



Members of a Czech folk band from Caldwell entertain crowds of people outside Caldwell City Hall.



Many bakeries from the Brazos Valley made a showing at the Kolache Festival. Here people

line up to buy kolaches from the Snook Bakery.



Above: Mr. and Mrs. George Hlavinka were crowned king and queen of the Kolache Festival.

Right: Donnie Randle of Caldwell attempts to eat a dozen assorted kolache's in a kolache-eating contest.

Kolache Festival

Caldwell celebrates Czech culture

Story by James Johnson
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If you ever visit a small Texas town and witness more than 25,000 people singing, feasting and dancing the polka, there is a good possibility you are in the midst of a major celebration. Saturday's annual Kolache Festival in downtown Caldwell was no exception.

The Kolache Festival, which was deemed to be the biggest and best in its five-year existence, entertained a lively crowd of celebrants who refused to let the 100-degree temperature deter them from enjoying 12 hours of Czechoslovakian festivities.

Several special guests attended the event, including state Rep. L.B. Kubiak, who was instrumental in having Caldwell designated as the "Kolache Capital of Texas," and Josef Cernohlavek, third secretary of the Czechoslovakian Embassy in Washington, D.C.

Cernohlavek told a crowd that being at the festival made him feel at home.

"This festival gives an accurate account of what you might expect in my native country," Cernohlavek said with a distinct Czech accent. "The people here are very friendly. It's like a real Czech celebration."

As a token of the Festival's appreciation, Cernohlavek received a key to the city of Caldwell. One department store found an especially appropriate way of reminding Cernohlavek of his visit by presenting him with an authentic Texas cowboy hat.

Judges for the kolache baking contest featured several Bryan-College Station personalities, including Randy Davis of Star 92, Randy Asher of WTAW and KBTX-TV news anchors Rick Davenport and Anne Friedenborg.

Kolaches (Czechoslovakian wedding pastries for which the festival is named) sold out almost completely by 3 p.m., forcing some participating Brazos Valley bakeries to make extra trips home to bake and restock their respective kolache booths.

Vlasta Manlevik, a Czech visitor from Seguin, said she was impressed by the different events at the festival that pertained to Czechoslovakian culture and that she never had attended such a gathering where so many tourists paid tribute to a somewhat forgotten ethnicity.

"I've been to more German celebrations than I could

count," Manlevik said. "I always enjoyed them, but this is so diverse. There is everything from Czech singing to the appropriate Czech dressing fashions."

Spectators were exposed to nearly every facet of Czech customs. The 135 arts and crafts booths sold items ranging from Czechoslovakian Christmas ornaments to hand-sewn dresses and hair wreaths (which were a familiar sight around the four square blocks the festival encompassed).

One of the most crowd-pleasing attractions of the festival was the antique automobile show. Featuring more than 100 classic cars, the show dazzled spectators with cars such as a 1917 Studebaker and a mint-condition 1955 Chevrolet Bel Air, complete with a suede interior.

Nearly every vehicle was valued at more than \$30,000. Some of the car's owners were from places as far away as Alaska.

Bobbie Hunter, former secretary of the Central Texas Classic Chevy Association in Austin, said she does not recall ever being part of such a culturally-oriented celebration.

"It's my third time to come here," Hunter said while relaxing near a 1957 Cameo Pickup. "The cultural background is fantastic. I think it's great."

Hunter added that she has participated along with the Chevy Association in many events around Texas, but none any bigger or better.

George Hlavinka, chairman of the festival, said it will take at least a week to calculate festival profits or tally how many thousands of kolaches the 17 pastry booths actually sold.

"This was the most successful festival we've had from the standpoint of how many attended," Hlavinka said. "We had a tremendous influx from Houston, Austin and as far away as Florida."

Hlavinka said the free admission surprised most of the spectators because of the first-class entertainment.

"We had such a big crowd at the street dance (the festival's final event) that it made it difficult for some people to participate," he said. "The crowds stayed until the very end."

