

Dish Omaha – May 28th, 2025

Jeff: Time now for Dish Omaha featuring KVNO's resident foodie, Diane Watson. Good morning, Diane.

Diane: Good morning, Jeff. Happy summer. Summer is here, and you know how I know? Because the very first summer food festivals are coming up.

Jeff: Ahhhh.

Diane: That means summer to me. So, let's talk a little preview of what we've got going on. But first, I want to ask you, do you have a great food festival memory?

Jeff: I have sort of a general memory of any time I have food outside at a festival, there's something about smelling the food, whether it's sausage or a slice of pizza, but really it's the sausage, honestly.

Diane: I love that.

Jeff: There's something about eating it out of that little paper cardboard container.

Diane: Yes! Oh, I love it. And having the fresh air around you. Oh, I love that idea. Now I want a sausage. We've got some coming up. You know, food festivals started back as agricultural fairs back in the early 1800s, and then they became harvest festivals, celebrating the season and what was coming to harvest. And then specialty festivals really gained ground in the 70s and 80s. I don't know if you've ever been to the Gilroy Garlic Festival in California.

Jeff: Oh, I've heard of it. It's garlic on everything.

Diane: All things garlic, and it's amazing. And then, of course, the Maine Lobster Festival is like 70 years old. And then the rise of food media really created ethnic and cultural festivals, and then it just became a great rite of passage for summer. The Taste of Omaha will be kicking off on May 30th, runs Friday to Sunday, Friday evening to Sunday evening at the Heartland of America Park. This is the 28th annual Taste of Omaha.

Jeff: Wow.

Diane: It was inspired by the Taste of Chicago, which was started in 1980. That's one of the country's largest food festivals, and it just has such incredible diversity of food available.

Jeff: Now I want a Chicago hot dog.

Diane: That's a great festival if you've never been. I always say it's like you and 200,000 of your closest friends. So, at Taste of Omaha, there will be 50 plus vendors. There's also a lot to do. There are two stages. One has music, one has dancing. The main stage will have over 13 bands over the weekend.

Jeff: So, I do have a memory from Taste of Omaha.

Diane: Oh, bring it.

Jeff: My band, Prairie Cats, played there several times.

Diane: I remember Prairie Cats.

Jeff: And this is when it was on the riverfront with the water in front of you on the stage.

Diane: Right.

Jeff: And Mark Farner from Grand Funk Railroad was playing the next night.

Diane: Ooooooh.

Jeff: And we're playing, and there he is in a gondola going by.

Diane: Oh my gosh, can't make that up.

Jeff: And we actually had one Grand Funk cover song that we turned into a swing song. So, we rolled it out.

Diane: Oh, you couldn't have planned that any better. That's amazing. And I bet you had sausage there too.

Jeff: I can guarantee that I did.

Diane: There's also a dancing stage. There will be 12 different dancing performances of all kinds of styles. So, it's something cool to check out. It's very family friendly. Some of the things I looked forward to having, there's going to be Mexican ice cream, all kinds of kebabs, barbecue, Cuban, Indian, Thai, and Filipino food. So, I'm super excited. And lots and lots of sweets because I know you have a sweet tooth. Summerfest at River's Edge is June 6th. That's Friday from 6 to 10. That's the Tom Hannafin River's Edge Park over the pedestrian bridge in Council Bluffs. They've got 10 plus food trucks serving tacos, barbecue, burgers, dogs, Chinese. There's a drone show at 9:30 PM.

Jeff: A drone show? Like a sky?

Diane: Yeah. Sounds pretty cool. There'll be music. There's a foam party with giant bubbles. The Place You Love Pace will have a live interactive art lab where you can make some art and a pop-up farmer's market that night. There's another festival June 7th. That's Saturday from 3 to 11 called the Midwest Tacos and Tequila.

Jeff: What? I never heard about this.

Diane: I know. I think it's only the second year. It's going to be at Falconwood Park in Bellevue. It is a ticketed event. There will be music, art, tacos, and tequila, of course, a mechanical bowl, if you feel like taking a ride there.

Jeff: Probably want to do the ride before you eat the tacos or the tequila. I'm just saying.

Diane: Right. Not a bad idea. There's a taco eating contest. There'll be 15 plus food trucks, traditional tacos, as well as the unusual. There's also another taco and tequila festival in September at the Heartland of America Park. One more festival I just want to bring up real quick is the Aspen Food and Wine Classic. That's in Aspen, Colorado. Next month, I will be attending to cover for KVNO Radio. More to come on that. That will be mid-June. It's the premier food festival, 5,000 attendees.

Jeff: Wait, can you take us all with you?

Diane: I just can only take me.

Jeff: Okay. You'll report back.

Diane: I'll bring it back to you.

Jeff: Yeah, good. Okay. Diane Watson, thanks so very much for this edition of Dish.

Diane: Thank you.