

Greasy, Humdrum Ballpark Food? Think Again.

BY MARGARET RHODES

WE FIRST NOTICED the spicy tuna roll in New York. Then came the fine wine in Chicago, the fresh Dungeness-crabmeat sandwich in San Francisco, the cedar-planked salmon in Seattle. In the past three years, the foodie movement has invaded the most American of venues: the baseball stadium. The average cost of an outing to a Major League Baseball game has nearly doubled since 2000, to roughly \$50, with concession stands easily outpacing merchandise as the No. 2 grab for revenue. Catering companies want to nudge that bill even higher, relentlessly upgrading ballpark menus. Here are four mouthwatering items hitting concession stands in 2011.



LOCAVORE CREPES

Safeco Field, Seattle

"We definitely hear from purists who are like, 'It's a hot-dog-and-beer game, what are you doing?'" says chief design officer John Sergi of the new creperie. To help make the Parisian staple feel authentically local, his team tapped Seattle-based Zoe's Meats for humanely raised, grass-fed beef; Washington's Beecher's Handmade Cheese for cheddar; and nearby farmers for produce.



BELGIAN FRIES

Miller Park, Milwaukee

These aren't your parents' flash-frozen spuds. Potatoes are cut and twice-cooked in front of customers, then served with dipping cups of Asian barbecue sauce and chipotle-lime, roasted-garlic, and Sriracha aiolis. "We're frying them fresh to order to keep them hot and crispy," says chef John DiMartini, who drew inspiration from visits to boutique eateries like New York's Pommes Frites and Milwaukee's Café Hollander.



VIETNAMESE HOT DOGS

Wrigley Field, Chicago

In Chicago, hot dogs are a serious business—fans down 1.5 million every season. To reinvent the wiener, chef Robin Rosenberg looked to the trip he'd spent feasting in Asia. "It's classic American street food face-to-face with classic Vietnamese street food," he says of the banh mi dog, which comes with daikon radish, cucumber, cilantro, sweet chili sauce, red onion, and lime juice. "At our tasting, we knocked it out of the park."



CHORIZO CORN DOGS

Petco Park, San Diego

To appeal to a more regionalized palate, chef Ambarish Lulay didn't have to look far: "San Diego is like 20 minutes from Mexico." His team picked chorizo, a spicy ground-pork sausage, battered, deep-fried, and garnished with cilantro and lime aioli. "The corn dog is a great vehicle to introduce new flavors to baseball, because it's something everybody knows," he says. "To have a surprise inside, it's like an adult corn dog."