

ITALIAN FEST MEDA KIT

Italian Fest Committee
Collinsville Chamber of
Commerce
221 W Main
Collinsville, IL 62234

Phone: 618-344-2884
Fax: 618-344-7499
E-mail:
info@discovercollinsville.com

Visit our website:
www.italianfest.info

Follow us on Twitter:
twitter.com/ItalianFestMain

Italian Fest September 16-17, 2011

Page 12

5K Run/Walk Starts at 8:00am on Saturday



More than 500 people participated in last year's 5K run/walk, and Italian Fest hopes for another great turnout this year. The 23rd annual 5K starts at 8 a.m. on Saturday, Sept. 17 at Clay Street in uptown Collinsville. The route features paved roads, police escort, traffic control, and water near the midway point. It starts on Clay Street and finishes on Main Street. Registered participants may use showers at Leisure World after the race.

Awards are given to the top three overall male and female finishers, and the top three finishers in each of the following divisions: wheelchair, 10 and under, ages 11-14, 15-19, 20-24, 25-29, 30-34, 35-39, 40-44, 45-49, 50-54, 55-59, 60-69, and 70 and older.

Register by Sept. 1 to take advantage of early registration pricing and receive an Italian Fest 2011 long-sleeved T-shirt. After Sept. 1, shirts are available while supplies last. Late registration and packet pick-up will be from 6:30 a.m. to 7:45 a.m. at the race site on Sept. 17. Registration and route map are available at www.italianfest.net, or pick up a form at the Chamber of Commerce office.

This year, Italian Fest will also offer a special group registration rate for parties of 10 or more. So get the office together, gather up neighbors or grab a few friends and run the 5K together. Group registration must be postmarked by Sept. 1.

Don't forget about the Kids Fun Run! All participants receive an award in this non-competitive half mile run down Main Street. Register on the regular 5K registration form.

Fest History

The first Italian Fest was organized as a Columbus Day promotion for downtown merchants in 1984. Social, church and civic organizations from the area set up booths on Main Street to serve a variety of authentic Italian foods. Early fests featured bed races, bocce ball tournaments, pizza and spaghetti eating competitions.

In 1986, a citizen group replaced the downtown merchants as festival organizers and added other events including the city's largest parade.

Since 1987, the Fest has come under the auspices of Collinsville Progress Incorporated, a civic organization and arm of the Collinsville Chamber of Commerce. In 1988, the Fest was moved to mid-September to take advantage of the generally better weather conditions.

Put on your red, white and green
and come visit the
Metroeast's Premier Festival!
Labeled "Best Festival"-Riverfront Times

What's New

- Italian Fest Idol Contest
- "Now That's Italian" Ambassador to Italy and Italian Cars featured in the Parade!
- Italian Fest expands beyond Main Street with bigger and better Children's Area, Family Dining Tent and Special Entertainment Stage
- Parade Viewing Stand in Hospitality Tent For Sponsors

ITALIAN
Fest 2012
September 21 & 22
Good Times...



Inside This Issue:

Italian Fair Cuisine (cont)	2
Pre-Fest Events	3
Where the Money Goes	4
Italian Fest Idol, Wine Contest, Shuttles	5
Events and Entertainment Schedule	6
Music	7,8
Pedal Push, Parade	9
Children's Area, Grape Stomp	10
Bocce Ball	11
5K Run/Walk	12

ITALIAN FEST

The Main Street Event
Collinsville, Illinois

Italian Fest September 20 & 21, 2012



Italian Fest 2012 will include all the traditional events and attractions that have made the fest famous: the bocce ball tournament, grape stomp, parade, wine garden, 5K Run-Walk, continuous entertainment on three stages, craft area, wine making contest, Little Miss & Mr. Italianfest Pageant, hospitality tent and a children's area.

But the real calling card of the Italian Fest continues to be the authentic Italian fare including spiedini, Italian beef, spumoni, bagna cauda, and Italian Ice.

The festival now attracts more than 130,000 people every year and has raised more than \$1 million for local civic, social, church and school organizations.

Let Them Eat Italian

Grab anyone on Main Street during Italian Fest and ask them why they came, and you're likely to hear the word "food." Although entertainment and socializing are a big part of the fest, the real draw—the thing which keeps visitors returning year after delicious year—is the selection of authentic Italian foods offered by the Italian Fest vendors. We're not just talking about pasta staples like lasagna and spaghetti; Italian Fest can satisfy any craving—the sweet tooth, the carnivore, the veggie lover, the hot-and-spicy enthusiast. Featured are just a few of the items that festival-goers cannot get enough of.

BAGNA CAUDA

Bagna cauda is a much-loved Italian dish with a long history. A mixture of salted anchovies, garlic, olive oil, and milk or butter makes this thick sauce perfect for dipping vegetables and bread. The Collinsville Kiwanis provide Italian Fest with a hearty supply of bagna cauda each year. Kiwanis member Ginger Trucano says it's a very popular food at the fest. Its strong taste has given it a cult-following of devoted foodies, but sometimes scares newcomers out of trying it. "It's very Italian," Trucano says, "but it's one of those items that you either hate it or love it." But, she says, "if you love the stuff, you can't leave it alone." In her opinion, it's best to introduce customers to bagna cauda before they know the ingredients. "The funny thing is, if people don't know what's in it, they'll eat it and say, 'This is good!' But if you say there are anchovies (in it), they'll say, 'Oh, no, I can't eat that.'"

Let Them Eat Italian (continued)

So how did this spicy dish get started? The history of bagna cauda is as much debated as its tastiness. It originated in Piedmont, probably in the middle ages, but that's as much as historians can agree on. Some believe it derived from the Roman *garum* sauce, a strong dish made from fermented fish. Others say bagna cauda was just a mix of hardy foods that were available during the tough Piedmont winters.

One popular version holds that the first bagna cauda was a very happy accident. Land-locked Piedmont would have had to trade for salt, having no seacoast of its own. Legend has it that the traders would hide salt under other goods to avoid paying heavy salt taxes, and the best hiding place was the bottom of anchovy barrels. Thus, salted anchovies, the basis for bagna cauda.

Centuries later, demand for bagna cauda is going strong at Italian Fest—so strong that the Kiwanis have to use the kitchens at Collinsville's Gateway Center to prepare a large enough quantity. "We'll make four batches of it, which is seven and a half gallons each batch, so that's a lot of bagna cauda!" Trucano says.

With some customers buying it by the pint, none of the food goes to waste.

Cannoli

Another wildly popular Italian food featured at Italian Fest is cannoli. Cannoli is a dessert which originated in Sicily hundreds of years ago, but today is popular all over North America. Food bloggers rave about it. Connoisseurs argue over the best recipe. Italian bakeries offer it up as their finest treat. What makes this little pastry so popular?

Perhaps it's the simplicity of the cannoli. They are nothing more than tube-shaped pastry crusts, deep-fried and stuffed with cream filling. But this basic concept yields

countless variations, giving it broad appeal and presenting dessert enthusiasts with scores of options.

The original Italian recipes call for sweetened ricotta or mascarpone (an Italian cream cheese) as the main filling. Over the years, American versions substituted a creamy mixture of milk, sugar and cornstarch, though many chefs still use ricotta.

The mouthwatering filling may also include vanilla or orange-flower flavoring, cinnamon, chopped pistachios, chocolate bits, or candied citrus and cherries. For best results, the filling is piped into still-hot shells just before serving.

Cannoli has always been popular at Italian Fest. So when word got out that no vendors had signed up to offer cannoli at the 2011 fest, a new face stepped forward to fill the niche. Rena Storm of Rena's Dance Unlimited in Edwardsville, and her advanced students from the Mouvement Dance Theatre, will open a booth to provide these delightful desserts.

"It's our first year (as vendors)," Storm says. "We've danced in Italian Fest before, but we have never had a booth." Storm was born and raised in Collinsville, so she's only too happy to support the community and the festival. "When I asked (the Mouvement students) about it, they were excited," she says. The group is proud to carry on such a sweet tradition for the festival.

Spedini

La Cucina Italiana Magazine once called Spedini "the Italian take on skewers," and that's an accurate description. Spedini is meat on a stick, grilled over a flame or broiled. Despite a deceptively simple definition, Spedini can be as complex—or as no-fuss—as the cook desires. It can be made from chicken, beef, shrimp, lamb, tuna, even sardines. Additional ingredients

include all variety of vegetables and spices. Some involve marinades. Some require bread crumbs. A few call for cheese. Of course, Italian Fest has its own special variety grilled by the Mother of Perpetual Help Men's Booster Club. Member Edward Holliday says this particular item has been on the menu at Italian Fest for about 15 years now.

"We sell over 5,000 spedini (during the fest)," he says.

The boosters first got started making the Spedini when an older member provided his mother's traditional recipe. It is a beef variety, with thin strips of meat wrapped around vegetables.

It's a complicated process; obviously, some assembly is required. Holliday says the prep time starts a full week before the fest kicks off.

"We start cutting vegetables on Monday and Tuesday, and then Tuesday night we roll about 2,500 Spedini," he says. "And on Wednesday we roll another 2,500 Spedini."

"Rolling" the Spedini means putting the veggies inside the meat. The beef strips are cut thin and sprinkled with Italian bread crumbs and seasoning. The vegetables are rolled up inside the strips, and the food is held together by two toothpicks. The meat wraps are refrigerated until the fest. Booster club members bring a large grill to their vendor stand and cook the Spedini fresh for customers.

Like most vendors at Italian Fest, the booster club depends on local grocery stores and other providers to supply them with such a large quantity of meat and veggies. And that's to say nothing of the manpower required to actually prepare the food.

In trying to estimate how many people it takes to pull it all off, Holliday says with a laugh, "An awful lot!"

History of Bocce Ball



With the fest going strong on Main Street, a celebration of a different kind takes place at Glidden Park. Bocce ball enthusiasts gather to play in the largest bocce game in Collinsville, always held the Saturday of Italian Fest.

Bocce is a traditional Italian game similar to American horseshoes. Players compete in teams of two, each trying to throw their set of bocce balls closest to the target ball, or *pallino*, to earn points. This versatile game can be played indoors or out, on a variety of terrain. In terms of devotion to their sport, bocce players can hold their own with American football and baseball enthusiasts. Many tournament players were tossing bocce balls long before Italian Fest got started, and play it year-round. Some gather three times a week at the American Legion to keep their bocce skills sharp. Others may play in their backyards or neighborhoods. For all of them, the game is a lifelong pastime.

One devoted player is Collinsville resident Peitro Lecce, who says bocce has been played in Collinsville "as long as I can remember, and I'm 90 years old!" Lecce and his godson Chuck Vollman are huge fans of the annual tournament, and never miss a chance to participate. In

fact, Vollman always hosts a pre-tournament party for his friends featuring mountains of Italian food. Godfather and godson have played as a team for many years.

They're excited to see how popular the tournament has become. "It's really grown. I would say they're up to 75 teams and each team has two people," says Vollman.

The tournament begins Saturday morning at Glidden Park. It offers the chance to, as Vollman says, "live the Italian life for the day." That means lots of fun, socializing, and food, of course! With an Italian flag and an American flag flying over the tournament, team members and audiences alike are invited to share an afternoon of beer, soda, hot dogs, and visiting. "It's the culture," Vollman says. "The Italians (say), if I have it, you can have it!"

It really is an all-day affair. The tournament begins at 9 or 10 in the morning, and the final teams are usually still going strong by 5 p.m. This all-day frenzy of food and fun draws bocce enthusiasts from Collinsville, Gillespie, Granite City, Alton, even as far away as Springfield, Ill.

"They come from near and far!" says Lecce.

"It's not just Collinsville anymore," says Vollman.

"I think it is growing," agrees Vic Betta, another Collinsville bocce fan. He sees a growing number of women participating in what was once a man's sport. "It's still 80-20" he says of the men-to-women ratio. But lady bocce players are helping to boost the numbers, and so are the kids and grandkids of lifelong bocce players.

This is the case for Collinsville retiree Chico Italiano. Italiano plays bocce with his peers, but he's also inducting his grandchildren into the sport. This year, his 15-year-old grandson Nick will be his partner at the tournament.

"Bocce is a game anybody can play," Italiano says. Yet no matter how many games he participates in, it never gets old. "We play every week!" he declares.

But lest onlookers think the game is easy, Lecce explains that it can still be a fun challenge.

"There's really skill to what they're doing," he says of his fellow players.

How did bocce become such a cultural phenomenon in Collinsville? For one thing, says Vollman, the town's large Italian immigrant population several generations ago needed cheap entertainment. Bocce was something they all knew and loved from their days in Italy, and it was free—no special courts or club memberships needed. It was also communal, giving friends and neighbors a good excuse to get together. It still has all these qualities today.

Plus, bocce is versatile. It can be played on flat ground, sloping ground, hills, courts, rocks, granite, sand, in tall grass, across neighborhoods and through the streets.

"I've seen them out here in the snow!" says Betta of the Legion's bocce players.

Italiano chimes in, saying that you can play with bocce balls anywhere "as long as you can see (the balls)."

For those in the tournament, game day offers the chance to be outside and play for an afternoon. Best of all, the winning teams get trophies and bragging rights, lending an air of tradition to the event as returning teams carry on a good-natured rivalry.

Vollman sums up the experience of the annual bocce ball tournament by saying, "those are good stories and good memories."

