



James Drennen, right, helps a customer order food at the 32nd Annual Greek Festival in Santa Cruz on Saturday.

JON WEIAND/SENTINEL

# 'Evolution of generations'

Events

9.8.13

Church traces event's roots to 1980

By CALVIN MEN

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SANTA CRUZ — While the 2013 Greek Festival is confined to one block on Church Street between Cedar and Center streets, it's packed with the country's culture.

Walking down the block between the food tents, attendees are met with sounds of the Greek language interspersed with English and the enticing aroma of fresh dishes.

The festival — which continues Sunday — was started when the Prophet Elias Greek Orthodox Church was founded in 1980 and members wanted to share their food and culture with Santa Cruz, said Sophie Moore, parish council president and event manager for the festival.

**IF YOU GO**  
2013 GREEK  
FESTIVAL

**WHEN:** Noon to 8 p.m. Sunday

**WHERE:** Church Street between Cedar and Center streets

**COST:** Free

see this evolution of generations continue the tradition."

Logistically, the kitchen prepared the food for the three-day festival. Among the ingredients were 800 pounds of calamari, 60 cases of eggplants with 20 eggplants in each and 800 pounds of ground beef, Moore said.

"That kitchen is crazy right now," she said Saturday.

Festival food preparation began in early August when members of the church prepared some dishes that were frozen and stored. While the food is cooked fresh the day

"It actually started as a small event in our (church) backyard to where it's grown today to the festival that it is," Moore said.

"My mom was one of the people that started the festival and now I'm kind of getting up there," Moore said. "My kids and grandkids are taking over so you



JON WEIAND/SENTINEL

The morning crowd enjoys the 32nd Annual Greek Festival in downtown Santa Cruz on Saturday.

of, the advanced work is necessary.

"You can't do it the same day as the festival," said Anastasia Karastmatis, head cook of the festival.

Still, Karastmatis was up at 3:30 a.m. Saturday to start cooking food for the festival and slept in a bedroom at the church for the two weeks leading up to the festival.

The majority of the food at the festival was prepared in the church's kitchen, which compares to a restaurant kitchen. There several large ovens in one corner, grills spanning most of a wall in another corner and wide preparation tables in between.

While the kitchen has the look of a restaurant, the food has the taste of a home-cooked meal.

## GREEK

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"We cook it like at home, honey," she said. "Just a bigger portion."

In the minutes leading up to the 10 a.m. opening Saturday, the kitchen was a flurry of cooks stirring pots, seasoning vegetables and labeling serving trays. The clang of silverware and dishes was occasionally interrupted with someone yelling across the kitchen in a mixture of Greek and English, asking about the status of a dish.

Outside on the street were more than a dozen booths, most of which were serving food.

Scotts Valley resident Sharon Banks was quick to answer why she was there: "the food."

At 11 a.m., the 71 year old had a tray with moussaka, a baked dish with eggplant and ground beef, and pastitsio, described as a Greek lasagna with macaroni, ground meat and cheese.

Ed Holleman drove from San Francisco with his wife to the festival after seeing it on the news.

"I haven't tried everything yet," said Holleman, 61, adding that he'd likely eat a little of each dish before the day's end.

"I'm probably going to take some home, too," he said, gesturing to a large bag hanging from his belt.

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