

Reinventing San Gennaro

Patrizia Orioli (September 23, 2011)



The Two Bridges Neighborhood Council, in collaboration with the Basilica of St. Patrick's Old Cathedral has taken the opportunity of the annual feast of San Gennaro to establish the San Gennaro Gateway North location as a possible destination point, the first in a plan for the development of a series of "gateways," to facilitate visitor and tourist access points to the Chinatown-Little Italy Historic District.

The [Two Bridges Neighborhood Council](#) [2] ("Two Bridges"), in collaboration with the [Basilica of Saint Patrick's Old Cathedral](#) [3], has re-imagined Manhattan's annual San Gennaro Feast with innovative cultural and interactive programming at Mulberry Street between Prince and Houston Streets - the most northern final block of the San Gennaro Feast.



In New York City the Feast of San Gennaro began in September 1926 when newly arrived immigrants from Naples congregated along Mulberry Street in the Little Italy neighborhood, to continue the tradition they had followed in Italy. Through the decades the festival expanded and is now an 11-day street fair beginning on the second Thursday in September in the Little Italy area of Manhattan as an annual celebration of Italian culture and the Italian-American community. Centered on Mulberry Street, which is closed to traffic for the occasion, the festival generally features parades, street vendors, food stands featuring sausages, zeppole and other Italian-American specialties, and games.

Two Bridges took the opportunity of the annual feast to establish the [San Gennaro Gateway North](#) [4] location as a possible destination point, the first in a plan for the development of a series of “gateways,” to facilitate visitor and tourist access points to the Chinatown-Little Italy Historic District. It is also considered an experiment to explore a pedestrian way on a street that includes such landmark structures as the [Puck Building](#) [5] and the Basilica of St. Patrick’s campus.

Their program includes: performances staged on the grand steps of the Basilica of St. Patrick’s Old Cathedral, featuring jazz numbers by notable Italian musicians like Bucky Pizzarelli, Gene Bertoncini, Piers Lawrence, the Tre Bella group, the Anabella Lenzu Dance Company and Liz Miele. Bocce tournaments on both weekends of the feast, including “In Bocca Al Lupo” (a.k.a. Cornhole), hosted by the [NYC Social Sports Club](#) [6] with free play sessions all day during the week. Having special relevance to the Patron Saint of Naples, a special parish [Red Cross](#) [7] Blood Drive. The unveiling of a hanging sculptural piece suspended between the historic landmarks of the Puck Building and the Basilica of St. Patrick’s Old Cathedral Designed by [SOFTlab](#) [8]. The 25-foot square sculpture weighs only 120 pounds. Floating above Nolita at the north gate of the San Gennaro Festival, the piece—made from photography color filters and laser-cut Mylar panels—will be dancing above cannoli until September 25.

The program also features a special chorale concert of Italian Renaissance music by [AmorArtis](#) [9], the Basilica’s choir-in residence with the Basilica Schola. A theatrical reading of the 1911 immigrant tragedy at the Triangle Shirtwaist Factory Fire in the Cathedral proper. An exhibit at St. Michael’s Russian Catholic Church of imperial vestments worn during the coronation liturgy of Czar Nicholas. Last but not least, a raffle to win a wonderful [Vespa](#) [10].

The San Gennaro Gateway North aims to establish the idea of Houston and Mulberry Streets as one in a series of future gateways into the historic district, and at the same time, promote the annual San Gennaro Feast through lively cultural programming that will represent a re-imagining of the future feast within the milieu of the traditional feast –at least on this street.

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