Cotati Historical Society Newsletter

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Preserving Cotati's Past
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Cotati Museum Hours:
Saturday 1 - 4 P.M.
2nd Wednesday of each month 5 - 7 P.M.
Special times by appointment
Phone 707-794-0305

Learn more about Cotati history and the Cotati Museum at our **website:**
www.cotatihistoricalsociety.org

SOCIETY OFFICERS

President: Terry Dutra 795-3977
V.Pres.: Connie Martin 795-2772
Secretary: Marie McNaughton
Treasurer: Yvonne VanDyke
Historian: Prue Draper
Art Director: Judy Pagnusat
Archive Admin: Judy Gustafson

Barbecues Became Local Tradition

When we hold our fifth annual Cotati Historical Society chicken barbecue on April 14, we'll be continuing a historic tradition that made Cotati famous years ago. It started as a family picnic for St. Joseph's Catholic Church parishioners in 1940 when Father Denis Glennon was pastor.

Beverly Hahn and Doreen Ferrero helped publicize St. Joseph's popular barbecue and festival.

The first was held at Oak Grove near Sonoma; the second and third were held in Olive Grove, near Fetters Springs. World War II, with gasoline rationing and shortages, led the parish to move the annual event to the Cotati Plaza, and how it grew after that! No longer limited to St. Joseph's members, by the early 1950's it had become Northern California's largest chicken and beef barbecue, and advertised itself as "Food, Fun and Frolic for 5000". It was always held in the Plaza on the fourth Sunday in June, and crowds came from miles around.

1963 workers preparing for the 23rd BBQ. Left to right are John Fomasi, co-chairman of the chicken barbecue committee; Art Nelson, of the lamb barbecue committee; Joe Aggio, on the bean-cooking committee, and Rosalia Aggio, in charge of salad making.

Preparing for it became a year-round job, and committees held bi-monthly meetings to be sure everything got done. St. Joseph's parishioners welcomed other community members as the menu and program expanded. They cut the wood for the barbecue a year in advance so it would be nicely seasoned.

In addition to chicken, they served pit-roasted beef, and local ranchers raised four steers just for the event. Preparing the well-aged beef was a special art that required the efforts of a sizable committee who cut the meat,

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5th Annual Cotati Historical Society Old Fashioned Chicken BBQ

Sunday April 14, 2013
12 - 4 PM (Meals served until 3 PM)
Ray Miller Community Center, 216 E. School St., Cotati

Silent Auction
Live Music

Car Show
Bake Sale

$10 in advance, $12 at door
Tickets available at Chamber of Commerce Office, Cotati Exchange Bank or CHS Board Members
or by calling: (707)795-5508 or 795-3977

Barbecue Tradition Lives On

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seasoned it and wrapped it in layers of butcher paper, then burlap, and wired the bundles firmly together.

A few days before the barbecue, a deep pit was dug in the Plaza, and filled with firewood, then lit. Keeping the fire going seemed to require a lot of supervision, and men of the community were happy to hang out there through days and nights, with liberal liquid refreshments to keep them relaxed. When the coals were perfect, sheet iron was laid over the coals, the meat bundles laid on the sheet iron, covered with more sheets, and then earth was shoveled over to seal in the succulent delicacy.

Marguerite Hahn and her husband Jack were always key players in the barbecue scene. Jack often served as chairman for the day, and Marguerite, seen here selling tickets, was never far behind. She was also the town historian, and took the photos we feature today.

Another committee would be cutting the chickens – usually 1200 to 1500 of them – and preparing them for the barbecue. These would be cooked on a 40-foot long barbecue built of basalt brick lined with fire brick. According to local lore, it was the largest above-ground barbecue in Northern California. In the meantime, the women would be busy cooking more than 300 pounds of beans, making over 1000 pounds of potato salad and slicing hundreds of loaves of bread.

Fireman Glenn Nylander clowned with antique fire truck as part of the parade.

A parade of local families and businesses started the program for the day, there was a "Queen for a Day" contest, music and dancing, bazaar booths and assorted kinds of entertainment. In addition to the great food and drink and the fun of seeing friends from far and near, there were games of all kinds to keep people entertained. They all cost a bit of money, but sometimes they paid off too.

Proceeds of the barbecues paid off all debt on the church and raised money to buy land and build the new hilltop St. Joseph's Church. After reaching that goal, the workers turned their attention to other endeavors, and the huge barbecues ended. ***We are happy to revive the tradition, and we welcome volunteers, goodies for our popular bake sale and items for our silent auction. Like old St. Joseph's, this is our major fundraiser for the year.***

Welcome to our new and renewing members

Barbara Abramson, Marion Ackerman, Mark Ackerman, Marie Aggio, John Allred, May Andreoli, Erin Armstrong, Marie Baranzini, Laurie-Ann Barbour, Mary Bartlett, George & Karen Baur, Creighton Bell, Frank & Kathryn Bianchi, Jenny Blaker, Lillian Blodgett, Dick & Jo-Ann Braden, Alan Budinsky, George Bunting, Paul & Kerry Burke, Diane Canadas, Ken & Sheri Carli, Ann & Fred Carrasca, Kevin Comora, Sarah Cornelius, Ralph Cota, Chris Davis, Velma DiMeola, Julie Dinkins, Diane Dorfman, Vickie Dougan, Bob Draper, Prue Draper, Robin Draper, Terry & Wil Dutra, Jennie Falletti, Jane Ferina, Geoff & Amy Fox, Maurice & Betty Fredericks, Barbara Gegan, J. Pat Geis, Bob & Wendy Gilman, Faith Gingher, Janet Gingher, Harold Griffith, Fred Groverman, Greg Gustafson, Judy Gustafson, Martha Gustafson, F. Paul & Carolyn Hacker, Bill & Connie Hammerman, Sally Harper, Jone Hayes, Dave & Karen Heisel, Irene Hilsendager, Sage Howell, Dennis & Jennifer Hunt, Nancy Hunt, Andrew & Catharine Hutchins, Art & Vicky Ibleto, Mark Ibleto, Alice Inouye, Nancy Justis, Pat Kavanaugh, Val Kinsbury, Eric Kirchmann, Bill & Lucy Kortum, Janet & Michael Kurvers, Mark & Jan Landman, Lorraine Leivas, Mary Lou Lentz, Jeff & Janet Libarle, Syd Lundgren, Bruce, Heather & Ali Martin, Jr., Bruce & Connie Martin, Gary, Kim & Jake Martin, Kiyoko Maruyama, Mary Nell McCann, Terry & Barbara McGee, Marie McNaughton, Eleanor Miller, Jerry Miller, Millie Nibe, Kathy Jacobsen Norwood, Tom Origer, DeLoris Osborn, Ellen Ostrand, Dolores Owen, John & Anne Page, Jerry & Judy Pagnusat, Ed Patterson, Bruce Pearson, Gary & Louise Petersen, Ron & Connie Petty, Stan Poncia, Jeanne Pratt, Jim Ramsey, Lindee Reese, John Richardson, Bob & Debbie Renati, John & Anne Rock, Marjorie Rosselli, Chris Santero, Gary & Reta Santero, John & Vickie Scharer, Carl & Mary Schollmann, Tom Scott, Mike Sheehan, Joan Simon, Sonoma County Library, Spancky's, Dan & Carolyn Torliatt, Lee & Marjorie Torliatt, Pam Torliatt, Yvonne VanDyke, Barbara Jean Veronda, Dorothy Watt, Mariann Weed, Suzanne Whipple, Pamela Wilford, Carol Williams, Simone Wilson, Jack Withington, Robin Wood.

Much Appreciated DONATIONS

John Allred, Dick & Jo-Ann Braden, Paul & Kerry Burke, Fred & Ann Carrasca, Vickie Dougan, Jennie Falletti, Barbara Gegan, Pat Geis, Bob & Wendy Gilman, Faith Gingher, Janet Gingher, Martha Gustafson, Jone Hayes, Dave & Karen Heisel, Nancy Hunt, Nancy Justis, Michael & Janet Kurvers, Janet & Jeff Libarle, Bruce & Heather Martin, Jr., Terry & Barbara McGee, Marie McNaughton, Kathy Norwood, DeLoris Osborn, John & Anne Page, Bruce Pearson, Gary & Louise Petersen, Bob & Debbie Renati, John Richardson, John & Anne Rock, Gary & Reta Santero, Mike Sheehan, Carol Williams.