

Kentucky Wine and Vine Fest this week
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The Kentucky Wine and Vine Fest, to be held Friday and Saturday, will present visitors with the opportunity to experience a "unique blend of Kentucky's cherished past and exciting present," said Carola Hartley, director of Nicholasville Now!

"This experience will be so unique that it simply can't be found anywhere at any other festival in the world," she said.

The event, which was recently proclaimed Kentucky's official state wine festival, will be held for the second year. It is actually the only wine festival in the state.

The festival is significant for Jessamine County's heritage because the first commercial wine vineyard in the nation was established here in 1799 by a Swiss immigrant, John James Dufour. There are currently several vineyards and a winery in Jessamine County, as well as a wine shop in downtown Nicholasville. Building on this tradition, the downtown promotional group Nicholasville Now! established the wine festival as a one-day event last spring. This year's festival has been expanded to two days to include more events.

"There will be so much to see, hear, and most of all, taste and enjoy, that we couldn't pack it into just one day," Hartley said.

The events on Friday, May 13, will be held at Connemara Golf Links. The festival golf tournament is scheduled to start at noon and will be finished by 5 p.m., with an amateur wine competition running from 1 to 5 p.m. The wine social, dinner and dance will be held from 6 to 11 p.m., and will include a Kentucky wine tasting, amateur wine competition announcement of awards and dancing to music of the Blues Brothers, which will be performed by a band from Louisiana with impersonators of the 1970s comedy-blues duo made famous by Saturday Night Live actors John Belushi and Dan Ackroyd.

On Saturday, craft booths will be open at 10 a.m., but wine tents won't start admission until noon. There will be two tents, one presenting wines from Kentucky, and the other from the rest of the world, including many parts of the United States.

"There will be seven vineyards from Kentucky pouring their wines, and people will be able to compare them to wines from other states and different countries," said Hartley.

A \$10 "all day" pass will be good for entering both tents, and it will include 10 wine samples.

Cooking-with-wine demonstrations are scheduled for 1 p.m., 1:30 p.m., 2 p.m. and 5 p.m., and will be led by nationally recognized chefs Joseph Arvin and John Arnett. Sherrie Keller Pauley from Three Suns will be making appetizers, and entrées will be prepared by chef Taylor Rye of Bellini's Restaurant in Lexington.

Watching the chefs cook is free, but a small fee will be charged for eating what they make.

Another highlight of the festival is its auction, where a variety of items, including wines and other spirits, will be up for bidding. The silent auction will be held all day until 4 p.m., when the live auction will take place. Steve Cocanaugher will be the auctioneer.

Also on the program is classic car cruise-in. Musical performances will be from 12:30 to 8 p.m. and will range from bluegrass to country and blues and jazz.

Stringtown, a bluegrass band from Anderson County, will be on stage from 12:30 to 2:30 p.m. Country music artist Len Doolin, a native of Garrard County, will be singing from 2:30 to 4 p.m.

Bobby McIntyre, a local D.J., will be spinning records on the Central Bank parking lot at the corner of Oak and Main streets from 1 to 4 p.m. At the same location, the Blues Brothers impersonators will be performing with their band Deep Dish from 4:30 to 6 p.m.

The evening will end with jazz performances by radio personality Jack Pattie's Mambo Combo of Lexington from 6 to 8 under the tent at the festival site on York Street.

Hartley said that last year's festival was a big success, but this year's program will provide many more opportunities to learn about local culture and have fun.

"Just as a wine improves with age, this year's festival experience has become even more fantastic. It should be on everyone's 'must go' list," she said. "I would encourage visitors to attend the Friday events, and then to enjoy the day-long activities on Saturday."

Ticket information

Admission to the festival is free, but there will be \$10 tickets to get into wine tents. Hundreds of wines will be featured.

The Friday night dinner at Connemara is \$35, and includes the wine social as well as a full meal. To reserve tickets, call Connemara at 885-4331 or Nicholasville Now! at 881-3820.

Cooking demonstrations are scheduled for 1 p.m., 1:30 p.m., 2 p.m. and 5 p.m. Attending is free, but there will be a small charge for cooking demonstration samples.

For more information, call Nicholasville Now! at 881-3820.