Pittsburgh vs. Green Bay: Which has the super food?

Rib-sticking fare as rich in tradition as each city's football team

By Chris Krider - FLORIDA TODAY - February 3, 2011

The teams of two tough towns will meet in Arlington, Texas, on Sunday, and they have a few things in common: Lots of snow, no cheerleaders and a serious love of rib-sticking food.

One can’t think of Wisconsin without thinking of cheeseheads. And Pittsburgh is a steel town, whose workers -- and now tourists -- devour Primanti Bros. ‘extreme sandwich, with loads of meat, fries and coleslaw.

"One thing I like is they're both charter NFL teams," says Ed Patrick, who owns Steagles pub in Melbourne with his son Michael. "I mean, they go back to the very beginning of the NFL.

And if you want to represent them at your Super Bowl party, just remember, they want nothing to do with your dainty salad. Here’s a look at the food traditions that evoke the Pittsburgh Stealers and the Green Bay Packers.

Pittsburgh

It’s hard to name one signature food for Pittsburgh, though the Primanti Bros’ sandwich comes close. Steagles calls its meatier version “Pittsburgh Food,” a sandwich on a roll with a choice of turkey, ham, salami, roast beef, tuna, bacon, chicken and steak, plus toppings that on any other menu would be considered sides.

"It's any type of meat that we have on the menu," Michael Patrick says. "...topped with provolone cheese, tomatoes, french fries and our cole slaw, homemade cole slaw."

Sure, there are a few other flavors Pittsburgh is known for.

"Clark Bars are a Pittsburgh thing," he says. "Pierogies ... Heinz Ketchup, obviously."

And a fried bologna sandwich, which the pub is thinking about adding.

Pierogies -- stuffed dumplings with origins in Europe -- reflect the city’s ethnic heritage. Albrecht Powell’s version on pittsburgh.about.com works sour cream into the dough, which he says is a trick used by many in the ‘burgh.

On the drinking side, Steagles carries Yuengling and Rolling Rock, beers with western Pennsylvania origins, but it can’t get Iron City in time for the Super Bowl.

Steagles is planning a big Super Bowl party, so you can sample its wares while cheering on your team.

"Cheeseheads welcome, if they dare!" Patrick says.

Green Bay

You can’t get Wisconsin cheese curds on the Space Coast without special-ordering them, and maybe you don’t want to.

"They don’t travel well. You need to eat them fresh," says Chef Jimmy McGuinness, who teaches at Keiser University in Melbourne and compiled his expertise on Midwest cuisine by living for 23 years in Chicago.

"Cheese curds: I didn't really like them until I left Wisconsin," says avid cook Oliver Gladowski of Rockledge, formerly of Madison, Wisc. "Then I missed them. But now I love cheese curds. The best are deep-fried."

And they often are described as

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"squeaky," or as he says, "rubbery, oozy good taste."

Cheddaring is the process of making the cheese we call cheddar, McGuinness says, "large pieces of curd compressed, and you get these incredible cheeses."

While cheese obviously is a Wisconsin food, he says, don't overlook river fish.

"If you don't do something fish-related, there'd be a miss. There's almost always a smoked fish dip out there."

He also mentions smoked bacon, duck breast and hams from Nueske's, and sausages from Usinger's.

Which brings us to brats. Bratwurst. Cooking it right is a "religious experience" for some fans, McGuinness says.

"You want to simmer them gently. You don't want them to burst open. And you want that spicy brown mustard," he says. "If you're lucky enough, a pretzel roll is the way to go."

Bratwurstpages.com insists they be simmered in beer or water, usually with chopped onion.

For the Super Bowl, Glodowski says, "we do what's best in Wisconsin. We drink beer."

McGuinness would make mac-and-cheese fritters with fresh brats and a mustard dipping sauce.

Though he's not a football fan, if he's forced to watch the game, he knows what to say: "Hey dere, let's go, Packers!"

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