

# 2024 New Bedford's Portuguese Feast Survival Guide (Aug 1-4)

Malasadas, carne de espeto and Madeira wine, oh my!

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 108th 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.

Each evening the feast grounds will close at 11:45pm. On Friday, the grounds will open up at Friday – 5:00pm, but on Saturday and Sunday they will open up at 12:00pm.

The Carnival will open all four days of the Feast. Cushing Amusements is a family owned and operated traveling carnival. You can visit their Facebook Page to see past events and a glimpse at some of their entertainment and rides.



*Feast of the Blessed Sacrament photo.*

Walgreen's Family Fun Day is from 12-4:00pm on Saturday. Children under 12 eat for "free"; a free burger, hot dog, French fries and a soda. A perfect weekend day for families to bring along the little ones and not worry about having to pay high prices. 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!

In addition, from 12-4:00 PM, the Main Pavilion welcomes all seniors to enjoy a 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. The buffet is arranged in a way that visitors are allowed to sample more than one entree with their 'Caldo Verde' (Portuguese green soup) and a "pop" (small) handmade bread. A coffee or soft drink is also included. Malassadas (sugared fried dough) dessert is extra and there may be a line, but the cost is low.

The last day of the feast is Sunday and will feature a parade

at 2:00pm with over forty different organizations marching the one mile route from Brooklawn Park to the Feast grounds at Madeira Field.

This year organizers are pulling out all the stops and there will be Color Guards, Marching Bands, Folkloric Groups, Jugglers, Giant Puppets, Gigantic Clydesdale Horses, Steel Drum Band, Bagpipers, Veterans Groups, Community & Cultural Heritage Organizations and much more!

Parade Route: The parade begins at Brooklawn Park and proceeds south on Acushnet Avenue to Earle Street, turns east onto Earle Street and continues to the Immaculate Conception Church. It then turns north onto Madeira Avenue and proceeds to Madeira Field where it enters the Feast grounds and past the reviewing stand at Stage 1.

## **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 2024 Feast of the Blessed Sacrament Committee which in an historic move welcomed women. You can read about the decision [here](#)

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.

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.

### **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.



*Feast of the Blessed Sacrament photo.*

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 Folclorico 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. The 2024 Feast Headliner will be....Badfish!



*Feast of the Blessed Sacrament photo.*

The phenomenon known as Sublime, arguably the most energetic, original and uniquely eclectic band to emerge from any scene, anywhere, ended with the untimely death of lead singer, guitarist and songwriter Brad Nowell in May of 1996.

But encompassing the sense of place and purpose long associated with Sublime's music, Badfish continues to channel the spirit of Sublime with a fury not felt for some time. What separates Badfish from other bands is that they have replicated Sublime's essence, developing a scene and dedicated following most commonly reserved for label-driven, mainstream acts.

Badfish make their mark on the audience by playing with the spirit of Sublime. They perform not as Sublime would have, or did, but as Badfish does!"-Feast of the Blessed Sacrament.

BADFISH will be headlining Thursday Night from 10:00pm-11:30pm on Stage 1.

Headlining Friday Night will be the F00Z FIGHTERS from 10:00pm-11:30pm on Stage 1. The Award Winning Foo Fighters tribute band featuring dynamic frontman Nicky Rich, F00Z FIGHTERS have blazed a trail to become the most sought-after



Foo Fighters tribute band in the Nation.

Headlining Saturday Night will be NELIA from 10:00pm-11:30pm on Stage 1. Nelia is a local singer determined to break down long-standing barriers in the Luso-American community. On stage, she manages to capture mature audiences with her ethnic-flavored music while captivating younger crowds with her amazing stage presence.

Headlining Sunday Night will be BAND FAITH from 10:00pm-11:30pm on Stage 1). With almost 3 decades of music under their belt, New Bedford, Ma based BandFaith has been performing their mix of Portuguese/Latin fused music for fans all over the world.

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

Thursday August 1 <sup>st</sup> 2024			Friday August 2 <sup>nd</sup> 2024		
STAGE 1	6:00-7:00	FREEZEPOPS	STAGE 1	5:00-7:00	GET THE FUNK OUT
STAGE 4	6:00-8:00	SOMETHIN-ELSE	STAGE 4	5:00-6:00	MARVIN & G
STAGE 2	7:00-8:00	NADIA & KARMA	STAGE 4	6:30-9:30	CADENCE & COMPANY
STAGE 3	7:00-8:00	FULL TILT	STAGE 2	7:00-8:00	EDGE
STAGE 1	8:00-9:20	FOLKLORIC CAMACHA GROUP	STAGE 3	7:00-8:00	LITTLE LIES
STAGE 4	8:00-10:00	SHARON & KENNY	STAGE 1	8:00-9:20	FOLKLORIC CAMACHA GROUP
STAGE 2	9:00-10:00	NADIA & KARMA	STAGE 2	9:00-10:00	EDGE
STAGE 3	9:00-10:00	FULL TILT	STAGE 3	9:00-10:00	LITTLE LIES
STAGE 1	10:00-12:00AM	BADFISH	STAGE 1	10:00-12:00AM	FOOZ FIGHTERS

Feast of the Blessed Sacrament photo.

Saturday August 3 <sup>rd</sup> 2024			Sunday August 4 <sup>th</sup> 2024		
STAGE 4	3:00-4:00	HALLIE GRACE	STAGE 4	12:00-2:00	KOURY SISTER
STAGE 2	5:00-6:00	HARDWIRE	STAGE 4	3:00-4:00	JAKE JENSEN
STAGE 4	5:00-7:00	PLAY BY PLAY	STAGE 1	5:00-6:00	REBECCA CORREIA
STAGE 1	6:00-7:00	ELVIS	STAGE 4	5:00-6:00	PERRY SOLO
STAGE 2	7:00-8:00	HARDWIRE	STAGE 4	6:00-1000	FRANK MEDEIROS
STAGE 3	7:00-8:00	MORRISSEY BLVD	STAGE 2	7:00-8:00	LACEY CHERYL 5
STAGE 4	7:00-9:00	DOUBLE IMPACT	STAGE 3	7:00-8:00	DJ GAZELLE
STAGE 1	8:00-9:20	FOLKLORIC CAMACHA GROUP	STAGE 1	8:00-9:20	FOLKLORIC CAMACHA GROUP
STAGE 4	9:00-10:00	JACKSON NEVES	STAGE 2	9:20-10:20	LACEY CHERYL 5
STAGE 2	9:20-10:20	HARDWIRE	STAGE 3	9:20-10:20	DJ GAZELLE
STAGE 3	9:20-10:20	MORRISSEY BLVD			
STAGE 1	10:00-12:00AM	NELIA	SATGE 1	10:00-12:00AM	FAITH

*Feast of the Blessed Sacrament photo.*

## 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.





*Feast of the Blessed Sacrament photo.*

## **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.





*Feast of the Blessed Sacrament photo.*

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).



Josh Souza photo.

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# Feast of the Blessed Sacrament

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