

In Cuisine

The old saying, “the kitchen is the heart of the home” certainly applies to the Famèe Furlane of Vancouver.

Beginning with the first banquet in 1958 when a simple traditional meal was served, through the many evolutions of the menus to the present time, our society has enjoyed an enviable reputation for gastronomic pleasures.

The first banquet was held at the Clinton Hall, which is now the home of the Famèe Furlane. After inquiries regarding, among other things, quantity per person, where to purchase products for the best quality and price, as well as length of time required to prepare meals for a large crowd, Leonilla Tesan, Maria Maniago and Rita Nozella, along with the help of some enthusiastic members, prepared the food which was served at the first Banquet. The dinner consisted of polenta (made by Romolo Pez) and tocjo (meat stew), salad (from members’ gardens), cheese, buns and crostoli, accompanied by wine which was made by the members. The polenta was ceremoniously carried into the hall in a container made from a 4x8 piece of plywood with short side panels, much to the delight of the attendees. Subsequent menus were enhanced to include antipasto, fruit and homemade sweets. As the popularity of the banquets grew and the soccer club also began to hold banquets, other members joined the cooking staff. At the end of each banquet, all unused food was taken to the Sisters of the Atonement, for distribution to the poor in the downtown area. For many years our society was well known for its popular “Polenta and Tocjo” banquets.

As the menus became more varied, finding appropriate cooking pots was something of a challenge. Petronio Olivieri loaned some pots to make risotto. Joe Toso made two aluminum pans and a large pot for soup, which are still in use today and according to all of the cooks, are indispensable!

The menu options have evolved over the years to include traditional items such as pasta, muzet, (cotechino), brovada, tripe and sausages as well as more conventional food such as scaloppini, ‘uselus schampâs’ (involtini), chicken, roast and many other items that are enjoyed today.

Summertime picnics which were very popular family events included such foods as pasta, polenta, sausages and tripe, to name a few.

Babbo Natale dinners have also become traditional annual events.

One of the most memorable events, during the more than 25 years that Leonilla Tesan spent in the kitchen, was the 1979 Congresso. Those who worked in the kitchen deboned 170 chickens and cooked 80 salmon while preparing other delectable foods. Petronio Olivieri was responsible for ordering the food. Tony de Benedetto gave the Famèe Furlane the use of his ovens, transported the cooked food in his heat equipped van to the dinner venue and then organized the servers. Many volunteers helped in serving the food to the attendees. Both the hard work and efforts by all those who helped during this event contributed to its success. It was truly a team endeavour!

Several years of working in the kitchen, as well as purchasing food, enabled Esterida Colussi to accept responsibility for the kitchen when Leonilla Tesan retired. With the help of an excellent group of ladies and men, including Beatrice Del Bianco, whose speciality is lasagna, the Famèe Furlane's reputation for culinary excellence continues to flourish. Laughingly, the ladies in the kitchen have often joked that over the years, Beatrice has made enough homemade pasta, if placed end to end, could wrap its way around the world! With the already busy schedule of banquets, showers, weddings, baptisms and other special events, were added cooking classes and food demonstrations.

During the 2004 Congresso, held in Vancouver, one of the events was a "light dinner" which was held at our hall following the Mass on Sunday afternoon. The traditional Furlan menu which was planned by Esterida Colussi, was a huge success and thanks to the hard work of all those who helped to prepare the food and serve the attendees, this event became one of the highlights of the weekend.

On November 14th, 15th and 16th of 2008, the Famèe Furlane of Vancouver celebrated its 50th Anniversary. Due to the large number in attendance, the venue for the Gala Dinner on Friday evening was the Italian Cultural Center. The Saturday event, a "Taste of Friuli" was held at the Famèe Furlane Hall, complete with traditional decorations. As was done 50 years ago, the polenta was again the focal point of the meal and was ceremoniously poured into a large circular wooden box, the size of a large round table. A buffet of traditional foods and sweets, including tocjo, muzet and brovada, frico, sausages, bacalà with white wine sauce, bacalà with anchovies, gubana (courtesy of Miretta Bordon), fritulis and pinza, among other items, was thoroughly enjoyed by all who attended. Wines from Friuli complimented the food. Following the Mass on Sunday, a quick meal of pasta was served at St. Helen's Hall prior to people attending the Cultural Evening at the Famèe Furlane Hall. On this 50th Anniversary weekend, the staff who prepared the food outdid themselves.

The annual New Year celebration continues to be one of the most successful events of the year. This is evidenced by the fact that the tickets sell out well before the event is advertised.

Heartfelt thanks are extended to everyone who has worked so diligently to prepare and serve the meals throughout these successful 50 years. In doing so, because those who worked in the kitchen were very busy behind the scenes, they frequently missed some of the special and memorable moments at various events, including members' banquets. Over the years, the Famee Furlane's excellent culinary reputation has been well earned!