



UT tailgate spread

photo by Chris Fritchie

Dare to Throw the Ultimate Tailgate

By Monica Issitt

SITTING on the back of a truck with a couple of friends, waiting for the big game to start. This is the basic tailgating scenario, but a far cry from the extravagant goings-on popular with both college and professional football fans. Tailgating traditions are as varied as the variables. Time of day, weather and the opponent all affect the menu of any sensitive tailgater. Is it a morning kick-off? Then how about omelets, biscuits and mimosas? Does the game start at noon? Then, chili for a cold day or gigantic sub sandwiches for a warm one might be appropriate.

What dishes make up the food culture of the opponent? Southern fried chicken or boiled shrimp? Respecting diverse flavors goes a long way towards a spirit of sportsmanship before history is made, even if the stink-eye comes out in the third quarter. After all, a tailgate is really just a big party, a soiree of goodwill,

proving that, no matter if your blood runs OU red, UT orange, A&M maroon or Cowboy silver and blue, we can all just get along while enjoying great food.

For those who wish to take tailgating to an artistic level, there are plenty of old pros to emulate, like Joe Cahn, self-named “the Commissioner of Tailgating,” visiting every NFL city every fall, logging meals on his website, tailgating.com, as he goes. “Boiled lobster in New England...perogis in Pittsburg...brisket in Dallas...”

RED RIVER RIVALRY

Tailgaters attending the OU/UT game get some help in the food department since this tailgating party is thrown inside the State Fair of Texas. Fried Snickers, fried Twinkies, fried Oreos, fried Coke and, of course, Fletcher’s Corny Dogs, are all dolled out to fairgoers in mass quantities. Don’t miss the sea of painted

coolers and grab a spot on your side of the 50/50 split.

COW PATTIES

5 lbs. ground beef
1 lb. Chorizo (Mexican Sausage)
14 Ritz type snack crackers
(crushed into small crumbs)
3 large eggs
1/2 medium onion, finely chopped

Place all ingredients in a large bowl (including the onions, if you are using them). Mix well, using your hands to knead the ingredients together. (You’re going to have to get down and dirty with this one). Once all ingredients are mixed together, form into hamburger patties. Prepare as you would any other hamburger. Makes 10-13 patties, depending how big you make them. This recipe can easily be doubled.

TIP: I find that if you prepare the patties



Cowboy Chili (left) and Southern Pulled Pork (right)

photos by Chris Fritchie

the night before the tailgate it is not only more convenient but it also allows the ground beef to absorb the flavor of the Chorizo (kind of like a marinade). If you do onions, make sure they are finely chopped because if the onion chunks are too large, it makes it difficult to form the mixture into patties. The same goes for the crackers- make sure they are crushed into very small crumbs.

FRIED OREOS

From Recipezaar.com

- 1 (20 oz.) package Oreo cookies
- 2 cups Bisquick
- 2 eggs
- 1 1/2 cups milk
- 3 tsp. oil
- Vegetable oil (enough for deep frying)

Blend Bisquick, eggs, milk and 3 tsp. oil until smooth. Preheat your deep fryer to about 375°F (use a thermometer if you wish to deep fry in a pan). Dip the cookies in the batter mixture until totally covered and then place in the hot oil (cookies will float). Keep checking and turn over the cookie when bottom side of Oreo is brown. Keep a close watch

because it only takes a short time to brown. Remove cookies and eat warm.

PARTYIN' WITH THE BOYS

Knowing and preparing regional favorites is a crucial component of good tailgating. Big hits for Dallas games are BBQ and Cowboy Chili. Using rivalry recipes is fun too, as in bringing out the Philly Cheese Steaks for the Cowboys-Eagles game or made-from-scratch sourdough when they play the Forty-Whiners.

So, get your parking space reservation early and don't cross the blue lines. Go, Cowboys!

COWBOY CHILI

- 1 lb. beef sirloin steak or boneless beef top round steak
- 1 Tbsp. olive oil
- 1 medium onion, chopped
- 1 small green pepper, chopped
- 1 tsp. ground cumin
- 1 Tbsp. all-purpose flour
- 1 cup salsa
- 1 3/4 cups beef broth
- assorted toppers (optional)

Cut beef strips crosswise into small

cubes. Heat oil in non-stick saucepot. Add beef and cook until browned and juices evaporate, stirring often. Add onion, pepper and cumin and cook until vegetables are tender-crisp. Stir in flour and cook 1 min. Add salsa and broth. Heat to a boil. Cook over low heat 20 min., or until done. Serve with assorted toppers, like shredded cheddar cheese, chopped green onions and salsa.

OOOOOOOH, PIG SOOIE!

As teenagers, Clay Cullins of McKinney and brother, Dale, would join their parents for games on "The Hill," the nickname of the University of Arkansas at Fayetteville campus. They would pick up fried chicken or BBQ on the way or bring some sandwiches from home, open up the custom van and have a bite to eat in the parking lot before the game.

These days, Dale has kicked it up a notch or two and the list of supplies his family now brings to games includes a 10' by 20' tent, chairs, table cloths, rope lighting, an HD T.V., a satellite and a 2-piece band for the "big games."

For the Arkansas-LSU game, Dale likes to fix Gumbo, "in honor of the

opponent,” he says. If it’s a morning game, donuts and Paula Dean Baggie Omelets fit the bill.

SOUTHERN PULLED PORK

From Allrecipes.com

- 1 Tbsp. butter
- 2 lbs. boneless pork roast
- 1 Tbsp. Cajun seasoning
- 1 medium onion, chopped
- 4 cloves garlic, crushed
- 4 cups water
- 1 Tbsp. liquid smoke flavoring

Cut the pork roast into large chunks. Season generously with the Cajun seasoning. Melt butter in a large skillet over medium-high heat. Add pork and brown on all sides. Remove from the skillet and transfer to a slow cooker.

Add the onion and garlic to the skillet and cook for a few minutes until tender. Stir in the water scraping the bottom to include all of the browned pork bits from the bottom of the pan and then pour the whole mixture into the slow cooker with the pork. Stir in liquid smoke flavoring. Cover and cook on high for six hours, or until meat is falling apart when pierced with a fork. Remove pieces of pork from the slow cooker and shred. Return to the slow cooker to keep warm.

The Cullins are not alone in recognizing tailgating as art and there are endless resources available to help with a successful tailgate. Cookbooks by Jay DiEugenio, *The Tailgate Guy*, as well as blogs like *The Ultimate Tailgate* and *tailgatepartyshop.com* provide inspiration. There is even an American Tailgaters Association.

Collecting pre-game paraphernalia is a hobby in itself. From a grill/cooler combo called the Grill ‘N’ Chill, to flags, banners and camper tops, outfitting your sport space is all part of the fun.

From a sandwich before the game to Hi-Def, catered banquets with private chefs, when it’s all about the food there are a myriad of ways diehard fans can do it up. And, the best part is cheering your favorite team to victory on a very happily full stomach.

Monica Issitt is a freelance writer and former North Texan now tailgating in Central Arkansas. Web site references are also found on page 92.



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