

Russian Weekend



St. Nicholas Russian festival features food, fun and entertainment page 18

Eight-year-old Daniil Wilson performs with the Sivka Burka Cossack Choir during the Russian festival at St. Nicholas Orthodox Church of Saratoga on Sept. 29.



The sign, below, lets visitors know they're in the right place, but it's the welcoming committee of Mary Pilipenko, left, and Cherryl Schafer that offer them a warm greeting as they arrive for the Russian festival, held Sept. 29-30 at St. Nicholas Orthodox Church, 14220 Elva Ave. in Saratoga.

Borscht and Pelmeni?

There's plenty of that and more at the Russian Festival at St. Nicholas Orthodox Church

By DICK SPARRER

Photographs by JOHN MEDINA



It's not everywhere in town where Saratogans can enjoy a bowl of borscht, a plate of shashlyk or a large portion of pelmeni. But there was plenty of that and vodka, too, when St. Nicholas Orthodox Church of Saratoga held a Russian festival on Sept. 29 and 30 at the church at 14220 Elva Ave.

The two-day event at the local church offered more than just food and drink, though. Each day featured plenty of entertainment by Russian singers, dancers, musicians and puppeteers. The Russian Folktale Puppet Theater offered shows each day, and the Sivka Burka Children's Cossack

Choir and singer Michael Yagudin were also among the entertainers who performed.

The festival included a market that featured items for sale, and the parish bookstore offered authentic Russian wares and books for visitors to purchase.

For many, however, the food was the main event. Guests could feast on borscht, shashlyk, pelmeni, pirozhki, bliny, kovrizhka and more. And of course there was the vodka tasting that kept many of the adult festival visitors smiling.

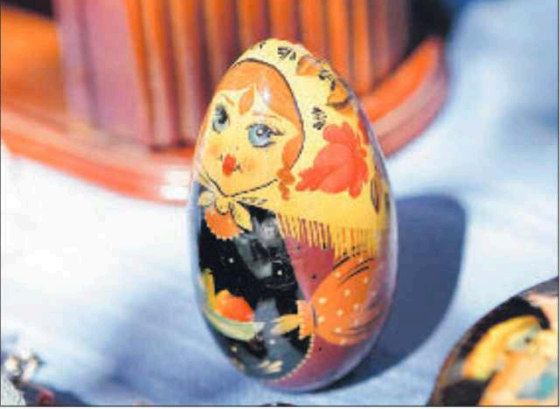
The efforts of many St. Nicholas Church parishioners, volunteering their time and hard

work, helped make the weekend festival a success, along with the contributions of many sponsors: The Slavic Store; Earl's Organic Produce; Big Basin Cafe; Kathleen Brewington, attorney at law; Alison Cingolani; Conciliar Press; Double D's Sports Grille; Fleming's Prime Steakhouse; Dan Nicholas, CLU, CLTC, Long Term Care Planner; George Nikolaou; John Simmons HyperText; Los Gatos Diner; Los Gatos Shell; Saratoga Oaks Lodge; Tom and Angela Snyder; and USA Nails.

All in all, the successful weekend event likely had folks saying, "More borscht, please." But they'll have wait until next year.



At left, custom vodka makers Jack Wirnowski, left, and his son Douglas pour some of their creations during the vodka tasting event at the Russian festival. Above, Deanna Schneyer of Texas seems to be enjoying herself while sampling the Russian vodka.



Above, traditional Russian dolls are on display during the Russian festival at St. Nicholas Orthodox Church. At right, members of the Sivka Burka Cossack Choir perform for the festival visitors.



Above, Russian souvenirs are sold during the Russian festival where 4-year-old Vladi Khitrov of Los Gatos, at left, appears to be having a pretty good time.



Traditional Russian pastry, peach pirog, was served at the Sept. 29 festival.



Zachariah Springer, left, and his godfather Dane Petersen share a toast of vodka during the Russian festival at St. Nicholas Orthodox Church of Saratoga.