

## That's Amore!: A look at the iconic Italian Festival celebrating food and fun

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Staff Writer

Throughout the weekend of October 12, Stamford's Mill River Park hosted the That's Amore Italian festival, a two-day event featuring food, music, and the celebration of Italian heritage.

From 12-9 pm on both Saturday and Sunday, the park was packed with people coming from Stamford's surrounding towns and cities to enjoy the festivities.

"It's a good blend of foods, definitely a good exposure of Italian culture, and (it's great) just to see the Italian community in the tri-state area, especially in Stamford," Mr. Rob Rende, a Stamford native and former teacher at Westhill.

The festival was hosted by Parachute Concerts and sponsored by UNICO, a national Italian Service Organization with chapters throughout the United States.

John Cassone, President of the UNICO Stamford chapter ('79), said "If you like food, and you like music [...] to be around a beautiful mosaic of people and the wonderful food, it's something to come and see and be a part of."

Food is a huge driver of That's Amore, with the main attraction being the 13 different vendors selling delicious

authentic Italian food, frequently prepared right in front of you. With dishes ranging from pasta to pastries, there was a large array of options to keep anyone busy for a few hours.

"Sausage and peppers was my favorite," Carmen Hughes said, a Stamford resident. Other highlights among attendees were the zeppole, mozzarella sandwiches, and penne alla vodka.

The vendors were not limited to food, however, with the contribution of an Italian heritage tent where you could speak with the UNICO organizers and learn information about the pride of being Italian and the contributions of Christopher Columbus.

In addition, there was Body By Rigatoni, an Italian lifestyle brand. "I am supporting my friends and connections I've made in Italy," Nicole Ponti, Body By Rigatoni's founder, said.

"I sell their work, their art, their specialty products, and I make my own. Everything comes from Italy."

Multiple Italian singers such as Alessandro, Biagio, Francesco Castiglione, and Vittorio Dicarlo also performed throughout the festival. At times, the area in front of

the stage was completely covered in people dancing to the music. People of all ages joined in, with elderly couples dancing together and young children jumping around nearby.

This festival began about 10-12 years ago as a small Columbus Day celebration, with simply a ceremony and some music and dancing, but has now evolved into a much more substantial effort.

"We had a lot more of the traditional Italian performers and dancers, but now it's more of a larger and bigger production that more people from different cultures actually enjoy," Cassone said, reflecting on how the festival has changed throughout the years.

"But we're doing similar things than we've done each year. You know there's an old saying, 'If it's not broke don't fix it!'"

That's Amore is built on Italian-American pride, with the enthusiasm from the community resulting in no doubt that this festival will continue to be a tradition in Stamford. When asked if they hoped That's Amore returns and continues in future years, a festival attendee, who asked to remain anonymous replied, "It better!"

## Garba Night At The Hill

Tamara Hill

Photo Manager



Photo by Tamara Hill ('26)

Garba is a form of dance which originated in Gujarat, India. Garba dance celebrations typically take place around Navaratri, which is a Hindu holiday that is run on the lunar calendar. Navaratri celebrates divine femininity, and that celebration carries on to Garba. Traditionally, Garba was performed by women to honor the Hindu goddess, Durga. Today, people bring their friends, have fun, and most importantly, they dance at Garba events.

"Garba is like life, it all comes in a full circle," Keeran Giritharan ('26) said.

When dancing Garba-style, participants usually dance in a circle moving counterclockwise.

A smaller concentric circle of dancers dance inside clockwise, or vice-versa. Subsequently, people dance with sticks, called dandiya, which they hit together by themselves, with a partner, or as a small group.

On Saturday, October 5th, the annual Garba Night was held at Westhill High School. Food, vibrant costumes, dancing, socializing, and the sales of goods and services went on in the main gym.

"Garba was an excellent night full of incredible surprises," Saksham Behl ('26) said.

Westhill hosts Garba every year, and people from all over the county attend. This year, there were over 500 people dancing and celebrating. On Saturday's celebration, there were also lively dance performances that encapsulated India's culture.

Along with the Garba dance itself, Bollywood music was played and dancers also danced in a modern Indian way. by playing Bollywood music, and having dancers dance in a modern Indian way.

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