

Eating through the fair

Waukesha County Fair offers a blend of classic and new fair foods



Hunter Turpin/Special to The Freeman

Valerie Koniar of AV's Concessions shakes an orangeade, one of several beverages they offer.

By Hunter Turpin
Special to The Freeman

WAUKESHA — With over 30 food vendors at the Waukesha County Fair, visitors can enjoy traditional treats like cream puffs and pretzels, elaborate creations like waffle bombs and bacon-wrapped tater tots on a stick, or lighter options like smoothie bowls.

The colorful trailers decorated with flags, signs and lights will be open every day of the fair, lining the main drag of the fairgrounds, as well as down some side paths.

This year's fair offers eight new vendors, joining some that have been with the county fair for over 10 years. Here's a look at a few:

Jayme's Chipstix

John Kalashian and his wife Jayme offer innovative food options at their orange, red and yellow trailer; all the recipes originating from their kitchen at home.

They offer a menu consisting mostly of potato products, including fan favorites like loaded tater tots, their headliner items, bacon-wrapped tater tots and twisted potatoes on a stick, and new creations such as apple pie nachos.

"All these ideas, this whole trailer was my wife's (vision)," John said. "This is her menu, she created every dish in this trailer."

With the limited space in the trailer, where they prepare everything, they can't get too technical with their recipes, he said.

"We kind of experiment at home, we have little deep fryers," John said. "We'll come up with a new idea and invite the family over ... and they're honest."

John grew up around fair food; his father ran a popcorn wagon at the Wisconsin Sate Fair when John was young.



Jayme's Chipstix, serving mostly potato-based items, has been coming to the Waukesha County Fair for 12 years.

Waukesha County Fair schedule

WAUKESHA — There is plenty to do tonight and Saturday at the Waukesha County Fair. The fair runs through Sunday. Visit the website at waukeshacounty-fair.com for a full schedule and other information.

Tonight

5:30 p.m.
County Executive & Fair Marshal's Junior Livestock Auction – Insight FS Livestock Coliseum

5:45 p.m.
Olivia Schwader – Piano – Family Fun Stage

6 p.m.
Doze 2 Guys – Children's Tent
Annie Darelus – Violin – Family Fun Stage

6–9 p.m.
4-H Kids Zone: Free Family Fun Bingo 4-H – Revere Electric Supply Co. Forum Marketplace & Shops (North Hall)

6:30 p.m.
Muckey 4-H Cloggers – Family Fun Stage

7–8 p.m.
Kings of Radio – Coors Light Stage

8 p.m.
Ted Nugent - Miller Lite Main Stage

8 p.m.–12 a.m.
The Toys – Revisited – Leinie Lodge

9:30 p.m.–12 a.m.
Kings of Radio – Coors Light Stage

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Fair

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“We were kind of born and raised into it,” he said. “We were just toddlers, so what we’d do is while mom and dad ran the popcorn wagon, we’d go in the back of the trailer and sleep in the back of the refrigerator box, we had blankets and pillows.”

John and his brother took over the popcorn wagon business at 16. Around 20 years ago, John transitioned away from popcorn.

The couple has been vending at fairs and events around the state and have been at the Waukesha County Fair for 12 years.

“Everything we have on our menu — it’s not a big menu — but it’s a unique menu,” John said.

Corn Man

Lakesha Gonzalez operates Corn Man, selling roasted corn with a variety of seasonings, spices and toppings, but she didn’t get her start at the fair, rather in a school while she was a teacher.

“We always had the corn they bring in for lunch and I would always mix the corn for all the staff in a big bowl with different spices and mayo and parmesan cheese,” Gonzalez, who was a teacher for 11 years, said. “Someone was like ‘you should really get into doing corn.’”

Around seven years ago, she



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Lakesha Gonzalez’s husband and daughter prepare corn for roasting before food vending opens.

bought a corn roaster and began doing fairs around Wisconsin. On Thursday, she had her husband and daughter helping prepare the corn.

Gonzalez said that fair days can get long, she woke up at 6 a.m. to begin working which includes many administrative tasks, as well as preparing the food.

AV’s Concessions

Serving freshly-made lemonade, limeade and orangeade, among others, Valerie Koniar of

AV’s Concessions said she enjoys seeing the crowds at community events.

She owns the beverage trailer with her brother and they have been coming to the Waukesha County Fair for around 10 years; Waukesha was the third event they vended at.

“We called the day before and they said ‘we’ll get you in, but you gotta be there by three,’” Koniar recalled from their first year at the Waukesha fair. “We’ve learned a lot in our 10 years, but we haven’t left.”

Koniar attended the fair with her family before becoming a vendor and over the years she’s enjoyed seeing the way the crowds have changed and seeing the diverse groups of people that come every year. She said patrons in Waukesha are loyal.

“I think it’s because we use real lemons, real sugar. What you see is what you get. It’s all from scratch and every one is individually made,” Koniar said before making an orangeade, which she shook in a metal shaker.