First ever ‘Top Taco’ fest is spicing up New Orleans cuisine scene

NEW ORLEANS - Crescent City locals and visitors will be able to indulge in an evening filled with tacos and tequilas when the inaugural Top Taco festival lands in the Riverwalk's Spanish Plaza tonight.

A collaborative effort by the team behind the highly successful Top Taco Denver and local restaurateur Shane Finkelstein, Top Taco NOLA will feature tantalizing tacos from 40 of the city's best restaurants, along with handcrafted tequila cocktails and top notch live entertainment.
A portion of the proceeds will benefit One Heart NOLA, a charitable organization that raises funds and awareness for New Orleans' foster children.

**Where is “The South’s Best Restaurant”? In New Orleans! Just ask a LOCAVORE**

Top Taco Denver launched in 2013 and has since become the number one summer food festival in the city.

“I’ve always wanted to do a taco festival. 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,” says Finkelstein, festival director and proprietor of NOLA restaurant Nacho Mama’s. “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.”

The evening will feature 40 restaurants that will compete for People’s Choice and Judge awards in four categories: Top Creative Taco, Top Traditional Taco, Top Creative Cocktail and Top Margarita.

An additional 10 restaurants will be showcased in the private VIP Lounge aboard the Paddle-wheeler Creole Queen, where guests can enjoy one-of-a-kind culinary creations, exclusive VIP tequila tastings, live music by Mariachi Jalisco US, and Margie Perez’s Latin band Muevelo.

“Since it’s our first year, I really wanted to blow people away with the VIP experience,” Finkelstein said.

The family-owned riverboat does annual charity events for CASA, the foster children advocacy group, so they were very excited about the opportunity to help raise money for One Heart NOLA.
Confirmed restaurants to date include: Mizado, Jacques Imo’s, Rum House, Araña, Velvet Cactus, Tacos and Beer, Del Fuego, Patois, Canal St. Bistro, Chiba, Cowbell, Vincent’s, Nacho Mama’s, La Casita, Felipe’s, Blue Oak BBQ and Horn’s. Restaurants will be paired with tequilas and spirits including Sauza Hornitos, Patron, Tres Generaciones, Casa Noble, El Tesoro, and Cointreau to create festive and flavorful cocktails.

Live entertainment will include performances by NOLA’s famed Latin ensemble Los Poboicitos and Afro-Cuban jazz and groove band Otra.

Top Taco NOLA will take place on Thursday, March 23, 2017 at Riverwalk’s Spanish Plaza in New Orleans. Stay up to date on information and ticket sales at www.toptaconald.com and follow on social media at www.facebook.com/TopTacoNOLA.

UPDATE: Top Taco was a delicious success!

Here are the winners:

Judges Choice awards:

Creative taco
3- la casita
2- king fish
1- blue oak

Traditional taco:
3- Felipe's
2- canal st bistro
1- chilango

Traditional margarita
3- Carreta’s
2- Johnny Sanchez
1- mizado

Creative tequila cocktail
3- Cochon butcher
2- del fwyago
1- Mizado

People's choice awards:

Traditional taco
3- Felipe's
2- Tequila house
1- Chilango

Creative taco
3- Velvet cactus
2- Rum house
1- Johnny Sanchez

Traditional Margarita
3- Nacho momma
2- Mazado
1. Johnny Sanchez

Creative Tequila Cocktail
3. Barcadia
2. Masquerade
1. Tequila House

Ultimate Top Taco Award:
Chilango