

Historic Cuisine On the Go: A Campus Archaeology Program and MSU Food Truck Collaboration

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Introduction

In 2017, the MSU Campus Archaeology Program (CAP) used archaeological and archival data to reconstruct historic campus cuisine, and, in collaboration with MSU Culinary Services, orchestrated an 1860s-era luncheon event. To expose a broader audience to historic cuisine, CAP once again worked with Culinary Services in the spring of 2018 to bring some of the favorite “historic” dishes from the luncheon to the students, faculty, and staff across the campus through the MSU ON-THE-GO Food Truck. Consumers were able to learn about MSU’s history by tasting the food that past students and staff would have consumed.

Experiential Outreach

Historic Luncheon Reconstruction

In April of 2017, the Campus Archaeology Program hosted a historic luncheon featuring dishes inspired by foods that had been consumed on campus in the 1860s. Ingredients were derived from archaeological food remains and archival records, while historic cookbooks provided popular recipes of the time. Together with MSU Culinary Services expert chefs, a menu was created and the luncheon planned. Guests from across the campus were invited to the event.



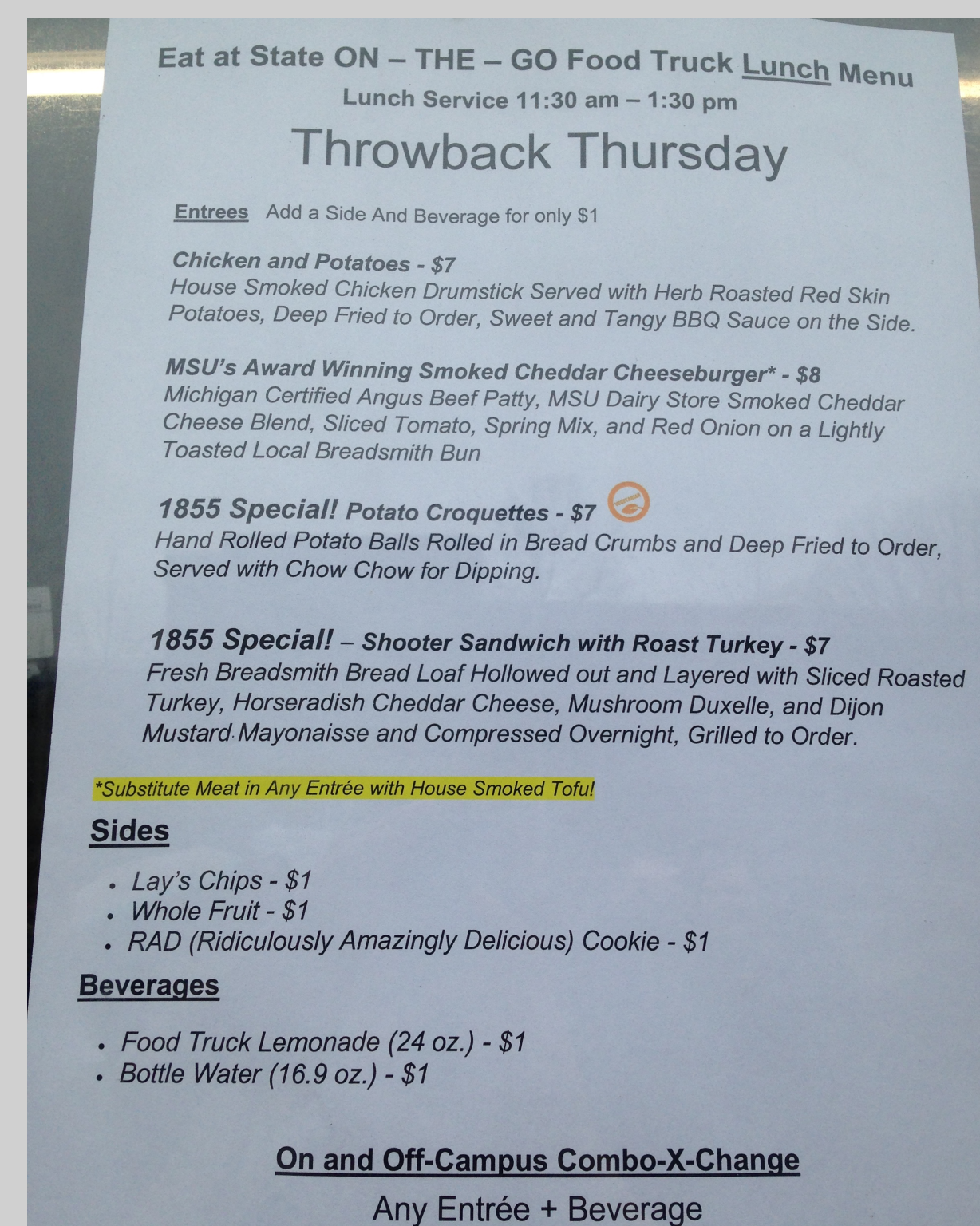
Food Truck Collaboration

Although the historic luncheon garnered a lot of publicity and social media attention, only fewer than 40 people were able to actually taste the historic dishes. Taste can evoke memory and make connections. To this end, we expanded our collaboration with MSU Culinary Services and came up with historically based food dishes that could be easily served on the MSU ON-THE-GO Food Truck.

The Eat at State ON-THE-GO Food Truck is MSU’s very own food truck. The truck operates seasonally and parks at various locations across campus for lunch and late-night dining. Offering rotating, seasonal menus using locally sourced ingredients from the MSU Dairy Store, MSU Student Organic Farm and more, the food truck offers guests a unique dining experience.



Images courtesy of MSU Campus Archaeology Program



Throwback Thursday

Shooter Sandwich

Hollowed bread loaf with pressed
roast turkey



Potato Croquettes

Deep fried mashed potato balls served with
chow-chow relish



Images courtesy of MSU Culinary Services

Flashback Friday

Pressed Beef Epigram

Breaded and fried pressed beef and vegetables



Image courtesy of MSU Culinary Services



Image courtesy of Autumn Painter

Codfish Croquettes

Deep fried codfish and potato
balls



Images courtesy of MSU Culinary Services

Also featured in some of the meals was pork sausage served with chow-chow relish and ginger cake (courtesy of MSU Bakers).

Outreach Events

The historically-inspired dishes (seen to the left) were featured during special “Throwback Thursday” and “Flashback Fridays” lunches at different locales around the MSU campus during March and April of 2018. The events were widely advertised on our social media sites (Twitter, Instagram, Facebook, Snapchat, and the CAP blog).

Recipes featured included a few that were adapted directly from the historic luncheon, including potato croquettes, chow-chow relish, and codfish balls. Additionally, the Culinary Services chefs created some new twists on historic eats, such as the roast turkey “shooter” sandwich (a modern play on pressed meat popular in the 19th century), a pressed beef epigram (a breaded and fried morsel of deliciousness), and pork sausage sandwich with chow-chow relish. The MSU Bakers also made ginger cake, one of the most popular dishes at the original luncheon, which proved quite popular at the food truck, too.



Image courtesy of MSU Campus Archaeology Program

Results



Image courtesy of MSU Campus Archaeology Program

This collaboration was a huge success. The favorite food item was the potato croquettes, which sold out within a half hour each time! At each event, we provided flyers about the Campus Archaeology Program for patrons to learn more about the program. It was difficult to determine how many people purchased food at these events as a direct result of our marketing, but the historically-based offerings were popular nonetheless.

Conclusion & Future Directions

We will be continuing our partnership with MSU Culinary Services this fall, expanding the variety of historically-based menu items and switching the location from the food truck to one of the major dining spaces on MSU’s campus. These changes will be more high-profile and allow for more exposure to the collaboration and the project, as well as allow for opportunities for growth and improvement of creative outreach endeavors. By continuing this project, we hope to reach a broader audience of MSU students, faculty, staff, and visitors.

Once historic featured meals are established at 1855 Place, we plan to conduct formal surveys for students to evaluate the effectiveness of our outreach efforts and record student reactions to the dishes and the Campus Archaeology Program

Acknowledgements

This project would not have been possible without the MSU Culinary Services, MSU Bakers, MSU University Archives and Historical Collections, MSU Library Special Collections, Dr. Lynne Goldstein, and Lisa Bright.