

## Gourmet Getaways: Fantastic Food Festivals Worth Traveling to in 2018

**Marla Cimini, For Reader's Digest**

If you're a fan of delectable food and prominent chefs, plan your next trip around one of these fantastic (and flavor-filled) culinary events!

### Why you'll want to go



Food festivals offer a true taste of a destination's diversity, showcasing the culinary magic of local chefs, star mixologists, and wine and beer experts. Through a variety of events, such as farm-to-table dinners, exclusive tastings, cooking demos, and other presentations, these gastronomic celebrations are fun, educational, and delicious experiences.

To get started, these are the most popular food festivals to visit in 2018:

## Hawaiian Food and Wine Festival



Courtesy Reid Shimabukuro

**October 6–28, 2018:** Each year, the [Hawaiian Food and Wine Festival](#) showcases more than 100 of the hottest chefs, winemakers and mixologists in the world. The festival, which celebrates Hawaii’s history, people and culture, includes events on three islands, attracting over 25 percent of its guests from the mainland U.S. and abroad. Chef Roy Yamaguchi, who created the Hawaiian Food and Wine Festival with co-founder and chef Alan Wong seven years ago, explained, “When we launched the Hawaii Food & Wine Festival in 2011, food and culinary began to take center stage in Hawaii again. The star power from chefs helped the festival shine a spotlight on Hawaii’s food scene. The impact of this national exposure on Hawaii is evident today in the proliferation of Hawaiian (and poke) themed restaurants on the mainland, as well as when you look at the recent increase in James Beard Award nominees from Hawaii over the last few years.”

## Windy City Smokeout, Chicago, IL



Courtesy Windy City Smokeout

**July 13–15, 2018:** Considered one of the country's premier BBQ, craft beer, and country music festivals, this event is hosted by popular Chicago restaurant, Bub City, and the award-winning mainstay, Joe's Bar. An array of top pit masters from Chicago and across the country come together and serve up an abundance of zesty barbecue favorites, from tri-tip to brisket. More than 45,000 enthusiastic guests attend this [weekend-long annual celebration](#) where hungry attendees have the chance to savor some of the best classic and inventive BBQ and craft beers from around U.S. Music and entertainment is also a big component, as food lovers can groove to some of country music's biggest artists as well as up-and-coming bands. (Side note: If you love BBQ, you need to check out these [31 delicious recipes for the grill](#).)

## Savor Borgata: The Ultimate Food Experience, Atlantic City, NJ



Courtesy Borgata Hotel Casino Spa

**November 2018:** This much-anticipated east coast event sells out every year, as **Savor Borgata** presents an entire action-packed weekend of chef-lead lunches, dinners, demos, and tours held throughout this popular hotel, casino, and spa. Avid food lovers can also attend cooking classes and exclusive kitchen tastings over this flavor-filled weekend. The most recent event featured an impressive roster of culinary heavy-hitters, all whom represent restaurants at the Borgata hotel and casino—including Wolfgang Puck, Michael Symon, Michael Schulson, Bobby Flay, and Geoffrey Zakarian—all personally preparing and serving up their mouthwatering specialties.

## ***Bon Appétit* Presents Feast Portland, Portland, Oregon**



Courtesy Carly Diaz

**September 13-16, 2018:** Known as the flagship food and drink extravaganza of the Pacific Northwest region, **Feast Portland** was founded in 2012 as a four-day festival with over forty diverse and flavor-packed events throughout the city. In recent years, the feast has grown considerably, and now showcases legendary and emerging chefs, culinary professionals of all kinds and industry leaders from across the country. With large-scale tastings, interactive classes, and special dinners, this event is a hot ticket among food aficionados and often sells out months in advance. Dedicated to the community, this organization works to end childhood hunger and support other local charities. (In 2017, net proceeds were donated to Partners for a Hunger-Free Oregon).

## Culinaria Festival, San Antonio, TX



Courtesy San Antonio Cocktail Conference

**May 17–20, 2018:** Currently in its 19th year, the San Antonio's iconic **Culinaria** food and wine festival celebrates the mosaic of culture found in San Antonio's diverse culinary landscape. This festival is a four-day affair presented by San Antonio's most creative chefs who serve up a wide array of mouthwatering delights—from delicate appetizers to hearty main courses and inventive desserts. Set against the backdrop of the Texas Hill Country, the events include a Grand Tasting, and two full days of the famed "Culinaria Village" that is filled with gastronomic programming, such as wine seminars, decadent food demos, brunches, a Texas Taco championship, and the long-time favorite—Burgers, BBQ & Beer.

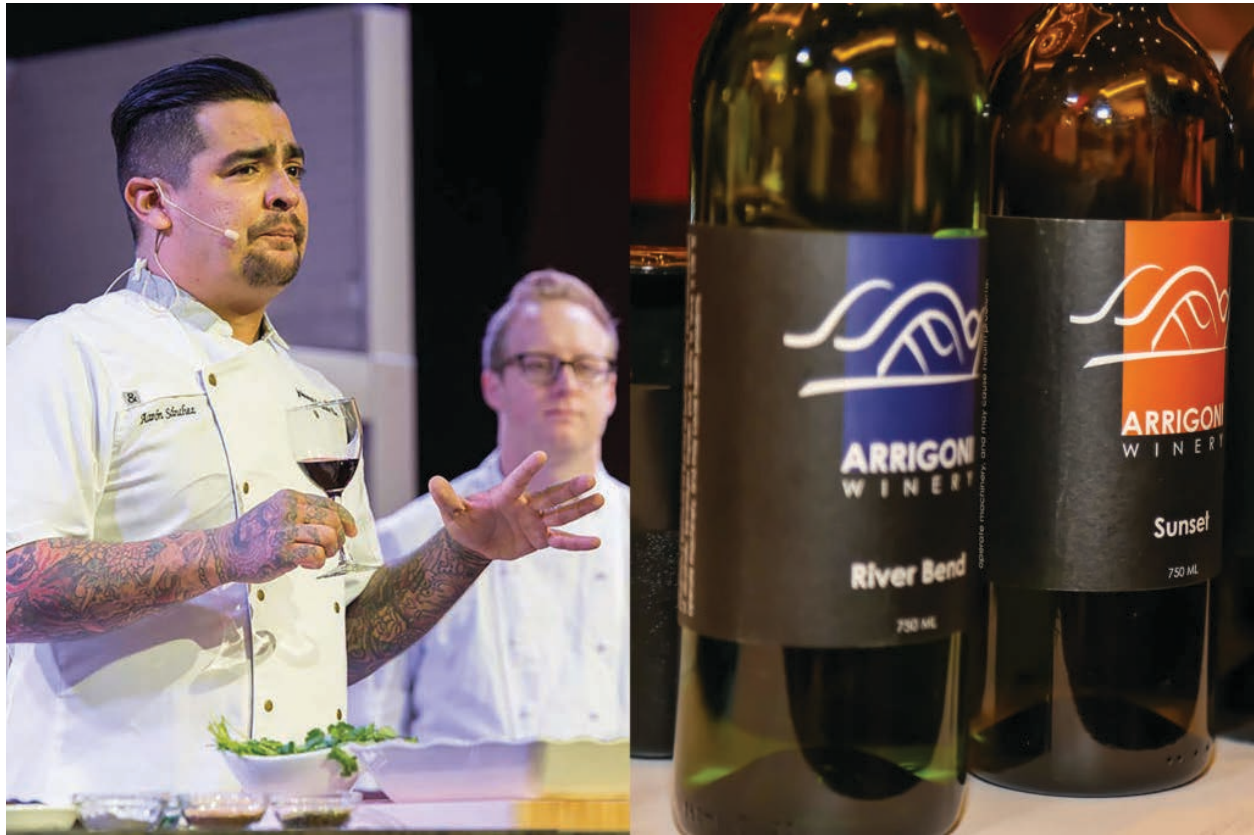
## The Cayman Cookout, Cayman Islands



Courtesy Cayman Islands Department of Tourism

**January 11–14, 2018:** The 10th annual **Cayman Cookout** is a Caribbean weekend-long foodie extravaganza that brings together some of the world's most creative culinary minds and tastemakers, hosted by renown New York-based chef Eric Ripert. Other culinary stars include José Andrés, Anthony Bourdain, Emeril Lagasse, Robert Irvine, and many others. With immersive food and drink gatherings throughout the weekend in the area's famed Seven Mile Beach, attendees have the chance to mingle with chefs and food professionals while tasting new and classic recipes. This four-day event is held at the luxury hotel, the Ritz-Carlton, Grand Cayman and features demonstrations, gourmet tastings, inventive mixology courses, and exclusive dinners. If you can't make it for the festival, don't miss these **off-season travel deals** to make it to the Cayman Islands on the cheap.

## The Sun Wine and Food Festival, Mohegan Sun, Uncasville, CT



Courtesy Mohegan Sun

**January 26–28, 2017:** This annual culinary festival features an extensive roster of celebrity chefs and celebrated wine connoisseurs leading interactive and imaginative cooking demonstrations and robust wine tastings. With a multitude of epicurean events, several festival highlights include: Divine Delights, a decadent wine and dessert pairing extravaganza; The celebrity chef dine-around, which headlines an array of famous chefs serving up signature dishes at live cooking stations; and Bourbon Tasting, a variety of Jim Beam bourbons accompanied by savory dishes from Bear's Smokehouse. As the main event, the Grand Tasting invites attendees to sample over 1,000 wines and beer with specialty tastings. **The festival's** big finale is the Sunday Brunch with Martha Stewart, considered the ultimate feast for fans and food lovers.



## Arizona Taco Festival, Scottsdale, AZ



courtesy Scottsdale Taco Festival

**October 2018:** The mighty taco gets top billing at this annual [Arizona festival](#), as lovers of this Mexican favorite enjoy celebrating the wild, wonderful and tasty ways the taco can be prepared and presented by expert chefs. The taco festival includes a vast array of exciting experiences, including taco competitions; taco tastings; eating contests, games for kids—and even a Chihuahua beauty pageant. The event's tequila expo also offers attendees the extreme opportunity to sip hundreds of premium tequilas, while the festival's margarita tent serves up a number of creative varieties of the popular cocktail. This fun festival also features live music in a variety of diverse genres to suit everyone's tastes—including surf punk, Latin jazz, rock and roll, reggae, and mariachi. To bring these festivals to you, check out these [amazing food festival recipes from around the country](#).

**Marla Cimini** is a writer with a passion for travel, music and culinary adventures (combining all three whenever possible)! She contributes to USA Today and a multitude of major publications worldwide, covering an array of lifestyle and travel topics — ranging from exotic Tahitian getaways; to Japanese food trips and Italian wine trails. She is co-author of the book, *A Century of Hospitality*, a history of US hotels. A frequent flier, she calls the Philly area home. **Catch up with her on Instagram and Twitter: @MarlaCimini**  
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