

Here to stay

The Astoria Scandinavian Midsummer Festival celebrates tradition, pageantry and food June 19, 20 & 21

Story by CATE GABLE

The Astoria Scandinavian Midsummer Festival, taking place June 19 to 21, holds down a long and glorious tradition on the North Coast, from the festival's first Queen Marjorie Yost, (Danish, 1968) to last year's Abbie Johnson (Norway, 2014) who has attended every festival since she was born and was put to work as soon as she could walk. Abbie, her proud parents and grandparents have a long tradition of volunteering to make the event special. It takes a community — and many hands make light work.

There's only one little kink in the works this year. As Abbie's granddad and festival organizer Lorán Mathews puts it, "We haven't decided yet what year to call this festival. We're not sure about our numbering — it all depends how you count."

He continues, "If I say I'm 70 years old then you start counting not when I was born but when I'm one year old. So that's year one — after my first full year. Anyway we started in 1967, and we're still trying to figure out when our 50th will be. We're have a meeting on June 10 to decide."

But whether it's the 48th or 49th year, any way you slice that krumkake, the Scandinavian Festival is here to stay, or so this year's volunteers hope. "There have been a lot of people involved over the years,"

Mathews continues. "It's been good to keep it going so long, and we want to keep it going another 50 years. A lot of the people in the original group are gone, so we've had other people taking over along the way."

The Royal Court

There is no better indication that the Scan Fest's longevity is assured than to look at the impressive royal court. Each of the four lodges — Norway,

Finland, Denmark and Sweden — nominate a young woman to represent them. These misses are carefully chosen to represent their culture and have a rigorous schedule of speaking engagements.

Miss Denmark, Meisha Boettcher, is a junior at Knappa High School, and her maternal great grandparents are 100 percent Danish. Miss Finland, Kaisa Johnson, is a senior at Astoria High School; her Scandinavian heritage was passed down to her from her mother who is 100 percent Finn. Johnson has been a Viking/Nordic dancer for nine years.

Leah Marie Telen, Miss Norway, a senior at Astoria High School, had a great-grandmother who was 100 percent Norwegian. Next year Telen plans to study nursing at Clatsop Community College. And Miss Sweden, Kristina Kjellberg, is an exchange student at Astoria High School. Her family lives in Uppsala, Sweden. Kjellberg will return

to Sweden after the festival and then has two more years of schooling before she graduates.

There is also an array of Junior Misses with similarly outstanding talents. With this level of involvement of Astoria's young people and generations of family involvement, Mathews' aspirations for another 50 years seem easy to imagine.

Coronation and Ball

Janet Bowler, this year's Scan Fest entertainment chair, notes that the crowning of the new queen is what begins the whole festive tradition. "The Queen's coronation takes place 7 p.m. Friday at the arena. The candidates will each speak on the importance of their Scandinavian heritage, and then a panel of judges selects one to reign as Miss Scandinavia 2015."

The men get involved after the coronation, carrying flaming torches for the Torchlight Procession, Bonfire and family-friendly Queen's Dance. As Bowler says, "The men will lead the newly crowned Miss Scandinavia and audience members to the bonfire to throw straw hexes into the flames. This tradition symbolizes ridding ourselves of bad luck for the coming year. There will be accordion music and a dance or two around the fire."

Miss Scandinavia and her father or special partner usually lead the first dance. Bowler notes that if you like the Chick-year Dance, the Hokey Pokey, or local favorites — the Butterfly and the Varsouvienne — this family-friendly gathering is for you. There will even be some experts showing off a waltz, schottische, polka, snoa, tango,



Submitted photo by Janet Bowler Celeste and Ernie Petersen of Astoria, pictured here at the 2014 festival, embody the Astoria Scandinavian Festival's motto of Explore Astoria and Discover Your Inner Viking.

Photo by Damian Mulinix

Following her coronation, recently crowned 2014 Miss Scandinavia Abbie Johnson awaits the start of the torchlight procession outside the Clatsop County Fairgrounds during the opening of last year's Scandinavian Midsummer Festival.

hambo or hump. Scandinavian Country of Astoria will provide the tunes.

Don't Forget the Food

But don't worry if this Scandinavian lingo is puzzling, because there is one thing everyone can enjoy — the amazing food. Corleen Mathew's krumkake is legendary. Then there's Norway's potato lefse; riisipuuro from the Finns; Danish meatballs with red cabbage can't be missed; and the Swedish pea soup is to die for.

Those Scandinavians seem to spend a lot of time in the kitchen. Lou Ann Thorsness, in charge of the Sons of Norway booth, shares a bit of history about her country's offerings. "Our lefse is really 'hardanger lefse' made from flour, not potatoes, and was passed on to me by the ladies from the lodge. Kringle was also passed to me by the lodge ladies, including my Aunt Edith Helligso and the late Lois Ahola — both Astoria natives.

"And we can't forget spritz — this recipe is from my mom, Nancy Thorsness, who died



Submitted photo The Olney Grange provides a beef dinner Friday night featuring beef pot roast, baked potato, green beans, salad, pie and a beverage for \$13.

Try your hand at Scandinavian cuisine. Lou Ann Thorsness has provided a recipe:

Kringle

Ingredients

- 2 cups sugar
- 2 cups sour cream
- 2 egg yolks
- 2/3 cup melted butter
- 1 teaspoon Anise-liquid (can also use seeds)
- 2 teaspoons baking powder
- 2 teaspoons baking soda
- 4 to 5 cups flour

Directions

1. Mix the sugar, eggs, sour cream and anise together.
2. Add the melted butter
3. Add in the dry ingredients. Slowly add the flour, mixing as you go until the dough can be handled.
4. Roll the dough out and cut into 7-to-8-inch strips, about the length of a pencil
5. Twist into a "B" or pretzel shape.
6. Bake at 350 F for 10 to 12 minutes.



2015 Astoria Scandinavian Midsummer Festival Court
Miss Scandinavia 2014
Abbie Johnson

Abbie is a freshman at Linfield College majoring in nursing. Her Norwegian heritage comes from her maternal great-grandfather, who was 100 percent Norwegian. Abbie's mother, Tara Johnson, was Miss Norway in 1989, and her sister Helen was Miss Scandinavia in 2010. Abbie's family is active in the local Scandinavian community, and Abbie has attended every festival since she was born. She helps the Sons of Norway make lefse for the festival and considers it a privilege to continue a tradition so close to her family's heart. She encourages everyone to get involved in their heritage.



2015 Astoria Scandinavian Midsummer Festival Court
Junior Court Chaperone
Laura Biederman

Laura is a teacher at John Jacob Astor Elementary School and a member of the Finnish Brotherhood Lodge. Laura's grandmother was 100 percent Finnish.



Senior Court Chaperone
Bev Hoofnagle

Bev has been a part of the Viking/Nordic Dancers for 30 years. She and her husband have three children and nine grandchildren. Now retired, she enjoys spending time with her grandkids and riding motorcycles.



2015 Astoria Scandinavian Midsummer Festival Court
Crown Bearer
Stian Matthews

Stian attends Lewis and Clark School. His maternal grandmother was born and raised in Finland. Stian enjoys sauna at home and eating lutefisk during the Christmas holiday season. He's attended every festival since he was born, and his brothers have also been crown bearers. His favorite beverage at the festival is the lingonberry juice. Stian has attended the Norwegian Camp at the Sons of Norway to learn a Scandinavian language, and his family hopes to travel to Scandinavia soon.



2015 Astoria Scandinavian Midsummer Festival Junior Court
Junior Miss Iceland
Delaney Patterson

Delaney is a student at Lewis and Clark Elementary School. Delaney dances with the Nordic dancers and will perform with the group at the festival this year.



2015 Astoria Scandinavian Midsummer Festival Senior Court
Senior Miss Sweden
Kristina Kjellberg

Kristina is an exchange student at Astoria High School from Uppsala, Sweden. She looks forward to attending her first festival this year to see how Scandinavian-Americans celebrate Midsummer. Kristina can't wait to try the Scandinavian delicacies offered for sale because she misses the food from home. To prepare for being on the court, Kristina talked to her parents about her family history and has learned interesting things about her ancestors. Kristina will return home to Sweden soon and has two more years of school before graduation.



2015 Astoria Scandinavian Midsummer Festival Senior Court
Senior Miss Norway
Leah Marie Telen

Leah is a senior at Astoria High School. Her great-grandmother was 100 percent Norwegian. Leah enjoys watching the dancing at the festival, especially when her little sister dances with the Viking/Nordic Dancers. Sampling Scandinavian foods at the festival is also a favorite activity, especially the Swedish meatballs. This year, Leah had the opportunity to visit the Sons of Norway Lodge in Gearhart to learn how to make lefse. Next year Leah plans to study nursing at Clatsop Community College.



2015 Astoria Scandinavian Midsummer Festival Junior Court
Junior Miss Sweden
Payton Harper

Payton attends John Jacob Astor Elementary School. Payton's maternal great-grandmother was 100 percent Swedish. Payton looks forward to the bonfire on Friday night because she and her grandmother, Billie, make hexes to throw in the fire. Payton and her mom are members of the Vasa Lodge 215, and in 2016 her family will visit Sweden.



2015 Astoria Scandinavian Midsummer Festival Junior Court
Junior Miss Norway
Raelee Anne Telen

Raelee is a student at Lewis and Clark Elementary, and her sister, Leah, is Miss Norway. Her Norwegian heritage comes through her great-grandmother. Raelee dances with the Nordic dance group and attended her first festival last year. Being on the court has been fun for Leah because she's learned more about the Norwegian side of her family.



2015 Astoria Scandinavian Midsummer Festival Senior Court
Senior Miss Finland
Kaisa Johnson

Kaisa is a senior at Astoria High School. Her Scandinavian heritage comes from her mother, who is 100 percent Finn. Kaisa was Junior Miss Finland in 2005 and a Viking/Nordic dancer for nine years. Kaisa looks forward to participating in the Troll Run at the festival Saturday morning, June 20. Kaisa thinks the festival is important because it's helped her to learn about her ancestors and their culture and to keep their traditions alive. After graduation, Kaisa plans to attend the University of Oregon and major in English to become a teacher.



2015 Astoria Scandinavian Midsummer Festival Senior Court
Senior Miss Denmark
Meisha Boettcher

Meisha is a junior at Knappa High School. Her maternal great-grandparents are 100 percent Danish. Meisha enjoys shopping and eating at the festival. Her favorite foods include aebleskivers, krumkake, smoked meats, lefse, cold smoked salmon, and tarts. Being on the Scandinavian Midsummer Court is fun for Meisha because she's met others in the community who share her Danish heritage, and she has been able to hear their stories.



2015 Astoria Scandinavian Midsummer Festival Junior Court
Junior Miss Finland
Avery Biederman

Avery attends Lewis and Clark Elementary School. Her great-grandmother was 100 percent Finnish. Avery has attended many festivals and always enjoys sampling the prune tarts. She's even eaten lutefisk at the Finnish lodge.



2015 Astoria Scandinavian Midsummer Festival Junior Court
Junior Miss Denmark
Sophie Rose Alsbury

Sophie attends Warrenton Grade School. Her family has been involved in the Lower Columbia Danish Society for many years. Her mother was both a Junior and Senior Miss Denmark. Sophie looks forward to the festival every year so she can eat aebleskivers, Danish pastries offered for sale by the Lower Columbia Danish Society.