

**Suggested Interview Questions**  
***Food Fest! Your Complete Guide to Florida's Food Festivals***  
**by Joan Steinbacher**

**What inspired you to write "Food Fest!"?**

First and foremost, I love food, especially when someone else has prepared it! Sampling unique or different dishes I've not tasted before is a fun discovery, especially when you hit on a winner. In addition to food, I also love being outdoors. So I went to a few nearby food festivals where I could satisfy both cravings simultaneously. Double the fun! And besides my fun, I found they're an easy way to entertain family and friends, without breaking the bank. There's always a wide variety of food and activities and therefore something that everyone in the group will enjoy.

The problem was that I often didn't hear about a festival until it was over. Since I like to plan my weekends ahead and am always looking for new places to go on a road trip, I began searching for websites or books featuring food festivals. I found there was no single resource that had them all. And most lists I did find only mentioned the largest events. The small town festivals can be just as much fun because you get a feel for the community and get to sample their local cuisine.

So, I decided to create "Food Fest!" to fill the need.

**Who would enjoy "Food Fest!"?**

I think every Florida resident and visitor who enjoys travel, outdoor activities, or good food. It's particularly helpful for newcomers to the state because it introduces them to native Florida foods (like swamp cabbage), and the maps and regional breakdown helps them to get oriented to the state. It's also great for RV'ers who travel the state. Many go from campground to campground and "Food Fest!" provides ideas for local events wherever they go. Even longtime Florida residents will discover events in their local area that they never knew existed. And they welcome alternatives to entertain the out-of-town guests we all get—food fests cost less than theme parks and you don't have to grocery shop or cook for finicky Uncle John. What came as a surprise to me is the number of craft and food vendors who have purchased the book. They find it helpful to identify new venues to sell their own products.

**Did you attend all the festivals when writing the book?**

I wish! I try to go to as many events as I can, but my schedule doesn't allow me to travel as much as I'd like to. Eventually I plan to get to them all, but with some of them happening on the same weekend, it's tough to decide which one to attend; a good problem to have, but still a choice that must be made.

### **How did you compile all the information?**

The collection of the basic information for each festival took hours of research, much of it through the internet. Also through emails and phone calls to local Chambers of Commerce and festival organizers—they contributed much of the information themselves.

### **Why do you maintain a companion website for the book?**

Travel guides, especially those that list events, can be a challenge because some of the details can change from year to year. The website is complementary to the book, providing a resource for people to check for updated information. For example, the festival calendar, which changes annually, is online. Also, the website provides a place to list any additional festivals discovered since the book's printing. There are so many great food celebrations in Florida—the website provides a place to include those I inadvertently missed and also to keep the information as fresh as possible.

### **How often do you plan to update the guide?**

My intent is to update it every 2-3 years, depending on need. If it makes sense to update it more often, then I will. That's also part of why I maintain the website, to capture the inevitable changes that happen between editions.

### **What was the biggest surprise you encountered while creating the book?**

First, that there were so many festivals. When I started out researching I didn't think there would be enough to fill a book. And second, how many chili cook-offs are held in Florida. You wouldn't think so because of the heat, but Floridians love chili. And these competitors are serious. They have their own associations and rules for these contests. And I wouldn't try anything sneaky with those folks, you might wind up in a pot of blue ribbon chili yourself!

### **What is your favorite chapter?**

My family would say "Drink, Drank, Drunk," which lists the beer and wine festivals, because they think I coined the time "beer-thirty". But actually, I'd say "Seafood Fiesta". I love seafood and it's not something most people cook very often at home. Seafood fests let me try all different kinds in one day and get my fix. Besides, something about seafood and Florida go together.

**Do you have plans to write similar books for other kinds of festivals?**

Not right now, but I would definitely consider it in the future. Certainly there are plenty of music and art festivals to fill a similar travel guide and coincidentally I also love attending those! But first I'd like to get wider circulation for "Food Fest!" so it becomes more self-sustaining, meaning that festival organizers are proactive in supplying me updated information every year. I think that will come naturally in time once they see the value and the exposure they receive through both the book and website. Really, it's free publicity for them.

**How can people purchase a copy of "Food Fest!"?**

Visit the "Food Fest!" website and click on "How to Order" from the main menu. You can order online or direct from the publisher by mailing an order form to Bee Cliff Press, P.O. Box 8598, Seminole, FL 33775.

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