

## BURGERS AND BASEBALL

### Fans can leave diet at home, cheer for Fifth Third's new menu

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People come to a ballpark to count balls and strikes, not calories.

It's probably not surprising, then, that the new menu items unveiled yesterday for this coming season at Fifth Third Field includes burgers oozing with cheese, funnel cake meant to be dipped in chocolate, and hearty stromboli — with nary a fruit salad in sight.

"[People] are coming to get away from their diet during the week," said Craig W. Nelson, general manager of food and beverage for V Gladioux Enterprises at Fifth Third Field. "They want the chili dogs and the Philly steaks and the funnel cakes."

"The first year we had a deli and salad stand, and I think the whole year we sold 300 deli sandwiches," he said. "People are telling us: That's not what we want."

Instead, Mud Hens fans will get jazzed-up versions of classic stadium foods. This year's additions include three burgers: a Muddy Burger with chili, cheese, and onions; a BacHen Burger with bacon and cheese, and a "Bring the Cheddar" Burger with cheddar cheese sauce and grilled onions.

Meat-eaters will be pleased to see the return of two Stanley's Market kielbasas that appeared mid-season last year. Add to that two varieties of stromboli: Philly steak and Italian sausage and pepperoni.

Those looking for finger food will have a few more options too. The stadium will sell pretzel poppers — soft pretzel nuggets filled with cheddar, sweet cream cheese, or pizza sauce — as well as Ballreich's cheese popcorn and a mix of three popcorn flavors. Fans still craving more carbs can try funnel cake fries, strips of funnel cake served with chocolate dipping sauce.

There will be a handful of new Pepsi products too.

Sara Pepitone, editor of the stadium food blog [www.scoreboardgourmet.com](http://www.scoreboardgourmet.com), said she's not surprised by menu choices like those being made at Fifth Third Field. She sees it as part of a larger trend to upgrade traditional foods and appeal to more people.

"Everyone is always trying to extend their fan base. The biggest reason people go to games is actually to watch games, but if you're trying to broaden that then you have to think of other things," she said.

Using lean cuisine to do that? That's old news.

"People tried that in the last couple of years and maybe it worked and maybe it didn't, but I don't think there's excitement about that," said Ms. Pepitone, of New York City. "I think the excitement is about upgrading traditional ballpark fare."

So while some stadiums offer sushi and the new Yankee Stadium even has a small market with fresh fruit, others have gone in the opposite direction — big time. Look no further than the West Michigan Whitecaps, the Single-A Detroit Tigers affiliate near Grand Rapids, Mich., who will offer a 4-pound, 4,800-calorie burger this year. For \$20, it will come complete with five beef patties, five slices of cheese, salsa and corn chips, and nearly a cup of chili, according to news reports.

The Mud Hens, who still have a healthy option like hummus available, are working on their own bigger-is-better behemoth, but exactly what it will look like is a secret for now.

"We don't have all the details worked out at this point. It will definitely be ready for Opening Day" on April 16, said Scott Fuernstein, catering manager at Fifth Third Field.

Other things are getting bigger too — prices. Seventeen menu items, including draft beer and burgers, will be see their price tags go up by a quarter due to increased costs.

For those watching a game from the suite level, there will be other menu changes. Freshly breaded Walleye Bites, first introduced at a Mud Hens holiday party, are a salute to the hockey team that will play in the new downtown arena this fall.

"The response that we got was so good that we felt that we had to make sure that was available," Mr. Fuernstein said.

Fans in the suites also will be able to enjoy an ice cream bar and gourmet condiments like fresh bleu cheese, bacon, and banana peppers. And instead of the gourmet spinach salad available in years past, there will be a Betty Salad.

Which means that if you really, really want them, you'll still be able to get your veggies.

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## NEW 2009 MUD HENS MENU ITEMS



- MUDDY BURGER:** 1/3-pound Black Angus beef burger ..... \$6.50 topped with chili sauce, cheddar cheese, and onions.
- "BRING THE CHEDDAR" BURGER:** 1/3-pound Black Angus ..... \$6.50 beef burger topped with sharp cheddar cheese sauce and grilled onions.
- BACHEN BURGER:** 1/3-pound Black Angus beef burger ..... \$6.50 topped with bacon and American cheese. \$6.50.
- STROMBOLI:** Italian Sausage and Pepperoni ..... \$6 or Philly Steak.
- STANLEY'S MARKET SMOKED POLISH KIELBASA** and ..... \$4  
**STANLEY'S MARKET KIELBASA KLASSIC** ..... \$5 with sauerkraut on a rye bun
- BALLREICH'S CHEESE POPCORN AND TRIPLE MIX POPCORN** ..... \$3.50 (caramel, cheese, and butter)
- FUNNEL CAKE FRIES:** Strips of funnel cake served ..... \$3.50 with chocolate dipping sauce.
- PRETZEL POPPERS:** bite-sized soft pretzel nuggets ..... \$3.75 filled with cheddar, sweet cream cheese, or pizza sauce and mozzarella cheese.
- BEVERAGES:** Crush Orange, Crush Strawberry, ..... \$3  
G2 Gatorade Blueberry Pomegranate, Aquafina FlavorSplash  
Strawberry Kiwi, Aquafina FlavorSplash Lemon.

SOURCE: TOLEDO MUD HENS

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[< previous](#)

[next >](#)