

The More You NOLA: Melting pot

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The Brass-A-Holics keep the party going at a past Treme Creole Gumbo Festival. (Photo from Eric Simon and the New Orleans Jazz & Heritage Foundation)

Gumbo is more than a metaphor for New Orleans' melting pot nature. Each bowl brims with a powerful local elixir capable of instantly bringing people together. On Saturday (Nov. 14) and Sunday (Nov. 15), guests can celebrate the city's signature

dish while dancing to brass band beats at the eighth annual [Treme Creole Gumbo Festival](#) taking place at Louis Armstrong Park (701 N. Rampart St.).

The free festival is produced by the New Orleans Jazz & Heritage Foundation, which creates yearlong educational programs specializing in cultural enrichment.

The festival was one of four events started by the nonprofit organization after Hurricane Katrina to generate jobs for local musicians.

“After Katrina, we wanted to have a bigger impact. We wanted to create as many new employment opportunities for musicians as possible ? to help bring them home,” says Scott Aiges, the foundation's director of programs.

“Over the years, we've gone in the direction of making the event a celebration of brass bands, a tradition unique to New Orleans,” Aiges says.

“This year we've added a lot of old-line brass bands, such as the Eureka, Onward, Hurricane and Fairview Baptist Church bands. We wanted to showcase them alongside popular younger bands,” says Aiges.

The lineup's contemporary acts, including the [Rebirth Brass Band](#) and a special collaboration between [Shamarr Allen](#) and DJ Chicken, will get crowds moving.

In between sets, food vendors will serve up original gumbo creations ? ranging from J's Seafood Dock's classic Creole gumbo (loaded with sausage, chicken and Louisiana blue crab) to the modern smoked tofu and portobello mushroom vegan gumbo offered by Brocato's Poboy's & Catering.

“A lot of [vegans] now count on us for providing the only place where they can enjoy gumbo,” says Aiges.

Patrons can also browse the handmade goods displayed at the arts market or take the little ones to the kids' activities center.

“Put together a bunch of good gumbo and great music, and it's hard not to have a good time,” says Aiges.