

Take a trip around the world as Multicultural Festival returns to Town Park



Has being at home during COVID-19 left you with a yearning to see the world?

Well, the world is coming to Town Park this Saturday, September 11, with the return of Aurora's Multicultural Festival.

The Festival, which is designed to celebrate Aurora's diversity, will take over Town Park with music, dancing and celebration representing the cultures of Spain, Italy, Brazil, Hawaii and more.

Saturday's festival is the in-person component of a much wider multicultural event which will include virtual experiences running from Friday, September 10 through Saturday, September 19.

At our in-person event, we will have back-to-back-to-back captivating cultural performances celebrating a wide variety of cultures, says Shelley Ware, Special Events Coordinator for the Town of Aurora. During that same time, we're fortunate that we will have Hands-On Exotics, which will be bringing some African animals for an educational opportunity which will not only teach the children about the habitat of these animals, but also what our role is as humans of being stewards on the planet to ensure we're protecting these species.

In addition to the performances and interactive experiences, community groups like the Aurora Public Library and the Aurora Cultural Centre will be on hand to host interactive programs while distanced experiences will also be in the offering.

A community event facilitated by the GooseChase app will invite residents to take part in more than 50 multicultural-themed missions and activities throughout the community which kids and adults alike can complete for points with the highest point-getter eligible to win a gift card to a local restaurant and learn something new along the way.

Some of the missions include learning languages, trying different dishes at home to make, some trivia and activities at home, says Ms. Ware. It's a way for families to celebrate, learn and still be a part of the community.

As far as trying different dishes is concerned, however, the Aurora Farmers' Market is also getting into the act, preparing food kits for purchase, featuring local produce from vendors, with everything you need to create your own ratatouille.

These Fresh Food Kits, priced at \$25 for a box with enough ingredients to serve four people, is based on the theme of from farm, to fork, to yum and must be reserved in advance by Friday, September 10 for pick up at Town Park the next day from 10 a.m. to 12 noon.

“When you're celebrating cultures, it comes down to food, movement and celebration and food is such a huge component in learning about cultures,” says Ms. Ware, noting that each Multicultural Festival has been based around a specific international staple like rice, beans and lentils. “You take one grain that pretty much the entire world is consuming and each culture has taken a completely different spin on, and when you look at their spin, it takes you back to their geography, their history, their oral traditions ? so much can be learned from that one little grain.”

As much as food can show us where we have been, food can also tell us where we're going.

A virtual component of the Multicultural Festival will be a screening of the 2019 documentary Honeyland, which follows a beekeeper as they explore climate change and biodiversity challenges. Screened in partnership with the Aurora Film Circuit, Ms. Ware says she hopes viewers feel inspired and motivated by its contents.

“You can watch it from the comfort of your own home, on your own schedule, and after seeing this film for the first time, I really wished I had a forum to discuss it,” says Ms. Ware of the interactive component. “This movie makes you look through so many lenses. It is so easy for us to watch a superhero movie, but I guarantee you that when you watch it, your definition of a superhero will change.

Two discussion forums based on Honeyland will take place on Monday, September 13, from 6.30 ? 8 p.m., and on Thursday, September 16 from 7 p.m. to 8.30 p.m.

Additional programs associated with the 2021 Aurora Multicultural Festival include a Multicultural Activity Bag with themed crafts created for kids between the ages of four and 12, which need to be booked in advance, as well as the grand finale of the Town's popular Movies in the Park program ? featuring Disney's live action remake of The Lion King ? at dusk.

For more information, including registration for activity and food kits, visit aurora.ca/multiculturalfestival.

By Brock Weir Editor Local Journalism Initiative Reporter