



Vinotok Green Man.

Crested Butte's 25th Annual Vinotok Honors Eastern European Roots & Autumn Equinox on Sept. 13 – 18

GUNNISON-CRESTED BUTTE, CO - (August 10, 2010) — The autumn equinox, a time of balance between day and night, heralds in the celebration of Vinotok in Crested Butte, Colo. Meaning "fall wine festival" in Slovenian, Vinotok culminates on Sept. 18 after several days of celebrating and commemorates the bounty of the summer harvest and gathering of the community before the long winter ahead.

It is a time of village feasting, of forgetting the woes of yesterday and honoring traditional Eastern European roots. In the midst of the 25th annual celebration, from Sept. 13 – 18, is a colorful array of medieval characters, a street theatre performance, storytelling, and music.

How Vinotok Started

The origins of Vinotok began when creator and now "Godmother" of the event, Marcie Telander, sat around the pot belly stove at Tony's Conoco, listening to the "old-timers" of Crested Butte tell stories from their native lands of Austria, Hungary, Scotland, Ireland, Norway, Italy and Slovenia.

A common thread emerged. Many of these cultures had a wine festival in the fall when, as they were putting down wine for the upcoming year, the old wine from the previous year had to be drunk. They roasted a goat, told tales and danced polka. A fire was always present, a vestige of ancient cultures asking the sun to not stay away too long. It was typically on the fall equinox, a time of planetary balance, and in those cold countries, the start of the new year. They celebrated what they harvested—the hay, children and stories of those who had created roots in a new land.

The Celebration Today

Today, the festival begins with these roots in **storytelling**, gathering again around the potbelly stove of Tony's Conoco, now the Crested Butte Mountain Heritage Museum, to hear the tales of an older Crested Butte on Wed., Sept. 15 and munch on Croatian potica bread and hot chocolate from 7:30 – 9 p.m. On Sept. 13 and 14, **storytelling workshops** will be held to help individuals compose their personal stories, lies and old time tales for the week. Storyteller Marcie Telander will conduct the free workshops from 6:30 – 8:30 p.m. at Rumors Coffee & Tea House/Blue Moon Books.

Liar's Night celebrates the tradition of tall tales, whoppers and adventure stories blown out of proportion that are shared on the Thursday evening, Sept. 16 at The Eldo, beginning at 8 p.m. Prizes are awarded and the Green Man, a symbol of virility and vitality and the promise of spring to return again, is revealed. The Green Man is selected by the women of the valley. Admission costs \$4 for storytellers and those in costumes and \$7 for all others.

A **Community Feast**, featuring regionally harvested dishes of roast pig, corn, mixed vegetables, potatoes and traditional Croatian and Slovenian foods, will be held on Friday, Sept. 17, 5:30 p.m. at the Rainbow Park Pavilion. Local musicians, writers and poets will provide the entertainment. Bring your instruments, your poems, short stories or other written creations to share. The cost is \$12 per plate of food and \$6 for children under the age of 10.

Weeks before the celebration, community school children craft "**Grump Boxes**," creatively decorated boxes set about town. Townspeople write down their "Grumps," the grievances they want to forget at the change of seasons in order to move into the new year with a clean slate. These boxes are then stuffed into the Grump itself, a 20-foot tall grimacing effigy. The Grump plays a major role in Saturday evening's activities.

The Saturday of Vinotok, Sept. 18, is the high point of the celebration. A cast of medieval characters featuring maidens representing the 12 months of the year, accompanied by torchbearers and flag bearers "**mum**" out in the streets and into restaurants singing harvest songs, dancing and inviting all to participate in the evening's festivities. Runs from 5–7:30 p.m.

As night falls, a street theatre production is held in front of The Eldo on Elk Avenue at 7:30 p.m. In a **drama** honoring the cycles of nature and the imbalances of our modern world, characters are the Harvest Mother, a tremendously pregnant woman from town; the Earth Dragon, representing nature; and Sir Hapless, the symbol of technology. The Grump is put on trial, the sacrificial scapegoat for the discordance between nature and technology. Citizens decide to find him guilty, and then proceed to the town crossroads to burn him and all of the grievances of the year. The Grump goes up in flames in an enormous **bonfire** that happens at the four-way stop near the visitor center at 8:30 p.m. Now with a clean slate, the townspeople look forward to a new harvest of winter snow.

For more information about Vinotok, contact festival organizers Denise Reinert at (970) 209-9661 or Theresa Henry at (219) 308-6122.

VISITOR INFORMATION & PERSONALIZED VACATION PACKAGES

To find out more about other area events or to book personalized vacation packages, call the Gunnison-Crested Butte Tourism Association's toll-free line, (800) 814-8893, or visit www.GunnisonCrestedButte.com.

Find the Tourism Association on Facebook at www.facebook.com/gcbta or follow us on www.twitter.com/gcbta.

During the summer and fall, air access to the Gunnison-Crested Butte Regional Airport is provided by United Airlines.

ABOUT GUNNISON-CRESTED BUTTE, COLORADO

Gunnison-Crested Butte is nestled among almost two million acres of pristine wilderness in southwest Colorado. Winter sports enthusiasts know the area for its world-class alpine skiing and snowboarding at Crested Butte Mountain Resort, snowmobiling, cross-country skiing, snowshoeing and ice fishing. Gunnison-Crested Butte is also a haven for outdoor summer activities. In the warmer months, visitors can choose from recreational activities such as hiking, climbing, mountain biking, boating, whitewater rafting, kayaking, fly-fishing, camping and horseback riding. Year-round visitors enjoy distinctive restaurants, unique shops and stimulating cultural opportunities, and have a wide range of lodging options — from rustic inns to guest cabins and bed-and-breakfasts to full-service resort hotels.

Gunnison, county seat and a real western town, is home to the Gunnison-Crested Butte Regional Airport, Gunnison Whitewater Park, Gunnison Valley Observatory, Pioneer Museum and Western State College, which offers bachelor's and master's degrees in liberal arts and sciences and pre-professional fields. Both Crested Butte and Gunnison have thriving historic central business districts packed with shopping and dining opportunities.

Recognized as the "Official Wildflower Capital of Colorado" by the Colorado Legislature and one of the National Trust for Historic Preservation's "Dozen Distinctive Destinations" in 2008, **Crested Butte** is 28 miles from Gunnison and the site of rich mining, ranching and skiing heritage and home to the Crested Butte Mountain Heritage Museum and Mountain Bike Hall of Fame. Only three miles up the road is the resort village of **Mt. Crested Butte**, home to the ski area, an active base area, the area's conference center, and outstanding hiking and biking trails.

In **Gunnison County**, visitors will find the Curecanti National Recreation Area, where dinosaur fossils were recently discovered; the Blue Mesa Reservoir, Colorado's largest body of water and home to the largest Kokanee salmon fishery in the United States; and The Black Canyon of the Gunnison, one of our country's newest national parks. Gunnison County includes the quaint and historic towns of Pitkin, Gothic, Tin Cup, Marble, Powderhorn, Almont and Crystal, plus the better-known communities of Gunnison, Crested Butte and Mt. Crested Butte. Gunnison County is part of the West Elk Loop and Silver Thread Scenic & Historic Byways.