

# FEATURE

## Naples parish turns grape fest into 'dog days'

By Mike Latona  
Staff writer

With its speciality of wieners and sauerkraut, Naples' St. Januarius Church seems more equipped to host an Oktoberfest. In reality, the parish is continuing a long tradition of providing hearty German meals during a fall event that highlights fruit.

Parish volunteers will be selling food and beverages in conjunction with the upcoming Naples Grape Festival Sept. 22-23.

"We specialize in German hot dogs with sauerkraut; people love those. Or you can have hot dogs brimming with peppers and onions," noted Corky Schoff, St. Januarius' social activities coordinator, who also organizes the food tent.

Despite the mouth-watering attractions available at the tent, Schoff said the parish does not offer the festival's most renowned dish — grape pies. "We let (other vendors) take care of that," she said with a laugh.

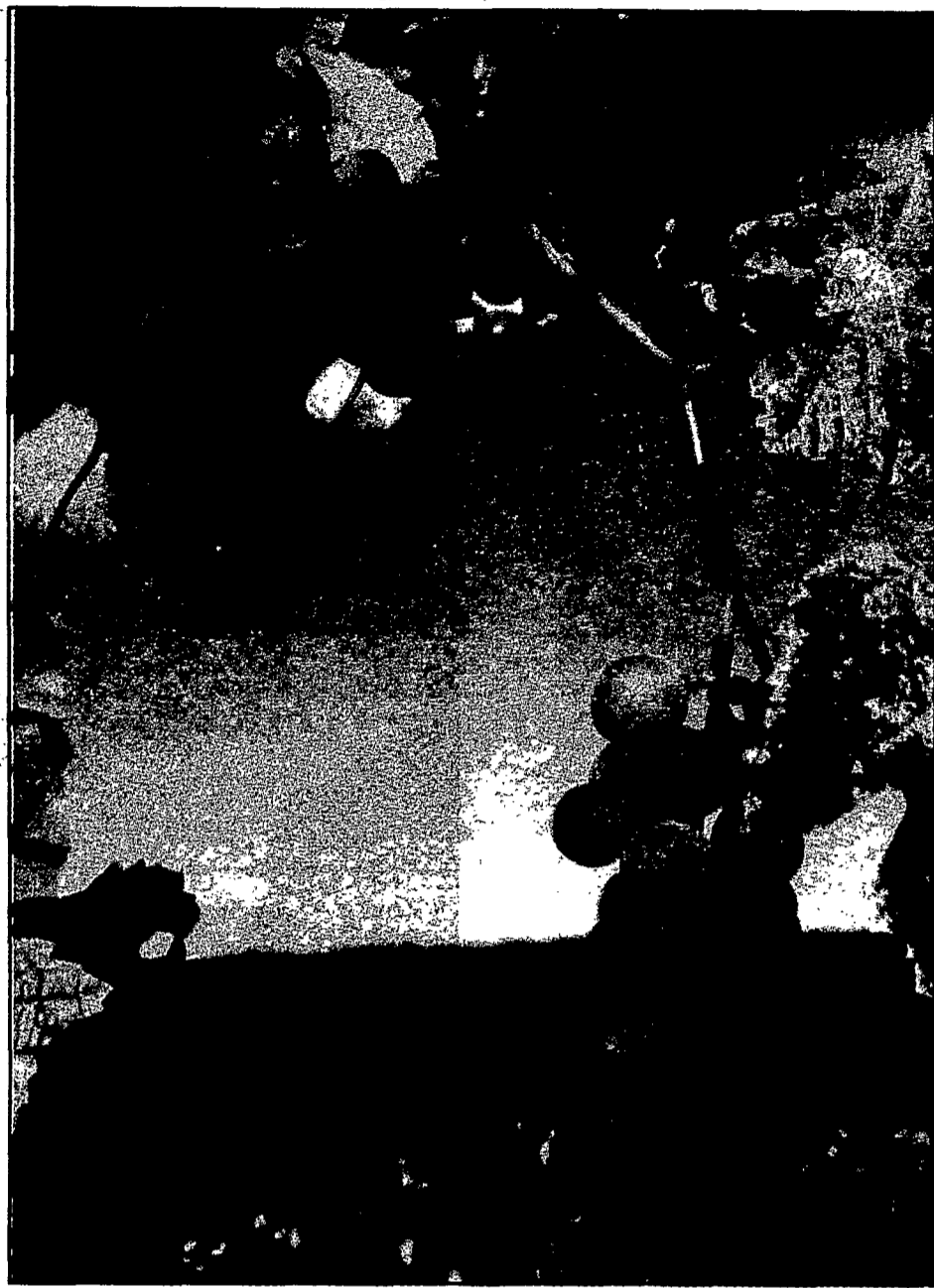
In addition to the pies, the Naples Grape Festival is well-known for extensive art exhibits and competitions, crafts and entertainment. Whereas the festival is celebrating its 40th year, Schoff noted that St. Januarius is observing its own milestone of 125 years in 2001.

Although the parish has special anniversary events planned for later this fall, Schoff said it will be business as usual during the grape festival. The St. Januarius food tent will be situated in the church driveway, 180 N. Main St. Tables and chairs will be available, or patrons can opt to eat as they walk to the grape festival's main attractions a quarter-mile away.

Schoff said the booth might offer Italian sausage this year as well. Chili, also, is a possibility if the weather is nippy. "But if it's a good hot day like we've been having, we'll stay away from that," she said.

Sandwiches will cost \$2.50 each and include all the toppings. Customers can also purchase soda, coffee and bottled water.

"We tell them 'You better eat before you go uptown, because our prices are better,'" Schoff said. She also warns diners



Andrea Dixon/Staff photographer

that business tends to be brisk, so those who wait until late afternoon risk encountering a sold-out food tent.

Schoff said the parish raised more than \$500 last year, selling an estimated 40 pounds of hot dogs over the two days. "The people come back to us every year for our German hot dogs. We sell them

to a lot of families; there may be five or six in a family," Schoff said.

The size of the crowds puts parking at a premium on festival weekend, according to St. Januarius parishioner George Horsch. "The village has probably 1,500 to 2,000 residents, and we have 30,000 to 40,000 people inundate it in the matter

of 24 to 48 hours," he said.

Because good parking near the festival is severely limited, St. Januarius emerges as a coveted piece of property. Horsch said the parish charges \$3 per car and raises more than \$1,000 on a festival weekend.

"We happen to be handy here," said Horsch, who formerly directed the parking operation and plans to volunteer again this year.

Whereas some people are indignant at being charged to park, Horsch said that many "are more than generous. They'll give a \$5 bill and won't take the change, because it's for the church. You catch a pretty good cross-section of human nature."

The lot fills up quickly, so Horsch and other volunteers use walkie-talkies to maximize the flow of cars. Among the trickier maneuvers, he remarked, is holding off festival patrons on Sunday mornings so that St. Januarius parishioners can exit the 9:30 a.m. Mass.

Horsch said he tries to be sympathetic toward the drivers, saying the most distressed people are those who "have been bumper-to-bumper for the last several miles, especially if it's a hot day."

Although portable toilets are available at the festival, Horsch said some people in dire straits have asked to use bathrooms in the church, which remains locked most of the weekend.

"I've had mothers come up pleading with me, holding their children by the hand," Horsch said, adding that he generally relents for these urgent requests.

Although the grape festival tends to turn this small Ontario County village upside down for two days, Schoff said that's fine by her.

"I don't mind the excitement," she commented. "The people really are nice that come down to these grape festivals. I don't mind it at all."

EDITORS' NOTE: The Naples Grape Festival will take place Sept. 22-23 from 10 a.m.-6 p.m. each day. For further details, call 716/374-2240. Or, access the festival link at [www.naplesvalleyny.com](http://www.naplesvalleyny.com) or e-mail at [naplesgrapefest@yahoo.com](mailto:naplesgrapefest@yahoo.com).

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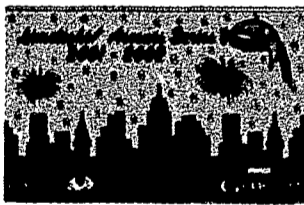


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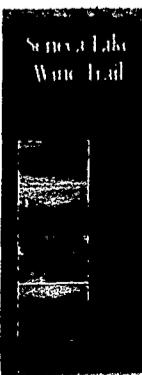
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