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Circling the Wagons

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By David McCabe

For years, food trucks have been huge on the streets of Manhattan, but in the Hamptons they are normally relegated to beach parking lots.

Now, for one night only, denizens of the East End can enjoy what office workers in Midtown Manhattan enjoy every day at the first Food Truck Derby, which is being held this Friday at the Hayground School in Bridgehampton.

The event is organized by Edible East End, a food magazine that has been published since 2005 and is part of a national chain of Edible publications. Its publisher, Brian Halweil, said the magazine wanted to bring a taste of food truck culture — which has reached a fever pitch around the country in recent years — to the East End.

A \$50 ticket buys a guest a tasting portion from each of the trucks, as well as unlimited beer and wine.

“The concept was to create a food experience that doesn’t really exist out here but that we love from the city,” said Halweil.

Long Island, however, will not be entirely unrepresented amongst the trucks present. Hampton Coffee Company will have an espresso truck at the event, Halweil said, as well as Wandering Palate, a truck that specializes in Long Island cuisine. Montaco, a Mexican food truck that's normally parked at Ditch Plains in Montauk, will also be at the Derby.

Mars Ostarello, who owns Montaco, said her truck focuses on producing food that honors her Mexican heritage while using locally-sourced ingredients. Everything the truck serves is made from scratch, she said, from the blue-corn tortillas to the salsa.

This is not Montaco's first Derby, so-to-speak. After their first season on the East End, the staff wanted to keep the truck open, so they took it down to Miami, where a food truck culture was just forming. That meant that five days a week, the taco truck was going to events like this weekend's derby.

"So we're pretty well versed on food truck derbies and gatherings of all types," Ostarello said.

This weekend, they'll be serving three types of tacos. Their fish taco, which is made with mahi and garnished with lettuce and chipotle mayonnaise, a chicken and salsa verde taco and a zucchini and roasted corn variant with hints of cumin and salsa verde.

Ostarello said that she doesn't want the East End to become saturated with food trucks, as Manhattan has been. Instead, she praised the way the hamlet of Montauk regulates vendors: only one food truck is allowed in each small beach parking lot, and two are allowed in larger spaces.

Other than a little more variety, she said, "I think we're all good here."

Some of the trucks featured in the event will be coming from their regular berths in New York City, including La Bella Torte, an Italian dessert truck based out of Brooklyn.

Joe Glaser, who owns the truck with his wife AnnMarie, went to culinary school when the recession of 2008 began, and he and his wife decided that it made more sense economically to open a truck rather than a brick-and-mortar store.

The truck specializes in traditional Italian desserts, and was nominated for a Vendy award after being in business for only four months.

"Everything that I do is classic Italian and I keep everything traditional," Glaser said.

Halweil, for his part, hopes that this event will perhaps encourage more operators to create food trucks on the East End.

"We hope that this event encourages more food trucks to come out here and stay parked, at least for part of the summer," Halweil said.

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