Omelette festival 'eggspands' in Abbeville

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ABBEVILLE — The annual Giant Omelette Celebration here today and Sunday has "eggspanded" into the biggest festival in the 18-year history of the event.

Organizer Arlene White said the sponsoring fraternity — part of a global French-speaking network — has always prided itself on maintaining the rural feeling of a market fair in the French countryside. Indeed, the chosen weekend initially was celebrated as the French Market Festival.

Even as recently as the past few years, no more than a couple of thousand people would turn out for the colorful event, which eschews gambling booths and carnival rides in favor of traditional arts, crafts and music, along with plenty of children's activities.

But White said in an attempt to bring the promotion of the French language, culture and customs to a wider audience, more activities have been added this year, and more public relations has been done with media outlets, tourism and other organizations.

The effort paid off with the confirmation that two television network crews will travel to Abbeville to film the festivities. The Food Network, a cable channel dedicated to the culinary arts, and a crew from Korean network television both plan to film segments for later broadcast.

A pair of well-known bands also have been added to the mix, along with a tribute to legendary Cajun singer-songwriter D.L. Menard of Erath, who will be inducted as an honorary cavalier — or knight of the round skilet — on Sunday.

Horace Trahan and the Ossian Express are today's musical headliners. Menard and a band of friends will play Sunday along with the Fa Tras Show Band, which plays while the 5,000-egg omelette is cooked in an enormous 12-foot skillet over an open wood fire on Concord Street in front of the courthouse.

The festival commemorates a stop by Napoleon Bonaparte on one of his campaigns through France in the early 19th Century.

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As the legend goes, he stopped in Bessieres and had an omelette at a country inn that were so delicious he had all the eggs gathered from the surrounding countryside to feed his troops.

A number of French-speaking cities around the world hold annual festivals. All belong to a global Confrerie whose mission is to preserve Francophile ties and the fellowship of the egg.

Resident Minerva Roy said she and her children make the event every year.

"It's very family-oriented and not like any other festival. Everyone gathers around the big skillet and watches as the eggs are cooked with crawfish tails and hot sauce, and when it's done, everybody gets a taste with a big hunk of French bread."

Omelette celebration schedule:

**Today**
- Arts, crafts and food booths 10 a.m.-5 p.m.
- Riverboat Band in Magdalen Square 10 a.m.-1 p.m.
- Tour of Homes 10 a.m.-2 p.m., starts at Abbey Theater
- Kid's World activities 10 a.m.-5 p.m. on the square with egg flip and egg toss events 10:30 a.m.-4 p.m.
- Retriever demo by Dudley
- Dunbar Kennels 1:30-2 p.m.
- Horace Trahan & Ossian Express 5-6 p.m. downtown

**Sunday**
- Poker run motorcycle registration 7 a.m.
- Run leaves at 8 a.m. and ends at noon at the square
- Anteque Farm Implement Parade 8:30 a.m. downtown
- Farm Implement exhibit 9 a.m.-5 p.m.
- Antique car show 10 a.m.-4 p.m. behind City Hall
- Festival Mass 9:30 a.m. at St. Mary Magdalen church
- Arts, crafts and food booths 10 a.m.-5 p.m.
- O.L. Menard and friends 10 a.m.-1 p.m. downtown
- Menard cheddar cheese industry 1:30 p.m. downtown
- Silver Belts Dancers 11:30 a.m.-11:45 a.m. in the square
- Fa Tras Show Band 1:30-4 p.m. downtown
- Chef's parade to giant skillet 1:30 p.m.
- Preparation of Giant Omelette 2 p.m. downtown
- Vermillion Players songs from "The Wiz" 3 p.m.-3:30 p.m.
- Festival closes 5 p.m.