

Kiss the crockery goodbye and party

While Athens counts down to its Olympics, Sydney prepares for its Greek Festival. CAROLINE BELLINGER reports

Now is probably a good time to lock away your fine china. With six months until the Athens Olympics, the 22nd annual Greek Festival of Sydney is about to hit town and for foodies it means the opportunity to indulge in a sumptuous array of (literally) smashing meals.

The festival runs from this Saturday until March 28 and will incorporate traditional Greek theatre, photographic exhibitions, music and poetry. However, the highlight will be the famous street fair which this year has undergone both a location and name change.

Having grown too big for the streets of Brighton-Le-Sands, the fair has moved to the picturesque Darling Harbour.

Greek Fest Darling Harbour will feature all the spectacular colours, tastes and smells of Sydney's best Greek cuisine.

Around 20 stalls will be selling a wide selection of tasty treats including loukoumades (honey puffs covered in nuts), pastitsio (similar to moussaka), dolmades, lamb souvlakia, seafood, dips and cheeses such as feta and fried haloumi.

Fresh corn on the cob, a popular treat in Athens, is also expected to be a hit as are Greek sweets including baklava and kourambethes (shortbread with icing sugar).

Connoisseurs of caffeine will be tempted by the traditional Greek coffee house, or cafe-nion, serving up steaming cups of Elliniko Cafe coffee. Producer and wholesaler stalls, such as Chris's Dips, Nick's Cakes and De Costi Seafoods will also have their wares for sale, with all food prices expected to range between \$3-\$15.

Greek Fest Darling Harbour will feature acclaimed local and international artists, comedians, sport tournament, craft stalls and even a "break a plate" competition.

Festival manager James Owen says the event has grown significantly since it's humble beginnings seven years ago.

"We began with about 10 food stalls but that has now easily doubled," he says.

"We were choking Brighton-Le-Sands so we moved to beautiful Darling Harbour where we can do so much. This year will be our biggest yet — we are expecting over 100,000 people."

Complementing Greek Fest Darling Harbour will be My Big Fat Greek Banquet showcasing seven Sydney restaurants.

"Last year we only featured one restaurant, Steki, but all three of its banquet nights were sold out within days of us advertising them which was absolutely fantastic," says Owen.

"They attracted an amazing amount of people and not just Greeks which is why we want to highlight the best cuisine Sydney's Greek community has to offer."

According to Owen, that Greek community now exceeds 150,000 people, the fourth highest Greek population in the world.

The eateries taking part in this year's My Big Fat Greek Banquet are Miltons, Steki, Whiteblue, Mylos, Perama, Scorpio's and Jordan's and bookings can be made by contacting the restaurants directly.

"There will definitely be some great Greek food, dancing and singing — and plenty of plate breaking," says Owen.

□ Greek Fest Darling Harbour is on March 21 from 10am-10pm along the foreshore of Darling Harbour and the Tumbalong Park area. For more information, call festival office on 9740 6022 or visit www.greekfestivalofsydney.com.au.



Dishing it out: Greek Festival manager James Owen makes a meal of the annual festival

Petersham is Sydney's Porto call

There's a reason why Petersham is often referred to as Little Portugal.

One stroll past the restaurants, cafes and delis along New Canterbury Rd and Audley St and you could be forgiven for thinking you are on the streets of Lisbon.

Launched last year, Bairro Português (Portuguese precinct), celebrates Petersham's cultural ties in a festival of food, wine and entertainment.

Bairro Português will begin this Friday, culminating on Sunday with the Food and Wine Fair. Local restaurants including Perama Greek Restaurant, the Madera Club, Alfresco Gelato and Cafe Bar, Fernando's Patisserie, Petersham Liquor Mart, Tasca and Gloria's Cafe will be providing a range of Portuguese cuisine.

Enjoy Portuguese custard tarts, bacalhau (dried, salt cod), chicken, spicy chourico (sausage), olive oil and sardines. Portuguese beer and wine tasting will also be offered throughout the day. The celebrations will commence at 1pm and run until 6pm with a full program of music, entertainment and activities.



Festival time: the Portuguese food festival

Mayor of Marrickville Barry Cotter says the free Food and Wine Fair will highlight Petersham's Portuguese culture and lifestyle.

"Petersham's status as Sydney's little Portugal is undeniable," he says.

"This is a perfect opportunity to experience a taste of Portugal right here in Australia."

The Food and Wine Fair will be on this Sunday in Audley Street, Petersham, from 1-6pm. From this Friday to Sunday, Petersham Town Hall will also host the Magic of Madeira Exhibition, which will include displays of unique Madeiran art, culture and travel information. Open Friday and Saturday 10am-4pm and Sunday 1-6pm Sunday.

This Sunday's program of entertainment includes:

- 1-1.45pm: Banda De Musica Portuguesa
 - 1.45-2pm: Grupo Folclorico da Madeira
 - 2-3pm: Mistura Fina
 - 3-3.20pm: Welcome to country, official welcome
 - 3.20-3.40pm: Grupo Regional da Madeira
 - 3.40-4.40pm: Tony Latino + Mandy Vieira
 - 4.40-5pm: Capoeira demonstrations
 - 5-6pm: Jose Pratas Tropical Congo Band
- There will also be a roving guitarist throughout the day.

CAROLINE BELLINGER

Dippers take the biscuit

A new range of school lunchbox fillers has just hit supermarket shelves. Arnott's Dippers combine your favourite savoury biscuits — Shapes, Jatz, Salada or Vita-Weat — with one of four delicious dips.

There are eight combinations, including Shapes and Tasty Cheddar Big Dippers, Shapes and Spring Onion Big Dippers, Jatz and Tasty Cheddar, Jatz and Spring Onion, Salada and Tasty Cheddar and Salada Spring Onion.

Health-conscious parents will also appreciate Vita-Weat Light Cheddar Dippers and Vita-Weat Mild Salsa Dippers, both low in fat. All Tasty Cheddar, Light Cheese and Spring Onion varieties are made with real cheese and contain no artificial colours or flavours.

Arnott's Dippers are in supermarkets from April and come in boxes of six. A 210g box of Jatz Big Dippers is \$4.19rrp and the 150g and 170g varieties sell for \$3.69rrp.



SUE BENNETT
QUICK BITES



World wide: Maeve O'Meara on safari

Tasty travels

Gourmet Safari's 2004 program has been released with trips to Italy, Vietnam and the Greek Islands planned as well as a comprehensive schedule of local tours including Tasmania and North Queensland.

Organised and run by Maeve O'Meara, Gourmet Safaris also conducts walking tours in Sydney to areas such as Haberfield and Leichhardt (Italian), Auburn (Turkish), Marrickville (Greek) and Bondi (Jewish).

"In May we are taking our first three-day safari to Orange to collect wild forest mushrooms with local chef Michael Manners," says O'Meara.

"And we continue our very popular three-day tours to Mudgee which is full of exceptional food and wine."

For full details about Gourmet Safaris call 9960 5675 or visit www.gourmetsafaris.com.au

Smooth brekkie

Breakfast for the time-poor has now been made easier with the launch of a new grab-and-go smoothie from Dairy Farmers.

Made with real fruit and low-fat milk, the Just Natural Smoothies range, provides about half the recommended daily calcium for adults.

The first of their kind, the smoothies boast a low GI value (30-32) meaning they leave you feeling fuller for longer.

Jai Sanderson from Dairy Farmers says the smoothie was targeted at busy women who are keen to look after their health without compromising taste. "It's the sort of snack that women can enjoy on their way to or from work or collecting the kids," she says.

Just Natural Smoothies are available in strawberry, mango and banana flavours and each 375ml bottle sells for \$2.99rrp.



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