

Can't stand the cold? Step into the Kitchen -- at Monday's Arctic Adventure



Budding chefs, pictured above at the AFLC's teaching kitchen, are preparing to do battle in the Armoury for culinary supremacy this Monday for Arctic Adventure

By Brock Weir

Arctic Adventure has become a popular Family Day tradition in Aurora over the years, but organizers are working hard to make this Monday's adventure fresh ? along with dancers, chainsaw artists, and a number of aspiring young chefs.

Town Park will be transformed into a winter wonderland on February 20 with something for everyone.

Featuring the traditional snowy activities like snowshoeing, tubing and skating on the outdoor rink ? all weather permitting ? this year's event will feature new twists on old standbys and a few things completely different.

?For the first time, the White Pine Dancers will be providing a smudging ceremony as an official kickoff to the Family Day festivities, which is really exciting,? says Shelley Ware, Special Events Coordinator for the Town of Aurora. ?We have been very fortunate to have the White Pine Dancers perform at a variety of events, but I think it is quite sentimental to have them officially kicking off Family Day since indigenous families were the first families in Canada.?

For outdoor revellers, the Band Shell will be where a lot of the excitement is. Following performances from the White Pine Dancers, the program lineup will include the band Six Ways to Sunday, as well as the Battle of the Chainsaw Competitions, which is always a popular attraction.

Those who take in the Battle each year, however, will notice a bit of a shakeup in the program.

?We have two professional ice carvers competing with each other to complete an ice carving within 22 minutes and then the crowd gets to choose who was the best carver based on what they produced,? says Ms. Ware. ?If you haven't been in the parks specifically at that time you miss out on the excitement, but this year we're fortunate that we will be offering two different battles.

?Some people have the chance to see both of them and for others that are maybe distracted with some of the other activities, know there will be a second performance they can catch to enjoy.?

Of course, as for all outdoor festivities, so many things are weather dependent. If Mother Nature cooperates, party-goers can expect snowshoeing, mini tubing rides courtesy of Snow Valley and, for the second year running, Body Zorbs where you can suit up in an inflatable suit and do battle with some of your closest friends.

?There is a lot to keep you busy as well as warm, so regardless of what the temperature is on Family Day, the activities will keep you warm, they will keep you engaged, and I think it would be a really fantastic way to spend time with your family on this newly formed holiday.?

In the lead-up to Family Day, some Aurora families are in the kitchen getting ready for the big day. Six young competitors are expected to hit the Armoury at Arctic Adventure for the Aurora's first-ever Junior Chef Competition.

Ms. Ware says the Town is ?thrilled? with the reception they saw to the call they sent out to all kids in Aurora who love to cook and might love a bit of healthy competition, not unlike Chopped Canada Junior.

As the Optimist Club of Aurora ladles out soups in the Armoury courtesy of a number of local restaurants, the kids will be getting in the zone.

?Having six youth participate enables us to format the competition so there will be two rounds [with three contestants] each,? says Ms. Ware. ?There will be the rounds with a cook-off at the end. I have met with a local chef, Tamara Colman to come up with the

mystery box ingredients and it will be a lot of fun. The items the kids will be making will only be tasted by the judges. Given the diverse list of ingredients in the mystery box, I think it will be equally enjoyable watching the judges taste the food and them judging it as well as the kids making it.?

Ms. Ware, however, is almost mum on just what's set to be in each young chef's mystery box, but says there will be a minimum of one protein, one form of candy, and some binding ingredients. There will also be a common table of kitchen tools for each contestant to share.

Arctic Adventure gets underway at Town Park this Monday, February 20, at 10 a.m., running through 4 p.m. For a complete schedule of events, visit www.aurora.ca.