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event to take place over four weeks on Facebook

LAS CRUCES — The New Mexico Department of Agriculture and New Mexico State Fair are partnering to host a virtual Battle of the Salsas, one of the most popular events at the fair.

The Battle of the Salsas is a competition for New Mexico-made and commercially-produced shelf-stable salsas available for sale in the New Mexico Country Store. The Country Store was created 25 years ago as a place to discover New Mexico foods, such as salsas and other chile products including chips, spice mixes, baked goods, jams and jellies, candies, ciders, nuts and much more.

New Mexico State Fair announced Aug. 10 that this year will feature the first-ever virtual fair as a safety precaution during the COVID-19 pandemic.

“Competition is a key part of the fair, and it doesn’t get much bigger than the annual Battle of the Salsas,” State Fair General Manager Dan Mourning said. “When we began planning the virtual fair, we knew this bracket-style tournament would be right up our alley, and we had to include NMDA to decide the best salsa in the land.”

The virtual event will take place over approximately four weeks on the NMDA and New Mexico State Fair Facebook pages. Aug. 30 kicked off the virtual competition with a single-elimination bracket-style tournament, featuring the top 24 New Mexico salsa brands from the 2019 Battle of the Salsas. These top 24 New Mexico salsas will be randomly generated and seeded within the bracket. During each round, people are encouraged to cast their votes for their favorite salsa.

“NMDA is thrilled to be joining forces with the New Mexico State Fair to bring the excitement of the annual Battle of the Salsas event to New Mexicans in the safest way possible during the COVID-19 pandemic,” New Mexico Secretary of Agriculture Jeff Witte said.

“The event showcases many of the brands that are members of our NEW MEXICO—Taste the Tradition® logo program and that are available throughout the state. New Mexico is famous for its tasty salsa, and we all win with these great products. But every year, we look forward to announcing the people’s choice award,” Witte continued.

As salsas advance through the bracket to the “final four” round, a panel of judges will conduct a blind tasting of the remaining salsas Sept. 23. First, second and third place winners will be announced on social media Sept. 25.

The New Mexico Virtual State Fair will run on the fair’s website at exponm.com and on Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram accounts Sept. 14 to 20.