

KEN OSBURN

The 35th annual Belk Fall for Greenville kicks off Thursday evening and runs through Sunday. Shown is a previous Fall for Greenville event.

Fall for Greenville mixes old and new for weekend

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Can you smell it? Fall for Greenville is almost here. And even if you can't yet taste it, the delicious aroma of local food is already in the air.

When else during the year can you taste mussels, shrimp and grits, lamb sliders, tacos, bacon sriracha bacon mac and cheese, tikka masala and funnel cakes and contribute to a good cause, too?

The 35th annual Belk Fall for Greenville kicks off Thursday and runs through Sunday, bringing 39 restaurants, four food trucks, 25 craft beer vendors, over 200 menu items and 75 musical acts with it.

This year, proceeds will go to benefit 11 local charities ranging from the Ronald McDonald House to Surgeons for Sight.

"This is one of the premier culinary festivals in the Southeast, showcasing the best local cuisines and entertainment talent," said Fall for Greenville board chair, Lindsey Davis.

The festival now attracts over 150,000 people from across the Upstate, and the region, Davis said.

Each year brings something just little bit new to the award-winning festival (it's been selected as a one of the Southeast Tourism Society's Top 20 events for six consecutive years), and this year it is food trucks. There will be four food trucks participating in the festival: The Chuck Truck, Highway 301, Robino's and Meat'n in the Middle, that will be housed on Food Truck Row, in Coffee Street.

In addition, the food vendors span a range from Indian to Jamaican, Mediterranean to Japanese and barbecue to pizza and southern to cupcakes.

They include FFG veterans like Coffee Underground, Larkin's on the River and Soby's New South Cuisine, and new kids on the block like The Bottle Cap Group, which owns Green Room Restaurant & Bar, SIP Whiskey & Wine, Brazwells Premium Pub and Ink N Ivy, and Sidewall Pizza Company.

Instead of their pizza, Sidewall will use the festival to showcase some of the restaurant's signature ice cream. The booth will offer four ice cream sandwiches including the ever novel, s'mores, a union of toasted marshmallow ice cream, graham crackers and chocolate ganache.

"We felt like it's an opportunity to participate in something really exciting that's happening in Greenville," Frant said with.

On the beer front, the craft beer experience includes 25 craft breweries, and special for the 35th year, local brewery, Brewery 85, has created a signature FFG Festbier.

In addition to food, this year's festival will feature a wealth of musical talent. For the second year in a row, the fun will kick off Thursday with a free concert at the Peace Center stage. Mark Webb will perform at 7 p.m. and the Turnpike Troubadours will finish out the evening with a show from 8:30 to 10 p.m. Another new development on the music front is the Aloft Acoustic

See FALL, Page 9A

Fall

Continued from Page 3A

Stage, which will be set up outside the hotel and next to the WXYZ beer tent, on Laurens Street.

And of course, no Fall for Greenville would be complete without a little food-related competition. This year, includes the US Foods Silver Spoon and Sugary Spoon Awards, and local culinary talent will square off for the popular Bartenders' Mix-Off on Sunday and various culinary demonstrations throughout the weekend.

As for parking, city lots will be open, and the lot next to Erwin Penland is also now open as well.

But those worried about getting caught in the fray have a few other options this year. Greenlink will offer a free shuttle service from County Square that will drop festivalgoers at the Augusta Street and Main Street intersection. And Bikeville will also sponsor a special Bike valet from 11 a.m. to 5 p.m. on Saturday and Sunday. The valet will be located on the Swamp Rabbit Trail under Main Street Bridge.

Taste tickets are on sale now and can be pre-purchased online through Oct. 12, or at Borderlands Comics and Games or at Dapper Ink through Oct. 14.