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## News

# Oviedo Mall to host Food Truck Wars featuring 40 trucks on Saturday at noon

By Whitney Hamrick | March 29, 2012

The generators roar like engines revving up for a race as the delicious smells of gastronomic wonders fill the surrounding air. Stomachs rumble and taste buds salivate in longing for the cuisine that food truck culture is known for. This is Food Truck Wars.



Kleber Sanchez of Oviedo with the food truck that he and his wife, Liliana, have operated for several months.

A total of 40 food trucks will wage a war of flavor as they battle for five top prizes at the Oviedo Mall this Saturday from noon until 6 p.m.

The largest food truck event of its kind, Food Truck Wars is a spring board effort of Liz Otts, president and founder of Food Truck Crazy Inc., who also produces the monthly event at the Oviedo Mall of the same name.

"It was a brainchild of mine," Otts said. "After some research, I was shocked to find that no one was doing what I considered to be 'food truck wars.'"

The project began to form in September 2011. Otts worked with the city of Oviedo and the Oviedo Mall to create an event with live music, a silent auction, and an arsenal of eats to feed an army of foodies.

Oviedo's mayor, Dominic Persampiere helped to create a video advertising the event. The video opens with two men back to back, spatula and whisk in hand. Luis Colon of Louie's Bistro and Larry Long of Country Chuck Wagon explain the virtues of their cuisine and declare a line made famous by the Highlander movies, "There can only be one."

Actually, points out Persampiere, there can be a total of five winners at this event in categories such as the "Chef Off," where six nationally acclaimed judges will pick a winner, "People's Choice Award," "Largest Single Item," "Most Fun Food Truck Appearance" and "Highest Food Sales."

The mayor said he was excited to participate in the video because it is a fun way to promote the event.

"It's going to be a nice, fun event over at the mall," Persampiere said. "I'm excited about the trucks coming in and I welcome them to the city of Oviedo. Some of them will be visiting for the first time and it's exciting to have them in our city."

Some of the trucks representing Central Florida are Curbie's Sidewalk Cafe of Sanford, StrEats 401 of Oviedo, Mi Casita of Orlando and TJ's Seafood Shack of Oviedo.

Tim Shepardson, owner of TJ's Seafood Shack, tests out new recipes via their food truck. The restaurant's physical location looks like a mix between the New England pier from Jaws and a Caribbean hut, which also reflects the diversity of their menu.

"If people like the new recipes we make then we integrate them into the restaurant," Shepardson said. "We want to take the favorite flavors in life and make it more creative, food that's just amazing in your mouth."

Favorites from Southern California, Louisiana, New England, North Carolina and coastal fare from right here in Florida are featured on the menu be it blackened, broiled, grilled or fried to best bring out the natural flavors.

Shepardson makes it his mission to feature as many regional seafood favorites as he can.

"We want to make as many people feel welcome as possible."

Shepardson says their goal is to expose their customers to seafood in creative ways like the BLT po boy with salmon or the mahi mahi rubeen.

"We take a regular product, give it some love and create food people love," Shepardson said.

While the food trucks battle to fill your belly, your ears will be sated with live music playing throughout the event.

Brent Ward of both The Jazzway Express and Risky Business will entertain the crowd with just as much musical variety as there will be food.

The Jazzway Express plays smooth jazz while Risky Business plays '80s music and synthesizer rock. Though it will be a busy day performing, Ward plans to use his free time to experience the food.

"I'm looking forward to seeing such a wide variety of mobile food concepts, all in one place," Ward said. "I plan to visit as many as possible to see the décor of the trucks, and the unique foods they bring to the event."

For more information please go to [foodtruckwars.com](http://foodtruckwars.com).

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