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Community Connection

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Bocce, food, fellowship at San Marco in Temple

At San Marco Club Italian Food Festival in Temple, one thing's as good as another

By **David Mekeel**
Reading Eagle

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Crouching down, eyes fixed on the small yellow ball at the other end of the dirt court, the thrower smoothly moved his arm forward and released the red ball.

It darted and dashed down the bumpy path, coming to rest a few inches from its target.

His teammate smiled, as his opponent nodded in recognition of a great shot.

Dozens of visitors tried their luck this weekend on the bocce ball courts at the San Marco Club in Temple during the annual Italian Food Festival.

But as the name implies, the bocce ball tournament was just a small distraction from the real meat of the festival.

Venture around the corner of the club building and it's clear why most visitors turned out: the food.

Gathered at long tables under large tents, or at round tables under small umbrellas, guests treated themselves to fine Italian fare.

From homemade lasagna to porchetta sandwiches to crespelle and stuffed olives, there wasn't much chance of leaving the festival hungry.

Even Bishop John O. Barres of the Roman Catholic Diocese of Allentown, who visited the fair Sunday, was intent on sating his appetite.

"I'm delighted to be here," he said. "It's just a wonderful bit of community spirit.

Having studied several years in Italy, Barres said he has quite a love for Italian food, adding that his favorite is carbonara.

That wasn't on the menu, but with the way guests raved about the lasagna, the bishop's taste buds were likely satisfied anyway.

"It's the best lasagna I've ever had," said Alice S. Tamalavage of Shillington. "They were not kidding when they said it was good."

Tamalavage's son Joe of Muhlenberg Township agreed, adding that he couldn't wait to taste a few more treats.

"I'm going to try the pizza next, after this settles," he said with a laugh.

The women toiling in the steamy kitchen would have been thrilled. It is, after all, their hard work that makes the food at the festival so good.

Take the lasagna: Even the dough is made by hand.

"This is not dough you buy in a store," said Chris Enslin of Muhlenberg, a volunteer selling food.

Enslin said the lasagna and stuffed olives were the big sellers.

But for Fernanda Barrell, 79, of Ontelaunee Township and her fellow cooks, the number of sales didn't really matter. Gathered in the kitchen, they just enjoyed getting a chance to get together and cook.

"It takes all day," Barrell said. "It's a pokey thing. But this is like coming to a second home."

"This is all good therapy," added Lucia Pellegrini of Temple. "Otherwise we'd go crazy sitting at home."

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Reading Eagle: Kevin Cook
Joe Tamalavage of Muhlenberg Township and his mother, Alice Tamalavage of Shillington, dine on lasagna Sunday at the San Marco Club Italian Food Festival.

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