Hot Pepper Shakespeare

Green Library

Children

|

Tweens (10-12)

|

Young Adult

|

Adults

Hot Pepper Shakespeare

Mar 7, 2016

$1-50

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Byline
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Hot Pepper Shakespeare was a fun, short program commemorating the arrival of *First Folio! The Book that Gave Us Shakespeare* to FIU and a way to engage students and other visitors with the works of Shakespeare. Participants had to eat a hot pepper and try to recite a monologue from Shakespeare before being given milk or

bread to heal the burn.

Advanced Planning

There was very little time for planning the event. Originally, the libraries wanted to put on a performance. Unfortunately, those plans fell through but we still had a space on the schedule and needed something to fill in. I am a fan of Hot Pepper Game Reviews on YouTube and they had linked a Hot Pepper Shakespeare video from a small theatre company in Connecticut who used the idea to promote their events. So, I appropriated the idea for ours.

Marketing

The First Folio committee on campus handled much of the marketing by placing the event on their website, calendar and other materials. Three or four weeks out from the event, I asked for volunteers by e-mail. While I fully intended to have participants sign up on the day of the event, I needed to make sure we had at least a few people who were guaranteed to participate. It was fairly successful marketing, overall. We had enough participants and a good crowd. One nice stroke of luck is that the #ChilliMonologues video started to blow up online before our event.

Budgeting

The budget for the event was $50, but it required much less than that. Hot peppers are relatively cheap. The milk and bread, used to ease the burn after a participant finished, were also cheap. Shakespeare is in the public domain. Our main expense was the trophy given to the winner. Initially, the program was not planned as a competition, so it could have proceeded without it.

Day-of-event Activity

I only had myself for set-up and hosting duties. I brought down a table and arranged the peppers on it. I had an area set aside for readings, if participants weren't prepared with their own. While the participants read, I poured milk. My biggest challenge was running out of milk. Luckily we have a Starbucks and a little food counter in the library, so I was able to quickly get more while a participant was reading. Ideally, I would have had one or two other staff to help me, but I was able to do it all on my own.

Program Execution

The program went very well. I would estimate around 50 people were watching at any given time, with people dropping in and out during the program. Our space was very open, so it was accessible in that way. In addition to the five people who signed up ahead of time, an additional eight or so people signed up that day; a few people signed up immediately and some others signed up after the event had started.

All of my feedback was extremely positive. Throughout the event, people were laughing and yelling out encouragement to their friends or coworkers.

I had a wide variety of peppers (fresh and dried) on hand for people. The participant would introduce themselves to me, select a pepper and a monologue, and then I would introduce them to the audience. As they read, I would pour them some milk (no lactose intolerant or vegan participants were there) and hand them the cup. Occasionally, I would also set up the next person with a monologue while one participant was reading. After everyone had gone, the winner was determined through audience applause.

Advice

Get a wide variety of peppers so many different people can participate. Capsaicin affects different people in different ways, so cooler peppers can still have an affect on people who aren't good with peppers. Some who eat a cooler pepper will still react like they're eating a Carolina Reaper. From my experience, no one went for the mid range peppers though. They either wanted to prove their mettle with a really

hot one, or wanted a cool pepper because they knew they couldn't handle it.

Overestimate how much milk, bread, whipped cream, etc. you have on hand. Some of these peppers have effects that last a while, so participants may want to come back for more.

Have a waste receptacle. Peppers have stems and some people may just want to spit it out after realizing they made a mistake in selecting their pepper.

Did you try this program at your library? Share your experience using this form.

Supporting Materials

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- Programming Librarian Facebook Group

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Image



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Audiences:

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Cookbook Challenge

Audiences:

Adults (21 and up)