

Christmas Market returns for three-day holiday extravaganza

By Brock Weir

Get ready for the start of a new local tradition as the Town of Aurora gets ready to launch a new three-day outdoor Christmas Market on November 30.

Outdoor Christmas markets, particularly in Toronto's Distillery District, have been traditional destinations for local families for many years. Aurorans got an appetizer of what a Christmas Market might look like here in Town at last year's Christmas Tree Lighting Ceremony and such was the success of the appetizer, the Aurora is ready to enjoy a full-blown banquet.

‘The overwhelmingly positive response to last year's mini-market gave us the encouragement to take that event and transition it into a three-day, 27-hour event,’ says Shelley Ware, Special Events Coordinator for the Town of Aurora, of the first Christmas Market, which was approved by Council last year after a motion from Councillor Tom Mrakas. ‘The whole event supported a festive feeling regardless of anyone's holiday backgrounds and I think everyone walked away with a little more spirit inside. We are optimistic that our lineup of entertainment and market features this year will certainly attract people and encourage them to come all three days. It's impossible to go just one day and be able to see it all!’

Each market day – afternoon and evening – offers something different.

It kicks off November 30 from 6 – 9 p.m. with the Town's Official Christmas Tree Lighting Ceremony in the forecourt of Town Hall. While the tree itself will be a focal point, the Marketplace will be well underway on the other side of the parking lot at the Aurora Seniors' Centre.

‘Between the Tree Lighting, there will be live reindeer and 18 outdoor market vendors, eleven indoor vendors, in addition to Mrs. Claus doing her readings and Marquee Theatrical Productions, which will be doing a theatre performance called The Elf Named Buddy,’ Ms. Ware explains. ‘As well, there will be kids' make-and-take crafts in one of the rooms and we're also fortunate to have the Salvation Army Kettle Band performing.’

Market vendors on this first night include Caterina's Kitchen, which is a firm favourite at the Aurora Farmers' Market, and local artisan Bill Hack, who will be selling all sorts of unique tools made out of hockey sticks. And that's just a teaser.

‘We will have a Holiday Bingo concept to motivate you to circulate through all the vendors,’ says Ms. Ware. ‘Everyone will be given a Bingo card and, as you tour around to the different vendors, you can have it stamped. Once you have two lines made on your Bingo card, we will be raffling off a prize package of vendors every hour on the hour.’

‘We want you to experience firsthand an event that quickly became one of the most talked about events in our community. There's so much offered for all stages and ages of your family, whether they are into live theatre, whether they are of the age to be mesmerized to meet Mrs. Claus, where they have the curiosity to see live reindeer, a fire-juggling show, the magic of the tree lighting, there are just so many features within this short three-hour span that it is really something to experience.’

And the experience continues well beyond this three-hour window.

The Christmas Market will be back the next day – Saturday, December 1 – from 12 noon to 9 p.m., with a full Busker theme. Five different buskers will be performing throughout the day, and the Duffle Bag Theatre Company will offer two live performances of A Christmas Carol. The Borealis Big Band will also be on hand for two one-hour concerts while families looking for hands-on fare will be able to take part in free cookie-decorating activities.

The next day – Sunday, December 2 – the Market will run from 12 noon to 6 p.m.

The day's activities will feature live performances from the Aurora United Church choir, Spectrum Baton Club with their fire baton presentation, a free pancake breakfast between 12 noon and 1.30 p.m., and performances from the Aurora Community Band.

Hands-on activities will once again be the order of the day with gingerbread house workshops for \$5 where all materials will be supplied, as well as a festive planter-building workshop facilitated by the Town's horticulturalists, or \$25 per planter.

‘We'll be ending the whole experience with a nativity narrative put on by Northridge Community Church,’ says Ms. Ware.

For more information on the Aurora Christmas Market, visit www.aurora.ca/christmasmarket.