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	BLOOM Festival	Saturday, May 14 9:00am - 3:00pm Shippensburg, PA 
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http://cumberlink.com/news/local/communities/enola/teamwork-key-to-success-of-pa-greek-fest/article_890914f8-073b-5ac3-b53a-831eba953157.html

FEATURED TOP STORY

Teamwork key to success of PA Greek Fest

Stephanie Kalina-Metzger For The Sentinel Updated May 11, 2016



Photos by Jason Malmont, The Sentinel

Peggy Orosz, left, and Koula Kokos prepare baklava on Monday morning at the Holy Trinity Greek preparation for the 44th Annual Capital Region Greek Festival.

Each year the Greek community proves the power of teamwork by mobilizing as one to get much work completed for its annual Greek Festival.

This is the 44th year of the annual, free festival, which will be held Friday to Sunday at the Holy Trinity Greek Orthodox Cathedral, 1000 Yverdon Drive, in Camp Hill. Volunteers are working harder than ever to prepare for a turnout that grows bigger each year.

“The whole community volunteers in one way or another, taking posters to work, cooking on the day of the festival, leading church tours — the youth participate by entertaining the crowd with dancing. Everyone comes together to make the festival a success,” said Dimitri Zozos, one of the festival's organizers.

Parishioners gather together weeks prior to begin preparations. Long tables fill the gym where volunteers work assembly-line style to prepare the Greek specialties that sell out during the event.

During a recent visit, baklava was the focus of everyone's attention.

The women worked quickly and deftly with large sheets of delicate phyllo dough as they chatted, while the men lined up to scour pan after pan of the sweet, layered dessert.

According to Thana Ward, who works every year at the fest, the treat dates back to 14th century Eastern Europe where it was served to diplomats and contained pistachios, almonds and hazelnuts.

The Greeks put their twist on things by substituting walnuts and swapping out thin bread for phyllo, she explained. Demand for the little triangles of goodness has grown so great at the festival that production is being ramped up this year from 14,500 pieces to 20,000.

This is all very exciting to Ward, who is president of Philoptochos, a philanthropic arm of the Archdiocese of the Greek Orthodox Church in America and the second largest women's philanthropic organization in the United States in terms of money donated to charitable causes.

"Philoptochos means 'Friend of the Needy,' and we give both locally and nationally," she said. "Some of the local charities which benefit are Project SHARE, the Bethesda Mission, the Bailey House in Harrisburg and our new cause, the Pennsylvania Psychiatric Institute."

Rev. Father Michael Varvarelis said the annual event goes beyond entertainment and enriches every volunteer who participates through fellowship and tradition. "One thing that is important to us is to train the next generation in making the traditional foods and pastries to benefit their own community and extend a helping hand to different areas, both local and internationally."

The family event draws thousands each year to partake in the delectable homemade fare crafted by hands with a mission to touch hearts around the region. Organizers encourage guests to arrive hungry.

"The Greeks have a word for it—'Kali Orexi.' It can best be translated as 'good appetite,' but we favor the more colloquial saying 'eat heartily,'" said George Spanos, parish council president.

Just a few savory offerings include roasted lamb shank, chicken oreganato, meatballs, a layered eggplant and ground beef dish topped with a creamy béchamel sauce called moussaka, Greek salad and pastitsio, a dish similar to moussaka but uses pasta instead of eggplant, as well as spanakopita, otherwise known as spinach pie.

Outside, men will mind the grills preparing the popular gyros and souvlaki. Once again, flames will fly from the saganaki tent as volunteers set Kefalotiri cheese aflame with brandy, much to the delight of the crowd. Because the calamari has been such a hit in recent years, volunteers will be preparing more than ever before.

"We're preparing an additional 50 pounds this year," said lead festival chair Sam Kolokithas, who said record crowds are expected this year.

Those with a sweet tooth won't be disappointed. In addition to baklava and baklava sundaes, volunteers are preparing a variety of Greek desserts like Greek donuts called loukamades, kourambiedes (cookies) and rice pudding, to name just a few.

The Olympic Flame Dancers will once again entertain the crowd, and visitors will also have the opportunity to tour the cathedral located on the grounds.

Ask any volunteer and they'll tell you that the food, entertainment and hospitality are important, but at the heart of the event is the joy of sharing. "The people who come are so fantastic and they ask us questions and we try to answer them the best we can. It's a chance to share our food, our religion and our culture," Ward said.

To learn more, visit www.PAGreekFest.com.

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