

Festa Italiana 2006 Complete Description

The Italians are back! After a tremendously successful Italian festival last year, the Italians are back with Festa Italiana 2006. Presented below is some information regarding the Italian Festival that will be held as part of the Louisville Metro Office of International Affairs' International Heritage Month during September 2006. If you have any questions regarding the festival, please contact Bernardo J. Carducci by phone at 812.282.3938 or by E-mail at bcarducc@ius.edu.

*Vivi e Ama
come gli
Italiani!*

[Translation: Live and Love
like the Italians, the official theme of the Festival]

Festa Italiana 2006
Louisville, Kentucky
The Italian-American Association
www.louisvilleitalians.com

Today, the image most closely associated with Italian-Americans is that from the highly successful HBO series "The Sopranos." In contrast to this less-than-favorable image, Italian-Americans have a rich and honorable heritage in Louisville. Some of the earliest evidence of the influence of Italians to this area dates back to the early 1870s. More specifically, recognized worldwide for their artistic ability and masonry craftsmanship, early Italian businesses in the area were best known for their marble, tile, and ceramic artistry that adorned the exteriors and interiors of what were then some of Louisville's most prominent houses in the area that is now known as Old Louisville, as well as numerous historic commercial and religious buildings downtown. In the early 1900s, the Italians also used their native knowledge of agriculture to establish and command a major presence in the produce business, much of which was located at the recently demolished "Hay Market." At that time, the produce business contributed greatly to Louisville's economy, including developing the "seven-day schedule" for the billing and payment of wholesale produce that was adopted nationwide and is still used today! Always known for their culinary skills, the Italians established a presence in the restaurant industry at the turn of the century when the three Mazzoni brothers arrived in Louisville from the seaport city of Genoa, Italy and opened a tavern that sold, among other dishes, rolled oysters for five cents apiece.

Today, Italian-Americans are found living throughout Metro Louisville and are involved in various governmental, educational, medical, and commercial enterprises, as illustrated by the nature of the membership of the Italian-American Association. More recent memories of the heritage of Italian-Americans in this area are associated with the wonderful ethnic heritage weekend festivals on the Belvedere in the late 1970s and early 1980s. Back then, the Italian Heritage Weekend Festivals were some of the biggest and most-successful presented in the city.

It is in the spirit of the rich historical contributions made by Italian-Americans to the city of Louisville, as well as the more recent fun-filled memories of the Italian Heritage Weekend Festivals, that the Italian-American Association is presenting the *Festa Italiana 2006*. *Festa Italiana* will be a community-based celebration of the Italian heritage in this community. This neighborhood festival will be similar to what you would see if you were to attend a festival in New York's famed "Little Italy" or visit a

village square (piazza) in Italy. The *Festa Italiana* will be held Friday and Saturday, September 8 and 9, 2006, at St. James Church, which is located at the corner of Bardstown Road and Edenside Drive, one block north of Eastern Parkway, in the Highlands. On a historical note, St James Church in particular, and this area of the Highlands in general, was selected for the *Festa* because this was one of the areas of migration for many of the early Italian-Americans after leaving the downtown area in search of a less urban and more tranquil quality of life. On a more contemporary note, this area of the Highlands was selected because it is one of the most active areas of pedestrian and vehicle traffic in the community, making it a perfect location for creating the natural atmosphere and feel of a traditional “Little Italy” street festival.

At the heart of any Italian festival is great food, and the *Festa Italiana* will be no exception. Since Italians are known for their great cooking and a love of food, the *Festa Italiana* will feature authentic Italian food prepared by some of the most-recognized Italian restaurants in the city, such as Ray Parrella’s Italian Restaurant, Ferd Grisanti’s, Lentini’s Little Italy, Black Olive Catering, and Tony BoomBozz’s Pizzeria, the “official pizza” of the *Festa Italiana*. For dessert, the Italian-American Association will host the dessert booth, featuring pastries based on family recipes. Lotsa Pasta will have an Italian grocery store while Vespa of Louisville will display some of the famous Italian motor scooters. To foster a relaxed atmosphere in which to enjoy all of this wonderful food, the *Festa* will also include a romantic beer and wine garden and picnic tables for family-style dining. To create the authentic feel of an Italian festival, a scenic recreation of an Italian village piazza, including backdrops of buildings and red-and-white tablecloths on the tables, will be recreated in the heart of this neighbor in the Highlands. To be sure, you will step ten feet off of Bardstown Road and feel like you are in Italy!

Because great music is a must for any Italian festival, the *Festa Italiana* will include live authentic Italian entertainment on the main stage for both Friday and Saturday. The featured entertainment both days will be the Detroit-based Pino Marelli Trio, which is well known for its performances at Italian festivals in cities throughout the Midwestern region. Singing in both English and Italian, the Pino Marelli Trio specializes in performing traditional and contemporary Italian music, folk songs, and the stylings of the great Italian-American crooners, such as the legendary Frank Sinatra and Dean Martin, the satin-smooth voices of Julius La Rosa, Perry Como, Tony Bennett, and Al Martino, who played the role of Johnny Fontaine in “The Godfather: Part 1,” and, of course, the dynamic Louis Prima. Other entertainment featured during the festival will include a strolling accordionist playing romantic ballads, solo operatic performances, and a dance troop performing and teaching members of the audience traditional Italian folk dances, such as the *tarantella*. On the lighter side, other entertainment will include separate spaghetti-eating contests for adults and children and a bocce ball court. Bocce ball is a traditional Italian lawn game played with wooden balls. This game is similar to horseshoes, easy to learn, and can be played without difficulty by children and adults of all ages.

The family-friendly atmosphere of the *Festa* will be enhanced by presence of a children’s play area that will be located adjacent to the beer and wine garden for ease and convenience of parental supervision.

The hours of operation for the *Festa Italiana* are Friday, September 8th from 5:00 p.m. to 11:00 p.m. and Saturday, September 9th from 2:00 p.m. to 11:00 p.m. Admission to the festival is free and open to the public.

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