

Saturday's Multicultural Festival is full of beans

By Brock Weir

Boiled, baked, fried, re-fried, there is no shortage of ways to spice up the humble bean.

They are a staple in just about every culture around the globe and this Saturday you will be able to sample how over 13 countries put their own spin on the legume at the third annual Aurora Multicultural Festival.

Set to take place at Town Park from 11 a.m. to 4 p.m., the Multicultural Festival will bring together back-to-back dance and music performances, international sports, tasty treats, and even tastier beans ? and admission is free.

?Last year, we celebrated rice, so we put together the trajectory of global staples for the next few years and felt we could have a little bit of fun this year with the bean,? says Shelley Ware, Special Events Coordinator for the Town of Aurora. ?Beans are a global staple, which is celebrated in a variety of ways by a variety of cultures, which are all flavoured, prepared, cooked and handled very differently. We're going to provide a variety of bean samples from a minimum of 13 different countries, then we're also going to have four specific cooking demonstrations from four different regions. The first will be based on food from Cameroon, the second will be Italian, the third will be Mexican, and the fourth will be from the Caribbean region. We're also aiming for a fifth demo based on Indian Curry.?

As the flavours dance on your tongue, performers will be up on their feet on the band shell throughout the day. Represented will be South Asian dancing courtesy of the Panwar Music and Dance production company. There will be dancers putting on displays representing Mexico, Chinese music and dance courtesy of the Chinese Collective Arts Council, performers from Brazil with ?Hips Don't Lie?, and further ambassadors from Korea, Cameroon, and Polynesia.

?Close to the end of the day, there will be some flamenco dancing and we'll be closing out the day with an interactive taekwondo demonstration,? says Ms. Ware. ?But, what's new this year, is our buskers. From 11 a.m. to 2 p.m., we will have a flag lady stilt walker, who was really well received during the Canada Day parade. Her being able to stroll through the park, she will be able to provide an opportunity for people to take photos and have some interaction. Between 12.30 and 2.30 p.m., there will be a strolling busker with some magic displays, and from 1 ? 3 p.m., there will be a mime on site.

?Another strong component is our Cultural Games and people will be able to have a hands-on experience with cricket, field hockey, bocce, archery, and a Peruvian game called Sapo. We'll also have our inflatable jousting set, an artist to provide free henna paintings, and, in addition many vendors from the Aurora Farmers' Market and Artisan Fair will be extending their hours and staying open until 4 p.m.?

While most of this is about the experience itself, there will be a few takeaways as well. Throughout the day, arts and crafts projects will be available with crafts based around themes from all seven continents. To pick just two examples, if the prospect of Antarctica tickles your fancy, kids can enjoy a craft based around penguins. If Africa is more your speed, giraffes and elephants are the order of the day.

?People need to come out and invest the time,? says Ms. Ware. ?With the crafts evolving and changing, with the hands-on games being presented, with the back-to-back performances on the stage, I even find it hard to walk away because there is always something that catches my eye. I find you have to come in with an open mind; leave the passport at home, but bring your lawn chair and really absorb the experience. If you're not rushed, it will give you time to cover new things.

?Take a chance and see what is offered in our community and if you're fortunate enough to be surveyed, provide all of your feedback to us because it all matters. We're confident with our cultural games, food sampling, performances and buskers, there is something for everyone's curiosity.?