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Peterborough's annual celebration of all things Italian continues to grow in popularity with celebrity chef and restaurateur Aldo Zilli pledging support and confirmed to take part this year.

Aldo's appearance on the Sunday adds to the growing list of activities planned for the weekend (9 and 10 September 2017) which is fast gathering a reputation for one of the most vibrant celebrations of the Italian community in the UK.

Aldo, famed for his TV appearances and string of Zilli-themed restaurants, will share his culinary expertise in a not-to-be-missed Q&A and book signing for Italian food lovers. One of nine children, he was born in the central Italian region of Abruzzo in a small seaside town where he first found his passion for Italian home cooking from his mother.

The session will join the bumper line up of entertainment including music and dance from Laboratorio Orafolk, who are coming all the way from Deliceto in the province of Foggia, and captivating theatre from Shakespeare in Italy with their performance Aliens Order.

Adding an extra cultural twist classic pieces from Italian opera will be sung by Davide Sorrentino, Giuseppe Barile and Teresa De Roberto.

The two-day festival, now in its ninth year making it the longest running event of its kind in the UK, takes place in Cathedral Square and is organised by Peterborough's Italian Community Association and supported by the city council.

There will also be wine making, a Prosecco stall for lovers of the iconic fizz, Italian cakes from bakers such as La Rondini, pizza from a range of specialist vendors, Porchetta - an Italian hog roast, wood fire oven sales and festival merchandise including t-shirts, bunting and balloons.

As in previous years the Mediterranean extravaganza will also feature an Italian market, confectionery, ice-cream, pasta, football and boxing demonstrations, classic Italian cars, motorcycles, scooters and lots more.

Annette Joyce, the city council's service director for city services and communications, said: "This is the city's most popular cultural and community event in the calendar and we're delighted to have renowned Italian chef Aldo Zilli joining in too. Make sure you book the date in your diary and prepare yourself for a tantalising array of food, drink, music and dance.

"Each year the festival grows in stature and I am sure people will be looking forward to all the highlights including the performances from Laboratorio Orafolk and Shakespeare in Italy."

The Shakespeare in Italy project was inspired by an Italian Community Association publication, Aliens Order, which took its name from the certificate of registration and identity card that people arriving in the UK had to sign up to in the 1950s if they wanted to work in the country. The lively, colourful fun pop-up performances with a nod to Commedia Dell Arte, has reference to Shakespeare's Italian plays including Romeo and Juliet, Othello and The Merchant of Venice.

The festival runs on Heritage Open Day weekend and there will be an exhibition celebrating Peterborough's London Brick heritage at St John the Baptist Church in Church Street on the Saturday. A large number of Peterborough's Italian community worked for the London Brick Company.

The festival runs from 12noon to 5pm, Saturday 9 and Sunday 10 September.