

EATING

How to get the most out of food fests

BY NICOLE STAFFORD
SPECIAL EDITOR
nstafford3@homecomm.net

Whether partaking in a taste-fest satisfies your philanthropic urges or your taste buds, most of us want to enjoy these food melanges to their fullest.

That's a tall order at venues like the Comerica Michigan TasteFest, an annual food tasting and entertainment event June 30-July 4 in downtown Detroit's New Center area.

If you're like most patrons, you'll walk away feeling you could have eaten less, or more, or differently.

Is the tummy ever satisfied? Cut yourself some slack, and loosen your belt.

Even those who taste food for a living find having a plan is key to enjoying taste festivals.

"What I try to do is walk around once and see what they've got, then I start testing the food. I don't make a meal out of every place that I go," said Gary Hungerford, CEO of Royal Oak's Silver Spoon Creative Catering, which is serving up Marinated Baby Lamb Chops, BBQ Chicken Calzones, Grand Marnier Chantilly over Fresh Fruit and Tarte Tatin (an upside-down, French caramel apple tart) at the upcoming taste-fest.

In its 12th year, the five-day event, which benefits New Center development, boasts participation by more than 30 metropolitan Detroit restaurants.

Each will serve up culinary specialties — Chicken Picatta from Marinos in Detroit, BBQ Pork Ribs from Beale Street Blues in Pontiac and Chocolate Fudge Cake Shake from Twingo's Cafe in Detroit, just to name a few.

The restaurants will set up shop in booths along West Grand Boulevard, serving taste portions of appetizers, entrees, desserts and side dishes in exchange for TasteFest tickets.

Sounds heavenly, right? Just keep in mind your experience at Comerica TasteFest and similar events will probably be all the more divine, if you have a plan.

Tactical strategy

Know the lay of the land, said Bill Roberts, president of the Michigan Restaurant Association and owner of 220, StreetSide Seafood and the Beverly Hills

Banquet on the Boulevard — TasteFest

What: More than 150 delectable dishes from more than 30 metropolitan Detroit restaurants. A variety of beverages including British ales and margaritas will also be available for purchase.

When: 11:30 a.m. to 10 p.m. Friday-Monday, June 30-July 3; 11:30 a.m. to 8 p.m. Tuesday, July 4

Where: West Grand Boulevard between Woodward Avenue and the Lodge Freeway, adjacent to Fisher Building.

Information: Call (313) 927-1000 or visit www.tastefest.com

Cost: \$5 for nine "taste" tickets (cash only) at ticket booths located throughout the festival. Tickets are not refundable, but any unused tickets benefit New Center Council, Inc. programs. "Taste-sized portions" are priced up to two tickets. Other menu items are priced up to eight tickets.

Participating restaurants

■ Silver Spoon Creative Catering, Royal Oak

■ Olympia Cafe, Allen Park

■ Mordick's Mackinac Island Fudge

■ Parker's Rib Haus & Soul Food, Romulus

■ Aw Shucks, Elk Rapids

■ Jada, a barbecue grille, Detroit

■ Davo & Busters, Utica

■ Ginopolis Restaurant, West Bloomfield

■ Hunter House Hamburgers, Detroit

■ Sweet Potato Sensations, Detroit

■ 736 Java — Coffeehouse, Detroit

■ The Coney Man/American Coney Classics

■ The Sheikh, Orchard Lake

■ Iridescence, Motor City Casino, Detroit

■ Classic Buffet, Motor City

Casino, Detroit

■ The Amond Hut, Bay City

■ Papa Romano's

■ Kola's Kitchen, Riverview

■ Hokkaido, Stevensville

■ Sweetwater Tavern, Detroit

■ Mario's, Detroit

■ Bert's Jazz Market Place, Detroit

■ Under the Eagle, Hamtramck

■ Peacock Restaurant, Dearborn

■ Beale Street Blues, Pontiac

■ Orchid Cafe/Saigon Bistro

Catering, Troy

■ Savino Sorbet

■ Edy's Dreamery Dip Den

■ Twingo's Cafe, Detroit

■ Traffic Jam, Detroit

■ The Globe, Detroit

■ Good Food Co., Troy

■ Atwater Block Brewery, Detroit

Grill

"I'm a person who doesn't like to stand in line," said Roberts. "If you're in a huge crowd and you know where you're going, it sometimes helps. ... The other thing is, if there's a layout ahead of time, you might want to plot your course."

When mapping out your route, decide which restaurants and which dishes interest you, advised Roberts, adding he typically heads for establishments with which he's totally unfamiliar, as well as a handful of old favorites.

Consider making your first stop somewhere in the middle of the venue and working your way out, too, as most patrons start sampling at the entrance, he said.

Likewise, moving left, rather

than right, through the event often reduces exposure to crowds, he said. "We tend to flow right because most of us are right-handed, so go left."

31 flavors

Sample a few items, then take a break, advised Pascal Pavianni, chef and co-owner at Silver Spoon Creative Catering. Don't make the mistake of rushing, he said. "I know that in France it takes three hours to eat a seven-course meal. Time allows you to

digest the food in between each course with a beverage or sorbet.

"Really, to get the most out of the experience, I would just take my time," said Pavianni.

Furthermore, consuming sorbet between tastings, especially items with strong flavors, such as lamb, fish, BBQ, Thai food and other spicy cuisine, will enable you to fully experience the offerings, Pavianni said.

And, thanks to Waterford's Savino Sorbet, sorbet will be readily available.

"I do love to eat, and especially at these events. You get to try lots of different cuisines," said Savino Sorbet owner Lou DeCillis, who is also a chef trained at the Culinary Institute of America. "But after you taste four or five different items, well, the sorbet really does break up that monotony, and the whole fun of these events is tasting the food."

DeCillis hopes TasteFest patrons will visit his booth not only to cleanse their palates but also to sample some of his new, innovative sorbet flavors. Tropical rainbow, for instance, is a swirl of raspberry, mango and pina colada.

Sampling and experimenting are all essential to the experience, said DeCillis. And, if you're not willing to physically share your food with others, DeCillis is apt to offer strangers a taste from his own plate, if they're interested — at least share your opinions and feelings about the food.

Tasting food is an age-old social event, he said. "If you think about it, when we were all cave dwellers, the whole experience of eating — it was really a social kind of thing. People really got together around food, so when I go to a taste-fest, it's a big party."

Maximum intake

Nonetheless, food festivals are also an opportunity — not to mention, excuse — to shamelessly fill up. And, there are several tactics for turning an ordinary taste-fest into a pig-out session, said DeCillis.



Good eats: A variety of culinary favorites await visitors to the Comerica TasteFest, held June 30-July 4.

First up, be honest with yourself. If you love food, if you love to eat, don't try telling yourself otherwise. Just go for the gusto.

Better than just doing it, better than merely granting yourself permission to break the rules, plan on pigging out. Hey, don't eat breakfast.

"I swear, I'm not kidding — I would not eat breakfast," said DeCillis. "I'm not embarrassed to tell you when I go to these events, I think, hey, here's my chance to go to lots of different restaurants in one trip, and I figure I'm going to pig out."

Of course the stomach isn't a bottomless pit, either. So, as Pavianni suggested, take your time. And, while you're at it, enjoy the total sensory experience, said DeCillis. Take in the sights and smells. Listen to that steak sizzle over the open flames.

"You gotta smell the aroma and look at the plate," said DeCillis. "That's part of the experience. And that way, by the time I'm stuffed I feel I've had the total experience — the unique, the sublime."

home appliances

15-50% off* every day

*regular retail prices. Excludes special purchases

plus check out this week's featured items

side-by-side refrigerators

Sears Regular Retail Price	Outlet Price	Savings from Reg. Retail
\$1799.99 - \$1999.99	\$999.99	\$800 - \$1000
\$1599.99 - \$1789.99	\$899.99	\$700 - \$890
\$1399.99 - \$1589.99	\$799.99	\$600 - \$790

top-mounted refrigerators

Sears Regular Retail Price	Outlet Price	Savings from Reg. Retail
\$799.99 - \$999.99	\$499.99	\$300 - \$500

get the features and brands you want... names like Kenmore, GE, Whirlpool, Amana, Frigidaire & Maytag.

Many with these great features: frost free, adjustable shelves, ice and water through the door, and more.

SEARS
OUTLET STORE

One-of-a-kind, out-of-carton, discontinued, used, scratched and dented merchandise. Items pictured are just a few examples of the hundreds of great values. Merchandise shown is representative only. Actual merchandise varies by store. Special Purchases are sold at their everyday low prices. ©2000 Sears, Roebuck and Co.

Open 7 Days
Mon-Fri 9:30 a.m.-8 p.m.
Sat. 9:30 a.m.-8:00 p.m.
Sunday 12:00 Noon to 5:00 p.m.

SEAR'S OUTLET STORE
12001 SEARS AVENUE • LIVONIA
One mile west of Middlebelt off Plymouth • 734-422-5700

PREVIOUSLY SELECTED MERCHANDISE NOT INCLUDED

WITCH HOUSES
Now Appearing...
THE SHOWCASEMEN
FRI-SAT
28,500 Seating
In the Super B Third Complex
LIVONIA
(734) 255-5520
AMPLE LIGHTED PARKING

DAVE THE DJ
NOW EVERY
TUESDAY & THURSDAY
Formerly at Vickie's Steakhouse
OPEN DAILY
MON-SAT
AT 11:00 AM
BUSINESSMEN'S
LUNCHES
from \$5.95
DINNERS
from \$6.95
DINNERS
from 4 p.m.

MONTANA'S
Steak & Seafood House
MONDAY-THURSDAY SPECIALS!

9 OZ. PRIME RIB \$9.95
9 OZ. NY STRIP STEAK \$9.95

All Entrees include: Salad, Bread, Choice of Potato and Soup Bar (with 8 Homemade Varieties to Choose From)
We also serve:
10 pc. Jumbo FRIED SHRIMP and Great FILET MIGNON!
Catch SPORTING EVENTS on one of our 6 TV's!
Open Daily at 4 p.m. and Sunday at 2 p.m.
Enjoy our FREE Soup Bar with all entrees!

34290 FORD RD. - WESTLAND (734) 728-7490