dishing out Ramp Pesto on a Ritz Cracker. Others tried the pesto on deep friend pork rinds, some tried Dot Patterson's Ramp Cornbread.

"It's been a real good day," Cummings said. "We've had a steady flow of people that have come through. I don't know the exact head count but, I'd say we've had about 400 people here today, so, it's been a good day."

The patrons liked all these recipes.

"The Judge has declared that Newt Miller and Bob Ledford had the best tasting recipe here, with the fried potatoes and ramps," Cummings said.

The Ramp Festival is a precursor to what comes up on June 8th when the Farmers Market opens for the 2013 Season.

"I think come June 8th when we open, we'll have plenty of produce for sale," Cummings said. "About the

end of June the tomatoes will be coming in. I feel really good about all the vendors we'll have. Last year, we had 25 vendors dedicated to selling produce. This year, we'll have 44 vendors signed up to sell produce.

"Booth space is at a premium, we're full," he said. "We've got a lot of people excited about the year, we think it's going to be a great one."

Cummings said that the recent heavy rains may have impacted some local gardens.

"It's hard to say because people planted stuff in the county where they didn't get as much rain as other places," Cummings said. "That newly plowed ground on the west end of the county got rained on and packed down and it's going to crust over, and we may have to have some things planted again."

"Some things may be delayed a week or two, some folks will have to check and see what's happened to their topsoil," he said. "If the ground is real hard, some folks may have to go back and

replant."

Patterson, better known as the Blairsville Maid, said she's excited about June 8th.

"It's been a pretty good day, it's been windy, but, we've had quite a few customers," she said. "It's good to be back at the Farmers Market. I always look forward to coming out here. I like people and I enjoy meeting new people each time I'm here."

"This event gets everyone excited about what's going to take place here in June," she said. "It gets me fired up and I'm ready to put everything in jars that I can."

Patterson had samples of sweet potato cobbler, peach cobbler, carrot cake, corn bread, and all kinds of jams and jellies, and of course, her special recipe squash pickles. She also had lots of visitors at her booth.

Willy Kerr of Mountain View Farms also was on hand for the occasion. He and his 10-year-old son Travis Kerr stayed busy selling farm fresh eggs.

"It's been a good day, we've sold several dozen eggs," Willy Kerr said. "They're farm fresh from the hen house. Most of the eggs that you get in the stores are 30 days old when you buy them. These are gathered daily and they move pretty fast. They're a lot fresher than the ones you buy in the store, and they taste better too."

Cummings stayed busy too. His parents were here from Alabama and witnessed their son signing his first book, All Around the Farm, a collection of his columns about his boyhood days growing up in Phil Campbell, Ala., published weekly in the North Georgia News. "I've signed and sold about six dozen books today. My hand's not cramping either," he said.

