

# Festival to hail Utah's queer food scene as it becomes 'more visible'

Queer Food Festival will feature 20 LGBTQ+ and ally-owned food vendors.

By KOLBIE PETERSON

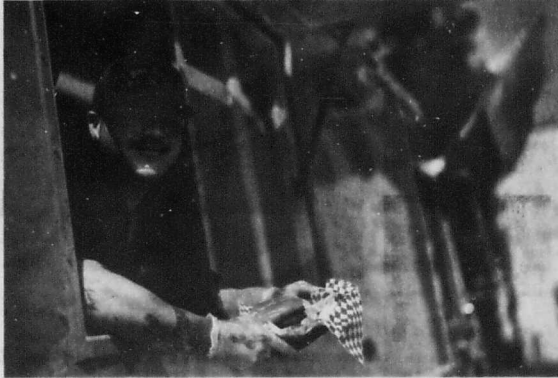
The Salt Lake Tribune

The first Queer Food Festival, back when it was known as the Queer Food Festival, happened in 2019. The second festival was scheduled for March 28, 2020, which ended up being the day after Salt Lake City Mayor Erin Mendenhall issued a mandatory shelter-at-home order for city residents because of COVID-19.

Needless to say, that event was postponed. When the local-centric festival was able to return, it was an opportunity to "break bread together and not worry, just celebrate and think about abundance," said organizer Liz Pitts, president and CEO of the Utah LGBTQ+ Chamber of Commerce.

This year's Queer Food Festival, as the event is now known, will feature 20 LGBTQ+ and ally-owned Utah food vendors. It will be held Friday from 5:30 to 9 p.m. at Mountain West Cider, at 425 N. 400 West in Salt Lake City's Marmalade neighborhood.

Festival attendees will get what Pitts calls a "mini taste of Salt Lake," or samples of food from all 20 vendors, plus a complimentary specialty cocktail as well as entertainment. Tickets to the 21+ event — which must be purchased in advance, as no tickets will be available at the door — are \$35 for chamber members and \$45 for non-members. Discounted tickets for \$20 are available to anyone who needs them, no questions asked. Tickets will be available until they sell out, or until 12:01 a.m. Friday.



Jordan Starks — a trans man who operates his burger truck, Bad Boy Burger Co. — prepares one of his signature mushroom burgers in Layton on April 30.

## SLC gets a queer food festival

The first Queer Food Festival was the idea of Moudi Sheity, a former owner of Mediterranean restaurant Laziz Kitchen. Back in 2019, Laziz Kitchen was being featured in Jerry, a Brooklyn-based print-only queer food journal, and Sheity wanted to do an event in Utah around the article, said Pitts, who was with the Utah Pride Center at the time.

The event was "wonderful and fun," Pitts said, and the proceeds benefited the Utah Pride Center.

In 2021, Pitts became the president of the Utah LGBTQ+ Chamber of Commerce, and they went back to Sheity and told him

the chamber wanted to continue the event "because we're promoting and supporting our local, queer and allied businesses," they said.

With Sheity's blessing, the event, with the new name of Queer Food Festival, returned in 2022.

Since then, the annual festival "has grown in size and in scope, as we really refined that this is an event intended to bring together community, celebrate [and] have fun," Pitts said.

This year, about half of the proceeds of the event (after the food vendors and entertainers are compensated) will go to the chamber and its nonprofit Safe Zone Utah, which offers free LGBTQ+ inclusivity trainings to

small businesses and nonprofit organizations.

## 'Loud, proud and out and about'

Jordan Starks has been a vendor at the Queer Food Festival before, running his parents' food truck, Fry Me to the Moon. But he said it had always been his dream to participate with his own food truck, at this event and others.

He's been running food trucks since he was 22, he said, but this year, at age 30, he struck out on his own and started Bad Boy Burger Co., a new vendor at the festival this year.

Starks, who transitioned four years ago, said he "wanted to use

this truck as an opportunity to get involved with the community and reach out to a different group of people, more relatable to me. And it's been going really well, actually. So it's been very cool."

He said he typically donates a portion of his funds every week to a worthy cause; in April he raised money to support a friend in their transition process. He also has a goal of starting an LGBTQ+ resource center in Davis County, where he lives.

Using his culinary school experience, Starks cooks up such gourmet burgers as The Smooth Talker, which is a 10-pound burger served on a locally baked brioche bun and topped with melted Swiss cheese, caramelized onions, mushrooms and garlic aioli. He also offers vegan and gluten-free options.

Pitts said Utah's queer food scene is growing and becoming "more visible," and Starks is part of that movement.

"I want to show people like, 'Hey, we could do this. We're here. We could be loud, proud and out and about,'" he said.

Here is a complete list of the rest of the festival's vendors:

- Suck It Up, Buttercup!
- Sweet Hazel Co.
- Avenue Proper
- Red Rock Brewery
- Sugar House Coffee
- Coffee Garden
- Empanadas 801
- Flanker Kitchen + Sporting Club
- Kahve Cafe
- Xiao Bao Bao
- Cuisine Unlimited
- Laziz Kitchen
- LUX Catering & Events
- Beehive Cheese
- Fillings & Emulsions
- La Lupe
- Skillet
- Sushi Squad
- The Locker Room

## Sewing artists

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"When I first started, I felt like there wasn't anyone that looked like me in the sewing world," Knoll said. "But then I started an Instagram, and I started finding all these people that were my age with a similar style."

The quilted jacket now hangs on a mannequin in Knoll's sunny sewing room in her Salt Lake City home — from where she works remotely examining wildlife disease data for the Navajo Nation.

Knoll is one of many in the Salt Lake area's young "sewists."

Sewists, a portmanteau of artist and sewer, are a diverse group. They are doctors, architects, climbers and trail runners. They see sewing as a creative outlet and opportunity to bypass the environmental waste of the fashion industry. Instead of trying to fit into a poorly sized garment, sewers can make clothes that are perfectly tailored to their own bodies.

"Sewing has really had new life, brought to it by a bunch of younger people sewing," said Delaney Dangerfield, the 28-year-old owner of the Sugar House sewing store Sewcity. "And I really feel like a lot of that is the result of so much online community building."

## Bringing sewers together

Dangerfield decided to open Sewcity in October 2020 to create the kind of store she dreamed of shopping in. Today, the store is filled with technical fabrics for making backpacks and other outdoor gear, colorful swimsuit materials and more traditional linens.



Natural light pours into the home sewing studio where Lella Knoll — a veterinarian for Navajo Nation and a sewing influencer — works on her projects.

She offers sewing classes, and each February throws a fundraising party called "Frocktals" featuring a fashion show of self-made garments.

There are many reasons why many of her customers are drawn to sewing, Dangerfield said. "A lot of clothes off the rack are not going to fit most people," Dangerfield said, "and it's also very cheaply made. And that's before you even start to talk about the ethics and sustainability side of it."

In "Me Made May," Dangerfield will host a kick-off party for the monthlong challenge to only wear garments that were

made by the sewers.

## Outdoors and crafting combine

Within that niche of young people designing and sewing their own garments, Knoll has found an even more specialized group in Salt Lake City: Sewers who are avid climbers.

Knoll also climbs outside and in the gym, and designed her own climbing pants with extra room and fabric reinforcements around the knee. She is working on her first pattern for the pants — which she plans to sell.

"I wanted to offer something that not everyone else is offering," she explained.

There are many sewers in the Salt Lake area making their own gear. Dangerfield said. People make backpacks, hiking clothes and bike packing bags. Dangerfield started with a trail running bag, and her store's section of technical fabrics is growing.

"It's kind of fun to feel like your own R&D department," Dangerfield said.

## A transformed closet

The ability to customize clothes to her own measurements, choose her own fabrics and modify designs has turned a casual hobby of altering ready-made items into a full-fledged passion for Knoll.

At her local coffee shop, a barista recognized her and complimented the Carhartt workwear jacket she wore and had recently posted about.

In the home that she shares with her partner, two dogs and two cats, Knoll has managed to build a life full of all her different interests — from animals to climbing to pattern creation.

She has sewn nearly every item in her closet — which is filled with flowing dresses, coats, swimsuits and even handmade sandals. A spacious room adjacent to the living room serves as her sewing studio and home office. Dozens of stacks of neatly folded fabrics line one wall. Her two huge dogs — Sug and Nico — like to lay in the sun while she stands at a large table in the center of the room cutting and measuring fabrics.

She no longer has to follow pattern instructions to a T.

On a recent road trip, Knoll stopped into a Target store and tried on a few items and realized they "made me feel sad" because they fit so poorly.

"You're not supposed to fit into clothes," Knoll said, "clothes are meant to fit you."

## Bridge knowledge builds on lessons

Tom Bodett, an author, voice actor and radio host, said, "In school, you're taught a lesson and then given a test. In life, you're given a test that teaches you a lesson."

In bridge, you are given tests that you might pass by remembering previous lessons. But if you fail a test, hopefully you will remember the lesson for next time.

This deal occurred during one of my playing lessons. East opened two diamonds, a

textbook weak two. South overcalled three clubs, thinking that to pass with 13 points was wimpy. Then, though, when North advanced with three spades, that was forcing and painted South into a worse corner. (It is anti-percentage to be able to land on a pinhead in these crowded auctions. Advancer must be allowed to investigate the right game without having to leap around.)

South had no good bid. Eventually, he gambled on three no-trump despite his inflexible,

weak diamond stopper. North also took his time, but finally passed. (Note that four spades should go down, declarer losing two diamonds and two spades.)

The defense to three no-trump is also textbook. West leads the diamond jack (higher of a doubleton) and East ducks the trick, signaling encouragement with his right. Then South has no chance. But note that if East takes the first trick, the contract can be made. The curious may work it out.

## BRIDGE

Phillip Alder

In no-trump, whether you are declarer or a defender, if you are trying to establish a suit in which the opponents have one winner, make them take that winner as quickly as possible.

		North 45-44-24	
		♦ A Q J 10 8 5	
		♥ K 5 4	
		♠ 10 4	
		♣ 10 2	
West		East	
♠ K 8 4 3		♠ 9 7	
♥ Q J 1 2		♥ A K 8 5 3 2	
♦ 2 7		♦ J 2 5 3	
♣ Q 9			
		South	
		♠ A 10 5 4	
		♥ Q 8 6	
		♦ A K 7 6 4	
		♣ A 7 6 5	
Dealer: East			
Vulnerable: Neither			
South	West	North	East
2♣	Pass	Pass	2♠
2NT	Pass	Pass	Pass
Opening lead: ♠ J			