

Top Taco New Orleans festival set for March 23



Expect restaurants to get creative at Top Taco New Orleans set for March 23, 2016, in Riverwalk's Spanish Plaza. Here's a look at The Rum House's Jerk Chicken and Brisket Taco as it was served at the 2016 French Quarter Festival in New Orleans. (Photo by Ann Maloney, NOLA.com | The Times-Picayune)

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Forty New Orleans area restaurants are slated to compete at the inaugural [Top Taco New Orleans festival](#) on March 23 in Riverwalk's Spanish Plaza. The big winners, however, might just be Crescent City taco and tequila lovers.

The restaurants will compete in four categories: top creative taco, top traditional taco, top creative cocktail and top Margarita. The festival attendees will select a people's choice award winner as well.

Confirmed restaurants -- some expected, some a bit of a surprise -- include: Araña, Blue Oak BBQ, Del Fuego, Canal St. Bistro, Chiba, Cowbell, Felipe's, Horn's, Jacques Imo's, La Casita, Mizado, Nacho Mama's, Patois, Rum House, Tacos and Beer, Velvet Cactus and Vincent's.

Live entertainment confirmed will include Los Poboycitos and Otra.

[Top Taco New Orleans](#) will feature mucho tacos that can be nibbled while festival-goers enjoy tequila cocktails featuring Sauza Hornitos, Patron, Tres Generaciones, Casa Noble, El Tesoro and Cointreau.

A portion of the proceeds will benefit [One Heart NOLA](#), a charitable organization that raises money and awareness for New Orleans' foster children.

The event is described as "a collaborative effort by the team behind the highly successful Top Taco Denver and local restaurateur Shane Finkelstein." [Top Taco Denver](#) is a popular summer festival that began in 2013 in Colorado.

For details on tickets, which were not yet available as of Friday (Nov. 18), visit [TopTaconola.com](#). (Top Taco Denver costs \$74 for general admission and \$131 for VIP tickets, according to that [festival's website](#).)

"I've always wanted to do a taco festival," Finkelstein, festival director and proprietor of NOLA restaurant Nacho Mama's, said in a press release. "When I attended Top Taco in Denver a couple of years ago, I was really impressed by all of the incredible talent that participated and knew immediately this would be a great addition to New Orleans' festival scene."

"Combine all of the incredible chefs we have in our city with amazing tequila, great live entertainment and the Mississippi River as a backdrop and it is certain to be a memorable night," he said.

The event is sponsored by Southern Eagle Beverage, Hola Nola tortillas and Performance Food Group.

Another 10 restaurants will serve food in a VIP Lounge, aboard the Paddlewheeler Creole Queen, where guests can also sip at VIP tequila tastings and be entertained by Mariachi Jalisco US and Margie Perez's Latin band, Muevelo.

"I really wanted to blow people away with the VIP experience," Finkelstein said.

The family-owned riverboat, which serves as the site for charity events for CASA, the foster children advocacy group, is a natural fit to help raise money for One Heart NOLA. For more details, visit [OneHeartNOLA.com](#).

The new taco festival is just the latest addition to the region's food festival calendar. In 2016, the inaugural [Fried Chicken Festival](#) and [Beignet Festival](#) were added to the roster.