

11 Food Trends Spotted at Bonnaroo

By Kristin Luna | Jun 16 2014



Come for the music. Stay for the food. © Kristin Luna

[Bonnaroo](#) brought familiar faces—such as the Avett Brothers, who took the fest’s stage for the fifth time—back to Manchester, Tennessee, this past weekend, alongside Bonnaroo virgins like Elton John, who closed down The Farm Sunday night with his first US festival appearance ever. But while the music played a starring roll as always, the flourishing food scene helped elevate the whole event.

“Good food should be a part of any festival,” said Kerry Black, a cofounder of [Superfly Presents](#) (the cocreators of Bonnaroo). “So we tried to have a lot of different levels of food available so [people] are not stuck eating soggy chicken fingers all weekend long.”

And with more than 150 vendors set up over the course of the weekend, festivalgoers were not hurting for options. Here are some of the food-centric themes we observed at this year's 'Roo.

1. Bacon!

One of the biggest hits was **BaconLand**. BaconLand and its bacon flights (yes bacon flights) aimed to capitalize on the nation-wide love for all things bacon. “It came from me, being a bacon freak,” Black said. “We wanted to start it off as a vendor to test the idea, before possibly opening a restaurant. Everyone loves bacon, but there really aren't a whole lot of bacon-themed restaurants. We did bacon tastings of 50 or 60 kinds and wound up using a beloved local brand, [Benton's](#), on all of the sandwiches.”



2. Whole Hog

Across from BaconLand, there was **Hamageddon**, a 4,000-pound, 22-foot-long steel pig that breathed fire from its nose and back end and housed a whole hog roasting in its nucleus. “We call him Henri,” Black said. “I always wanted to own a teacup pig and name him that.”



3. International Dishes

Tennessee may not be rife with international food, but the restaurants and caterers who set up camp for the week brought some culinary diversity. We spotted bahn mi, Chinese, pad Thai, Greek and much more among the varied food offerings.



4. *Fried Everything*

We are in the South after all, and many—and by *many*, we mean *most*—dishes *are* battered and browned. If fried food is your thing, you needn't have looked far: Vendors did not hesitate to fry anything and everything they could get their hands on, from clams to cheesecake to alligator on a stick.



5. Micro Pop-Ups

In addition to the Airstream trailer setup he has brought the past three years, Miami chef Jeremiah Bullfrog upped the ante with a mini restaurant inside a shipping container. Bullfrog, who co-owns [gastroPod](#) with his wife, Carla, created a *Pulp Fiction*-themed menu paying homage to the cult film's 20th anniversary. The Royale with Cheese and the Five Dollar Shake were best sellers. "It's a pretty ballsy move doing the volume of shakes we're doing," Bullfrog said—but patrons also loved ordering the Big Kahuna, as well, if not just to announce whether they prefer their patty "burnt to a crisp" or "bloody as hell."



6. Diet Options

Though the South isn't traditionally associated with meat-free diners, this year's festival delighted those with eating restrictions, thanks to tasty vegetarian, vegan and gluten-free options galore.



7. Classic Fries

Don't underestimate the power of a heaping plate of fries, both sweet potato and traditional. Many booths sold out of the greasy fare early on, and without a doubt it was the dish with the most ubiquity throughout the course of the festival.



8. Indie Chef Experiments

M. Wells Food Show raised the bar with quality, offering a sophisticated menu that included tuna tartare on mini ice cream cones, oysters, and mussels and clams in a salted herb butter.



Still, proprietor Sarah Obraitis, who co-owns the New York-based brand with her husband Hugue Dufor said the burger never fails to reign supreme. Even country star Dierks Bentley, who attended as a fan, told us it was the best thing he ate all weekend.



9. *The Amish*

The Amish were having a moment. Or at least, the **Amish Baking Co.** stand—one of the most popular booths at the festival—was. The Florida-based bakery kept sweets lovers satiated with doughnuts aplenty. “It’s *literally* one of the best doughnuts I’ve ever had,” said Kerry Black, a native New Yorker.

THE AMISH BA



Menu
The Dough
The Deal(s)
The Pretzel
The Water



10. Community Dinners

Announced via social media, the first ever **BonnaRoots Community Dinners** sold out immediately. Farm-to-table dinners, featuring locally sourced ingredients, the two separate meals were served on long tables out under the stars and seemed to encapsulate the community feel that Bonnaroo sets out to promote.

11. Craft Brews

Broo'ers Festival celebrated its 12th year of bringing craft beer to the grounds and offering an alternative to standard offerings like Miller, Bud and PBR. This year's tent featured a mash-up of 25 breweries, from Seattle ([Elysian Brewing](#)) to nearby Tullahoma, Tennessee ([Ole Shed Brewing Co.](#)).