

Pizza Jam FAQs

Last updated 3/18/16

What is the Pizza Jam?

The Pizza Jam is a group of musicians that get together twice a month to play contradance and other tunes.

Why is it called “The Pizza Jam”?

We call it the "Pizza Jam" for historical reasons. The jam sessions have been going on for about 12 years and were started around 1999–2000 by Rob Hoffman. A pizza parlor called “It’s a Beautiful Pizza” on Belmont Street hosted a Balkan jam on Tuesday nights and had just moved to larger quarters. At the time, there was no jam session for contradance music and Rob saw a possible opportunity for one. He spoke with the owner, who agreed to host the jam sessions on the first and third Mondays; this was the beginning of the Monday Night Pizza Jam. In those days, in addition to playing music from the Portland Collections, musicians had a chance to play music by local composers, who would attend the sessions and bring copies of their music for everyone to try. We also played other music in addition to just contradance. Hambo, Schottis, Tango, English Country, cowboy songs and other styles were all on the menu. Once in a while we even played songs people could sing.

In 2010, the owner sold the pizza parlor and we lost that venue. The name “Pizza Jam” persists.

Who can attend?

The Pizza Jam welcomes players of all instruments and at all skill levels.

Where and when does the Pizza Jam meet?

The pizza jam meets twice a month, at 7:30 PM on the first and third Mondays. For months that have five Mondays, we don't meet on the fifth Monday. The first Monday session is at the home of Sally Joughin, 2715

SE 34th Ave; the third Monday session is at the home of Laurel Thomas, 3037 NE 43rd at Siskiyou.

What tunes are played?

We use printed music and don't expect people to play by ear, though it's fine if you do play by ear. We typically play tunes from the Portland Collections, Volumes 1–3, by Sue Songer, and from the Waltz Books, I-IV, by Bill Matthiesen. If you don't have those books yet, we're all willing to share our music. Additionally, you are encouraged to bring copies of any other tunes, contradance or not, that you would like played at the jam session; please bring 10–12 copies so that there are enough for all.

What is the format of the jam session?

Usually we go around the room and each person takes a turn at choosing a tune to play. That person gets to set the tempo, decide how many times we play it, and start us off by playing an intro or counting us in so that we all start together. When you choose a tune, you can announce at the beginning how many times you want to play it, or, you can decide on the fly and call “Hup!” or stick out your foot during the second playing of the B part of the tune when you want to end it. We recommend playing each tune at least four times to give people a chance to catch on.

Is there a mailing list?

To get on the mailing list, send or give your name, email address, and the instruments you play, to Sally Joughin, sjoughin@earthlink.net.

How does one find out about an upcoming jam session?

Sally sends an email, usually the Friday or Saturday before each jam session. The email will always state the time and place of the jam. You are asked to respond to all, saying whether or not you plan to attend.