

culture vs cake



Written by bubba



In a city as homogenous as Lima Ohio, I should welcome any attempt at celebrating multiculturalism and different ethnic experiences, and I do. I'm Italian and I grew up in Denver where there are considerably more Italians than there are here. Every summer for as far back as I can remember we would go to all the Italian Feasts at the Catholic Churches in Denver and we would eat, play games and know that our money was going to a good cause. Last night we went to the second annual 'Lima Italianfest' last night...you guessed it, it was a little different.

By the way, I was at the first Italianfest too, exactly a year ago. Before I go on a rant, let me say that this year was much better. There was more of everything, including people. And it had more of an Italian feel too – kind of important at an Italianfest. Still, last night I felt the same thing I felt a year ago - that the people here are confusing the concept of an Italian Feast with events they are used to having, like county fairs.

Back to the festivals in Denver...or any major population center for that matter. What I like about all those feasts is that everything is Italian. They don't sell waffle cones – they sell canolis and gelato. They don't have turkey drumsticks and cheeseburgers, they sell sausage sandwiches and pasta. You can't walk through their market places and buy patchouli oil incense and henna tattoos but you can buy big provolones and Toscano salamis. I cannot tell you how weird it was last night to watch someone come to what is billed as an Italian event and immediately ask where the elephant ears are. Another major difference between last night and the other feasts is that, at real feasts, the prizes are usually Italian meats and cheeses. At Lima's feast, the prizes were all cash. Actually, not completely true.



There was one game – the 'Cake Wheel' I think, where you could bet a dime on a numbered cake and if your number came up – you win that cake. So after I figured out that there wasn't much to do besides eat my customary sausage sandwich, I thought what the hell...it's not spicy capicola, but maybe I'll just try and win a cake instead. They were all home made and some of them looked good. Here was the problem – all of the desserts that were appealing had a line about four people deep of fat women who were stalking them. You had no chance whatsoever of winning anything good because these women were big, had about ten pounds in dimes to 'gamble' with and had no intention of leaving until

they got what they came for. I watched them for a few minutes because it was interesting. They each clearly knew what dessert they wanted and what specific things stood between them and their treat – i.e. which other woman was betting on what they wanted.

When I saw how serious they were, I resigned myself to the reality that those women simply liked cake more than me. But I was still bored. Was there any room for me to have fun at the cake wheel? Maybe. But these women sure seemed 100% committed to doing whatever they needed to in order to take those tasty treats home. Or were they? That's what I decided to find out. So I bellied up behind a few of these cake-stalking beefalos and started up a conversation with a friend, trying to be heard of course.

Me: I'm just going to do what I did last time and pay \$5 for that cake on number 24.

Fat Woman at #24 (F#24): You can't do that.



Me: Why not? I love cake. In fact I love it *that* much.

F#24: Doesn't work like that. You have to play.

(pause while the wheel is spun – a pair of iced crescent rolls go unclaimed because no one bet on #13)

Me: I got 3 coffee cakes earlier for \$10 and I didn't have to wait for a hundred spins. You know, 10 cents a bet.

F#24: That's against the rules.

Me: There aren't any rules per se. There's really just a process. Plus they make more money that way...*my way*.

F#24: They aren't trying to make money.

Me: Sure they are. This is a fundraiser and they make more when I just buy things outright. Tell you what. I'll give you \$10 for your place.

F#24: No.

Me: You want that cake that bad?

F#24: That's why I'm here.

Me: And you won't let anyone else bet on it?

F#24: They can bet on other things.

Me: But not that cake. Your cake.

F#24: I am betting on this.

Me: No you are waiting on that. Eventually you will win.

F#24: Hopefully.

Me: I'll give you \$20 for that cake when you win it.

F#24: No.

Me: I'll give you a bite.

F#24: No.

Me: Half.

F#24: No.

Me: Do you think cake plays too large of a role in your life? I mean, you seem obsessed.

F#24: You're the one that wants it so bad.

Me: That's right. And I'm willing to pay.

F#24: Not me you won't.

Me: Do you know who baked it?

F#24: (clearly annoyed) Nope.

Me: I'm going to go find out. Maybe they'll bake me one when I tell them how committed I am.



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