

THE TASTES OF SUMMER

Eat, drink and be merry with new food-centric gatherings BY AMY SCHNEIDER



Da Nang Vietnamese Eatery joins the fleet at Eugene Food Truck Fest June 18

The tastes of summer beckon — this year, two brand-new foodie shindigs splash onto the scene. Look forward to a season's worth of eating, drinking and living it up. And the best part is, you don't even have to trek to Portland.

First comes the **Eugene Food Truck Fest**, a delicious gathering invented by the Eugene Mission to raise awareness of homelessness during the summer months, when thoughts of shelter and housing tend to fade as the warm weather rolls in.

More than 25 of our area's best food trucks will convene at Valley River Center on June 18 for a summer food celebration bound to leave you completely stuffed.

"Food trucks are just cool," says Caitlin Vargas, development director at Eugene Mission. "They have this ability to create different menus and items and customize things."

She adds, "We also appreciate the relationships that they build with their customers. Everyone we've talked to says, 'I've been wanting someone to do this.'"

Vargas says she and Eugene Mission outreach and events coordinator Cortney Roy have spent time "beating the street" asking local food trucks to join the fest. The response has been overwhelmingly positive, Vargas says, and the list of participating trucks represents some mighty fine local food offerings.

Attendees of the Eugene Food Truck Fest can choose from a diversity of cuisines, including Kun Fusion's unique Korean-Mexican menu, Da Nang Vietnamese Eatery's tempting salads and rice bowls, Viva! Vegetarian Grill's reliably tasty veggie offerings and Coalesce Juicery and Whole Foods' raw and healthy dishes.

Vargas says that initially the Mission planned for a more modest event, figuring they could start small and build from there. That changed when the event's Facebook page ballooned with almost 10,000 people interested and nearly 3,000 people saying they will attend.

"Our plan to go small was totally wiped out," Vargas laughs.

Due to the interest, Vargas says the event will include DJ Robb Holloway, live broadcasting from KDUK, and a kids' activity area with a bounce house, face painters and the River Road Park Imagination Bus.

There's no cost of admission — just bring money to buy food. Food trucks will donate 10 percent of their proceeds to the Eugene Mission.

"I commend all the food trucks and vendors," Vargas

says, "and we're happy for their support."

Eugene Food Truck Fest is 11 am to 3 pm Saturday, June 18, in the parking lot of Valley River Center. See more at the event's Facebook page.

Later this summer, food lovers should head over to Springfield for another new culinary celebration, **Springfield Tap & Taste** on Aug. 27.

"We realized that we wanted to do something to celebrate downtown and revitalization, and reach out to a new demographic," says Kim Lyddane with Willamalane Park and Recreation District, which is putting on the event. "We looked around and decided the things important to us are good music, good food and good things to drink. We also wanted it to be all local."

That's why Lyddane and others at Willamalane decided to put together a food-and-drink gathering to showcase Springfield's edible offerings.

While a full list of participants is not yet available (applications are currently being reviewed),

Lyddane says that Plank Town Brewing will serve as an official sponsor. Needless to say, Plank Town's collection of exquisite beers, from its hoppy "Riptooth IPA" to its satisfying "FURTHR Ambr," will bring immediate tastiness to the new festival.

Other sponsors include Hop Valley and Security Monster, Lyddane says.

Springfield Tap & Taste will consist of a collection of canopies set up at the corner of 5th and A streets in downtown Springfield, echoing the vibe of a block party. Guests will receive a souvenir glass and taste tickets with the price of admission, as well as a tasting guide, and they can wander through a selection of food and beverage vendors, sampling each offering as they go.

"Our hope is that they're going to fall in love with everything they taste," Lyddane says.

Willamalane plans to set up a mobile stage where local bands will perform. "It will be a great way to celebrate the last summer weekend before Labor Day weekend," Lyddane adds.

A full list of participating vendors should be available by July 1, and Lyddane says to check out willamalane.org for updates.

Springfield Tap & Taste is 5 pm Saturday, Aug. 27, at 5th and A streets in downtown Springfield. Admission is \$15 in advance and \$20 at the gate; see willamalane.org for tickets.

NOT FULL YET?

It's the best of three worlds: The **Blues, Brews and BBQ** festival kicks off another year 11 am to 11 pm Saturday, June 4, at 10 Shelton McMurfhey Blvd. Start your summer with tasty barbecue treats, lots of blues music and a pint or two, plus a kid zone carnival. Admission is \$17, with a portion of proceeds benefiting March of Dimes. See more on the event's Facebook page.

The party rolls on over at 2 Towns Ciderhouse Taproom with its **Summer Block Party** noon to 5 pm Saturday, June 25, 33930 S.E. Eastgate Circle in Corvallis. Mazama Brewing and Nectar Creek Honeywine join the festivities, with live music, food carts, free tours of the facilities and lots of drinks to sample. In the meantime, try out 2 Towns' latest releases, including Hop and Stalk, a fruity and fresh summer cider, and La Mûre, a lambic cider with a sharp punch of blackberries.

Head out to Oakridge for the beloved **Oakridge Keg & Cask Festival**, a refreshing collection of local breweries, cideries and wineries. You're bound to find something you like. While the 2016 lineup is not yet available, last year's list of contributors included Agrarian Ales, Claim 52 Brewing, Ninkasi Brewing, Oakshire Brewing, Block 15 Brewing, Viking Braggot Company and many other Oregon favorites. Check out Facebook for more.