



**DUBLIN<sup>®</sup>**  
IRISH FESTIVAL



**Category 52**  
**Best Food and Beverage Program**  
**Dublin Irish Festival**  
**Budget \$750,000 – \$1.5 Million**

## Category 52

### Best Food and Beverage Program

#### Dublin Irish Festival

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### **Overview Information:**

#### **Introduction & background of main event**

For 28 years, the first weekend in August has been reserved for the largest three-day Irish festival on the planet. The Dublin Irish Festival, hosted annually in Dublin, Ohio, a city just northwest of Columbus, is one of the nation's premier Irish festivals and a Central Ohio tradition. More than 100,000 guests visit the Festival each year to experience the best of Irish dance, music, art, sports and culture. Located on 39 rolling acres in Dublin's Coffman Park, the Dublin Irish Festival brings guests from all over the world together in celebration of all things Irish.

#### **Description and purpose / objective of food and beverage program**

The purpose of the food vendors and the beverage program at the Festival is to provide guests with quality food and drinks with Irish themes, good aesthetics and a variety of choices.

#### **Number and types of vendors**

Fifty-four food vendors were present on the 2014 Dublin Irish Festival grounds. Many new Irish items have been added in year's past, but the Festival is always looking to add more. Eleven vendors have been with the Festival for five years or less and 13 have been with the Festival for 15 or more.

Many of the vendors offer a crowd-pleasing variety of traditional Irish fare, as well as local favorites sure to please the palates of a diverse demographic of guests. In 2014, the Festival strived to embrace the "foodie" atmosphere of Columbus by relocating its food trucks to a specialized area, which allowed guests to easily locate food vendors on the Festival grounds.



At the 2014 Dublin Irish Festival, there were 32 retail beverage locations on festival grounds. Sixteen of these locations sold beer, 9 sold cocktails and 7 sold pop and water.

#### **Site plan (i.e. food courts, crowd flow, etc.)**

On the Festival grounds, there were five main food vendor areas, each with at least three vendors. The vendor booths were generally situated around or near the Festival's main stages or in high-traffic walking areas. Beverage token booths were also placed strategically throughout the Festival. At these booths, guests could purchase plastic tokens with which to buy both alcoholic and non-alcoholic drinks from festival beverage locations.

#### **Cash management process**

Food vendors handled all monetary transactions on their own throughout the Festival weekend and many, if not all, had the ability to use credit card transactions. Fees paid to the City of Dublin were done in advance for vendor space and all vending sales were kept by the vendor.

During the Festival, tokens were required for the purchase of all beverages served from Dublin Irish Festival alcohol, pop and water locations. Cash was not accepted at these locations and tokens were sold throughout festival grounds. Tokens

were sold 15 minutes prior to the closing of the Festival and alcohol sales ended 30 minutes prior to the end of the Festival. Pop and water sales continued until closing.

Beverage tokens were not accepted by the food vendors at the Festival.

### Fee structures

Included in food vendor fees were size of area by frontage, overnight security and power.

Total fees were as follows:

- 10' frontage: \$1,700
- 20' frontage: \$2,050
- 30' frontage: \$2,400

Additional fees were optional:

- 6' tables: \$5 each
- Chairs: \$1 each

Tokens were available to purchase in packages of six, 12, 24 or 48 with a credit card. Reusable commemorative mugs were available for \$2 or one token; pop and water were available for one token; 20 oz. beer, wine and cocktails were available for three tokens; Jameson Black Barrel and the Festival's featured cocktail, the Irish Mule, were four tokens; and Jameson 12-year-old Special Reserve, only available at the Jameson Whiskey Tent, was five tokens.

### Alcohol beverage training / control

The Dublin Irish Festival's Sharing O' the Green Program allows community organizations to work in several capacities at the Festival including beverage serving, beverage inventory management and distribution, tending to guest parking lots, and much more. In return for working, the organization earns a portion of the total monies that its group collects throughout the weekend.

The purpose of the Sharing O' the Green Program is to provide an opportunity for Dublin-based organizations to serve the community, raise funds to support their programs and to enrich the City of Dublin. In 2014, 32 Dublin community organizations participated in the Sharing O' the Green Program. In total, the groups raised \$114,000.

All beverage servers who work at the Festival serving alcohol must attend a festival-run beverage server training session. It is the intent of the City of Dublin to ensure that patrons of the Festival are able to enjoy alcoholic beverages in a safe and responsible manner. It is made clear up front that individuals can be held criminally and/or civilly liable for the violation of Ohio law or the requirements set forth in the beverage server handbook. In the event that a beverage server violates the provisions outlined in the beverage server agreement, Dublin has the right to terminate participation in the Sharing O' the Green program.

**32** community organizations raised **\$114,000** during the 2014 Dublin Irish Festival's Sharing O' the Green beverage program

*"We've been able to continue our overall operations in no small part to the Sharing O' the Green fundraising opportunity. This is our second largest fundraising event of the year and we would not be able to continue our operation without the funds received from our beverage sales efforts."*

*-Tom Cassidy  
2014 Sharing O' the Green participant*

### Vendor application process

All vendor applicants were asked to go online to the Festival website and fill out an application, even if they had been at the Dublin Irish Festival in past years. Applications were open for roughly six months beginning in September through March 1. Once the applications closed, the Food Vendor Committee met and decided on the selection for the 2014

festival. Decisions were based on multiple factors, including returning vendors (given first priority), variety and type of food/relation to Irish culture and booth size requested.

Approved vendors were then notified via email with a link to an online confirmation form where they electronically signed an agreement to Festival regulations, completed on-site information requested and paid a 25 percent deposit in order to secure their spot. Approximately five weeks prior to the Festival, full payment was made and Certificates of Insurance were submitted.

### **Festival / event controlled products and services (i.e. festival-only controlled product sales, vendor required product use, etc.)**

In 2014, the Dublin Irish Festival launched a custom-built iPad application for beverage inventory and beverage token management. This application was used to organize and communicate beverage sales through the Sharing O' the Green Program throughout the Festival weekend.

The application provided support for iPad-based functionality that worked with a back-end database to capture operational information regarding beverage distribution and token management. This information was used to measure the flow of beverage products during the Festival to create better inventory models and to track financial results as the festival progressed.

The iPad app provided distribution and inventory data where business trends were established by location, which greatly helped in the summarization of festival data for post-event reporting and strategic planning for 2015.



### **Promotional activities to drive business**

The Dublin Irish Festival promoted gluten-free food offerings from participating vendors as well as gluten-free beverages, such as Magners Irish Cider, on the Festival website.

In 2014, the Dublin Irish Festival offered the first featured Irish cocktail, the Irish Mule. This cocktail was offered for four tokens at festival alcohol-serving beverage locations. Incorporating Jameson Irish Whiskey—Jameson was a 2014 festival sponsor—the Irish Mule, inspired by the popular Moscow Mule, was suggested as a special promotional beverage created specifically for the Festival by Claire Gavin, the Jameson Ambassador of Ohio.

In addition to the alcohol available for purchase at the Festival beverage locations, guests also had the opportunity to purchase tickets for beer, wine and whiskey tastings, which were separate ticketed events held throughout the Festival weekend. The whiskey tastings consisted of six whiskeys provided by Jameson and were presented by Claire Gavin. These tasting events were a tremendous success and allowed for an unforgettable experience that strengthened the connection between the Festival, its sponsors and its guests.

### **Power/ water access**

No overnight power was available to vendors until Friday evening. Efforts were made to connect all who needed overnight power to hard power so that generators would not run overnight, reducing costs to city. No vendor was to touch generators and power was hooked up by representatives from Springfield/Acme Electric. They provided questionnaires on power needs that were returned to the City of Dublin. On Wednesday and Thursday during set-up, power was available if needed to help during set-up only. Power was not turned on for everyone until 10 a.m. Friday.

There were water hookups available on both sides of the event lawn as well as from the pavilion. Water pumped from fire hydrants was available on the south side of the park and from city hall.

Ice and pop were available to purchase (vendors could purchase pop for their individual usage only). Prices were set based on prices from the supplier. There were two refrigerated trucks on-site and vendors shared the usage. The use of large private refrigerated trucks was discouraged and the communal refrigerated truck was on-site beginning Thursday after 1 p.m.

### **Waste disposal**

Vendors were required to make every effort to dispose of their waste through recycling or composting. Behind each vending area there were collection containers for grey water, grease, food composting and mixed recycling. These were shared between all the vendors in the area, but in order to make sure there was enough capacity, they were each asked how much of each type of waste they expected. The Festival collected over a ton of compost materials. It also recycled over 3 tons of cardboard, much of which was brought on-site by vendors. The Festival was also paid \$385 for the grease collected, which amounted to 1.25 tons.

Efforts to promote recycling and reduce the impact the Festival had on the environment were implemented in 2014. Through the marketing of reusable commemorative mugs, the Festival encouraged guests to reuse their glasses as they sampled all that the Festival had to offer. Furthermore, redesigned recyclable cups were used at each beverage location.



*Recycling messaging design printed on single-use cups at the Dublin Irish Festival.*

### **Supporting Question:**

**What did you do to update / change this program from the year before? Were your updates / changes successful? Please provide measurable results / examples.**

The Festival is always looking to incorporate unique vendors into its food and beverage offerings in an attempt to further offer guests a multifaceted Irish cultural experience. In 2014, the Dublin Irish Festival welcomed several new vendors and, in keeping with the constantly evolving culinary palate of Columbus as a central food hub, established a new food court area specifically for food trucks.

Additionally, the Festival's beverage program underwent a large-scale digitalization in an effort to increase efficiency. Through the creation of an iPad app, the Festival greatly streamlined the beverage distribution and tracking process, which made the Sharing O' the Green Program much easier to manage and understand for all organizations involved.

**\$185,949**  
in revenue generated by vendors at the 2014 Dublin Irish Festival

Finally, the incorporation of Dublin Irish Festival-specific promotional activities had a positive impact on the overall revenue brought in by the Festival's food and beverage program. The Festival promoted gluten-free food options and offered gluten-free Magners Irish Cider for the first time during the 2014 Festival weekend.

**\$732,694**  
in revenue generated by the beverage program at the 2014 Dublin Irish Festival

These updates and changes to the already-high-performing food and beverage program in place at the Dublin Irish Festival resulted in approximately \$185,949 in revenue from vendors—about \$19,500 more than the revenue generated by vendors in 2013. The Dublin Irish Festival also generated \$732,694 in revenue from the Festival's beverage program in 2014.