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Guy Fieri brings Flavortown to the Super Bowl at the Players Tailgate



The scene outside of SoFi Stadium at the Players Tailgate, which Guy Fieri catered.

(Brian van der Brug/Los Angeles Times)

BY [KENAN DRAUGHORNE](#)

The Super Bowl may have been the biggest football game of the year, but right next door a culinary celebration for the ages took place. After a year off because of the COVID-19 pandemic, the Players Tailgate stepped up its game this time around with multiple open bars and celebrity chefs like Aaron May and Rocco Whalen serving up a storm outside the Hollywood Park Casino adjacent to SoFi Stadium.

The event featured a smorgasbord of dishes both gourmet and inventive — everything from Sonoran-style octopus to French fry ice cream. ESPN commentator Sage Steele emceed the event, bringing NFL stars like Joe Haden and Deebo Samuel onto the stage to share some words for the crowd.

Fieri showed up fashionably late to his own party, but his electric presence was felt as soon as he stepped on stage. Hands from the crowd shot into the air as he tossed out his “Knuckle Sandwich” cigars, and Fieri had more than enough to pass around.

“I just gave some to about five [Bengals] fans, they said they’re friends with Joe Burrow and they’re going to give him one after the game,” he said, nodding to the quarterback who’s become [synonymous with cigar celebrations](#).

Bengals fans were out in full force at the tailgate, their cheers slightly outpacing those of Rams fans during the DJ’s call and response. Some fans bought their Super Bowl tickets as soon as they knew the Bengals would be there, but for others, it was a truly last-minute decision.

“I left my family on the beach in Naples, Fla., boarded a plane last night and got in at 10 p.m.,” Cincinnati resident Julie Wirtz said. “I stay ‘til tomorrow morning when I board the plane hungover.”

Fieri rides for the Las Vegas Raiders, and even though his team wasn’t there, he was just excited to see a good game. Still, he couldn’t help pointing to next year, and he’s booking the silver and black to hoist the Lombardi trophy in 2023.

“We just need consistency,” he said. “We had a couple of things happen. But we have a great team, and a lot of great players. I was sorry to see us leave Oakland, but I went to college in Vegas, so it’s a win-win.”

Fieri barely had a moment to breathe during the event. When he wasn’t on the mic, he was backstage taking photos with fans, stopping by his Guy Fieri Foundation tent, or pouring glasses of his Santo Tequila Reposado for guests.

He took a second to let out an exasperated sigh during a momentary break from the action. Still, he wouldn’t trade all the commotion for anything.

“I get to do what I love doing, and be around people who are also food-centric,” he said. “A common denominator of people is food, and I get to be the mayor of Flavortown?”