

# LET THE GAMES BEGIN : Lompoc Renaissance Festival set for March 28-29

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In late March, an oak-filled park in Lompoc will be transformed into an ancient English countryside, complete with archers, barons, wandering minstrels and belly dancers.

The Lompoc Renaissance Festival will be held at Ken Adam Park -- off Highway 1 and Hancock Drive -- on March 28-29. It's a first-time event for the community, and is the brainchild of Justin LeCavalier, a Lompoc stay-at-home dad who runs a chain mail business -- making amour-like items and clothing from small metal rings linked together into mesh.

Each year, he travels to more than a dozen Renaissance festivals and fairs around the state to sell his wares, and decided that his own home town would be perfect for a gathering.

"I've always believed I live in the wrong era," said Mr. LeCavalier, with a large smile. "It (has) always just fascinated me, the history, the chivalry, the knights and damsels in distress, doing unto others and protecting -- that entire philosophy that one person could make a difference. I've always seen myself as a chivalrous type of guy."

Renaissance festivals are held throughout the U.S., including popular gatherings in Ojai and San Luis Obispo. Most of the festivals center on the time of the reign of Queen Elizabeth I of England, though Mr. LeCavalier says his festival may change historical locale every year -- maybe to Italy, France or Asia.

"It's the turn of the 15th and 16th Century," he said of this year's focus. "We're not limiting it to a specific time; we're limiting it to an era. The simple reason is that this is the day in the life of a castle. From year-to-year, the castle could move to a different country. Everyone mistakenly believes England is the only place with a Renaissance. I'm leaving my options open for each year."

Mr. LeCavalier, 34, said the Lompoc event will include a two-day archery tournament, which will be open to the public and will have individual winners on each day. Though some festivals do have jousting, that will not take place in Lompoc, he said.

The Lompoc festival will feature various stage acts throughout each day, including Myth and Magic, a performance troupe that does slight of hand tricks. The Gypsy Guild from Santa Maria will do belly dancing and there will be various musical acts as well, such as the a cappella Lacey Ravens from Los Osos and entertainer Aryeh Frankfurter.

"When you walk through the main gate, you'll be walking onto a stage," Mr. LeCavalier explained. "You'll be interacting with people."

He plans to have three or four food booths, including coffee and crepes, as well as an ale stand.

Though some who follow renaissance fairs are strict historians, Mr. LeCavalier said he will take a more lenient approach to historical accuracy. The fair will not be one with "noble" characters such as a king and queen, but will instead center on a baron's land and the working folk around that community. Mr. LeCavalier's own persona is that of a merchant craftsman, while others may choose upper or middle class representations.



Justin LeCavalier, also shown at left, shows some of the chain mail items he makes for Renaissance Festival participants. Mr. LeCavalier is promoting the Lompoc Renaissance Festival in March.



NORA K. WALLACE/NEWS-PRESS PHOTOS

Denny Anderson, executive director of the Lompoc Valley Chamber of Commerce, said he understands such festivals are very popular, and have their own set of followers.

"The neat thing about it, it's a little slow right then; there's nothing much going on," Mr. Anderson said of March. "It's different. It might attract a different type of crowd."

Vandenberg Village residents Glen and Mary Newcomb are retired educators who frequently participate in Renaissance festivals.

"I am so excited," Mrs. Newcomb said. "There is a lot of interest right here in the valley. We taught a Renaissance Cultures class at Allan Hancock College. There is that kind of interest. We have an interesting cultural center in Lompoc. People think of us as rural in thought. But we have a large community interested in international and continental history, as well as Spanish history. I think it will be a wonderful event for the Lompoc Valley."

The Newcombs are historical reenactors and members of The Order of St. Brigit of Celts. The acting group, with some 35 members, portray characters from the era of Queen Elizabeth I, around 1575 to 1590, Mrs. Newcomb explained.

Mrs. Newcomb, for instance, will portray Lady Mary MacMichael, while her husband is Sir Glynn MacMichael. Their group will perform various dramatizations during the Lompoc festival, portraying the noble, merchant and peasant classes.

"It will be kind of like Lompoc, except in the 1500s," she said with a laugh. "It's a good old town with good old boys."

The couple, and extended family members, will also perform "bawdy ballads" as the Merrie Wreath Consort, Mrs. Newcomb said. They'll use reproduction antique instruments such as the recorder, cello and primitive drums.

California seventh graders study the Renaissance period, and the Newcombs expect the festival will attract a large number of students.

"Kids could come and experience the whole Renaissance fair," Mr. Newcomb said. "It makes that a learning experience and history classes come alive for kids."

He said he appreciates that the festival won't be "excruciatingly historically accurate," and that it will provide "something new, educational, historical and cultural" for the community.

Tickets for the Lompoc Renaissance Festival are \$10 for adults; seniors and military in uniform are \$8; children ages 6 to 12 are \$6 and children younger than 6 are admitted free. Attendees bringing a canned good for the Lompoc Food Pantry will receive \$1 off the price of admission. For more information, log onto [www.livingknights.com](http://www.livingknights.com).

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