

SKI TO SEA

Veggie team adds a splash of color to Ski to Sea race

Competitors may get upset when passed by a 'carrot'

ZOE FRALEY

Couch potatoes need not apply for the 82.5-mile, sevenleg Ski to Sea race. People dressed as potatoes, however, are more than welcome.

The produce-costumed Buy Fresh Veggie All-Stars team again is competing in Ski to Sea, showing that food can do more than sit on a plate. Team members are using their veggie status to promote the Sustainable Connections Food & Farming Program, which helps support local agriculture.

In a race full of track pants and T-shirts, the produceattired team really stands out.

"We haven't seen many other costumed folks going through the race," said Shonie Schlotzhauer, Food & Farming Program manager for Sustainable Connections and team organizer. "We would hear comments all throughout race day, like 'Oh my god, I can't believe I got passed by a strawberry.'"

Here's a closer look at some of the members of this deliciously colorful team.

Erik Lookabill, 35, Bellingham: cross-country-skiing carrot.

Last year, Lookabill was a last-minute volunteer for the team, and he ended up skiing in a carrot costume with a hat of thick fern fronds.

"People make fun of you a lot when you're wearing a carrot costume, and they get really mad at you when you pass them," he said.

Though his leafy green carrot top tends to create drag, his costume could be worse.

"If I had to be a root vegetable, I'm glad it's not a potato," he said. "Carrots are wedge shaped and streamlined; potatoes not so much."

Max Dougherty, 21, Pittsfield, Vt.: downhill-skiing cow.

After hearing a friend rave about the fun of Ski to Sea, Dougherty decided to make the trip across the country to compete this year. What he didn't know was that he would be competing as a cow.



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Among the people who have competed on the Buy Fresh Veggie All-Stars Ski to Sea team in the past are, from left, Buff Black, strawberry; Charlie Maliszewski, eggplant; Fred Berman, potato; Brook Hayes, pea; and Max Morange, dairy cow.

"Being a cow just allows for terrible puns about being udderly excited," he said.

Dougherty has been preparing for the race by running and skiing, but he is a little worried about the extra weight of a cow suit.

"I've also heard the cow suit has a very nice set of udders, so I'm worried they might be swinging around."

Charlie Maliszewski, 52, Bellingham: road-biking eggplant.

Maliszewski joined the Buy Fresh team its first year in 2005 after working with Sustainable Connections, and he's been a sporty eggplant ever since.

"The color purple is stunning. The eggplant has many uses in the culinary sense," he said. "I just have a soft spot in my heart for eggplant. They're pretty."

Brook Hayes and Jesse Williams, 27, Bellingham: canoeing peas in a pod.

Hayes and Williams have been paddling their veggiefueled canoe since 2005.

"Getting our costume together is kind of a challenge," Williams said. "We have a couple big beach ball peas in between us and a couple small peas at the end of the canoe. Getting it all rigged in the canoe is kind of a challenge."

Though the peas are a crowd favorite, Williams said he can't help but wonder what it would be like to paddle down the river as a giant red chili pepper.

Greg Keeler, 36, Bellingham: sea-kayaking potato.

As a member of Sustainable Connections, Keeler hopes the Buy Fresh team will be able to spread the word about the importance of buying local produce. He's doing his part as a paddling potato.

Other teammates are Buff Black, a mountain-biking strawberry, and Ashley Sullivan, a running raspberry.