

Away-field advantage

Discover Miller Park's best eats, seats and tailgating tricks. By **Marissa Conrad**

Say what you will about **Miller Park's** (*1 Brewers Way, milwaukee.brewers.mlb.com*) retractable roof (real fans weather bad weather, a Chicago pal once told me)—it ensures the Milwaukee Brewers can always deliver. Even through the 45mph winds tormenting Milwaukee the Sunday afternoon I catch a Brewers/Pirates game with local Brew Crew superfan Chris Gervenak.

Gervenak, 25, is legendary among friends for re-creating the “bacon explosion” for tailgates: A viral recipe in 2009, it’s a weave of bacon wrapped around a sausage log filled with crumbled bacon. His more standard-issue snacks, on deck today, are Johnsonville brats, boiled the night before in a broth of beer, bacon and onions, and heated on the grill. We join a

bevy of fans in their twenties in the Molitor Lot (*Yount Dr and Story Pkwy*), where I learn Milwaukee’s tailgate staples: forties of Miller High Life, cornhole and a game Gervenak calls “testicle toss”: throw two balls connected by a stretchy band, trying to get the contraption to wrap around a ladder rung. But the wind is miserable, so we head inside.

For only \$8–\$20 a ticket, the bleachers, set smack behind the outfield, offer a surprisingly good view. Bring a towel in case you’re in the Kalahari Splash Zone, where mascot Bernie Brewer douses fans with water after every home run.



MEET THE EXPERT
Chris Gervenak, lifelong Brewers fan and tailgate organizer

Road Trips: Milwaukee



The sausage races at a Brewers game

The crowd roars as Brewers left-fielder Ryan Braun hits a triple. I’m more interested in tripling down on chorizo dogs, sold at almost every concession stand. But Gervenak insists

I hit Third Base Bar, outside of section 129, to try the park’s latest offering: French-Canadian specialty *poutine*, a heart-stopping basket of fries and cheese curds doused in beef gravy. My final sausage fix comes during the sixth inning, when mascots in chorizo, hot-dog, bratwurst, Polish- and Italian-sausage costumes race around the bases. As I watch their goofy jogs (Italian for the win! And ultimately the Brewers, too, 9–6), I learn the Cubs game got called off due to “inclement weather.” Score one for the roof.

Aim for the pie

One writer takes on the crème de la crème of Milwaukee food challenges: a 12-pound pizza with a \$500 prize. By **Marissa Conrad**
Photographs by **Darren Hauck**



McSchmurtis, left, and Conrad chow down on a 12-pound pie at Pizza Shuttle.

MEET THE EXPERT
Curtis McSchmurtis, Wisconsin State Fair cream puff-eating champ and radio host



How many napkins does it take to blot the grease off a 12-pound pizza? I’m about to find out at Milwaukee’s **Pizza Shuttle** (*1827 N Farwell Ave, 414-289-9993*), where the pie, at a 28-inch diameter, barely fits on a table for four. It’s topped with pepperoni and sausage—house rules for the Largest Wisconsin Pizza contest (advance reservations required, \$50), which dares teams of two to finish the monster in 45 minutes, dangling the carrot of a \$500 prize and sweet, sweet bragging rights. I’m teamed with Curtis McSchmurtis (a stage name he carries into his

real life), a cream puff-eating champion and cohost of quippy morning radio show *Connie and Curtis*.

Two minutes in, I’m confident we—the 112-pound writer and the radio jockey who had two minutes ago confided that the cream-puff contest was about speed, not quantity—have this thing locked up. Our strategy: Fold each slice to maximize intake over time. The pizza is terrific, straddling the line between thin-crust and deep-dish. The fact that each doughy triangle is wider than my spread-out

hand? Easy to ignore, especially when my friends unveil a five-foot sign with my face on it: **MARISSA VS. FOOD. EAT LIKE A CHAMPION TODAY!**

And I do, for about 25 minutes. That’s when our videographer points out that a family of 20 has ordered the same pizza. *Twenty*, he emphasizes. “Stop drinking water!” Curtis admonishes me. “I can’t swallow!” I shriek, my face covered in sauce and grease dripping down my forearm. With children gaping, I start my third slice. Curtis plows into a three-piece stack.

But, like the dozens of wanna-be pizza conquistadors before us (in four years, only two teams have finished), victory is out of reach. With nine minutes and a third of the pie left, we throw in the grease-soaked napkin to a mixture of embarrassment and relief. Our consolation prize? An 18-hour stomachache—and two scoops of frozen custard, which we happily accept. We are in Milwaukee, after all.

PIZZA PARTY!

See video of Conrad and McSchmurtis battling the mega pie at timeoutchicago.com/features.

JULY 29, 30

Riverwest 24, a 24-hour solo, tandem and team bike race with checkpoints throughout Riverwest (riverwest24.com)