

News Release

Event Dates: July 16 & 17, 2011 Event Hours: Sat. 9 a.m.-9 p.m. Sun. 9 a.m.-4 p.m.
Elizabeth Celtic Festival, Casey Jones Park, Colo. Hwy. 86 & County Road 17, Elizabeth, CO

Haggis Gets Tossed at Celtic Fest

Besides being Scotland's "national food," there is another use for Haggis. It can be tossed or hurled...that is, thrown for distance...as a sport. The Colorado State Haggis Toss Championships will again be held at the Elizabeth Celtic Festival on Saturday, July 16th, at Casey Jones Park on the east side of Elizabeth, Colorado.

As a food, "it's essentially 'sheep-loaf,'" comments Neil Gillette, director of this year's Celtic Festival. "Maybe you've heard that Native Americans used, 'all the parts of the buffalo.' Well, the Highland Scots used all the parts of the sheep in making Haggis. All those edible parts get minced, then mixed with oatmeal (the Scots were big on oatmeal), spices are added, then it's cooked in a casing like a sausage. It used to be cooked in a sheep's stomach, because that was left over and it was available," says Gillette. "Nothing went to waste."

Last year, over thirty Haggis Tossers took part. "While most contestants were from Colorado, we also had tossers from Texas, Missouri, Wyoming and even England," says David Sandekian, who runs the event. According to Guinness, the World Record for Haggis Tossing (or Haggis Hurling) is 180 feet, 10 inches. This amazing feat was accomplished by Alan Pettigrew, a Scottish shot-putter, in the Loch Lomand area in Scotland back in 1984. The record still stands. The Colorado Record is held by Dan Williams, a professional class Scottish athlete from Laramie, Wyoming. His record toss is 134 feet, 8 and a half inches. "The challenge is, you have to throw while standing on a barrel-top," says Sandekian. "If you fall off, you're disqualified."

The Elizabeth Celtic Festival is a growing two-day weekend event, with a wide range of things to see and do for all ages. "We have national-class competitors in Highland Dancing, Scottish Athletics and Solo Piping," says Gillette. "We also have mounted knights and other living history groups ranging from the Romans to the American Civil War." Performers include Celtic bands, "Skean Dubh," "The Commoners," and "Gobs o' Phun," and several pipe bands, Irish Step-dancers and other Celtic dance groups. "There are lots of activities for children and families," according to Gillette. Gates open at 9 a.m. both days, with extended hours on Saturday. The Haggis Toss finals will be on Saturday at 4:00 p.m. For more information, please see the event's website:

www.ElizabethCelticFestival.com.