

Italian Heritage Festival in full swing for a month of fun



June is Italian Heritage Month and the community is coming together to celebrate the sights, sounds, and flavours of Italy through art, film, horsepower ? and, of course, food.

The festivities ? Viva l'Italia: A Month of Celebration, Culture, and Community ? kicked off at Aurora Town Square on Monday evening with the raising of the Italian Flag, followed by the opening of an art exhibition at Royal Rose Gallery, whose owner, Rosa Calabrese, is a driving force behind the event series.

This is the second year Calabrese has brought the Italian Heritage Festival together, and has once again partnered with the Aurora Film Circuit, the Aurora Soccer Club, and sponsor Re/max's Osborne Goddard Team, to make it a reality.

If you missed the flag-raising and art opening, there is a packed weekend ahead with a Once Upon a Time, an activation with the Aurora Public Library, with a children's story time at 10 a.m. and an author reading at 2 p.m., and they will be back at Sunday's Aurora Street Festival with an art market, car show, and live painting.

?Our first year was definitely a learning curve, as it was nothing I've ever done before, or saw done in Aurora for Italian Heritage, so it was challenging, but rewarding in terms of the feedback and the engagement from the community,? says Calabrese on bringing the Festival back for a second year.

Reflecting on last year's event, she says the film screenings hosted with the Film Circuit and the exhibition games and family fun day hosted by the Aurora Soccer Club really brought the community together ? and they are coming back for more.

?We've expanded in terms of activating other spaces in the Town, like the Aurora Public Library where we're going to have a children's story time with an Italian children's book and author reading,? says Calabrese. We're also expanding the art exhibit, which is Seven Strong Women. We've pulled together an amazing lineup of artists to bring their story and family's history of immigration and resiliency to the gallery. I'm very proud about that one.

?For the Street Festival, we'll have four luxury cars parked in the Piazza parking lot (on Yonge Street, just south of Wellington) and we're back at the Street Festival with 10 vendor booths that have Italian product and flair ? that will be fun, too!?

The Festival continues Thursday, June 11, with the Aurora Film Circuit's screening of ?There's Still Tomorrow? in Town Square.

?We also have a fun surprise ? we have a little performance by an Italian-Canadian opera singer, who will be opening the film,?

teases Calabrese. ?There will be some fun giveaways for that one as well.?

The Aurora Soccer Club's exhibition game will take place Saturday, June 13, from 4 ? 6 p.m., with food trucks, children's games, and more. This is a free event ? as is the Games Day back at the Royal Rose Gallery on Saturday, June 27, from, 10 a.m. to. 2 p.m., which closes out the Festival.

?The Gallery will have different stations and we will be leading traditional Italian children's games and arts and crafts in an all-free event,? says Calabrese.

?This is definitely open to everybody. You don't have to be Italian to enjoy any of the events; my real goal is just to be able to connect with community members. In terms of the immigration story, whether you're from Italy or another country, you know somebody who has immigrated, what that process is, and how hard it can actually be. So, this is about developing that sense of camaraderie, that we really are all in the same boat, and respect for different cultures as well.?

For more, visit royalroseart.ca.

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