

The Best Days Of The Years

Every summer – for just one weekend– the Henry Maier Festival Park, better known to locals as the Summerfest grounds, in Milwaukee transform each year into my favorite family tradition: Polish Fest. There are a bunch of different festivals during the summer: German Fest, Irish Fest, Mexican Fiesta, Petfest, and much more. But Polish Fest is the one that is the one that my family has gone to the most and the one that relates best to us. I love everything about it: the polka music, the skygliders, splashing in the little fountains near the entrance as a kid, and especially the food. All of the sausages you could ever want, the jelly-filled, sugar covered packi plus the warm, cheese-filled pierogies with cold sour cream and chives.

I have fond memories of sitting by the lake and eating an ice cream cone from one of the many desert trucks, or grabbing an ice cold soda from one of the barrel-shaped beverage stands. But there is so much more as well. The booths with bits of Polish history, or with handmade items like knitted blankets, or medallions with the Polish crest, forged by skilled blacksmiths.

My family has too many pictures to count of this annual event, memories accumulating over the years. And in my house, there are so many mementos of the years I have gone and brought back something to keep as a reminder of where I came from: the magnet that I have on my desk that says, “Not only am I perfect, I’m Polish too!”, or the shiny metal Polish crest with a brown leather string that I would see every year until I finally convinced my parents to buy it for me as a child, or the colorful bianic flower crowns that the Polish use to celebrate Dyngus Day, or Fat Tuesday.

Every year it is what I most look forward to, and when I'm there I never want to leave. I can remember everything so vividly, the layout of each stage, each booth I've gone to, and each

exciting activity. If I had to rank my childhood memories, the times I've been to Polish Fest would be high on the list, The feeling of the hot summer air, the sun beaming on my skin, and a slight breeze from the lake; there's nothing like it.

But not only fun, Polish Fest helps keep the cultures alive of some of the cultures that make up Wisconsin. Being America's largest Polish festival, no better place am I able to relate to my ancestors and get a taste for some of the things that were important to them. Polish Fest makes me even more proud of my family's heritage, and I hope that it is a tradition that will carry on for the rest of my life and to a new generation, who can experience what I love most about Wisconsin. When my great grandma immigrated here from Poland, I wondered if she was ever able to come and experience a taste of home, and I hope she would be glad to see that I am keeping where I came from with me through the joyous memories of my favorite summer activity.

Works Cited

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