Mardi Gras Fun Facts

WOULD YOU BELIEVE...?

* More than 500,000 king cakes are sold each year in New Orleans between January 6 and Fat Tuesday, and another 50,000 are shipped out-of-state via overnight courier. The sugar-coated pastries include a tiny plastic baby doll inside; the person who finds it is declared "king" and must buy the next cake or give the next party.

* The metro area's 25,000 hotel rooms are traditionally 95% filled during Mardi Gras weekend.

* An economic impact study released by the University of New Orleans estimates that Mardi Gras generated $487 million in 1990.

* Since there is no governing body to license products or to proclaim any item official, as many as four dozen Mardi Gras posters are annually issued.

* The largest of about one dozen Mardi Gras supply houses in New Orleans sold 41 million pairs of beads for Carnival, 1991.

* The super-parades of Endymion and Bacchus, scheduled for the Saturday and Sunday before Fat Tuesday, feature a combined total of 75 floats, 60 marching bands and more than 250 units. Their 2,300 members toss more than 1.5 million cups, 2.5 million doubloons and 200,000 gross of beads.

* One of the most photographed objects in all of Mardi Gras is the *Boeuf Gras* float in the Rex parade. Since the Middle Ages, the *boeuf gras* (fatted bull) has been the symbol of the last meat eaten before Lent. While once a live bull was included in the procession, now a huge *papier mache* figure appears.

* Before recycling became popular, as much as 2,000 tons of trash were annually collected in Orleans Parish during the 12 days that precede Mardi Gras.

* The five truck parades that follow the krewes of Rex, Argus and Grela on Fat Tuesday feature more than 350 decorated flatbeds with nearly 15,000 costumed maskers aboard, most of them family members.

NEW TRADITIONS

Each year on the evening of January 6, the **Phunny Phorty Phellows** (PPP), a group of about 50 costumed men and women, trumpet the official opening of the Carnival season by riding a decorated streetcar along the St. Charles Avenue line. Accompanied by a lively Dixieland band, the group feasts on king cake and tosses throws to the delighted onlookers. On Mardi Gras Eve, the **Lundi Gras** (Fat Monday) celebration takes place at the Spanish Plaza on the Mississippi River adjacent to the Riverwalk Marketplace. The event features the riverboat arrival of Rex, a jazz concert, fireworks and a masked ball. The Proteus parade passes by the celebration at about 8:30 PM. The **Mardi Gras Maskathon**, a family-oriented costume contest, is held on Fat Tuesday at 2 PM in the 600 block of Canal Street.

FUTURE MARDI GRAS DATES

Feb 15 1994 Apr 30 1995 Feb 20 1996 Feb 11 1997



Facts prepared by Arthur Hardy, publisher of the annual Mardi Gras Guide magazine. 4/91