

# Sugar plums - and fried dough: Summer tradition on Christmas menu in Bradshaw

**By Rafael Alvarez**

*Special to the Review*

What is tradition in one parish can be alien in another. Not just devotion to a certain beloved saint over another. We are speaking of mysteries both sacred and sweet.

And of the staple by which man does not live alone: deep fried dough sprinkled with powdered sugar and served hot on a paper plate, among the offerings at the Christmas Bazaar at St. Stephen, Bradshaw, Dec. 7.

"When we moved to St. Stephen's in 1971 (from Our Lady of Pompei)," said Victoria Lombardi Falcone, 69, a 1962 graduate of The Catholic High School of Baltimore, "I walked around the carnival and asked people, 'Where's your fried dough?' I thought every church carnival had fried dough."

Alas, the daughter of Italian immigrants - a woman who still makes the pizzelle waffle cookies with old-fashioned irons over an open flame - had found herself in the wilds of northerneastern Baltimore County.

Her new fellow parishioners, for the most part non-Italian, were happy to let Victoria try her hand at selling dough the following year.

"The first year I couldn't give it away - nobody knew what it was," said Falcone.

She persevered, doing it pretty much by herself - getting the dough from John's Quality Bakery near Patterson Park, cutting it into slices, frying it in the church kitchen and then running it out to the stand.

That was tons of dough and some 40 years ago. It has become such a hit that folks at St. Stephen - who have been known to stand in the rain waiting for a fresh batch to come out of the hopper - cannot imagine a church celebration without it.

The tradition was added to the Christmas bazaar this year, the first that Victoria won't have a part in it.

The Falcone holidays have been dampened by recent open-heart surgery for her husband, U.S. Navy veteran Albert, 73.

"I have to stay home for him," said Victoria, who married Albert 45 years ago at the Shrine of the Little Flower.

(They met through Albert's sister, with whom Victoria was friends; their first date

was a screening of “Gone With the Wind,” at the old Hippodrome Theater.)

With Mr. Falcone on the mend, their three daughters – Lisa, Francesca and Nicole – and their husbands have picked up the slack. They will be assisted by a pair of retired St. Stephen school teachers, Patty O’Brien and Veronica “Ronnie” Dilworth, who have helped Mrs. Falcone at the fried dough stand for many years.

After using John’s Bakery, Victoria began getting the dough – about 400 pounds per event – from Prima Foods on Kane Street (near Our Lady of Fatima Parish). For the past half-dozen years, the bread dough has been donated by Woodlea Bakery on Belair Road.

Woodlea is owned by the third-generation of the Hergenroeder family, St. Stephen parishioners who for years worshipped at St. Anthony of Padua in Gardenville and supplied dough to that parish’s annual carnival.

“The success of fried dough (at St. Stephen) is a true testament to Mrs. Falcone,” said Charles Hergenroeder Jr., grandson of the bakery’s founder and a relative of Redemptorist Father Michael Hergenroeder, who has many served many years of ministry in Brazil.

Taking a break from baking 7,000 dozen Thanksgiving dinner rolls just before the holiday, Hergenroeder praised Mrs. Falcone as “tireless .... what I do is simple, dough is dough. But she built this simple treat up from nothing.”

Said Falcone daughter Francesca Troiano, 39, “I was just a baby when Mom started.”

“And now they stand in line,” said Victoria, who only ordered 80 pounds of dough for the one-day Christmas celebration versus the several hundred pounds used for the weekend-long carnival in warmer weather.

Finally, church carnival dogma also holds this truth as indisputable.

“Fried dough is not funnel cake,” said Francesca, who has set many people straight on the point. “Funnel cake is like pancake batter, fried dough is pizza or bread dough that you stretch and cut into pieces before deep frying.”

## **CHRISTMAS BAZAAR**

St. Stephen, 8030 Bradshaw Road, Bradshaw

Dec. 7, noon-9 p.m.

Games, raffles, crafts, vendors, food (pit beef, fried dough), Christmas tree sales, guests are invited to dress as shepherds and angels for live Nativity photos  
[ststephenbradshaw.org](http://ststephenbradshaw.org)

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