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WITH THE KIDS

Gingerbread that teaches good taste

By Brenda Rees

Exactly what makes those holiday treats so darn delicious?

The sweet science — or rather, the science of sweets — gets the aromatic and festive treatment in the current exhibition at the Discovery Science Center in Santa Ana.

"The Science of Gingerbread" explores the culinary and scientific aspects of human sight, smell and taste.

During a new original stage show, "A Matter of Taste," audience participants will investigate the bitter, sour, salty and sweet sides of flavor — and learn firsthand how important sight is for taste.

"It's so hard for us many times to distinguish everyday foods when we can't see them," explains Leslie Perovich, vice president of marketing for the center. "Guests will learn how sight plays such an important role in their sensory appreciation of food."

Indeed, after the show, visitors can try their hand at other food science activities and answer some burning gastronomic questions such as: Are brown and white sugars related? What do crystals have to do with taste? And just what the heck is the difference between baking soda and baking powder?

Also on display are 19 winners of a gingerbread structure competition, including such architectural marvels as a football stadium created by a group of cheerleaders and a NASA rocket presented by a Boy Scout troop.

Discovery Science Center, 2500 N. Main St., Santa Ana. 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. daily; closed Dec. 25. \$12.95 adults; \$9.95 children ages 3 to 17. (714) 542-2823; www.discoverycube.org.