

California Strawberry Festival

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Winner Receives \$2,000

Natasha Aitouganov Wins 35th Annual California Strawberry Festival Official Poster Contest

Oxnard, Calif.—Using a combination of line graphics and watercolors, artist Natasha Aitouganov of Sherman Oaks won the California Strawberry Festival's 35th Annual Official Poster Contest. Aitouganov's winning entry was revealed today to dignitaries and festival sponsors gathered at Yolanda's Mexican Café in Oxnard. The luncheon kicked off activities for the 2018 celebration taking place May 19 and 20. Aitouganov's design was one of 58 entries.

Aitouganov took home \$2,000 as the poster contest winner. "Winning the contest is an incredible feeling," says Aitouganov, 50. "I've never won an art contest before. This is a first."

Each year, the festival's volunteer board selects the poster design winner. "Our board is a cross section of people coming from all different background and experiences," says Mike Thompson, the festival's board chair. "In the past, we've had traditional poster designs as well as abstract designs. Natasha's work, a single strawberry filled with bold, vibrant, fresh colors, perfectly depicts the festival."

This is Aitouganov's first time entering the festival's poster contest. A professional artist, Aitouganov began drawing at age seven. Her parents, realizing her talent, immediately enrolled her in art school. Born in Belarus, she eventually immigrated to the United States in 1993 and studied production design at the American Film Institute. She mostly works in pen and ink and in watercolors.

"When I began thinking about the poster design, I asked, 'what's the best thing about strawberries?'" says Aitouganov. "Naturally, it's their taste. The entry's splashes of color are an interpretation of the wonderful flavors experienced when biting into a strawberry."

Although Aitouganov came up with other designs, she kept coming back to the simplicity of a single berry. "A strawberry bursting with exciting taste and colors represents, to me, the whole idea of the festival."

The 35th Annual [California Strawberry Festival](http://www.castrawberryfestival.org), May 19 and 20 at Strawberry Meadows of College Park (3250 S. Rose Avenue, Oxnard), features more than 50 food booths with all things berry, live concerts, gooey contests, Strawberryland for Kids with rides and attractions, hundreds of fine arts and craft booths and cooking demonstrations.

General admission is \$12, seniors 62 and over are \$8 and children ages 5-12 are \$5. Kids 4 and under are free. Active military and dependents with ID are \$8. Hours are 10:00 a.m. to 6:30 p.m. both days Free Park and Ride "Strawberry Express" shuttles with pickup locations off the 101 Freeway save patrons time and money. Parking onsite is \$10. Tickets are available for purchase in advance online via the website. Toll free information is available at 888-288-9242.

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**Note: Poster contest winner interviews and art design image available. Contact Diane Rumbaugh, 805-493-2877, diane@rumbaughpr.com.*