

Viva La Comida draws thousands to Jackson Heights

By Alexa Altman

Monday, September 24th, 2012 2:09 PM EDT



THE COURIER/Photo by Alexa Altman

Viva La Comida drew thousands of hungry guests who sampled Colombian, Peruvian and Salvadoran fare while enjoying vocalists and musical ensembles at the Friday, September 21 festival.

Food fanatics swarmed Dunningham Triangle for Viva La Comida — a culinary and entertainment extravaganza.

Viva La Comida, which lightly translates to “celebrate food,” drew thousands of hungry guests who sampled Colombian, Peruvian and Salvadoran fare while enjoying vocalists and musical ensembles at the Friday, September 21 festival.

This celebration marks the first event hosted by the 82nd Street Partnership in Dunningham Triangle, which recently underwent renovations.

“We’re really happy with the way it went,” said 82nd Street Partnership executive director Seth Taylor of the festival. “There was a great turnout of both residents from Elmhurst and Jackson Heights but we also introduced 82nd Street to a number of people from outside the neighborhood, which was really exciting for us.”

Taylor said the partnership hopes to make Viva La Comida an annual event, adding that in coming years they hope to block off traffic and turn the affair into a full-fledged street festival. According to Taylor, community support for the event has been outstanding.

“[The feedback] has been positive,” said Taylor. “Everyone’s had really great things to say about it from the music to the food.”

Among those excited about the event are local businesses, who saw a spike in sales during the festivities.

Louie Suljovic, owner of Louie’s Pizzeria on Baxter Avenue, said business was booming on Friday. The pizzeria, which normally sees a crowd on Fridays, had a line winding out the door for nearly three hours and a full restaurant during the evening.

“We always have a pretty decent Friday but with Viva La Comida it was tremendous,” said Suljovic.

The businessman didn’t know exactly how many patrons his store had that day, but was ecstatic that people from all over the borough were coming to sample his food.

“We have really good food so when people are able to try our food and enjoy it, that’s what makes us happy,” he said.

Suljovic said he supports the possible return of Viva La Comida.



Jeff Orlick, who runs the popular food blog Iwantmorefood.com and hosts culinary tours around Queens, assembled a group of mobile food vendors to appear at Viva La Comida. The event co-producer said the festival will not only spotlight the recent renovation of Dunningham Triangle, but highlight Queens as a premier foodie junction.

“People will see it as a destination for excitement and fun and food,” said Orlick. “Hopefully people will come back more regularly.”

By Alexa Altman aaltman@queenscourier.com