

Dance like a Hungarian at Sonoma's 'An Evening in Tokaj'



Try Hungarian food and dancing at "An Evening in Tokaj," a fundraising event for a student exchange program for aspiring winemakers, on Saturday, March 7, at Burlingame Hall in Sonoma.

The historic town of Tokaj in northern Hungary is a long way from the city of Sonoma, but the two places do have a couple of things in common. First, they're both known for producing great wine, and second, there are Hungarians in both places.

When a delegation from Tokaj visited Sonoma in 2011, actor and public relations man George Webber, who hosts tours and events in character as Buena Vista Winery's 19th-century Hungarian founder, Count Agoston Haraszthy, had an idea.

If You Go

What: "An Evening in Tokaj"

When: 6-9 p.m. Saturday, March 7

Where: Burlingame Hall, 252 West Spain St., Sonoma

Admission: \$65; \$20 for children

Information: 707 938-0224,
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Sonoma already had six sister cities, but why not make Tokaj (pronounced toe-kye) the seventh, then create an exchange student program for aspiring winemakers, which happened the following year. That inspired a fund-raising event to support it. The celebration, titled “An Evening in Tokaj,” rolls around again this year on Saturday, March 7, at Burlingame Hall in Sonoma.

“There will be legit, friendly Hungarians there to speak Hungarian with, Hungarian food and — most fun — Hungarian dancing,” Webber said. “When I started this endeavor, I didn’t know it would work, because I didn’t know if there Hungarians in Sonoma. It turns out there are Hungarians everywhere.”

Sonoma resident Sylvia Toth, co-chairwoman of Sonoma Tokaj Sister Cities, escaped with her parents from Hungary, then a Soviet satellite country, during the revolution of 1956, and enjoys keeping her native land’s traditions alive in her adopted country.

“In Hungary, there is something that is translated as ‘dance house,’” she explained. Essentially it means everybody gets up to dance, not just performers.

At “An Evening in Tokaj,” four dancers from the San Francisco Bay Area’s Eszterlanc Hungarian Folk Ensemble will put on a short performance, and then the floor will be open.

The event will feature homemade Hungarian desserts and Sonoma, Napa and Hungarian wines, as well as a choice of entrees:

Töltöttkáposzta kolbással (stuffed cabbage with sausage, sour cream and bread) or gombás palacsinta zsolt (stuffed crepes with mushrooms.)

“It’s a fun event,” Toth said. “You’ll have great Hungarian food, wine and music and a lot of good company.”

