



What's Happening on Main Street?

By Chris Weygandt Alba

Downtown Paso Robles celebrates one of the world's most versatile herbs at the **Central Coast Lavender Festival** in the downtown city park on **Saturday, July 10**. You'll be surprised to see all the different things made with this incredible aromatic plant.

The Main Street Association hosts the celebration with the Central Coast Lavender Growers Association. Like our successful **Olive Festival**, coming up on **August 21**, you'll find the park alive with all things lavender, along with artisans and artists and vendors.

Lavender, an emerging local product, is one of the most sought-after herbs because of its multiple uses. It's one of the primary essential oils, prized for its health benefits in homeopathy and aromatherapy. Lavender is one of the most important perfume oils. Particular varieties are valued for their culinary uses. And it's a perennial herb that can give you years of use.

Lavender is easily grown in this area. Like grapes and olives, it's well adapted to our Mediterranean-like climate. As a therapeutic essential oil and as flowers,

lavender is hailed as an antiseptic, natural antibiotic, sedative, and detoxifier. It contains more than 150 compounds, and when the oil is rubbed on the skin, it can be detected in the blood within five minutes.

Today, lavender is most commonly used by herbalists to treat anxiety, depression, mental exhaustion, insomnia, scrapes and wounds, digestive problems, headaches, skin problems and women's health problems. In addition, lavender can be used to treat exhaustion, heat exposure, fevers, aches and pains, over-exertion, jet lag, rashes, sprains, sunburn, sunstroke, bruises and burns. It also serves as a disinfectant and insect repellent.

A versatile herb, lavender products range from the oil, lotions and salts made with it, to lavender honey, lavender tea, lavender cooking spices and dipping oils.

At the lavender tasting garden at the festival, you can try teas, cookies, lavender lemonade and lavender lemon sorbet.

Along with all the lavender products at the park, you'll also find live music, lavender distilling demonstrations, a



special children's activity area, a juried art show, and artists and crafters in such mediums as photography, collage, handmade jewelry, and garden décor.

The Central Coast Lavender Festival will be held from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m., and admission is free.

For more information, call Main Street at 238-4103, or visit CentralCoastLavenderFestival.com. To find out more about lavender, visit centralcoastlavender.com. Here's a

sample recipe for lavender lemonade:

Cover 1/4 cup lavender flowers with 1 cup boiling water and let steep 10 minutes. Strain. Combine with a 12 oz. can frozen lemonade concentrate and 1 cup grape juice. Add 1 quart water. Chill. To make: fill glass 1/2 full of lavender lemonade over ice, then top up with lemon-lime soda or champagne. Add a lavender sprig.

Don't miss the Free Pancake Breakfast on July 29 in partnership with California Mid-State Fair and local Granges in downtown park 7:30 - 10:30 a.m. You must have tickets, available at shops where you see the Free Pancake Breakfast sign.