

Jazz Fest food: Event serves up epic eats (and, yes, even vegan treats)

Visitors to the Vancouver International Jazz Festival are in for a smorgasbord — of the auditory and edible variety.



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Visitors to the [Vancouver International Jazz Festival](https://www.coastaljazz.ca/) (<https://www.coastaljazz.ca/>) are in for a smorgasbord — of the auditory and edible variety.

In addition to serving up a selection of local and international musicians, from Canadian talent Audrey Ochoa to international superstars The Roots, the annual festival is also providing a plethora of delicious food options for guests to enjoy.

Longtime festival favourites including Did's Greek, Chick Pea, Thai Box and Japa Dog will return for this year's roundup of events, and the festival's food director has hand-picked a few new flavours to add to this year's lineup.

"This year we are adding Kampong Malaysian, El Coroto Venezuelan Arepas and B&B Salad, (offering) all local produce," Rod Grant, the mastermind behind the festival's food truck selection, says.

Grant says the process of picking and choosing the food-truck vendors — especially in a city that offers an ever-increasing number of delicious options — can prove tricky. But, he lets his tastebuds, and the feedback from festivalgoers, help make the decisions.

"We base our food vendor choices on guest requests — food quality, healthy, veggie/vegan/gluten-free choices, international menus and great customer service," Grant explains of the hand-picking process.

Grant pointed to two main food moments that will be happening during the festival, which runs through July 1, as his selects for things that may surprise people to stumble upon.

"Rock Point Ice Cream is handcrafted in Port Moody," he explains. "And Dr.

Oetker's will be at David Lam Park giving away free pizza."

Harbouring a comprehensive knowledge of the jazz festival's food trucks, and the fare that each one has to share, which vendors would make up Grant's own ultimate itinerary at the jazz festival? As expected, he had a few suggestions for where one might stop for a snack and a sip throughout the events.

"B&B Crepe for an appetizer, Tycoon Donair with a homemade Tzatziki for lunch, Fresh Squeezed Lemonade to wash it all down, desserts at Slavic Roll and Rocky Point Artisan Ice Cream," he says. "Life is short — I always have two desserts."



Rotem Tal and Itamar Shani of the Vancouver-based Chickpea.
STEPH YU / HANDOUT

For the duo behind longtime festival food mainstay Chickpea, Rotem Tal and Itamar Shani, this year's event marks the third year they've been "jazzing it up" with event attendees.

"The summer of 2017, a little after a year of being on the streets, we were lucky enough to snag a spot with the jazz festival," Shani recalls. It couldn't have been a more

perfect fit, they say.

"Taking part in the jazz festival celebrations is such a treat," Shani says. "We really dig mingling with the mixture of locals, tourists and super cool musicians."

"Plus, as big-time music lovers we're always super excited to get to hear new musicians each year at the festival," Tal adds. "Our staff are always

pumped to get to wander around the festival in between shifts and come back excited with new artists to add to our truck's music playlists."

The duo started their business in April 2016, as a love letter, of sorts, for the food of their home country of Israel — not to mention a "desire to bring really good hummus and falafel to Vancouver," Tal says.

"We've been really well received ever since we first rolled into the Vancouver food scene," Tal adds. "While there were few skeptics of a meatless truck rolling around town, for the most part, people have been happy to seek us out. We love seeing people's Instagram photos of their super stuffed pitas and hearing carnivores exclaim that they are full and happy after eating at Chickpea."

The main motivator behind their quick success, they say, is that Chickpea is about more than just making and selling food. It's about community.

"We've worked hard to create a business that embodies our passions for community involvement and environmental awareness," Shani says. "A few community centred projects of ours include; various fundraising campaigns for awesome, local organizations — past fundraisers for Women Against Violence Against Women, Vancouver Orphaned Kitten Rescue Association and the Humane Society — featuring different local artists on our walls each month and collaborations with other restaurants, like our UBC meal partnership with our friends at Aleph, a vegetarian, Palestinian-owned restaurant. We are a vegan, Israeli-owned restaurant for those who don't know."

The pair are also proud to point out that, when it comes to making an environmental impact as a business, their vegan, locally sourced menu also helps them stand apart.

"By using only vegan ingredients, sourcing locally as much as possible and composting all of our food scraps Chickpea has a minimal footprint on our planet," Tal explains. "Our motto at chickpea is to 'Spread the Chickpeace' and we strive to do that every day, beyond simply serving awesome hummus."

Longtime fans of Tal and Shani's fare will find all the usual suspects on the festival food truck menu — with a few new additions for the event, as well.

“We’re adding our restaurant’s Beyond Pita to the truck,” Tal says of the special menu items people should watch out for during the jazz fest. “We’ve taken the revolutionary Beyond Meat Burger and lovingly tucked it into a fresh pita that has been stuffed with our legendary hummus, fresh veggies, spicy schug. It’s beyond delicious!”

With a few years at the jazz festival under the waist-tie of their aprons, the Chickpea masterminds have (an albeit biased) take on the best type of food for an outdoor festival. And they were happy to dish the details on it when asked to.

“It depends on how you like to festival,” Shani said somewhat diplomatically when asked what makes the perfect festival food. “Pitas are always great for walking around to various different vendors and snacking while you explore. But we also like bigger platter type spreads for sitting in the grass and sharing a meal with friends.

“Luckily, we offer both options.”

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Vegan Shakshuka Recipe

Vegetable Base

5 cubed, tomatoes

10 sliced and peeled garlic cloves

3 chopped yellow onions

1 tbsp sugar

1 big, shredded carrot

1/2 sliced red pepper

1 sliced jalapeño

2 tbsp canola oil

Pinch of paprika

Chopped vegan sausage/cooked chickpeas

Sauce

1 cup hot water

275 grams organic tomatoes paste

1 tbsp paprika

1 tbsp smoked paprika

1 tbsp cumin

1/2 tsp salt

1/4 tsp black pepper

Method

Heat canola oil in a frying pan. When the oil is hot first add garlic and sauté.

Next, add the onions and sauté until clear. Add sugar and paprika. Add carrots and let everything sauté together. Add jalapeno and red pepper.

Once all the veggies are sautéed together, spread cubed tomatoes all over the frying pan. Make sure the pan is fully covered with all of the ingredients.

Sprinkle with salt. Cover the pan and lower the heat. Allow to cook for 15 minutes, without mixing or stirring.

In a large bowl, mix together tomato paste, hot water, cumin, black pepper, salt and paprika.

After the vegetable base has cooked for 25 minutes, pour the sauce mixture onto the cooking vegetables. Add cooked chickpea/vegan sausage, cover again and let cook for 10 more minutes. Serve as is, with a salad or stuff it into a pita like we like to do.

Recipe courtesy of Itamar Shani and Rotem Tal of Chickpea.



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