

Fresno food truck scene growing: New trucks, new venues, new food

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Their wheels may roll but food trucks are now a fixture in Fresno's food scene.

Years after Dusty Buns and other trucks paved the way, a slew of new ones are hitting the streets. New venues that host food trucks on a regular basis are popping up and crowds continue to be drawn to the unique style of dining out.

What many thought was a trend is here to stay, says Benaddiction food truck owner James Caples, who started his truck three years ago and has watched the scene evolve.

"People are learning that food trucks aren't just some trend that's going to last a couple of years and go away," he said. "It's not just some silly thing Millennials do."

The last year or so has seen a big influx in trucks bringing new and different cuisine to the mix.

A burger with a glazed doughnut for a bun, American cheese and candied bacon is sold by The Food Bar.

Diners can now get Peruvian food — think lots of chicken and starches like potatoes and fried sweet yams — at the P&R Fusion trailer.

Cheese lovers are lining up for the gooey, melty sandwiches at The Meltdown Bistro, including the "Pig Mac," a grilled cheese sandwich stuffed with pulled pork and mac and cheese.

And Taste Kitchen, a truck by chef Martin Franco, formerly of Pinot Wine Bar, is up and running after four years of planning. The Mexican-inspired cuisine — like pork belly braised in white wine and served in a taco — features organic and locally grown food.

As in recent years, most of the new trucks are bistro trucks. It's a change from the traditional Mexican food trucks that have been around for decades.

You can find food trucks serving late-night munchies on Tower District streets after restaurants have closed, at farmers markets and other events.

But food trucks are limited in where they can go by law, with some restaurants seeing them as a competitive threat. So the trend is toward regular weekly events where food trucks can congregate. They rotate in and out as they visit other locations and work private events, providing an ever-changing mix of trucks and cuisine for diners.

7 places in Fresno and Clovis host food trucks on a regular basis.

Because of those changing schedules, there is no centralized place to find out which truck will be where when. The best way to track them down is to follow them on Facebook, Twitter and Instagram, where trucks usually post where they will be ahead of time.

Or, diners can just show up at the regular events. While Gazebo Gardens and Enzo's Table — formerly called Bella Frutta — are mainstays of the food truck scene, a few more places are joining their ranks.

The venues

Tioga-Sequoia Brewing Company: The downtown brewery is hosting at least one food truck, sometimes more, from 5-10 p.m. Thursday through Saturday at its beer garden at 745 Fulton St. The brewery serves its beer and the trucks park in a distinctly urban setting with twinkling lights strung over the eating area and a table with a fire pit. Trucks often incorporate Tioga-Sequoia beer into their dishes, or at least create food that pairs well with it.

“It’s almost like you’re in a whole different city,” says brewery president Michael Cruz. “You don’t feel like you’re in Fresno.”

Last week, Tioga-Sequoia also launched “Kegs and eggs,” a Sunday beer brunch from 1-5 p.m. that the brewery plans to host once a month.

A truck provides the food and the brewery provides drinks that are appropriate for early in the day. There’s the Rush Hour breakfast stout, a “beermosa” made with orange juice and the light Catacomb Brew saison, and “Bloody Murrietas” — the brewery’s Joaquin Murrietta chile pepper beer with Michelada mix.

Keeps tabs on Tioga-Sequoia’s [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#) or Instagram for details.

Blackbeard’s Family Entertainment Center: 4055 N. Chestnut Diagonal in Fresno, has a seasonal food truck night from 6-9 p.m. The fledgling event usually has at least three food trucks and is attracting many of the newer trucks. Organizers expect to add live music soon.

Gazebo Gardens: One of the biggest food truck events around, this one has live music, two bars and a garden setting. It runs from 5-9 p.m. Thursdays through Saturdays at the nursery, 3204 N. Van Ness Blvd.

Enzo’s Table: Formerly called Bella Frutta, the store at Willow and Shepherd avenues in Clovis hosts food trucks from 10 a.m. to 2:30 p.m. Saturdays and Sundays. Olive oil, nuts and fresh produce are for sale in the store.

Eatin’ on Eaton: The Friday event at the historic water tower is back after a hiatus. Trucks are at 2400 Fresno St. from 11 a.m. to 2 p.m. Fridays.

CartHop: About six trucks are on the Fulton Mall from 11 a.m. to 2 p.m. Thursdays at Merced Street.

The Village Trucks: The north Fresno food truck event is from 11 a.m. to 2 p.m. Tuesdays at Friant Road and Fresno Street.

The Newbies

Fresno has too many food trucks to list here, including several beloved longtime ones such as Dusty Buns and Tako BBQ. But here are the new ones that have hit the scene in the last year or so. If you know of one not listed here, visit their Facebook, Twitter or Instagram account to find out more.



Bravo Bites

Cuisine: American burgers and Mexican

Noteworthy dish: Asada fries — French fries with chunks of steak, cheese and beans.

Back story: The Bravo family was drawn closer together after son Daniel, 23, died in a motorcycle accident. They used his life insurance to buy the truck and run it together.

Most likely to find at: Gazebo Gardens on Thursdays, sometimes Fridays or Saturdays.



Cowboy Shaman

Cuisine: Thai and Vietnamese fusion.

Noteworthy dish: Multiple types of Pad Thai — chicken, shrimp, vegetarian.

Back story: Two former teachers — the wife is Asian — who love to cook.

Most likely to find at: Gazebo Gardens, Enzo's Table, Eatin' on Eaton.



The Food Bar

Cuisine: Gourmet burgers and sandwiches served with candied bacon.

Noteworthy dish: The glazed doughnut burger — handmade beef patty with American cheese and candied bacon with a cut glazed doughnut for a bun.

Back story: By day, owner Jarrod Tadlock does environmental construction work, cleaning up messes from oil companies and gas stations.

Most likely to find at: Gazebo Gardens on Fridays and Saturdays.



Gastro Grill

Cuisine: Pub-style cuisine inspired by the term gastronomy, the art of good food.

Noteworthy dish: Filet mignon tacos with mushrooms, onions, horseradish cream, roasted red pepper sauce, microgreens and cotija cheese.

Back story: Reyes Chacon is a Le Cordon Bleu-trained chef who works as a heavy equipment operator by day and runs the food truck with wife Debbi on the weekends. The pair has also run Chacon's Catering for 13 years.

Most likely to find at: Eatin' on Eaton, Gazebo Gardens on Fridays.



Tacos Mazatlan

Cuisine: Authentic Mexican

Noteworthy dish: Asada tacos prepared with cabbage, cilantro, onions and salsa.

Back story: Technically not a newbie since the first truck has been around 25 years, the family's two trucks are increasingly showing up at food truck events.

Most likely to find at: The Cherry Auction, Grizzlies games.



The Meltdown Bistro

Cuisine: Sandwiches and other “melts” with lots of melted cheese.

Noteworthy dishes: The “Pig Mac” — pulled pork with mac and cheese in a sandwich

Back story: Pete Ramirez was the head chef at O’Sullivan’s Irish Lounge and runs the truck with his fiance, Dany Syravong.

Most likely to find at: Gazebo Gardens on Fridays.



P&R Fusion

Cuisine: Peruvian and American

Noteworthy dish: Chicharrón sandwich — tender fried pork loin with fried sweet yams.

Back story: Robert Vieira has been in the food world for six years, married his Peruvian wife Patty and spent a year and a half learning recipes in Peruvian restaurant kitchen.

Most likely to find at: Gazebo Gardens and Enzo's Table.



Taste Kitchen

Cuisine: Mexican-inspired food that's organic, local and includes free-range chicken and grass-fed beef.

Noteworthy dish: Taco de lengua — grass fed beef tongue with tomatillo salsa on a homemade taco.

Back story: Chef Martin Franco has worked at several Fresno restaurants, including Campagnia and Pinot Wine Bar.

Most likely to find at: Tioga-Sequoia.



Weenies on Wheels

Cuisine: Quarter-pound Nathan's hot dogs wrapped in bacon.

Noteworthy dish: The "LuWow" dog with grilled pineapple and shredded cheese.

Back story: Best friends Lorraine Gonzales and Cecilia Martinez started with a "little 12-inch griddle" and worked their way up to a large trailer.

Most likely to find at: late night Tower weekends, Blackbeards, Tioga-Sequoia.

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