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dyngus day dispatch

an eddytorial

Days before the Dyngus Day Festival two years ago we were stopped dead in our tracks. At first, the “experts” told us, it would be just for two weeks. We even had hopes of doing a “Dyngus Day Do Over” to coincide with Pope John Pauls 100th birthday a month later. But now, more than one hundred weeks later, the entire world seems to be changing right before our very eyes. Things we took for granted can no longer be looked at the same way. Today everything is being questioned. It appears that nothing is, as it seems. But the shift that is occurring cannot be denied. You can feel it in your heart and in your soul.

People naturally seem resistant to change, but change is constant. Change is mother nature’s mantra. The pussy willow bush lays dormant for months after shedding its leaves to sit idle though a cold winter only to resurrect and pop open with furry buds signaling a new season before sprouting leaves again to soak up the suns rays. As much as humans resist change, change can be good, albeit sometimes painful. Often people become complacent in certain patterns or behaviors that are detrimental to health or well being. A sedentary individual benefits when he changes his lifestyle and becomes active for example, even though the exercise may hurt at first.

As we grow we learn. As we learn we adapt. Babies learn to crawl but soon re-

alize, walking is easier so they change their method of movement. We learn to walk and before we know it, we run.

And so it is with the annual springtime revelry we call Dyngus Day. Truth be told, our seasonal celebration has been going through constant change since the very beginning when we began this festival sixteen years ago. We’ve added venues, bands, new communities, social media and thousands of revelers that are now proud of their ancestral lineage.

But it was the parade that seemed to attract the attention. More than the polka dancing, or the pierogi, even more than the piwo, the Dyngus Day Parade became a rallying point for Poles. Which is why last year in spite of the “authorities” threats we decided to stage a parade anyway. Granted it was nothing like what we have come to know over the years, however we felt it was important to show the world that the spirit of Polonia was and always will be at the forefront of humanities desire for freedom and liberty. We were willing to stand up for our God given rights. Not that last years “parade” was confrontational, it was simply meant to demonstrate the insatiable thirst for freedom that is part of our Slavic DNA.

However it’s important to make sure that we don’t lose focus and keep the experience of the parade as we intended it to be right from the very beginning.

The parade was always meant to be different and quirky. How could it not be? It’s origins lie in an observance that involves swatting each other with pussy willow branches and sprinkling water on members of the opposite sex. But here in Buffalo we have taken that strange observance to a whole new level. The parade has generated international awareness for our city and its huge Polish population. They may be generations removed from the immigrants that once came here looking for freedom but they are still a formidable force representing nearly a third of the population of our region. And now we have thousands of individuals of all ethnic backgrounds converging on a neighborhood that once laid claim to being one of the largest Polish communities in the world.

The parade brought people in but the parade is just one part of a multi faceted experience. And the vision for that experience is one of authenticity, uniqueness, family friendliness and safety. In addition to fostering ethnic pride the purpose of the Dyngus Day Buffalo Parade was to expose the opportunity that a forgotten Buffalo neighborhood offered to the entire region. Yes we wanted to spread the message that Polish history was filled with courage and perseverance, but also that the future was bright and filled with hope. We wanted to reclaim our old streets. Not just for our

past but for our future. And we wanted to do it in a respectful manner, without it turning into just a boozy bacchanal.

Three years into the parade we knew the side streets of Historic Polonia simply weren’t wide enough to fit the trucks and floats filled with red and white clad revelers. But now we have out grown the path again and need a wider expanse. Which is why we have changed the parade route. This year the parade will run down Broadway from Memorial Drive to Fillmore Avenue. We realize that change is inevitable & is a part of growth.

In our constant quest to make this the biggest and best we are very happy to welcome to our team, our new parade coordinator Wendy Higgins (although she’s not really new). In fact as president of the Polish Cadets in Buffalo’s Black Rock neighborhood, Wendy has been part of our Dyngus family for many years. Her positive energy, warm heart, team spirit, infectious smile & organizational skills make her the perfect person to lead our parade into a new era. Since it’s inception we knew this had to be more than a bunch of people marching down a street. It had to be fun, different, and interactive but as it grew we also knew it had to be family friendly & most importantly it had to be safe. Wendy has proven herself to be a team player with vision & we are thrilled that she is on our team.

And so as we begin to look at life with new eyes we realize no matter what your lineage, together we are Dyngus strong. Remember Dyngus is a spirit of renewal and hope. Around here we know Dyngus is more than a day, it’s a state of mind. And that will never change.

Na Zdrowie

Eddy Dobosiewicz
Dyngus Day Buffalo



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Mission Statement

Dyngus Day LLC in partnership with public and private organizations, provides marketing and event management support to Dyngus Day celebrations and participating venues throughout the Buffalo Niagara regions and across the United States. Dyngus Day, LLC promotes public awareness and branding of Buffalo N.Y. as the Dyngus Day Capital of the World.

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what is dyngus day?

a pussy willow primer

So, how do you explain to a novice, that there is a day every year when people actually chase one another while brandishing pussy willow branches, trying to swat each other to show their affection, then reciprocating that pursuit by dousing the other with water? While keeping a straight face that is.

Well, it's really quite simple. Just picture Fat Tuesday on the other end of Lent. It's just a party signifying the end of Lent the day after Easter as opposed to the day before lent starts on Fat Tuesday. The ancient roots of the post Lenten bash known as Dyngus Day had their start in pagan rituals signifying the beginning of the growing season but over the centuries, those rituals have evolved into a whole different experience. Especially in Buffalo, NY.

Historically a Polish-American tradition, Smigus-Dingus or as we call it, Dyngus Day, celebrates the end of the often restrictive observance of Lent and the joy of Easter. Over the decades, here in Western New York, Dyngus Day has become a wonderful holiday to celebrate Polish-American culture, heritage and traditions.

There are many stories that attempt to explain the origins of the day. Many Polish religious customs date back to pre-Christian, Slavic practices. The custom of pouring water

is an ancient spring rite of cleansing, purification, and fertility. The same is true of the complimentary practice of switching with pussy willow branches. Since 966 A.D., Dyngus Day has been associated with the baptism of Prince Mieszko I. Tradition states that Prince Mieszko I along with his court were baptized on Easter Monday when he adopted Christianity as the national religion of Poland. Thus, Dyngus Day and its rites of sprinkling with water have become a folk celebration, in thanksgiving for the fact that the first king of Poland was baptized into Christianity, bringing Catholicism to Poland. In more modern times, the tradition continued when farm boys in Poland wanted to attract notice from the girls of their choice. It was customary to throw water and hit the girls on their legs with twigs or pussy willow branches, cologne was used instead of water, by the more gallant lads. The ladies would reciprocate by throwing dishes & crockery and Tuesday was their day of revenge, imitating the same tactics. These days they would probably be arrested for such frivolity.

Where is Dyngus Day Celebrated?

Buffalo, NY is officially the Dyngus Day capital of the World, hosting the largest concentration of festival locations, polka bands and Polish tradi-

tions in the nation. Although the custom of such a quirky post Lenten celebration is based in Polish tradition, this city, situated on the south eastern shores of Lake Erie, has truly embraced this ancient custom and made it it's own. Some smaller events have been exported from Buffalo into other communities where Polish-Americans have settled however there is no dispute that if you truly want to Dyngus there is no other place than Buffalo to do so. Ironically, it's not widely observed in Poland. But we're working on it.

Pussy Willows or Water?

This is a yearly debate among Dyngus Day revelers. The tradition holds that on Easter Monday boys would sprinkle the girls with water and tap them with pussy willows. On Easter Tuesday, the women would return the favor. At modern Dyngus Day parties it is common practice that both men and women trade water splashing and pussy willow spanking equally.

Why use pussy willows?

Pussy willows play a major part in Buffalo's Dyngus Day celebrations as men and women flirt with playful "taps." Branches of the plant are used, as the pussy willow is one of the first "budding" plants of spring. This like the use of water is directly related to the emerging "life" associated with a new growing season.





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TWO BUFFALO SABRES TICKETS + BACIK PRODUCTS + GIFT CERTIFICATE TO STO LAT

ready set march

in a new direction

The official definition of parade is; a large public procession, usually including a marching band and often of a festive nature, held in honor of an anniversary, person, event, etc.

In the case of the Annual Dyngus Day Parade, here in Buffalo, it could simply be defined in one word. FUN!!! What started out as a rag tag group of passionate Poles with a few flags, a couple of pickup trucks and a band on a trailer, has turned into a big splash of Polish pride surfing a sea of red and white. Floats resembling medieval ships, smoke spewing dragons, fire trucks with sirens blazing and hoses squirting, polka music blaring and families sharing memories and laughter as they stroll through the neighborhood waving to smiling crowds of young and old alike. Everyone from seasoned citizens to wide eyed urchins gather on the curbs to watch the festive springtime pageantry pass them by. Who doesn't like a parade? Not anyone that has ever been to the Dyngus Day Parade in Buffalo NY, that's for sure.

But this is not your typical parade. Our parade is about fun, and frivolity. If there is any show of strength it's the strength of friendship and family. The tug of the forgotten neighborhood where so many people once lived and worked seems to draw people back, certainly to remember, but



also to reinvent. This parade acts as a bridge from the past to the future. A generational gangplank allowing stories to become interactive. It's one thing for your Dziadzia to tell you about the fun he had with the Holy Name Society bowling team. It's another to actually go to the same lanes and do the same thing. An even better way to experience the parade is by participating in it. Whether it's building floats, designing costumes or just walking through the streets holding a flag or banner with your families name, the Dyngus Day Buffalo parade, is a great way to bond and connect with family and friends.

Relatives now gather from all over the world to take part in the revelry. The Easter holiday gives loved ones an added reason to reunite in WNY and stay the extra day or two to take part in something that not only draws the clan together, it creates life long memories for them and their offspring. They do it as a way to share an ancestral bond, to instill in their children a sense of history, and dignity along with ethnic and familial pride. It's been inspirational to see this parade grow from the small group at its inception to one of the biggest annual events in the region. In fact the event continues to generate more participation every year, not only from people and organizations that actually take part in

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the parade but onlookers as well. The crowds that lined the streets of the historic Polonia District have grown dramatically. This surge of humanity has made it necessary to once again change the staging area and the actual route of the parade in order to make sure that residents and business owners of the neighborhood are not adversely affected because their streets are blocked for hours. It's even more important to us that everyone stay safe while celebrating the arrival of the spring season. As such, we needed to alleviate the congestion that was created at certain points along the former parade route with big trucks and floats trying to make their way through large crowds gathered at intersections of a neighborhood that was originally designed when the preferred method of transportation was the horse and buggy. Although we still have horses in our parade, we now have trucks and trailers and cars and motorcycles and it became evident that we needed to tweak the route to avoid those choke points to ensure the safety and well being of all those involved. So this year we have moved our parade division staging areas from the narrow side streets of the old neighborhood to the wide expanse of Memorial Drive. Parade participants will still check in at the traffic circle at Paderewski and Memorial Drive but rather than cramming the floats onto Clark, Sears or Playter streets parade participants will line up on both sides of Memorial Drive from the circle down to Broadway. When the parade begins at 5 pm it will head west on Broadway to Fillmore Avenue. After the pussy willow procession ends (usually around 6:30), spectators or parade participants



can continue in their regularly scheduled Dyngus delights whether it be at one of the participating family owned taverns, Church halls or the massive festival grounds and tent.

Now if family, friends and fun isn't enough of an incentive to take part in the Dyngus Day Buffalo parade how about a chance to win some really cool prizes? As long as the parade was going to reinvent itself with a new route and staging area, we thought it would be fun to give all of our parade participants a chance to win some great stuff generously donated to us by our sponsors. This year anyone that registers to be part of the Dyngus Day Buffalo parade will automatically be entered into a drawing for a huge gift basket filled with everything from Belvedere Polish vodka, Bacik imported foods, Buffalo Sabres tickets, gift certificates from Morluskis, Sto Lat, Happy Swallow and Tops, and much more. The winner will be drawn at our post parade awards party.

Critics complain that the neighborhood is not Polish any longer. The Poles fled and the area is different. Why do we bother?

We do it because we know who we are and where we come from. We are proud of our history and our ancestry! And undoubtedly, so are the thousands that gather to celebrate this annual affair regardless of their ethnic background. Whether you're riding a bike, on rollerskates, walking with an organization, or standing on the curb cheering with a pussy willow branch, it doesn't matter if your DNA proves your lineage from somewhere other than Eastern Europe, because everybody's Polish on Dyngus Day.



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EASTER MONDAY MASS
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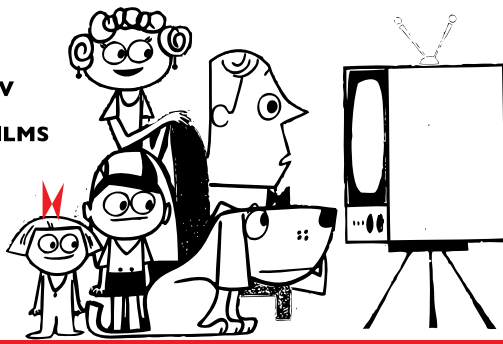
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Dyngus Day Buffalo without a doubt has to be one of the most unique ethnic festivals in the nation maybe even the world. When you combine pussy willow spanking, water splashing, accordion squeezing, polka dancing plus one of the most unusual parades ever to march down any street or boulevard, then turn them all into one event spread out in numerous venues throughout the city and region, it all makes for one thoroughly unconventional good time. There's no doubt that it's all fun and games, but we're very serious about having fun responsibly. And that means no drinking and driving. That's why Liberty Cab, courtesy of our sponsors Dyngus Day Buffalo, WEBR, Belvedere vodka, and Tyskie beer have provided us discount vouchers to get home safe and sound.

So to insure everyone's safety and well being, all participating Dyngus Day venues will have free discount vouchers to give affected partygoers safe transit home. All you have to do is ask at any participating venue. Or better yet, simply download the Riide app and use the special promo code DYNGUS to receive \$10 off of your first ride.

When Dyngus Day Buffalo sought out a transportation partner this year, the search didn't last very long because of Bill Yuhnke, president of Liberty Yellow Cab. Bill is a life long Western New Yorker

who not only understands the whole idea behind the annual Dyngus Day celebration, he knows the streets of the city like the back of his hand. (Which can come in handy for a guy that runs the biggest taxi company in the area). He and Liberty have been serving the people of WNY for well over fifty years. However not only does he know his way around town, he knows the people of the town, because he's one of us. Bill understands our way of life, our traditions and customs. When he heard that we needed help making sure everyone was safe on Dyngus Day, he told us to relax because he had it covered. You see Liberty Cab, not is not just a huge fleet of comfortable cars used to transport people, it's a squadron of vehicles operated by drivers that act as goodwill ambassadors for the Nickel City.

Yuhnke himself is one of our city's strongest ambassadors. He uses his taxicab operation to promote a positive image of both the taxicab industry and the City of Buffalo as well. He often likes to say "When you're a tourist or a visitor to our city, odds are the first and last person you're going to see, is going to be a taxi driver". Always eager to support local events and help out charitable causes, his positive efforts have won him national recognition. In fact in 2004 Mr. Yuhnke was named the TLPA Taxicab Small Fleet Operator of The Year.

Whether you are looking for a ride into the city to see the parade or need a safe lift back home after the festivities are over, Liberty Cab is just the ticket to get you there safe and sound. And when it's time to go, it's time to go. At the end of the night after all the polka partyers are pooped out and the pussy willow spanking has stopped, all the drivers have been instructed to take people home and not to another party spot. So if you think you're going to enroll one of our drivers in another chorus of the Beer Barrel Polka or Who Stole the Kiszka, think again. Safety is first and foremost with these guys. Besides most of them can't carry a tune very well anyway.

So if you are looking for safe transport to a Dyngus Day destination or a ride to a concert or a game downtown just call their dispatch desk or click their RIIDE app and Liberty Cab will handle the rest.

Liberty Cab drivers will take you home and tell you Dobra Noc, you just have to be nice to the driver and show up for work on time on Tuesday.

"Dobra Noc" (dobra nohts), by the way, means Good Night in Polish. And that's exactly what we want you to have. Actually we want you to have a good time and a great night. By getting everyone home safe and sound that's exactly what it will be. Na Zdrowie.



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stan tall

faith is stronger than time

The neighborhood on the far east side of Buffalo that many refer to now as the Historic Polonia district was once the second largest Polish colony in the world, outside of Warsaw, Poland. The area was made up of a thriving business district that rivaled that of downtown, surrounded by thousands of modest but well kept homes that housed hundreds of thousands of people who worked in the factories, slaughterhouses and related industries located nearby. It had banks, retail stores, bakeries, medical facilities, police and fire stations, theatres, taverns, social clubs, the "colony" even had it's own newspapers. It was a city within a city. A lot has changed since the Historic Polonia districts heyday but we are getting ahead of our self. For this story we need to go back to the beginning.

It's hard to imagine today, but in the mid 1800s the area surrounding the intersection of Fillmore Avenue and Broadway Street (formerly Batavia St) was open and rural. The outskirts of a city that was on the move. In the 1870's Poles were immigrating into the United States but Buffalo was merely a connection for them as they made their way westward to places like Detroit and Chicago where there were already established Polish communities. Prior to 1870 there were only about 150 Poles living in Buffalo. A local real estate devel-

oper named Joseph Bork owned a large tract of land in that area. He noticed that Polish communities in other cities centered around a church. So he donated a parcel of land to the Diocese of Buffalo with the intention that it be the location of a new Polish parish. In 1873 the newly ordained Rev. Jan Pitass formed Saint Stanislaus parish and immediately erected a modest church building at the corner of Townsend and Peckham Streets. Now with a parish organized, the Poles that were passing through the city finally had a reason to stay. Bork seized this opportunity and immediately began constructing single story frame houses to house the growing Polish community. Within three months he had built 400 such cottages. By 1879 there were 2,500 residents in this new Polonia community. By 1881 over 9,500 Poles now called Buffalo their home.

With the rapid Polish population explosion the small church could no longer accommodate the burgeoning congregation so work began on the Romanesque structure that we know today. Ground breaking took place in August of 1882 and in September of 1883 the parishioners began worshipping in the completed basement hall of the new church. The upper level of the church was completed (except for the towers) in October of 1886. The \$100,000 construction cost of the building was entirely financed through

volunteer contributions.

In 1881 the Felician Sisters took on the task of educating Polonias youth which until then was handled by three lay teachers. At first the nuns undertook the teaching of girls only. Eventually a new building was constructed to accommodate both boys and girls, and continued as a center of education for hundreds of thousands of children until the building was demolished after the last class graduated in 1971. The school continued to operate across the street in the former Bishop Colton High School until dwindling enrollment eventually forced the closing of the parish school in 2008.

Much of the St. Stanislaus campus that we know today was created under the watchful eye of the third pastor of the parish, Rt. Rev. Peter J. Adamski. When he was assigned to lead his east side flock in 1945, one of Adamskis main concerns was fostering higher education for the youth of the community. It was he who initiated a high school program for the parish school which eventually evolved into the building of Bishop Colton high school for the girls and Bishop Ryan High school in nearby Kaisertown for the boys. He made many improvements in all the parish buildings but his crowning achievement was the construction of a brand new social center in 1960. He retired in 1974 and died in 1982. Years after his death the

Social Center was renamed in his honor and was home to one of the busiest and longest running Dyngus Day celebrations in the city until Covid fear induced shutdowns swept the entire world.

In spite of dwindling parish enrollment due to the suburban flight that took place in the 70s, 80s and 90s, Saint Stanislaus has maintained it's rightful role as the Mother church for western New York's Polonia. Many noteworthy dignitaries and heads of state have visited the house of worship while in town to gather support from or gain favor with Buffalo's Polonia. The support of the Polish community in Buffalo was very important both economically and politically. The sheer numbers of people that were part of this Diaspora was something that could not be ignored. Gerald Ford visited the church in his quest to get to the White House, Lech Walesa attended mass here and Cardinal Karol Wojtyla said mass here before becoming the leader of the church as Pope John Paul 2.

After Adamskis retirement the church was led into the new century under the leadership of the much beloved Rev. Msgr. John Gabalski who fought very hard to keep the parish school open and solvent. It was no easy task. Although it began before he was appointed pastor, the dissolution of the area happened during his tenure. As dedicated as he was to the school he was equally passionate about the organizations associated with the church. Groups like the Knights of Columbus and the Saint Stan's Athletic Club knew they could count on Gabalski's support. He knew the importance of social interaction to keep the community engaged with the church.

After Gabalski's sudden passing in 2003, Saint Stanislaus parish, under the direction of Bishop Edward Grosz, went through

an extensive renovation of the entire campus including the church, rectory, convent, social center and school. New acrylic clocks were installed in the illuminated towers and the historic Johnson organ in the choir loft was restored to its original condition.

In 2009 Father Thaddeus Bocianowski was appointed as the seventh pastor of Saint Stanislaus church. He held the reins of parish leadership until 2015. That was the year that the Pauline Fathers assumed the role of leading the flock. Nine years earlier they had taken on the herculean task of keeping Corpus Christi Church open just four blocks away. The current pastor Father Mariusz Dymek recently returned to replace Father Michal Czyzewski as the spiritual leader of both parishes since the two parishes combined when the previous vicar Father Tomasz Wilk had to take an unexpected medical leave. The Pauline Fathers have done remarkable things at Corpus Christi and their leadership has inspired new hope for the Mother Church of Buffalo's Polonia.

As the oldest Polish Parish in New York state nears it's 150th anniversary the church towers of St. Stan's continue to stand watch over a neighborhood that grew out of a desolate mudflat and marshland to become one of the most powerful Polish communities in the world. The spiritual fortress stood witness to it's fading and slow re-awakening as a now diverse neighborhood comprised of numerous nationalities and religions. In some ways the steeples signify hope that the abandonment, poverty and blight that overtook the neighborhood shall pass and that the faith that built this once mighty neighborhood will live to fight another day.



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Monday, April 18

Dyngus Day
HISTORIC POLONIA

Corpus Christi Church Pre-Parade Party

Family Friendly
Official Easter Monday
Catholic Mass
Holy Mass **11:30AM**
Free Pre-Parade
Party **NOON-5PM**
Kids Activities & Games
Authentic DJ with
DJ Red **12-9PM**
Live Music with Smash **1-4PM**
Authentic Food
Polish Bar Serving
Polish Beers and Wine
Admission Free **NOON-5PM**
Corpus Christi Athletic Club
169 Sears St, Buffalo
Historic Polonia
716-896-1050

Corpus Christi Church Post Parade Party

21 And Over
Dyngus Day Party
Live Music with
Mon Valley Push **6PM**
Authentic DJ with
DJ Red **12-9PM**
Authentic Polish Food
and Desserts
Polish Bar Serving
Polish Beers and Wine
Admission \$15 or Free
with Pussy Willow Pass
Party Begins **6-11PM**
169 Sears St Buffalo
Historic Polonia
716-896-1050

The Happy Swallow

Family Friendly



Dyngus Day Party
Live Music with
Dave Gawronski **5-8PM**
Authentic Polish Kitchen **Noon**
Authentic Polish Bar
Admission Free
Doors Open **Noon**
1349 Sycamore St, Buffalo
Historic Polonia
716-894-4854

Arty's Bar & Grill

21 And Over
Dyngus Day Party
Authentic Polish
Sound System
Authentic Food
Admission Free
Doors Open **Noon**
508 Peckham St, Buffalo
Historic Polonia
716-856-6027

The Broadway Market

Family Friendly
Dyngus Day Party
Authentic Music
Mon Valley Push **1-4PM**
Polish Beer, Food and More
Noon-4PM
Admission Free
Doors Open **8AM**
999 Broadway St, Buffalo
Historic Polonia
716-893-0705

Pussy Willow Park Main Stage

21 And Over
Shaken & Sturred
Authentic Polish Food by Polish
Cadets featuring
Bacik Kielbasa
Tops Markets
Babuszka Brunch **Noon-1PM**
Mimoski's and Baba Kartofflana
Food Truck Alley
Live Music with Kielbasa Kings
from Dearborn MI, **1PM-7PM**
Polka Legend
Jimmy Sturr Orchestra
featuring Johnny Karas
& Chris Caffery **7:00-11PM**
Official Dyngus Gear Sold Here
Admission \$15 or Free with
Pussy Willow Pass

Doors Open **Noon**
111 Memorial Drive
Historic Polonia
716-833-5211

Macky's Shamrock Room

21 And Over
Dyngus Day Party
Authentic Polish Food
Polish Drink Specials
Live Music **4-Midnight**
Pre-Parade
Decorating Party **3PM**
Admission Free
Doors Open **2PM**
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Historic Polonia
716-883-7383

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and Kickoff **5PM**
Broadway Street
Historic Polonia
OUTER POLONIA

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21 And Over
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Authentic Live Music
Polka DJ **10AM-Noon**
Buffalo Touch **Noon-4PM**
Polka DJ **4-6PM**
Lenny Gomulka and
Chicago Push **6-10PM**



Authentic Polish Food
\$5 Bloody Mary and Mimosa
Specials **10AM-Noon**
Admission \$15 or Free
with Pussy Willow Pass
Doors Open **10AM**
2437 William Street
Cheektowaga
Outer Polonia
716-464-3484

Porky's Amber Lounge

21 And Over
Dyngus Day Party
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Authentic Music
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Kielbasa Sandwiches
Admission Free
Doors Open **8AM**
2028 Clinton St, Kaisertown
Outer Polonia
716-238-3461

R Bar & Grill

21 And Over
Dyngus Day Party
Authentic Live Music
DJ Willam Rogowski **2-8PM**
Polish Platter Available
2PM-Sold Out
Featuring Belvedere & Tyskie
Admission Free
Doors Open **Noon**
2139 Broadway, Sloan
Outer Polonia
716-894-1336

Polish Cadets

Family Friendly
Dyngus Day Party
Authentic Live Music



Tom Mrocza & Music Box 4
Traditional Folk Dance
Polish Heritage Dancers
Polish Spirits featuring
Belvedere Vodkas
Authentic Polish Food Specials
featuring Bacik Kielbasa **1PM-5PM**
Admission \$15 or Free
with Pussy Willow Pass
Doors Open **1PM**
927 Grant St, Black Rock
Outer Polonia
716-875-3211

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Family Friendly Smigus Dymek
Authentic Live Music
with Buffalo Good Times
with Special Appearance
from Accordion Bill
and Danny Neaverth **6-10PM**
Authentic Polish Kitchen **4-6PM**
Admission \$15 or Free
with Pussy Willow Pass
Doors Open **4PM**
1833 Clinton St, Kaisertown
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716-984-0051

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Live Authentic Music with
Dave Gawronski **12-3PM**
DJ Konrad **12-4PM**
The Boys **4-9PM**
Authentic Polish Cuisine
Polish Beer featuring Tyskie
Polish Spirits featuring
Belvedere Vodkas
Admission \$15 or Free
with Pussy Willow Pass
Doors Open **4:30PM**
4475 Transit Road
Clarence
Outer Polonia
716-276-0683

**Dyngus Day Buffalo Parade
Awards Party**
Saturday, April 30 • 7PM
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Polish Cadets
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Outer Polonia
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Polish American Arts Festival
Cheektowaga Town Park

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Polish Food & Fun
Vendors
Demonstrations
2600 Harlem Road
Cheektowaga

Pussy Willow Partners
Polonia Spreads Its Wings

This year we're very happy to welcome two brand new official venues to our festival family. Although technically it's really four given that Sto Lat Bar is part of a complex that includes Chrusciki Bakery and Simply Pierogi. Each member of this trio have unique identities but they work together in the same space inside what used to be a Sears store at the Eastern Hills Mall. All of them combined create one great experience whether it's on Dyngus Day or any other time of the year. But on D Day itself they have a lot of great stuff planned. Top polka entertainment, prizes galore and of course awesome drinks featuring Belvedere Polish and organic infused Vodkas.

Another great venue that we think will wind up as one of the best parts of Dyngus Day Buffalo, actually lives in Cheektowaga just outside of Buffalo's eastern border. Pubski Pub is not only a reincarnation of a cool vintage tavern that serves huge delicious portions of polish comfort food, but this place quite possibly could be home to one of the liveliest polka parties this town has ever seen. With the addition of their tented deck and patio adjacent to their main dining room, combined with the high energy of two nationally renowned polka bands, the energy at this pussy willow stop will be elec-

tric. You may want to get there early for a good perch.

And even though they're not selling Pussy Willow Passes because their admission is free, Morluskis in Clarence has jumped on the Dyngus Day Band wagon in a big way. Located in an old church right on Main St in the Hollow, we think this may be so much fun you may pray for just one more taste of their delicious food long after Dyngus Day. No doubt you'll pray even harder for a few more drops of their homemade Krupnik. Make sure you try one of their signature Belvedere cocktails or their Polish beers like Tyskie, which are specially imported from Poland.

If you are looking for some new Dyngus adventures we recommend all three of these great places. Whether it's during our festival or another day of the year, make sure you try them all. Remember Dyngus is more than a day. It's a state of mind.



NA ZDROWIE

YOU SAY

POTATO

I SAY KARTOFEL

Although today it is widely accepted as a staple of Polish diet, many people associate the potato as synonymous with Irish fare. In fact, the "ish" had nothing to do with the lowly "spud" at the beginning. Rather than "ish" it was "ian". Peruvian and Bolivian to be exact. Modern day genetic testing has traced a single origin for potatoes to Southern Peru and extreme northwestern Bolivia where they were domesticated about 8,000 years ago. However in the second half of the 16th century the Spanish (more of that "ish factor") introduced the edible tubers to Europe where it quickly took root (pun intended). But our story is not about "ish" it's about wish. As in I wish I had some kartofele or ziemniaki as they are more commonly called in Poland today.

Bringing potatoes to Poland is attributed to King Jan III Sobieski (he is said to have sent a big sack of potatoes to his wife Marysieńka during the Vienna siege), but it was Paweł Wieniarski, a gardener of the

Wilanów Palace grounds, who planted the exotic tubers in the gardens of Wilanów. Later, his son-in-law, Jan Łuba, popularised potato-growing in Warsaw, during the reign of King August Mocny. As the story goes, Łuba would bring carts full of potato seedlings all the way from Saxony. The king, craving this delicious treat, demanded to be served a plate of fried potatoes with his meals each day. As popularity of this luxurious treat grew, gardeners in noblemen's estates began experimenting with the controversial vegetable.

At first Poles were disgusted with potatoes and considered them harmful to human health much like the tomato which was also considered dangerous for human consumption long ago because of its relation to the deadly nightshade. However the versatility of this root vegetable

quickly made it indispensable in the

minds and plates of Poles all across the country. Even Adam Mickiewicz wrote about the potato in his poem Kartofla

While a poet praises vegetables with his lyre "Suddenly, a potato pipes up from the fire:

in Poland. More and more cookbooks were published containing a growing number of recipes, some of them quite weird, with potatoes taking centre stage.

Jan Szyttler, the author of pioneering cookbooks during the age of Romanticism, added a somewhat surprising recipe for potato pickles, the so-called kartofla wiosenna (spring potato):

"When you have new, small potatoes in the spring, marinate them a little in vinegar for use in the autumn for various marinades and salads."

Very small potatoes should be used for such pickles. After boiling, the potatoes had to be cooled in icy water and when cooled completely: 'each should be peeled separately, placed in a jar and covered with boiled white vinegar flavoured with spices'.

Potato cultivation continued and eventually brought over 100 potato varieties to Polish farmers and tables, in the form of potato dumplings, noodles, pancakes and pies. Potato-based recipes were not only presented in cookbooks but also in magazines addressed to the working class or women. Cookbooks de-

voted specifically to potatoes also began popping up.

World War II largely destroyed Polish achievements in potato growing, especially in the parts of Poland incorporated into the third Reich. Thus, as soon as the war was over, Polish scientists immediately started to rebuild the potato industry. They were successful – the potato became one of the most important foods in Poland under the communist regime.

Today, thirty years after the fall of communism, the potato is regaining its prominent place in Polish cuisine, and its different varieties are sought out by Polish chefs. Over 120 varieties of potato are currently grown in Poland, but still, there is little knowledge about the vegetable, even though using the right variety for any given dish will result in a more refined culinary experience.

Whether it's a firm variety like the Anouschka or Belana perfect for salads or a good masher like the Bellarosa or Marabel which are spectacular as a pierogi filling, there is sure to be a variety to please every palate in polonia.

Smaczego



Polish

kitchen. Whether boiled, baked, fried, dried or liquefied the potato found its way into the hearts,

Or - ders now the lute to be set to song

So the poet rhymes as he goes along."

However, it was only in the 19th century that potatoes gained economic significance

babuszka brunch

tie one on

When we were little our mommas would always tell us “breakfast was the most important meal of the day”. Mom wouldn’t let us off to school or let us go out to play until we had food in our tummys. It’s a lesson that has stuck with us all these years. So when we realized people were coming out earlier every year to begin their Dyngus Day adventures, we knew we had to get fuel into these Polonia explorers. Given that this year is all about change we thought why not add a new event to the festivities. And so we present to you ladies and gentlemen our very first ever, Babuszka Brunch.

While doing research for our food article this year we loved the way the recipe for Baba Kartoflana turned out and we wanted to share it with all of you in a fun way. Sure you can make it at home, but it won’t be as much fun as tasting it with us at the Pussy Willow Park Party Tent. This is a great way to start your exploration of the Historic Polonia district. Put on your favorite Babuszka and head over to the huge festival area at 111 Memorial Drive aka Pussy Willow Park. Brunch starts at noon and lasts until we run out.

Once you’re there Corky Johnson and his crew from The Polish Cadets will be serving their delicious rendition of this famous polish potato casserole along with refreshing Mimoski Seltzers You couldn’t eat anything more authentic if you had it delivered direct from Gdansk. As

an extra bonus the first 50 people to show up wearing a babushka will get a very special commemorative gift courtesy of your friends at Dyngus Day Buffalo. Now If you really want to own this event then jump into our Tops Markets Babuszka Brunch contest. What’s that you say? Well simply take a picture of your self, your friends, your pets... in a babuszka then post it to social media and tag Tops and Dyngus Day Buffalo. We will pick our favorite and award the creative genius with four free pussy willow passes and official DDB t-shirts to compliment your babuszkas.

Come on now. You have to admit. This sounds like a fun event doesn’t it? A bunch of babuszka wearing folks sipping breakfast and getting in the right frame of mind to dive deep into Dyngus.

Once you’ve filled up on all the deliciousness that the folks from Polish Cadets are known for, then you’ll be ready to venture into the heart and soul of Dyngus Day Buffalo and everything that the festival has to offer. Go explore the Broadway Market, marvel at the magnificent churches or the friendly neighborhood taverns then stick around and wait for the parade. Whatever way you choose to Dyngus down this year, make sure you eat all your breakfast first. As Momma used to say, “It’s the most important meal of the day!” And Momma always knows best.

baba kartoflana

polish potato pie

Polish potato pie is a savory dish that can be cut into wedges or slices.

INGREDIENTS
2 1/2 pounds potato
Yukon Gold, peeled

1 pound bacon
diced & fried,
drippings reserved

3 large eggs
beaten

2 cloves garlic
finely chopped

1 medium onion
grated

Salt

to taste

Black pepper
to taste

Sour Cream
to garnish

Grate potatoes into a colander placed over a bowl to catch the starches. Push down on the potatoes to remove moisture.

Set oven to 375°
Grease a 7x11 casserole, that is no higher than 2 1/2 in. with some reserved bacon drippings.

Transfer grated potatoes to a large bowl. Pour off the liquid from the bowl into the colander and add the white potato starch sediment left at the bottom to the bowl with the potatoes.

Add remaining ingredients and as much bacon drippings as your diet can stand. Mix well, adjusting the seasonings, if necessary (be careful, the bacon drippings will be salty). Bake 1 hour or until completely crispy on top.

Cut into wedges or squares and serve with a dollop of sour cream, if desired.

easter

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dyngus day darlings

what to do with the little squirts

Yes, we know Dyngus Day parties can get boisterous, and some might think twice about taking members of the younger set to experience first hand the Polonia pageantry that takes place on the day after Easter. But, think again, there are plenty of things to do and see for kids of all ages.

So stick a pussy willow branch in the stroller and teach the children what it is to be Polish and proud! Here's where to go with your lil nuggets.

Historic Polonia

At the corner of Clark and Kent aka Superman corner stand the towering spires of Corpus Christi Church. The awe-inspiring interior, features some of the finest ecclesiastical art in the city. A special Dyngus Day Mass begins at 11:30 am. After Mass, stroll over to the brick building directly behind the church. Inside the Corpus Christi Athletic Club there are bowling alleys, plenty of games and coloring contests for your little crumb crunchers as well as plenty of food to fuel all that activity regardless of your age. Try the pierogi pizza!

Although the Broadway Market has undergone numerous changes, the old-fashioned concept of selling farm fresh, exotic and unusual products here has remained unchanged since the Market's inception in 1888. Get the kids some Charlie Chaplin or sponge candy.



16th Annual Dyngus Day Parade-5pm

Accordions and flags, and floats and marchers and thousands of smiling cheering revelers having a grand time celebrating Polish Pride, has propelled this procession to such powerful proportions that people have been planning their participation with great anticipation. In other words it's grown. All new route kicks off at the corner of Broadway and Memorial Dr. at 5pm.

Kaisertown

Now dive deep into the heart of this Polish neighborhood with a German sounding name. This Dyngus Day party, inside what used to be Bishop Ryan High School, is as traditional as it gets thanks to the folks at Saint Casimirs Social Center 1833 Clinton St.. Great food, live polka music and general frivolity with a very authentic vibe.

Blackrock

The Polish Cadets 927 Grant St. have been providing social activities for Poles of all ages since 1899. One of the oldest social clubs of it's kind in the nation, Great live polka music, and delicious home-made polish food in the heart of Buffalo's secondary Polonia neighborhood. Old school cool.

The memories of celebrating heritage, ethnic pride, community and family will last a lifetime... that's the best part. Well, the food and the music are pretty good too, and of course the parade. Everyone loves a parade.



Open
10am

Specials
BLOODY MARYS
& MIMOSAS
10AM-NOON

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Polka DJ 10am-Noon

Buffato Touch
Noon-4pm

Polka DJ 4-6pm

Lenny & Gomulka
Chicago Push
6-10pm

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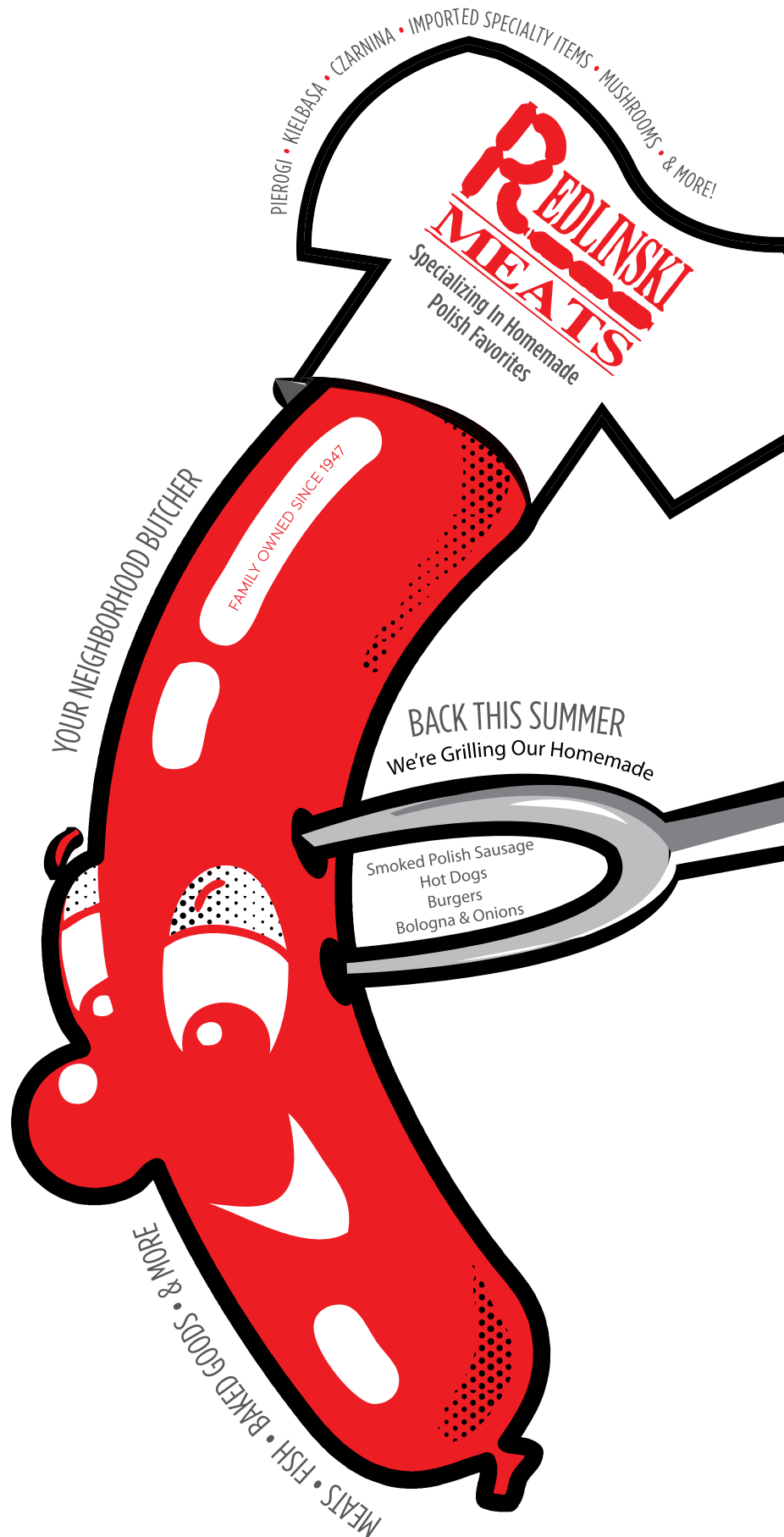
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the polka story

once upon a time there was a little twirl

Not only is Buffalo the Dyngus Day Capital of the World but, based on the amount of musical talent assembled at all the different festival venues that are part of this unique celebration, a strong case could be made that the Queen City of the Lakes is the Polka Capital of the universe. (At least on Dyngus Day it is). But let's not get ahead of ourselves. First we need to go back to the beginning.

Although many consider Polka to be a Polish creation, the dances origins are actually attributed to Bohemia. The invention of the step is credited to Anna Slazak, a farm servant at Elbstein near Prague. Based on local Slavic folk music, by 1835 the Polka became a dance craze all over the ballrooms of Czechoslovakia before spreading throughout Europe by way of Vienna and Paris.

Within ten years the lively 2/4 step hopped over the "pond" to the US and it remained a dominantly popular dance in Europe as well as in North America until the 20th century, when it was displaced by ragtime jazz, and the dance crazes of the Roaring Twenties. In fact the polka music that we know today here in North America is really an American creation that combined elements of ragtime and traditional Polish folk melodies. You would be hard pressed to find contemporary polka music anywhere in Poland because it's really as American as the blues.

Polka did, however experience resurgence in popularity here after WWII, when many Polish refugees moved to the US, adopting this Bohemian style as a cultural dance.

Although the origin can be traced back to one source, there are various styles of contemporary polka music all of which are American inventions, one of the styles found here is the North American "Polish-style Polka", it's roots are in Chicago. Two sub-styles are; "The Chicago Honky" (using the clarinet and one trumpet) and the "Chicago Push" (featuring the accordion, concertinas, bass, drums and almost always two trumpets). North American "Slovenian Style" is fast and features piano accordion, chromatic accordion, and or diatonic button box accordion: it is associated with Cleveland. North American "Dutchmen-style" features an "oompah" sound often with a tuba & banjo, and has roots in the American Midwest. "Conjunto-style" polkas have roots in northern Texas and Mexico and are also called "Norteno". Traditional dances from this region reflect the influence of polka-dancing European immigrants. The polka is also one of the most popular traditional folk dances in Ireland, particularly in Slabh Luachra, a district that spans the borders of counties Kerry, Cork and Limerick. Many of the figures of Irish set dances, which developed from Continental quadrilles, are danced to polkas. Introduced to Ireland in the late 19th century, there are today hundreds of Irish polka tunes, which are most frequently played on the fiddle or button accordion.

In the 1980's and 1990's, a new genus began to emerge a fusion of polka & rock, sometimes referred to as "Punk Polka", "Alternative Polka" and Team Dyngus'

newly coined description, "Rock and Rolka." a style of music that was popularized by the Denton, Texas ensemble, Brave Combo. Often characterized by playing traditional polka melodies or contemporary songs to a high energy polka beat. This genre of polka not only attracted a new generation of listeners it encouraged interest in some of the classic long time polka icons as well. Legendary performers like Marion Lush, Lil Wally and Frank Wojnarowski all found new audiences thanks in part to younger people discovering this new style.

But there's another type of polka sound, the big band orchestra. Now, we are sure that most people under the age of fifty are not used to being entertained with the sounds of a big band orchestra but there was a time when a multiple member group containing a dynamic horn section, led by a charismatic band leader was the norm. Although primarily associated with jazz oriented acts like Count Basie, Glen Miller, Benny Goodman, and many others, the full sound of a large musical ensemble lends itself perfectly to polka music. Considering the fact that polka music, as we know it was spawned from the marriage of folk melodies and ragtime jazz, this should not be surprising. Orchestras once led by the likes of Lawrence Welk, and Eddie Olinski, have been eclipsed by smaller more affordable combos with only five or six musicians making them much more affordable than the ten or fifteen piece orchestras that your Grammy cut a rug to, once upon a time. But that doesn't mean that style of polka music has disappeared. Not only does

it still exist but, we have without a doubt the best in the nation as part of Dyngus Day Buffalo this year, the one and only Jimmy Sturr and his Orchestra taking the mainstage inside the massive festival tent at Pussy Willow Park.

Speaking of Grammy's, no one even comes close to Jimmy Sturr. With more than a hundred different recordings that have earned him 18 Grammy awards and 5 Gold albums he continues to dazzle audiences throughout the world. He's recorded with the likes of Brenda Lee, Willie Nelson, Alison Krauss, Bela Fleck, Charlie Daniels, Arlo Guthrie and many more. If you have never seen Jimmy Sturr live in concert you will be blown away by his versatility, his style and his energy! In fact if the government could figure out how to tap into the energy of the Jimmy Sturr Orchestra, we're pretty sure the energy crisis would be over.

Now, if adventure and exploration tickle your fancy, there are a myriad of other musical styling's to suit all of your interests. We have numerous places that are official Dyngus Day Buffalo venues. The new Pussy Willow Pass admission policy, make it easier than ever before to go from place to place. So step out of your usual routine and comfort zone and try some new venues for a change we have plenty of places to go regardless of your geographic location. There is so much entertainment to choose from it's hard to know where to start. So why not start bright and early?

Solid performers can be found all day long at one of our new venues the Pubski Pub. It's a new name for an old place that was known as the Anchor Inn on William St near Harlem Rd. It's home to one of the coolest vintage barrooms anywhere in the area. That vintage vibe combined with the youthful energy of new owner Matt Burdzy plus the tented back deck and the top notch polka talents of the Buffalo Touch and Lenny Gomulkas Chicago Push, promise to make this one powerful polka party indeed.

Just down the road a bit is the Saint Casimirs Social Center which used to be



the home of Bishop Ryan High School. Once you arrive it will feel like you've stepped back in time. This is as traditional as you can get. A polka dance inside an old school gymnasium with the sounds of Buffalo Good Times and featured guest Accordion Bill. Rumor has it that there will even be an appearance made by local radio legend and member of the Rock and Roll Hall Of Fame, Danny Neaverth! Or you could head over to Porky's Amber Lounge just a few blocks away. One of the best preserved vintage bar interiors we've ever come across. This place makes a great stop to catch your breath and enjoy their complimentary kielbasa buffet.

Don't forget about the little town of Sloan nestled in between the railroad tracks just outside of the Lovejoy neighborhood and home to one of our favorite family owned taverns, R Bar this place is filled with Dyngus Delight from morning til night.

If you are a fan of family owned taverns and Historic Polonia is your preferred place for pussy willows, piwo and polkas, then you must visit Artys, Mackys and the Happy Swallow. The same families have run both places for decades and tradition has seeped into the very rafters of the buildings. Don't forget to make an appearance at the Corpus Christi Athletic Club. This historic church hall will be packed with polka lovers of all ages laughing and loving life as they spin around the dance floor as they have been doing in those hallowed rooms for generations.

As the festival unfolds on Monday there are dozens of other polka bands to catch at venues all over town. Check out our calendar in this guide or on our website www.dyngusday.com for a complete list of bands, venues, & more detailed information

It doesn't matter whether you are just listening, watching, participating as a seasoned hooper or a new comer to the dance floor, rest assured that this European form of aerobics can be enjoyed without Dramamine by everyone, and one thing is for sure, in the Polka Story, everyone lives happily after!



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profiles in polonia

prominent poles ponder the past

We often hear the term Polonia, but what does it mean? Technically the word refers to the Diaspora, (the people of Polish origin who live outside Poland). Actually that explanation is right, however in our experience, it is much more than that. Polonia is a collective sharing of experience, of tradition, of culture, of food and celebration. Just as with most immigrant communities that took hold in the United States after a generation or two we find that many become "Americanized" and old world traditions seem to wane or disappear. The native language becomes a distant memory. Customs crumble, the folklore fades and old world styles melt away or blend into the new way of life. It's understandable and logical that in the land known as the great melting pot, different cultures blend and eventually become homogenized. Adopting new ways in a new land are important. It demonstrates solidarity and a willingness to adopt the ways of your new-found home and brethren. However it's equally meaningful to remember where you came from. What our ancestors did in the past, brought us to where we are today.

But the importance of Polish customs and traditions cannot be understated. The ability to hang onto observances that have been around for thousands of years is what helped our ancestors keep the Motherland alive even when Poland

technically did not even exist for over one hundred years. The rituals, the music, the language, the faith, the foods, they were all kept alive by Poles throughout the world as they fought to regain their sovereignty. That's how strong our heritage is to the people of Polonia.

It's inspiring to know that there are so many people in our community that still adhere to the value of old world customs, traditions and holding dear the strong work ethic so prevalent in Polish DNA. After meeting with these three Polonia ambassadors we feel extremely confident that our heritage will continue on for generations yet to come.

JOHN KOWALSKI is the former Commercial Manager for the NY State Thruway Authority on the New NY Bridge (Tappan Zee Bridge) project. Before that he worked in bridge design and construction for NYS DOT in the Buffalo region, as well as serving as Deputy Project Director for the Route 9A Reconstruction project in Lower Manhattan following the 9/11 attacks. He's currently with Alta Vista Solutionsworking with the Long Island Railroad for a major expansion in Nassau County. This North Buffalo descendant of Polish immigrants knows about hard work and community. He grew up in the Pine Hill neighborhood on the eastern fringe of Buffalo's border and remembers his father's small pharma-

cy, Pine Hill Drugs and his fathers support of small local business. "If I want a hose I'll go to the hardware store, not a supermarket" his dad would often say. John's love of family and community are clear as he reflects on Buffalo's reawakening. "I'm amazed to see where new places pop up and then just take off. The Hydraulic section is a great example and now old industrial sections of Black Rock. You've got to have a positive outlook. When you see how amazing and thriving the Broadway Market is during the Christmas and Easter seasons, together with the sort of inspired neighborhood-local-business sense that is taking off, I believe the same can happen in Buffalo's Polonia. The roots of Buffalo's Polonia area have long been a part of this city, and given the deep appreciation Buffalonians have for their home....Polonia is always going to be a major part of it regardless of which ways Buffalo transforms in the future."

Now that his children Milo, Carmen and Isabella have grown, John and his wife Rosie have more time for the theatre and sampling Buffalos great restaurants. But his real dream? "Maybe someday I can find a few other people who love to play pinochle and we can revive that....I'm sure there are a few at the Broadway Market who've spent some time playing cards with a couple refreshments".

What does it mean to be a

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part of Buffalo's Polonia?
Buffalo has such a long and rich heritage of its Polish community that it is hard not to get taken up in it, especially at the high holy days of Easter and Christmas. In fact, it is so present that the Polish themes of the holidays tend to spill over to many other ethnic groups here in Buffalo....that says a great deal. I am proud to say that someone in our extended family used to own the original Tomato Land stand which famously made the Broadway Market horseradish. They had the stand I believe from the 1960's through the 1980s roughly.

I am very appreciative that my family taught me the traditions of the holidays so that, not only can we enjoy them, but continue to pass them onto our children....no matter how far they tend to scatter.

Do you have any favorite Dyngus memories or recollections?

So I have to confess.... while I am going to make it to Polonia's Dyngus Day Parties soon... it hasn't happened yet. That said....since we usually buy about 6 or 7 pounds of kielbasa and a huge ham, the spirit of Dyngus Day lasts for all of Easter Week. Then the split pea soup.

What is your favorite Polish food?

This is where my story goes South a little. As many other traditionally-Catholic ethnic groups blend, and in turn share and spread their great traditions, I married a wonderful woman from Italy, Sicily to be precise. So we tend to do the Polish food starting on Holy Thursday when we visit the Broadway Market and then on through Easter Sunday morning with the traditional Polish breakfast... but then onto the Sicilian traditions and her large loving family, which like the Poles, the celebrations spill over onto Easter Monday in a days-long eating and drinking fest..

I absolutely love fresh kielbasa. Love the way

the beautiful garlic-ey aroma fills the refrigerator. Walking past the butcher counters at the Market immediately puts me in the Easter mood.

Pussy willows or water?
Pussy Willows

EILEEN KOTERAS ELI-BOL has been a familiar face on WNED TV for over 38 years. She has been an enthusiastic fund-raiser and interviewer for both public television and radio since she joined the station back in 1982. Eileen was also the host of WNED's popular TV cooking series, "WNED Cooks", as well as the co-host of "Plain and Fancy Cooking with Goldie & Eileen." In addition to these endeavors, Eileen is the station's Art Director and Staff Photographer, and holds a Masters degree in Communication Design from UB.

Her photography, design and marketing skills have won many awards over the years. Her first love, however, has always been promoting Polish culture and heritage. Extremely proud of her Polish roots, she has served on the board of the Kosciuszko Foundation, WNY Chapter, and the Permanent Chair of Polish Culture at Canisius College. She attended Polish Language and Culture Summer Sessions at the Jagiellonian University in Krakow, Poland, and is the recipient of two Am-Pol Eagle Citizens of the Year awards.

Eileen has always been a champion of Polish programming of any kind, working with WNED's Program Directors to find, create, broadcast and promote these programs on the PBS and NPR affiliate.

What does it mean to be a part of Buffalo's Polonia?

I am extremely proud to be part of Buffalo's Polonia! Both sets of my grandparents emigrated from Poland, and to this day, my family always observes Polish customs and traditions throughout the year. Growing up, my Babcia Sophie spoke to us in

Polish, and so I was able to absorb the language from a very early age, and was excited to converse with my relatives when visiting Poland on multiple occasions. At WNED, I am always pushing programs on Polish culture on our air!

I narrated a radio series on Polish Easter, Christmas and Wedding customs on our classical music station, which we repeat every year. Back in 2005, I helped to raise the seed money needed to produce the WNED television documentary called "Polonia: Western New York's Polish-American Legacy." It was an amazing success, and turned out to be the most popular local documentary the station ever produced! It tells the story of an immigrant group that arrived here in Buffalo with little more than their faith and traditions, but with hard work and determination became one of Buffalo's most vibrant and creative communities. It's a real celebration of Buffalo's Polonia, and I've been told helped to inspire even more Polish pride among new generations, and even the Dyngus Day Parade we celebrate today. It's also narrated by Buffalo's own national star, Christine Baranski.

Do you have any favorite Dyngus memories or recollections?

Absolutely! My favorite memories are of the Dyngus Day celebrations held at the old Chopin Singing Society clubrooms on Kosciuszko St. on the old east side of Buffalo. The Presidents of the club, Judge Ann and Ted Mikoll, really knew how to throw a party. There would be two polka bands, great Polish food, singing, dancing and long lines right down the street, with people just waiting to get in. It was THE "in" place to be on Dyngus Day!. When I was a college student,

I was asked to be a one of their "Dyngus Girls" who greeted people as

they entered Chopin's clubhouse. We were in full Polish costumes, armed with an endless supply of pussy willows. Swatting those who entered was a delightful activity, and I would carefully adjust my "swatting intensity level" to fit the individual

What is your favorite Polish food?

Pierogi, of course! But they're best when homemade.

My sister Dr. Marilyn Barker and I did a segment on "WNED Cooks" where we made our grandmother's "secret" pierogi recipe. Babcia really perfected the art, producing the thinnest, most tender dough ever. I get hungry just thinking about it. A few years back, I entered the "Buffalo's Best Homemade Pierogi Contest" at Corpus Christi Church during their Dozynki festival and won first prize for my dessert pierogi. My sister has made literally hundreds of pierogi for the Felician Sisters on Doat St. over the years, and we're both known for our homemade Pierogi Gift Packages for friends! We make about 6 different traditional kinds, and love to experiment with new fillings.

Pussy willows or water?

Pussy willows! I've been known to swat co-workers (even our CEO :) on Dyngus Day to help spread "Dyngus Day cheer" (haha). I also use them to decorate my house in tall vases along with fresh flowers and forsythia branches. Water is too messy for me, especially if I have my professional camera in hand to snap the days action!

CRAIG POKORNOWSKI was born in Buffalo's Kaisertown neighborhood, surrounded by Polish traditions and strong family values. In fact Craig still lives in the house that his grandfather grew up in. In the 1920's, because of the congestion created by the burgeoning Polish community in Historic Polonia, people needed more

room to live and play. As a result of that overcrowding a new neighborhood was created around St. Casimirs church. Few people knew that area of Buffalo better than his grandfather Gene Pokornowski, who came of age helping his father deliver coal and ice to homes and businesses throughout Kaisertown and South Buffalo. After Gene passed away a few years ago Craig decided to carry on the family business. He reopened one of the most authentic neighborhood family operated taverns in Buffalo, Porky's Amber Lounge, which has been a part of Kaisertown's history for more than a half century. Like his grandfather Craig is involved in the community and looks for positives in every situation. A regular chip off the old ice block, this guy is truly an inspirational member of our Buffalo Polonia.

What does it mean to be a part of Buffalo's Polonia?

To me being a part of Polonia is all about family and tradition. It means everything. It's who I am. My wife Nicole is Polish, I'm Polish and now our kids are too. It's our heritage. It's what we know. I'm proud of my ancestry. I love our customs and our holidays. Every year my whole family gets together to celebrate each other and the holidays together while we make and smoke our own kielbasa. Maybe there's a little Krupnik at those gatherings too.

Do you have any favorite Dyngus memories or recollections?

Smiling faces, happy memories and happy family. I always loved seeing my grandfather entertain the people on one of his favorite holidays.

What is your favorite Polish food?

Personally I like Kapusta. Now my daughter Natalie, She loves Czarnina. The baby, Melanie, not so much

Pussy willows or water?
Pussy Willows



pussy willow power

the whole story from beginning to end

From an old world tradition to a modern ethnic festival, Buffalo's Dyngus Day celebration has turned into one of the largest, cultural events anywhere in the world. But it wasn't always that way. Here's how it all unfolded...

Although the post Lenten observance had been noted in traditional Polish neighborhoods dating back to the 1870s when the cities Polish colony began taking root, it was a low key observance back then. It was a chance for kids to play pranks by splashing each other or parents sprinkling their children with water to wake them the morning after Easter Sunday. Modern Dyngus Day in Buffalo had its beginnings much later with the Chopin Singing Society when they had their clubrooms on the East Side of Buffalo in the city's historic Polonia district. Judge Ann Mikoll and her late husband Theodore held a "Smigus Dingus" themed

party at the Society's clubrooms on Kosciuszko Street in 1961. The idea was born after a trip to Poland where the Mikolls renewed their love of the colorful obscure customs of the Polish people. The event, originally meant to boost the declining membership of the society, soon became an annual event in Buffalo. Political and business leaders made their way to the Chopin's Clubrooms every year the day after Easter to begin the day with a ceremonial "swieconka" luncheon. Polka music was played throughout the building's meeting and bar rooms and there was plenty of revelry to be had by all. Because of the quirky nature of the associated traditions i.e. the splashing of water and swatting with pussy willow branches, the party turned into a highly anticipated yearly affair.

But as the neighborhood waned so did Dyngus activity in the city. Chopins left the East-

side in the early 1990s & moved out to new clubrooms in the eastern suburb of Cheektowaga where they tried to attract a whole new generation of Polonia.

But by that time the younger members of Polonia were used to looking at other types of music and recreation. And Polka music was not part of what they were looking for. As the next generations of Poles became completely assimilated with modern American culture Polka music and old world style customs started to become obsolete and unhip. These were things your "Babcia" did. There was nothing cool about "Dyngus" back then.

That all changed in 2005 when the website DyngusDay.com was born. The following year Dyngus Day Buffalo was founded with the goal of shining a positive light on a forgotten neighborhood and a misunderstood culture. The hope was that by providing marketing and

organizational support to a number of combined events across the region, more people would show up to these parties and a younger demographic would be attracted to something that wasn't deemed hip by anyone under the age of fifty. The ultimate goal was to promote the unique ethnic, religious and cultural aspects of Polish culture throughout the world and the influence of Poles nationwide through this quirky celebration that was now known as Dyngus Day. In 2007, the streets of the Historic Polonia District were once again filled with polkas and pussy willows as the Inaugural Dyngus Day Parade was organized making its way through the streets of Old Polonia.

As time went on, the number of parties in the Historic Polonia District expanded with more events and numerous family owned taverns getting in on the act again. In addition to the "old neighborhood" the suburban venues hosting sizable Dyngus Dances have more than doubled. As well as other city neighborhoods, like Buffalo's Black Rock and Kaisertown neighborhoods. There are now dozens of different festival sites that are officially part of what has turned into one of the most unique ethnic celebrations of its kind on the planet.

Attendance in 2019 was estimated at over

100,000 for Dyngus Day events across Western New York making it one of the largest, one day ethnic festivals in North America. Even last year when the government banned all public gatherings and would not allow us our parade because of Covid fears, thousands showed up to cheer on our very slow moving motorcade.

A lot of attention was drawn to Buffalo's Dyngus Day by the reaction of CNN's Anderson Cooper a few years ago and may have angered some who thought that his uncontrollable laughter associated with the quirky customary rituals of the observance was insulting. However the resulting awareness and other national media coverage only fueled the growth of the celebration.

All this notoriety has born fruit. In addition to the growth of the festival, more people are now coming in by the busloads from places like Michigan, Pennsylvania, Massachusetts, S. Ontario etc. It seems that Dyngus Day in Buffalo, NY has now turned into a tourist attraction. Who would've even thought that to be possible seventeen years ago? But as Buffalo continues to reconnect with its history, and more of us realize the potential draw of our areas cultural authenticity we now see the value of old world traditions.

The compelling stories about all the ethnic communities that settled here, working the factories or railroads and raising families while striving to realize their American dream, appeal to a new generation and have revealed themselves to be powerful marketing tools for the city.

As a result of all these efforts, the neighborhood that was once home to this large Polish colony (and in fact the entire Polish American culture of WNY), has been experiencing a re-awakening of sorts. Many people now have a newfound appreciation of the areas potential. Additionally, because of the marketing efforts of dyngusday.com and their promotion of Polish culture throughout the years, an unprecedented swelling of Polish pride has taken place throughout the region.

After all this and more than a half century of polkas and pussy willows, no other city on the planet can claim to celebrate Dyngus Day like we do in the Queen City. That's why Buffalo, NY is the Dyngus Day Capital of the world. It has turned into a point of civic pride not only for Buffalo's Polonia but all of Western New York. Thank you for participating in history as we continue to spread the story about Dyngus Day and the heritage of Buffalo's Polonia. Dziekuje bardzo!



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