

2019 Feast of the Blessed Sacrament Survival Guide (Aug. 1-4)

The New Bedford Feast of the Blessed Sacrament, a.k.a. the Portuguese Feast, a.k.a. Madeira Feast is the largest event New Bedford has every year. More than that, it is the largest Portuguese feast in the world and the largest ethnic festival in New England. The feast was founded in 1915 by four Madeiran immigrants who wanted to recreate the festivities of their home island.

Here is an overview of the 105th Feast of the Blessed Sacrament which has become a major attraction for visitors from all over who come to celebrate the Portuguese culture through food, drink, and entertainment.

1. Location & Schedule of Events

The “feast” is a four-day event, officially kicking off at 6:00 PM on Thursday, August 1st with the assembly of the Festeiros (Feast Committee Members) at the intersection of Earle Street and Acushnet Avenue.

Led by the Feast President, the Festeiros march in a special procession down Earle Street to Our Lady of Immaculate Conception Church which is located at the corner of Earle Street and Madeira Avenue. At the church, Father Daniel O. Reis celebrates a special Benediction to the Blessed Sacrament.



Photo by Josh Souza.

Each evening the feast grounds will close at 11:45pm and open the next day at noon.

On Saturday, however the **5K road race** in memory of Anibal Moniz will begin at 10:00am with a check-in time of 8:30am. The course goes through the historic north end and finishes through the famous arches at Madeira Field. The first 250 entrants get a free t-shirt, but all participants are treated to food and drink. The top three male and female winners will receive medals and cash prizes of \$250.00 for 1st place, \$150.00 for 2nd place and \$75.00 for 3rd place. The age categories are 14 and under, 15-18, 19-29, 30-39, 40-49, 50-59, 60-69, 70 and over.

The road race is followed by Fun & Family Day from NOON-4:00pm. A ton of fun events and activities are planned including face painting, a traveling science museum, music by the Toe Jam Puppet Band, carnival rides, a free book, flash mob and routine by Dance Xtreme, and more. This year there are some new rides!

The last day of the feast is Sunday and will feature a parade at 2:00pm.

Want to win some prizes? Ruffled off this year will be a trip to Madeira Island with hotel and airfare, tickets to a Patriots, Red Sox, Celtics or Revolution game, His and Hers Deluxe Bicycles, Lottery Ticket Books, a Peace Sport 49CC Scooter, and a \$1,000 in gift certificates to your favorite local restaurants! Simply buy some raffle tickets for a donation of \$2 or \$5 will get you a book of 5.

2. Costs

There is no charge for admission and the entertainment is free thanks to the hard work of the committee members who comprise the 2019 Feast of the Blessed Sacrament Committee. Feast members come from all over the country to plan the feast each year, some as far away as California and Florida. Some of the members will be traveling from across the U.S., Canada, Europe, and South Africa to attend the feast, but in the meantime, they have had family members representing them at the committee meetings.

While admission is free to walk around and watch the entertainment or visit the Museum of Madeiran Heritage there are also many vendors on the grounds selling everything from handmade Madeiran souvenirs to cigars. Of course, food, carnival rides, and beverages are also an additional cost.

Prices of food are kept reasonable, and there is a great deal of variety to choose from. Tickets cost a dollar each and can be purchased at many machines located throughout the grounds by placing a five, ten or twenty dollar bill inside. Tickets are non-refundable. There are also stands with employees who sell the tickets.



Photo by Miss Z Photography.

To give you a general idea of the prices of items at the feast, a full meal is 12 tickets, most sandwiches are around four tickets, and a soda or water goes for one ticket. If you're over 21, an impressive selection of alcoholic beverages is available to choose from.

On Family Fun Day – which is Saturday – food is FREE food for kids under 12: burgers, hot dogs, French fries and a soda from noon-4:00 pm. Also on Saturday in the same time frame, seniors get a choice-of-menu dinner at a 50% discount and special for them will be music acts of The Essex County 4 and Taylor Cormier. Choices include roast beef, chicken, fish, *cacoila*, and the somewhat more exotic roast goat or rabbit, traditional Portuguese favorites.

3. Food

One of the greatest features of the feast is the delicious Portuguese fare. There are many food stands located throughout

Madeira Field that serve your favorites from the simple delights of linguica and *cacoila* sandwiches to full-on Portuguese cuisine plates of chicken, beef, goat or tuna with potatoes, rice, and vegetables.

Another major culinary draw is the *Carne de Espeto*, a massive, 40-foot barbecue pit where beef sirloin cubes can be cooked over an open flame on massive skewers. This is hard to miss since the aroma is absolutely mouthwatering. Visitors are able to buy the meat for eight tickets a pound and a delicious aromatic salt is provided to cook with.



Carne de Espeto. Photo by Josh Souza.

Visitors are then able to roast their own dinner over the gas-fired lava rock grill. Mr. Camara, (who has been a part of the organization since 1982) advised me that if someone tells you to pour Madeira wine on the meat it is not advisable (it does not help the flavor and causes the meat to burn faster!)

Other items that will be featured at the feast include *Milho Frito*, fried cornmeal, garlic and finely shredded kale make this the perfect treat to go with *Carne de Espeto*, *pasteis de Bacalau* (codfish cakes), *atum*, *cabra*, *favas*, *coelho*, *carne de vinho e alhos*, *malassadas*, *tremocos* and other Portuguese

classics. There will also be ice-cold fresh fruit cups, the perfect way to cool down for health-conscious attendees.

In case you are not accustomed to the flavorful cooking style of Portuguese cuisine, go to the Food & Drink page of the Portuguese Feast website for [definitions](#) of some of the food you might expect to see.

4. Drink

One of the draws of the feast is the consumption of Madeira wine, which is a central part of the festivities as it is part of a long tradition. Madeira wine is a sweet, fortified red wine. Genuine Madeira wine is made on the island of Madeira, and exportation of actual barrels are restricted due to regulations. However, thanks to a special agreement made between feast officials and the President of Madeira, casks are able to be delivered to New Bedford and served for the weekend, making this a very rare treat for those who attend.



For those who don't find that the taste of Madeira wine suits their pallet, there are a great variety of additional options

including a full liquor bar for mix drinks and frozen drinks. Alcohol stands also serve sangria and white wine and Budweiser beer is on tap.

If you wish to partake in the consumption of alcoholic beverages, you will need to have your ID scanned when you enter the feast grounds in order to receive a wristband that proves you are legally old enough to be served.

There will be additional ID stations at this year's feast due to the anticipated increase in numbers of attendees.

5. Entertainment

There is a great deal of quality free entertainment at the feast each year from Portuguese and American cultures. There are four separate stages of entertainment on the main grounds and a "Fado" stage at the Museum of Madeiran Heritage Courtyard Venue – these performances will be featuring a Portuguese genre of music that can be traced back to the 1820s but is believed to be even older than that.

One of the cultural acts that you may see take the stage at Madeira field is Grupo Folclórico Clube Madeirense S.S. Sacramento. This group of dancers presents traditional dancing performances to authentic Madeiran music and in traditional clothing. These performances are always very spirited and interesting to see.

There will be many bands on the smaller stages during the feast, but the largest stage is reserved for a special performance at 10:00 each night by a headliner band. For those old school metalheads, you will be excited to know that Scott Stapp of Creed will be headlining this year! Scott Stapp is known as a Grammy-winning songwriter and frontman for Creed (over 50 million albums sold worldwide), and for his work as a solo artist who released the platinum-certified *The Great Divide* (2005) and *Proof of Life* (2013) which featured his first solo Billboard #1, "Slow Suicide." His next solo venture

reflects a new outlook after the biggest fight of his life – five years and counting. With new single “Purpose For Pain,” one of rock’s biggest names roars back to the scene with a driving, introspective new single.

For more information on when and where events will be taking place, go to the Portuguese Feast [Entertainment Schedule](#).



THURSDAY AUGUST 1, 2019

Time, Act and Stage

6:45pm-8:00pm: Tony Borges (2)

6:45pm-8:00pm: Freeze Pops (3)

7:00pm-10:00pm: Cadence and Co. (4)

8:00pm-9:00pm: Grupo Folclorico do Clube Madeirense S.S.
Sacramento (1)

9:00pm-10:00pm: Tony Borges (2)

9:00pm-10:00pm: Freeze Pops (3)

10:00pm-11:30pm: Scott Stapp (1)

FRIDAY AUGUST 2, 2019

Time, Act and Stage

1:00pm-2:00pm: Country Monsta (2)
2:00pm-3:00pm: The Relics (1)
3:00pm-4:00pm: Country Monsta (2)
4:00-5:00pm: Morissey Blvd. (1)
5:00pm-6:00pm: Luz Eterna (2)
5:00pm-6:00pm: Radioactive (3)
6:00-7:00pm: Morissey Blvd. (1)
7:00pm-8:00pm: New Bedford Rude Boyz (2)
7:00pm-8:00pm: React (3)
8:00pm-9:00pm: Grupo Folclorico do Clube Madeirense S.S.
Sacramento (1)
9:00pm-10:00pm: New Bedford Rude Boyz (2)
7:00pm-8:00pm: React (3)
7:00pm-10:00pm: Ponta D'Sol (4)
10:00pm-11:30: The Edge (1)

SATURDAY AUGUST 3, 2019

Time, Act and Stage

12:00-3:00: "Walgreens Kids Day" w/ Dartmouth Acapella, Dance
Extreme, Benner Magic Show, and more.
3:00-4:00: On The Rocks (2)
4:00-5:00: Wild Nites (1)
4:00-7:00: Somethin' Else (4)
5:00-6:00: On The Rocks (2)
6:00-7:00: Wild Nites (1)
7:00-8:00: 7 Day Weekend (2)
7:00-8:00: Below Zero (3)
7:00-10:00: The Concept (4)
8:00-9:00: Grupo Folcorico Madeirense (1)

9:00-10:00: 7 Day Weekend (2)

9:00-10:00: Below Zero (3)

10:00-11:30: Bryan Wilson & John D'Luka (1)

SUNDAY AUGUST 4, 2019

Time, Act and Stage

Parade Starts 2:00pm

1:00-4:00: Matt Silvia (4)

4:00-7:00: Tim & Annette (4)

5:00-6:00: Flamingo Pluto (3)

5:00-8:30: Discovery Language Academy Folkloric Performance Group, Grupo Folclorico de Imaculado Coracao de Maria, Rancho Folclorico do Clube Social Portuguese, and Grupo Folclorico Madeirense (1)

7:00-8:00: Responders (3)

7:00-10:00: Graig Demello (4)

8:30-10:00: Timmy Brown (2)

9:00-10:00: Responders (3)

10:00-11:30: Badfish (1)



Museum Café Entertainment

Thursday, August 1, 2018 (8:00pm–11:30pm)

- Sonya Bettencourt, Fado Singer
- Jeremias Macedo, Fado Singer
- Viriato Ferreira, Viola Classica
- Loïc da Silva, Guitarra Portuguesa

Friday, August 2, 2018 (7:30pm–11:30pm)

- Sonya Bettencourt, Fado Singer
- Carlos Furtado, Fado Singer
- Viriato Ferreira, Viola Classica
- Loïc da Silva, Guitarra Portuguesa

Saturday, August 3, 2018 (2:00pm-5:00pm & 7:30pm–11:30pm)

- Edite Lawrence, Fado Singer (2:00pm-5:00pm)
- Sonya Bettencourt, Fado Singer

- Loïc da Silva, Guitarra Portuguesa
- Viriato Ferreira, Viola Classica

Sunday, August 4, 2018

4:00pm-7:00pm: Rebecca Correia (Singer-songwriter & guitarist)

7:30pm-10:30pm: Jordan Paiva (Josh Groban)

To see more and keep abreast of changes, check out the Feast of the Blessed Sacrament's entertainment schedule page.

6. Families

Since the Madeira feast involves alcohol consumption, some readers may be wondering if it is a family-appropriate event. You will be glad to know that family values are integral to the foundation of the feast. While it is probably not advisable to bring young children later in the night due to large crowds and loud music, it should be mentioned that there are many features of the feast that children will love. Also, the feast takes great measures to prohibit underage drinking. All who wish to consume alcoholic beverages are required to undergo a license verification process in order to receive a specially printed wristband.

Additional security precautions are always taken due to its size and significance. Few people realize this, but the Feast grounds are wired with such advanced cameras that all feast goers are on at least two cameras at any given time.



A cool part of the feast is that it features carnival rides and games all weekend. Saturday is probably the best day for families with young children thanks to **Fun & Family Day** which follows the **annual 5k road race**. Fun & Family Day kicks off at noon and ends at four, featuring special live entertainment for children, face painting, traveling science museum, Flash Mob, and routine by Dance Xtreme, Toe Jam Puppet Band, and more. Kids under twelve can also receive a free hot dog or hamburger, French fries, and a soda.

For senior citizens in the community, there is "Senior Citizen Afternoon" which also takes place on Saturday from noon to 4 pm. During this time a shuttle is being offered (courtesy of the City of New Bedford) from the parking lot of Lincoln Elementary on Saturday so that seniors can attend the event without having to worry about parking. On this day they are also offered a special deal of choice-of-menu dinner at a 50% discount! Menu choices include roast beef, chicken, fish, cacoila, and the somewhat more exotic roast goat or rabbit – traditional Portuguese favorites. Only 6 dollars instead of 12 (eat-in only). Special entertainment is featured as well.

7. History



The Feast of the Blessed Sacrament gains its roots from the island of Madeira which is located 390 miles off the coast of Morocco. Traditionally, each Roman Catholic parish in Madeira would observe a festival to celebrate their patron saint. A committee of four men called *festeiros* would be responsible for preparing the village for the celebration by decorating the streets, contracting entertainment (often in the form of a brass band and fireworks) and holding a ceremonial meal after mass on Sunday.

There are many versions of the tale of why the Feast of the Blessed Sacrament was first begun in New Bedford over 100 years ago. What is certain, however, is that the feast was initiated as a means of preserving basic values of the Madeiran culture. Of course, since it was first begun the feast has changed in many ways to accommodate thousands of eager participants and modern elements of the celebration.

While there have been many changes in the feast, many aspects still remain central to the celebration. The tradition of Madeira wine is a very old one, dating back to the 15th Century when the Malvasia vine was planted on the island of Madeira to see it would yield an alternative supply of wine for England. When growth was successful Madeira wine quickly took to the market, but did not become a major export until many years later. It wasn't until the 16th Century that the flavor we know of today was created when they discovered that the flavor of the wine was actually improved by being repeatedly heated up. Follow the link for more information on the [history](#) of Madeira wine.

The religious aspect of the feast also remains a part of proceedings. As it did in 1915, the feast still takes place near Our Lady of Immaculate Conception, which is located on the corner of Earle and Madeira Street in New Bedford. The Portuguese feast pays homage to its religious traditions by beginning the weekend festivities with a procession to the church where Father Daniel O. Reis gives a Benediction to the Blessed Sacrament. The last day of the feast starts with Sunday Mass at Our Lady of Immaculate Conception and "the Festeiros, Club Madeirense S. S. Sacramento, Inc. members, and all of the many volunteers receive the blessings of the church for their many hours of work devoted to achieving a successful Feast and for being respectful of its religious origins". Throughout the weekend the church also hosts a wonderful musical series of organ music and vocalists. The details of this schedule are still being finalized.

8. Madeira Field

Most of the events take place at Madeira Field, which is a permanent location in New Bedford's north end, which comes to life one weekend a year for the festivities. The address of Madeira Field is 50 Madeira Avenue, New Bedford, MA (88 Tinkham Street on your GPS). Parking can be a bit tricky, you may have to plan to search a bit to find a spot and walk a few

blocks, or pay to park in a nearby private lot.



The grounds on which the Feast of the Blessed Sacrament takes place are quite expansive and easy to lose people in. Be sure you have a plan for finding lost party members whether it be by cell phone or a designated area to meet up at.

When entering the feast you will need to get in line for a wristband if you wish to purchase alcoholic beverages. One of the most prominent features you will notice upon entering the festival grounds is the Santana House. The house is designed after the colorful architectural styles of the homes in the village Santana, Madeira and is where the Madeira wine is served from.

Across from the Santana House is Stage One, which is massive and where the main attractions will be hosted throughout the weekend. There are also two other smaller stages, one that is inside the gates and the other which is outside and amongst the souvenir vendors. You will also see many food and drink

stands throughout the grounds, and towards the back, you will find the barbecue pits for Carne de Espeto (or just follow your nose).

Feast of the Blessed Sacrament

50 Madeira Avenue
New Bedford, MA

Website: feastoftheblessedsacrament.com

Facebook: facebook.com/FeastOfTheBlessedSacrament/
