

FESTA 2008

Well what was set to be the largest event on the Croatian community calendar in South Australia certainly did not disappoint. Saturday the 22nd of November saw the 5th annual "Festa - the Croatian Food and Wine Festival" come to life and with over 6,000 people in attendance, the Croatian Sports Centre certainly became alive and full of atmosphere.

The morning of the 'Festa' was a daunting one with only grey heavy clouds in sight and not a sight of blue over the whole of Adelaide; it was a bit of a worry for our festival and the crowd attendance. Regardless, our team of volunteers continued to push on with positive attitudes to make the day, regardless of anything out of our hands, an absolute success.

The official opening began with me as the MC for the day introducing all our distinguished guests, President of the Croatian Sports Centre Mr Tony Kilic, co-directors of the 'Festa' Mr Jason Gilli and Mr Zeljko Kuzman and Croatian Community Priest Father Luka Pranjic. We were truly thrilled to have such a wide range of VIP's present on the day, including the South Australian Premier the Hon. Mike Rann, other MP's, sports stars Ivan Maric and Steven Salopek and thoroughbred owner and tuna fisherman Tony Santic amongst many others. This demonstrated to us all, just how interested people were in our community and ultimately how much of an impact we as Croats in South Australia have in all aspects of the wider South Australian community.

With all the formalities out of the way, lunch was beginning to be served from our traditional kitchens and the aromas of all the food were just amazing. Meals ranging from sarma, cevapcici and lepinja, squid, octopus, prawns, bull and other meats on the spit were beginning to be enjoyed by our growing crowd and this certainly was a great starting point to a brilliant day. The 'Konoba' was also a massive hit on the day, with the bar only selling Croatian wines, beer and spirits. It was certainly a great way for the general public to have a drink or two and get in to the spirit amongst all the Croats around them. Other than the kitchen and bars being flat out, our gate men were absolutely astonished by the number of people driving through the doors. At one stage, we made it on to all the local radio stations because there had been a back up of traffic blocking one of South Australia's busiest roads! And WOW - they ALL came to the 'Festa'!

As the crowds grew, the entertainers became excited and so they all put on amazing shows! With three folkloric dance groups present on the day, it was wonderful to see the beauty of our culture shine through. HFS Lenek, Hrvatska Zora - Folklorni Ansambl and KUD Hrvatski Pleter each performed brilliantly and we were so lucky to have each group in their own brand new costumes from Croatia. Our guests from Melbourne, Hrvatska Zora performed two numbers for us - 'Baranja' and 'Lika'. 'Lika' was performed for only the second time by the group and in their

new costumes. Lenek performed their traditional crowd favourite 'Prigorje' in their newly imported costumes and they certainly looked amazing. Lenek was also awarded by co-director Mr Zeljko Kuzman, a plaque in recognition of the 30th anniversary for their contribution to the Croatian Community in South Australia. The last group to perform was our older ladies and gentlemen from KUD Hrvatski Pleter. This group was amazing considering all of them had been working hard in kitchen since the early hours of the morning and still managed to come out to perform their medley of dances from Slavonija. Amongst the folkloric performances, were other entertainers including local band 'Lero' who were the main act and certainly didn't disappoint - playing all day! We were also treated to our folkloric bands from Hrvatski Zora and Lenek's '6 Becari' both performing great sets for the crowd with traditional string instruments. They were followed by Father Luka and Goran Lovrinov performing a great set of Croatian hits. The day was topped off by Cro Fest 2006 winner Joso Bacic singing a set to finish off the outside part of the days program. But before the end of the program outside, the crowd was amazed with a massive fireworks show, donated by Zeljko and Nikica Kuzman and wow - it was impressive! The show was amazing and certainly a great way to top of what had been a day full of expectations being exceeded and overall a day where the whole community was impressed and most definitely proud to be a part of it.

The 'Festa' afterparty then made its debut in the main club rooms with three Melbourne based DJ's present. DJ Matt, DJ Delco and DJ Wogboy all pleased the crowd with the favourite dance floor and barfly hits. By this stage of the night, everyone was partying the night away! Even people from the older generation who were more than welcome to stay but prior to the event said "oh no, that's not for me" were there partying the night away and having a drink to celebrate the success of the event.

Overall, the day was one which will not be forgotten for a long time. Our young committee feel a massive sense of pride and appreciation for how the day was run and extend our heartfelt gratitude to all who supported us in making the day the most successful event held in the Croatian Sports Centre's history! Events of this scale are not possible without the support of countless sponsors, donations from the community and a massive volunteer base who each gave up a part of their day to make the overall event a huge success!

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