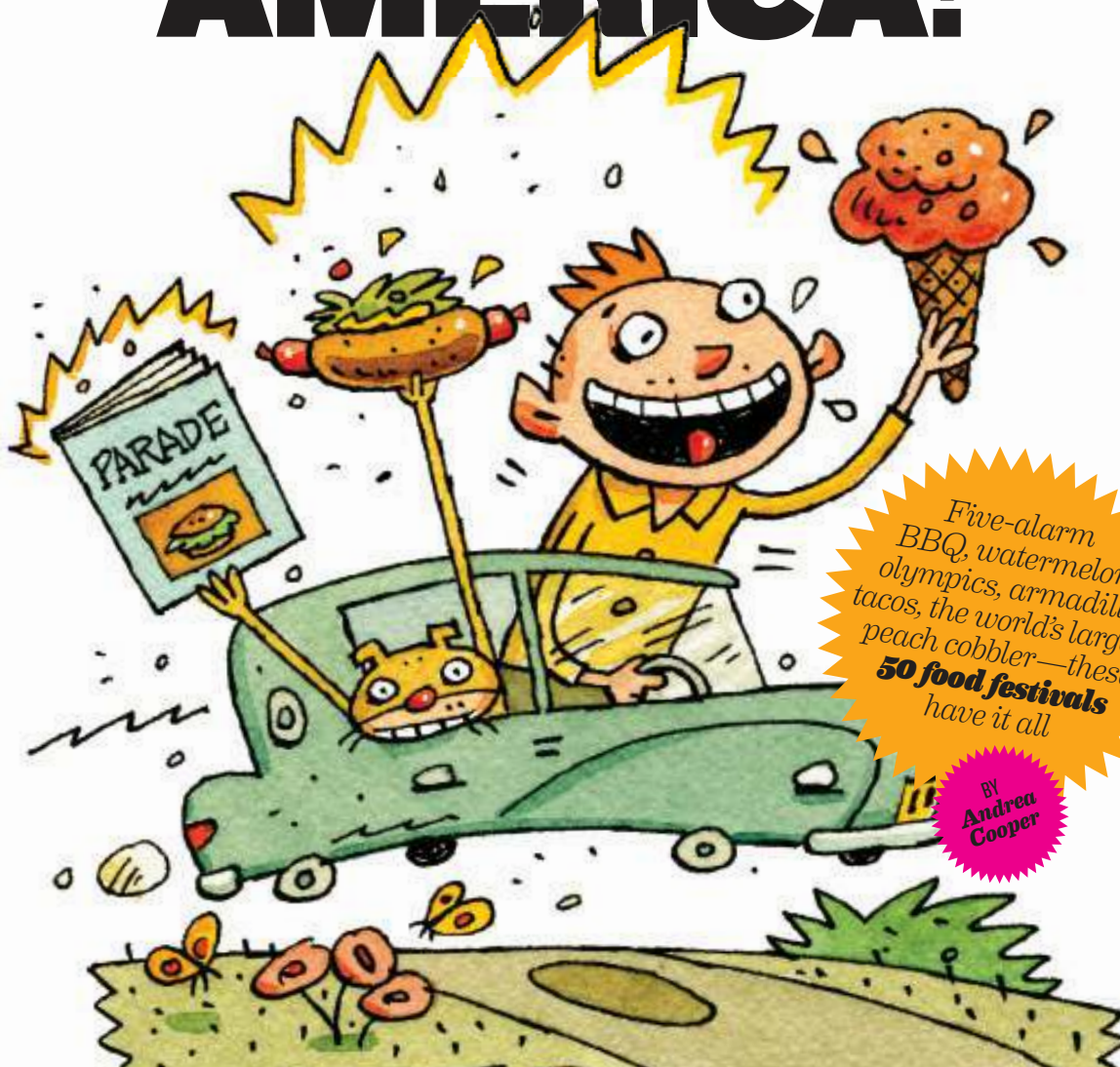


COVER AND
INSIDE
ILLUSTRATIONS BY
**Elwood
Smith**

Hungry?

EAT YOUR WAY ACROSS AMERICA!



Five-alarm
BBQ, watermelon
olympics, armadillo
tacos, the world's largest
peach cobbler—these
50 food festivals
have it all

BY
**Andrea
Cooper**

SOUTH

1 **Jambalaya Festival** Gonzales, La. May 26–29

This feast features dozens of varieties of the zesty Cajun-Creole rice dish. And when you want a change of taste, switch over to the po' boys and crawfish bread.

jambalayafestival.org

2 **International Biscuit Festival**

Knoxville, Tenn. May 27–28

Which baker will rise to the occasion and make the tastiest biscuit? Taking the Grand Champion prize last year was Fat Elvis, a peanut butter, banana, and bacon creation.

biscuitfest.com

3 **Georgia Peach Festival**

Fort Valley, Ga. June 3–11

What do you get when you mix 150 pounds of flour, 75 pounds of butter, 150 pounds of sugar, 32 gallons of milk, and 75 gallons of peaches? The world's largest peach cobbler, the event's big—as in 5 x 11 feet!—draw.

gapeachfestival.com

4 **North Carolina Blueberry Festival**

Burgaw, N.C. June 18

Beautiful setting + baked goods = heaven on earth. If you agree, come to this fest for its blueberry pies, buckles, and breads, offered up in a picture-perfect (Hollywood has filmed here) town.

ncblueberryfestival.com

5 **Slugburger Festival**

Corinth, Miss. July 7–9

Don't be scared by its unappetizing name: A slugburger is a deep-fried beef and soy-meal patty served on a

GOLDEN ONION DAYS
IN UTAH, EVERYONE
GOES HOG WILD OVER
THE BIG BULB—NO
TEARS ALLOWED (#22)



bun—and a beloved regional specialty. (Don't miss the Biloxi Seafood Festival, either, on Sept. 10–11.) slugburgerfestival.com

6 Hope Watermelon Festival

Hope, Ark. Aug. 11–13
The perfect event for fruit lovers with a competitive streak: There are watermelon-eating and seed-spitting contests, as well as a Watermelon Olympics featuring a melon toss and melon bowling. hopemelonfest.com

7 Kentucky Bourbon Festival

Bardstown, Ky. Sept. 13–18
Bourbon, made here since 1776, is the main lure, but the event also has kid-friendly doings, like steam-locomotive rides, horseshoe pitching, and barrel racing. kybourbonfestival.com

8 West Virginia Roadkill Cook-Off and Autumn

Harvest Festival

Marlinton, W.Va. Sept. 24
The grub served here is not really roadkill—instead, the dishes are all crazy collisions of weird meats. Past, er, delicacies include armadillo and roadrunner tacos and hog with groundhog gravy. pccocwv.com/festival.htm

9 Suffolk Peanut Festival

Suffolk, Va. Oct. 6–9
Trust us—you haven't lived until you've seen the world's only peanut-butter sculpture contest (gloves, plastic knife, and wet wipes provided). Less sticky activities include a demolition derby and a truck-and-tractor pull. suffolkfest.org

10 South Carolina Sweet Potato Festival

Darlington, S.C. Oct. 8
The average American consumes 5.2 pounds of this vegetable a year. Enjoy its natural sweetness and health benefits at this delicious event—one cup of

cooked sweet potatoes contains as much vitamin A as 16 cups of broccoli! visitdarlingtoncounty.org

11 Annual National Shrimp Festival

Gulf Shores, Ala. Oct. 13–16
In 2010, more than 250,000 people came to feast on shrimp—blackened, steamed, rolled in coconut, dressed in cocktail sauce, and done every other way. Always popular: Cajun Pistols, bread rolls stuffed with seafood and then deep-fried. nationalshrimpfestival.com



12 Boggy Bayou Mullet Festival

Niceville, Fla. Oct. 21–23
Up to four tons of mullet, a mild local fish, will be consumed here (tip: smoked mullet is said to be extratasty). The fest is also acclaimed for its music—Rascal Flatts and the Dixie Chicks are among past headliners. cityofniceville.org

WEST

13 Lebanon Strawberry Festival

Lebanon, Ore. June 2–5
When this event began in 1909, strawberries cost 2¢ to 4¢ a pound. Early organizers would no doubt be stunned by today's prices—and by the fact that up to 1,000 pounds of the fruit go into the fest's main treat, a giant shortcake that feeds 15,000. lebanonstrawberryfestival.com

14 Czech Days

Tabor, S.D. June 16–18
Tabor's founding Czech residents began emigrating here in 1869. The festival's signature sweet is the *kolache*, a delectable fruit-filled pastry. Go ahead and indulge, then

DON'T SEE YOUR FAVORITE FEST?
Tell us the what, when, and where of the food festivals you love at Parade.com/foodfest

burn off the calories in the polka dance-off. taborchzechdays.com

15 Northwest Raspberry Festival

Lynden, Wash. July 15–16
Two-thirds of U.S.-grown raspberries come from Whatcom County, home to this town. Savor berry pies and sundaes, and sip berry wine in this scenic valley below snowcapped Mt. Baker. bellingham.org

16 Gilroy Garlic Festival

Gilroy, Calif. July 29–31
Ingest garlic in every form imaginable. Traditionalists can stick to garlic bread and garlic fries, while the daring can opt for garlic frog legs and garlic watermelon. And for the penny-pinchers, there's free garlic ice cream. gilroygarlicfestival.com

17 Olathe Sweet Corn Festival

Olathe, Colo. Aug. 5–6
The mountain area's hot days, cool nights, and glacier-fed fields are said to produce some of America's sweetest corn. Taste it for yourself—and then return for seconds, thirds, and fourths. For the price of admission, you get all the cobs you can eat. olathesweetcornfest.com

18 Huckleberry Festival

Trout Creek, Mont. Aug. 12–14
Try the "blueberry with

OLATHE SWEET CORN FESTIVAL
OLATHE, COLO.
(#17)



attitude" in shakes, ice cream, cheesecake, chocolates, and pancakes. When you're too stuffed to speak, listen to the contenders in the elk bugling contest. Last year's winners: kids who blew through the hose of a vacuum cleaner!
huckleberryfestival.com

19
Steinley Cup Official State Microbrewery Competition

Saratoga, Wyo. Aug. 20
Sip your way through the sudsy entries in this local brewery showdown. Kids can vote for their fave root beer—and young and old can weigh in on the best red chili, green chili, and salsa.
saratogachamber.info

20
World's Largest Calf Fry Festival & Cook-Off

Vinita, Okla. Aug. 27
Calf fries, a.k.a. Rocky Mountain oysters, are actually fried calves' testicles. Some 2,000 pounds of them are dished out at this festival each year, but the event is no one-dish pony—abundant breads, beans, cobblers, and salsas are also available.
vinita.com

21
Best in the West Nugget Rib Cook-Off
Sparks, Nev. Aug. 31–Sept. 5
Half a million BBQ lovers come for America's biggest

rib cook-off, with some 100 tons sold. In the "don't try this at home" category, there's a rib-eating tourney where "athletes" have 12 minutes to chow down—the record is 9.8 pounds!
nuggettribcookoff.com

22
Golden Onion Days

Payson, Utah Sept. 1–5
These four days are packed full of activities, like helicopter rides, parades, talent shows, lawn-mower races (no worries—blades have been removed), and, of course, an onion cooking contest. Winning chefs get cash and—even better—mouthwash.
paysonutah.org

23
Hatch Chile Festival

Hatch, N.M. Sept. 3–4
Chile-laden caramels, chips, burgers, enchiladas, and ice cream—this event is a hothead's fever dream come true. Kids can soothe scorched palates in the watermelon-eating contest.
hatchchilefest.com

STILL HUNGRY FOR MORE?
Find a food festival near you, and discover 50 more eating extravaganzas, at Parade.com/foodfest

24
Spud Day

Shelley, Idaho Sept. 17
While most of us have faced off in a tug-of-war before, locals here would say you haven't really experienced the thrill of victory till you've pulled your weight over mashed potatoes. For the contest, a cement mixer churns up thousands of pounds of instant spuds.
ci.shelley.id.gov

25
Norsk Hostfest

Minot, N.D. Sept. 27–Oct. 1
It's the continent's biggest Scandinavian festival, with crafts, folk dancing, and lots of Nordic grub, like *klub* (Norwegian potato dumplings), *ponnukokur* (Icelandic pancakes), and lutefisk (a pungent fish dish from Norway, Sweden, and Finland).
hostfest.com



KENTUCKY BOURBON FESTIVAL
BARDSTOWN, KY. (#7)

26
Arizona Taco Festival

Scottsdale, Ariz. Oct. 15
Teams seek to take top honors in chicken, beef, pork, and seafood categories, along with "sidecart throwdowns" in salsa and guacamole. Competitors vie for \$7,500 in cash purses—not to mention yearlong bragging rights.
aztacofestival.com

27
Terlingua International Chili Championship

Terlingua, Tex. Nov. 5
Texans take their chili very seriously. At this granddaddy of chili cook-offs, you won't find turkey or vegetarian vari-

eties: Only Texas red, a meat-based type devoid of beans or other fillers, is allowed.
chili.org/terlingua.html

MIDWEST

28
World's Largest Brat Fest

Madison, Wis. May 27–30
In 2010 a record 209,376 bratwursts were eaten with relish—172 gallons' worth, to be exact. The event starts at 6 a.m. on Friday, a.k.a. Take Your Brat to Work day, when you can buy a brat-to-go.
bratfest.com

29
Rhubarb Festival

Lanesboro, Minn. June 4
Move over, strawberries—your tart sidekick is taking center stage. This member of the buckwheat family will be feted in song (the "Rhubarb National Anthem"), game (stalk throwing and rhubarb golf), and food (from soups to

nut-and-rhubarb bread).
rhubarbfestival.org

30
Taste of Chicago

Chicago June 24–July 3
Said to be the world's largest food festival—in 2010, 2.6 million people attended. More than 300 different delights will be served, so if you can't find something to eat, you're just not hungry.
tasteofchicago.us

31
National Cherry Festival

Traverse City, Mich. July 2–9
Celebrate the Fourth here with the ultimate American dessert, cherry pie. If one course isn't enough, try the grand buffet, which starts with chicken sliders with cherry BBQ sauce and ends with oatmeal-cherry cookies.
cherryfestival.org

32
Wayne Chicken Show

Wayne, Neb. July 8–10
Hey, contest lovers! Your best time to go is Saturday, when

WAYNE CHICKEN SHOW
USE YOUR HEAD TO WIN
THE BEST CHICKEN-HAT
CONTEST AT THIS
NEBRASKA FEST! (#32)





**WORLD'S LARGEST
BRAT FEST**
MADISON, WIS. (#28)

you can take part in tourneys of all types: artistic (best chicken hat), vocal (best cluck), athletic (rubber-bird chuck), digestive (hard-boiled-egg eating), anatomical (best chicken legs), and so on. chickenshow.com

33 **National Hamburger Festival**

Akron, Ohio Aug. 20–21

The burgers come in whole and half sizes, the better to eat just one more. And for people unafraid of messes or making spectacles of themselves, have we got the competition for you: Bob for as many burgers—they're immersed in a ketchup-filled kiddie pool—as you can in three minutes.

hamburgerfestival.com

34 **Spinach Festival**

Lenexa, Kan. Sept. 10

Dubbed "the spinach capital of the world" in the 1930s, this town pays tribute to the superhealthy veggie with the world's largest spinach salad and loads of Popeye-friendly dishes (even spinach desserts!). Kids will enjoy the green popcorn and lemonade.

lenexa.com/parks/festivals_spinach.html

35 **Persimmon Festival**

Mitchell, Ind. Sept. 17–24

The autumn fruit native to southern Indiana stars in ice

cream, hot and cold puddings, and other desserts, like persimmon truffles and cheesecake bars. One of last year's most memorable concoctions: persimmon pizza. persimmonfestival.org

36 **American Royal Barbecue**

Kansas City, Mo. Sept. 29–Oct. 2

If your idea of perfume is the aroma coming from a grill, you'll be in hog—and cow and chicken—heaven at this event. At the World Series of Barbecue (or the Super Bowl of Swine), you can see the meat elite at work; only the best teams in the U.S. are asked to fire up for the fest's invitational.

americanroyal.com

37 **World Food Festival**

Des Moines, Iowa Oct. 7–9

A frugal foodie's delight—vendors offer \$1 tastes or full plates for \$5 or less. The cooks hail from Brazil, Ethiopia, Greece, India, Ecuador, Russia, Turkey, and other distant lands. You'll have three days to eat your way around



this world, so pace yourself. worldfoodfestival.org

NORTHEAST

38 **Great Chowder Cook-Off**

Newport, R.I. June 4

What's the chowder-fest equivalent of a pageant's Miss Congeniality award? Here, it's a toss-up between "Most Spirited" and "Best Decorated Booth." Soup fiends, fear not: There are prizes for best chowder in three divisions—clam, seafood, and creative.

newportwaterfrontevents.com

39 **Vermont Cheesemakers Festival**

Shelburne, Vt. July 24

Sample more than 100 cheeses from 40 local creameries, or try artisanal smoked meats, cider, and breads. Early-bird bonus: Some creameries will open the day before for free tours.

vtcheesefest.com

40 **Atlantic City Food and Wine Festival**

Atlantic City, N.J. July 28–31

A Guy Fieri-hosted cheese-steak showdown and a gospel brunch with the Neelys are just two of the Food Network chef events on tap here. (Another cool N.J. summer treat: the Ice Cream Festival in Toms River on July 16.)

afoodandwine.com

41 **Maine Lobster Festival**

Rockland, Maine Aug. 3–7

Lobster lovers, this is the place: More than 20,000 pounds will be served here. In the Lobster Crate Race, contestants try to scamper across a string of 50 partially submerged lobster crates without falling into the ocean. Children can compete in the

lobster-eating and codfish-carrying contests.

mainelobsterfestival.com

42

Taste of the Caribbean and Jerk Festival

Hartford, Conn. Aug. 6

Enjoy island foods—curried goat, flying fish, and, natch, jerk chicken—while listening to musicians from Barbados, Guyana, Jamaica, and other tropical climes. The swivel-hipped can shake their way through free lessons in salsa, calypso, and Trinidadian soca; the rest of us can just sway.

tasteofthecaribbeanct.org

43

Pittston Tomato Festival

Pittston, Pa. Aug. 18–21

Got an unresolved argument with a friend or loved one? Take it to this festival: In the Tomato Fight, participants bombard each other with rotten tomatoes. The battle's \$5 entry fee gives you all you can throw and—you'll need 'em!—goggles.

pittstontomatofestival.com



CZECH DAYS TABOR, S.D. (#14)

44

Hard Crab Derby

Crisfield, Md. Sept. 2–4

Lunch on Chesapeake Bay blue crabs, Maryland's most beloved meal, and test your skills at the crab-cooking, crab-picking, and boat-docking contests. At the Crab Derby on Saturday, buy a crustacean for \$5, name it, and race it. Per tradition, the winner is set free—while the losers end up as dinner.

crisfieldchamber.com/events

**ONLY IN
AMERICA!**

See photos of crazy
food-festival antics from
across the country at
Parade.com
/foodfest

45

National Buffalo Wing Festival

Buffalo, N.Y. Sept. 3-4

Last year, 71,000 people flocked here for 500,000 wings covered with some 100 different sauces, from salt and vinegar to coconut Caribbean. It all adds up to 33 tons of chicken. Now *that's* something to cluck about.

buffalowings.com

46

Milford Pumpkin Festival

Milford, N.H. Oct. 7-9

Linus of the Peanuts gang never did see the Great Pumpkin fly through the air, but you can—the American Chunker, a six-ton air cannon, will be shooting squash more than 3,000 feet. Less lofty activities: scarecrow making and pumpkin painting and carving.

milfordpumpkinfestival.org

47

Bridgeville Apple- Scrapple Festival

Bridgeville, Del. Oct. 14-15

The festival honors two of the state's culinary treats: apples and scrapple (a meat loaf-like pork product). Contests include scrapple carving, scrapple chunkin' (pitching packages of scrapple, shot put-style), and the ladies skillet toss.

applescrapple.com

48

Wellfleet OysterFest

Wellfleet, Mass. Oct. 15-16

Slurp local oysters raw, or savor them grilled, fried, baked, or in stews. In last year's Oyster Shuck-Off, the champ shucked 24 oysters in just over two minutes.

wellfleetoysterfest.org

ALASKA & HAWAII

49

Kodiak Crab Festival

Kodiak, Alaska May 26–30

Celebrate the end of winter in late May—after all, it is Alaska—with crab legs, crab sandwiches, scallops, halibut, and chowder. One event highlight: survival-suit races, where competitors run down a ramp, pull on awkward suits, swim across a harbor, and jump into a life raft.

kodiak.org

50

Kauai Coconut Festival

Kapaa, Hawaii Oct. 1–2

Dine on fish with coconut sauce, haupia (a traditional coconut milk-based dessert), and succulent fresh coconut meat. Children of all ages will go nuts for games like coconut bowling, toss the ring around the coconut, and coconut checkers.

kbakauai.org

P



GUESS WHAT'S GOING ON IN THESE PHOTOS!

Which of the 50 food festivals are these? Find the answers at Parade.com/foodfest