

Head west and dig in

A Taste of Wellington won't let a little -- OK, a lot -- of roadwork cancel its ever-growing party

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Last year's Taste of Wellington West was a big success, with hundreds of people enjoying free samples from the many restaurants, bakeries and food shops along the strip.

It was so popular some businesses ran out of food and had to close early, says Chris Green, owner of Harvest Loaf Bakery and vice-chair of the newly formed Wellington West Business Improvement Area (BIA). "I saw a lot of new faces," Green recalls.

Bringing in potential new customers was the whole point of the tidbit giveaway. And it's why Taste of Wellington West is returning today from noon to 4 p.m.

There's just one problem: Wellington West is in the midst of major road reconstruction.

The blocks between Holland and Parkdale avenues are closed to traffic. In other sections of the street, the sidewalks are being ripped up. It's part of a two-year, \$20-million facelift to eventually make the area more pedestrian-friendly.

Instead of cancelling their plans, the organizers have decided to embrace the chaos and turn it into a plus.

"It's like a construction theme park," says Green. In fact, he has noticed the heavy machinery doing the ripping up and reconstruction seems to delight small children.

That said, organizers have planned carefully for the big day. Work crews have agreed to park their construction vehicles on side streets and open some parking areas. They have also promised to give the area a good spraying with water to damp down the dust.

Dubbed "epicurean row" by some, Wellington West is home to well-known nosheries like Ottawa Bagelshop, Thyme & Again Creative Catering and Absinthe Restaurant. Lebanese, Thai, Italian, Persian, French, Indian and Latin American are among the cuisines available at takeouts and restaurants.

Thirty businesses will be offering free food samples. Wellington Gastropub plans to unveil a



CREDIT: Bruno Schlumberger, The Ottawa Citizen

From left, Chris Green of Harvest Loaf Bakery, James Foley of Petit Bill's Bistro, Ma'ayan Steinberg of Herb and Spice, Terry Fitzpatrick of Petit Bill's, Farouza Shamim of Emerald Bakery and Marc Grondin of Amate are a few of the merchants taking part in A Taste of Wellington today along Wellington Street West.

new ice cream. The Royal Oak pub will have samples of its butter chicken.

Not all the participants are known for their food. Levonian, a shirtmaker, plans to hand out kimono-wrapped cookies. Law firm Beament Green is offering free legal advice.

Taste of Wellington is a chance to check out the new businesses that are springing up along the street -- like Amate, which opened its kitchen just two months ago. The handicrafts and food store features the flavours of Latin America, including enchiladas, tamales and mole sauces.

You can pick up a map at any participating business. At every stop there's an opportunity to fill out a free raffle ticket. Prizes will include gift certificates to area restaurants.

The Wellington West BIA takes in the area from to Island Park Drive eastward to Breezehill Avenue North. Two kilometres long, it includes the neighbourhoods of West Wellington and Hintonburg. It is not to be confused with the Wellington Street that runs in front of the Parliament Buildings.

The roadwork now under way, although disruptive, will give this diverse street a more cohesive look. Plans call for wider sidewalks, bike racks, art installations and new lighting.

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