



PHOTOS BY MADELINE GRAY | NORTH STATE JOURNAL

Women at the Holy Trinity Greek Orthodox Church grab handfuls of dough to make Kourambiethes cookies on Wednesday, August 31 in preparation for the Raleigh Greek Festival.

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She has many secrets for this cookie and if you sit with her long enough she will share them. For instance, with the clove, “We used to place a clove in the center, but people didn’t know what to do with it, chew it, spit it out. It adds another layer of flavor—but we leave that out now.”

Capetanos moved here 57 years ago, and in addition to helping with the baking prep she will be on hand at the festival to volunteer. Greek coffee is her domain. She said, “Come and see me on Saturday night, I work at the Kafenion, we have hot demitasse and cold frappe.”

Then there is Beba Zevgolis who manages baking for the festival. Zevgolis is watching everything going on in the room while also tracking the ingredients used on her Kourambiethes folder because she places the orders for what goes into these goodies. She seems to be



Ingredients for Kourambiethes cookies sit in the kitchen at the Holy Trinity Greek Orthodox Church .

everywhere all at once. One minute she is separating pastry cups for the cookies, and the next, she is at the scaling table overseeing the work.

Along the wall is a group of

women in charge of making sure each cookie is exactly the same size—1.70 ounces to be exact. And they are, because as volunteer scalars Sharon Willard and Elhaim

Flaherty agreed, “Beba will come and show us if we aren’t right.”

The time and dedication that goes into getting these baked goods exact for the public is obvious from batter to sift. Adjacent to tables queued up for weighing and shaping the cookies are three long tables lined up, topped with baker’s paper and a snow scene of powdered sugar awaiting the finished product for topping.

“We’ll powder the cookies, place them in their pastry cups, put them in their labeled trays, and then cover them with plastic wrap away from prying hands,” Zevgolis says with a wink. “And tomorrow when we are finished with these we’ll come back and prepare the almond cookies with chocolate.” Clearly a nonstop whirling dervish of activity right up until the event, the festival is run entirely by volunteers from 6 years old to well over 60. The preparations began in earnest in June.

“We do take January through March off,” said Sydney Langford with a laugh.

This act of faith has raised over \$150,000 for Habitat for Humanity since its inception. The festival runs for three days, September 9-11 at the North Carolina State Fairgrounds. In that space they have plenty of room for all of the activities, from the specialty dinner meals where you can experience oven roasted lamb shank followed by a treat from the pastry shop—perhaps a baklava sundae.

“You can spend the entire day, eat a meal and enjoy the marketplace, see traditional dancing and cooking demonstrations,” Leona Owen effusively shared in the kitchen with the next generation of women volunteering. Quickly pointing out that her friend in the kitchen, Penny Gallins’ son would be cooking at the festival she added, “The men love him cooking with them, he’s great.”

This church family is sharing their culture, feeding a community while raising money for charity and passing on traditions to the next generation.

The 35th Annual Raleigh Greek Festival

Friday, September 9
5:00 p.m.-10:00 p.m.

Saturday, September 10
11:00 a.m.-10:00 p.m.

Sunday, September 11
11:00 a.m.-6:00 p.m.

raleighgreekfestival.com

Tickets

General Admission: \$3.00
Seniors & ages 13-18: \$2.00
Children under 13: Free

*Free admission passes can be printed from the website

Featuring

Greek food and pastries, marketplace shopping, taverna with Greek beer and wine, live music and dancing, cooking demos, and children’s activities

*A portion of the proceeds benefit Habitat for Humanity