

Beer, burgers, and family-friendly fun on tap for Street Festival

From music, shopping, beer and even free burgers, Yonge Street will be the place to be this Sunday as the Aurora Chamber of Commerce gears up for the 2024 Aurora Street Festival.

The popular annual family-friendly event, one of the country's biggest such festivals, will take over Yonge Street from Wellington Street in the north to Murray Drive in the south on Sunday, June 2, from 11 a.m. to 5 p.m.

Hundreds of vendors are expected to fill the streets, along with an anticipated 30,000 patrons, for what's being billed as the biggest such event in years.

"The festival is 25 per cent larger than last year, and it will be the full length from Wellington to Murray and we're really excited about that," says Sandra Ferri, President & CEO of the Aurora Chamber of Commerce. "It's going to be a family fun event, just like it has been in the past."

"This year, some of the highlights are a Community Craft Beer festival happening inside the Law Insurance parking lot; We'll have every type of food you can imagine - everything from samosas to Caribbean chicken, Mexican cuisine, poutine trucks, desserts, ice cream - and Harvey's will be offering free burgers as part of their community engagement program. Who doesn't love that!?"

Throughout the day, there will be street performers, such as the ever-popular Fire Guy, who will be stationed near Brookland Avenue, the Roaming Magician who will be quite literally roaming the Festival doing card tricks and other fun stuff, and live music on multiple stages.

The music program will begin at 11 a.m. at the Church Street Stage with contemporary roots singer-songwriter Mimi O'Bonsawin at 11 a.m.

O'Bonsawin will be followed at 12 noon by Shining Water Singers with "Songs on the Drum", followed by The Baleen with their program of funk, pop and rock. The Shining Waters Singers return to the stage at 1.15 p.m., followed at 1.30 by Juno Award-winning Calypso and Caribbean artists Kobo Town.

On the Golf Links Drive stage, the Coyotes will be performing all day.

Rounding out the program will be an encore performance of the Shining Waters Singers at 2.30 p.m., the Aurora-based Borealis Big Band at 2.45 p.m., and Cheryl Lynn and The Catalysts with danceable funk and R&B at 3.45 p.m.

"The Aurora community has changed over the years, so we're looking at bringing a more diverse group of performers and something that will be lively, entertaining - and it doesn't matter what background you're from, you're going to enjoy it regardless!" says Aurora Chamber Events Manager Sandra Watson. "There will be something for everyone. You're going to come onto the street and you'll meet your neighbours, you'll find that little hidden gem of a business that you're going to love. You're just going to really enjoy the day."

Of course, showcasing these local businesses is always at the heart of the Festival.

Ferri says the Festival is a great way for businesses to promote their products, services, and even the tasty treats they whip up in the kitchen or the libations they pour out.

"It's a great opportunity for those businesses to be showcased in a very fun, enchanting way," she says. "This is the biggest street festival in York Region, probably one of the biggest in Ontario" and [this] is definitely back to pre-pandemic levels.

?I think we'll see the streets full and crowded. I think there is a real desire to be out. It was such a beautiful day last year and we're hoping for the same. People just want to be out enjoying themselves, having some good food, some fun, and listening to some good entertainment.

?It will be an enchanting day ? people on the streets, having a great time, hopefully the sun is shining ? it's magical!?

By Brock Weir