



2009 ethnic festival season kicks off with

Polish Fest



MILWAUKEE'S ethnic festival season begins this month with the music and dance of traditional and contemporary Poland as Polish Fest opens at the Henry W. Maier Festival Park (Summerfest grounds) on the lakefront.

From June 19-21, Polish Fest offers a Cultural Village with exhibits, Polish artists and folk art demonstrations, a marketplace, Polish cuisine, traditional and contemporary performers and much more. Fireworks will light up the skies over the lakefront on Friday and Saturday nights at 10:30 p.m.

New exhibits in 2009

- This year Polish Fest brings several fascinating exhibits to Milwaukee. The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) lists 13 places in Poland as World Heritage Sites possessing outstanding cultural or natural value for the common heritage of mankind. A special exhibit features the historic city centers of Kraków and Warsaw, the ancient Wieliczka Salt Mine, the Medieval city of Toruń, the primeval Białowieża Forest, the Renaissance town of Zamość, the wooden churches of southern Poland, and the castle of the Teutonic Knights in Malbork. Also included is the World War II Nazi concentration camp of Auschwitz-Birkenau.
- Another exhibit turns the spotlight on Poland's southern highlands, which contain some of the country's most spectacular scenery and colorful folk culture. The exhibit focuses on the Podhale and Spisz regions at the foot of the Tatra Mountains near Poland's southern border.

- On the 70th anniversary of the Nazi invasion of Poland that started World War II, Polish Fest honors the Polish soldiers and airmen who fought valiantly to preserve the world's freedom. A presentation of historic photographs illustrates Poland's contributions to the Allied victory.

- Closer to home, some special displays tell the story of the magnificent St. Josaphat Basilica and the monument to General Tadeusz Kościuszko, both located on Lincoln Avenue in Milwaukee's historic Polish neighborhood.

Music for every taste

On Friday and Saturday nights, the Miller Stage will feature bands with a wide repertoire of songs. Friday night's headliner will be Milwaukee's own 76 Juliet, playing a mix of rock and pop songs from the '70s, '80s, '90s and today. Saturday night will feature Rytymical, a Massachusetts based Polish-American threesome, who entertain with a broad mix of music ranging from the '50s to modern dance hits.

The Folk Stage will present a wide range of performers during the festival. On Friday night, the Megitza Quartet performs Roma and Eastern European folk music, capturing the energy of Gypsy culture. Squeezebox will headline the stage Saturday night with polkas, waltzes, fox-trots, two-steps, big band, swing, square dances and figure dances.

On the Cultural Stage, accordion virtuoso Lidia Kaminska will thrill audiences on Friday and

Saturday, and jazz sensation Grażyna Auguścik will perform on Sunday evening. Another favorite is the Non-Stop Polka Stage, which showcases some of the finest polka bands in the country.

Syrena, the Polish folk dance ensemble from Milwaukee, debuts a suite of songs and dances from the Spisz region that is showcased in the Cultural Village. Another must-see is the Polish Folk Dance of America Association Dance Gala at 6 p.m. Saturday on the Cultural Stage.

Visit the Cultural Village

Polish Fest's cultural area features a variety of displays and exhibits that provide something for everyone.

Folk art demonstrations include wycinanki (Polish paper-cuttings), pisanki (decorated eggs), wianki (floral head wreaths) and other handicrafts.

Local Polish artists display watercolors, oil paintings, and other works in the recreated market square representing Kazimierz Dolny, a picturesque artists' colony on the banks of the Vistula River. Genealogy can be explored with on-site experts, while travel pros help plan visits to Poland.

Animal lovers will not want to miss the Polish Tatra Sheepdogs. The dogs were introduced into the Tatra Mountain region of Southern Poland by Wallachian shepherds, probably in the 14th Century, and used to guard and herd sheep.

Fun, food for the whole family

Features on the Children's Stage throughout the weekend include magicians, clowns and Discovery World's "Fire & Ice." On Sunday, Little, Junior and Teen Miss Polish Fest contestants take the stage at 12:30 p.m. Also on Sunday, the 11th Annual Chopin Youth Piano Competition keeps the spotlight on young people, while celebrating Poland's great composer, Fryderyk Franciszek Chopin.

New food vendors include Ski's Home Cooking with jumbo pierogi and Polish noodles; Hawg City Grill with homemade Polish sausage and Polish chop suey with bacon; and Busia's Kitchen with naleśniki (Polish crepes with apple or cherry filling). Old World Deli serves up traditional Polish mushroom soup, while Polonez Restaurant returns with the infamous Polish Plate – potato pancake, pierogi, stuffed cabbage, half a Polish sausage and sauerkraut. Satisfy a sweet tooth with pączki, chruściki and cheesecake at the Kawiarnia Polish Café.

For discriminating adults, Polish Fest serves up Polish vodkas, liqueurs and wines. While Krupnik, a honey-



flavored liqueur, will be familiar to past festival-goers, this year the festival will introduce the Polish Cherry Bomb, featuring cherry liqueur and Red Bull. Of course, Miller beer and non-alcoholic beverages also are available.

At the Sukiennice, or outdoor marketplace, tempting treasures include beautiful amber jewelry, Bolesławiec pottery, blown glass ornaments, Polish crystal, hand-carved wooden boxes and festival souvenirs.

A children's activity area will feature crafts, games, a rock climbing wall, and more.

REDUCED ADMISSION FEES ON POLISH FEST'S FIRST DAY

POLISH FEST kicks off June 19 with "Fifty Cent Friday." Admission will be only 50 cents from noon to 5 p.m. and half-price or \$5 from 5:01 p.m. to midnight.

The regular Saturday and Sunday admission rates are still economical: \$10/general admission, \$8/Senior (55+), and children 15 & under free with an adult. On Sunday, Polish Fest celebrates a traditional Polish Mass at 10:15 a.m. Gates close at 11 a.m. The Mass is free, and entrance into Polish Fest is \$4 following Mass. To celebrate Father's Day Sunday, dads are admitted free from 4-6 p.m. with a child of any age.

Hours of the festival are noon to midnight Friday, noon to midnight Saturday, and noon to 10 p.m. Sunday. For more information about Polish Fest, call 414-529-2140 or visit www.polishfest.org.