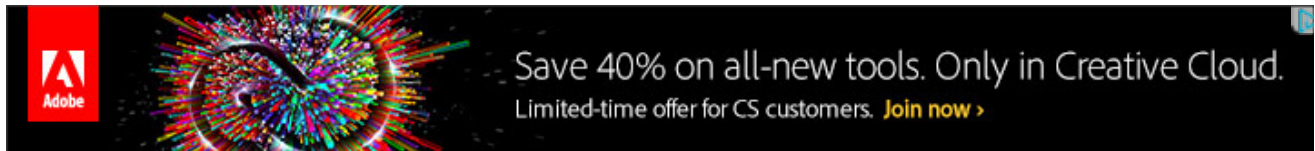


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## The Taste of Randolph: Delicious Food, Good Music, Fun Times

There is something that caters to everyone's taste at the [Taste of Randolph](#). Having expanded to three sections of the street, The Taste of Randolph has clothing tents, food, taste tests, an NBA center, and live bands to help Chicagoans unwind in the summer breeze.

The Taste of Randolph was June 14-16, 2013, and started at the 900 block of Randolph Street. There was plenty of food, products, music and people to make for a nice neighborhood festival. Randolph consisted of three narrow streets, each with different attractions and tents to harbor anyone's interest.





## The Food

Coming in from the south entrance, the taste had a music stage when I immediately walked in. So I was immersed in music and the smell of BBQ from the start. Walking along, I saw many food, promotional and taste test tents on my right and the alley of trees on my left.

Not only was there BBQ sliders and wings, but there were steak tacos, Shish Kabobs, Falafel, jalapeno cheddar brats, risotto balls, smoothies and corn on the cob, all from local eateries. If the smell wasn't enticing enough, I could see people cooking the food right in front of me. Smoke from the grills enveloping in my lungs.

Everything was moderately priced. The most expensive thing was a shish kabob meal and that was only \$9. Most tents you could either get a taste of the food for a few bucks or undertake a larger size for a few more dollars. The taste prices were between \$2-4 and the "meal" sizes were from \$6-9.

I tried a pulled chicken sandwich from [Porkchop](#). It was a moderate size and a good sampling of BBQ poultry. I also tried a lychee lemonade from [Belly Q](#). I never tried lychee before, let alone in a lemonade and I was hooked. It gave the lemonade a tangy taste and managed to be sweeter and not sour. It was the perfect accessory for the hot, sunny day.

A couple who attended the taste said they have been going for years and that there are more restaurants than in the past. They said the triple wide street and ATM machines are new for this year and that the booths used to take tickets instead of cash or credit card.

## The Atmosphere

Walking down the street further, I saw a dance floor in the middle of the event. It played popular songs that swelled throughout the people standing at tables and walking around the nearby alcohol tents. One stocked with beer and Strongbow cider, the other with different flavors of iced sangria.

Glancing down the street, I could see the other stage, which was slightly bigger than the first stage. People were standing by this stage as well, talking with friends, holding their cider or sangria. To the right of the stage was the NBA Center. With two basketball courts, a DJ booth and an allstar foot

comparison display, this was a good place for kids and families to enjoy themselves. There were basketball challenges and people just having fun. At the foot comparison, I stepped on the shoe replica of LeBron James and saw that my feet looked tiny in comparison to his size 16.

Going across from the stage toward the other long street were tents with clothing, beauty products, knickknacks and art. There was even a Bare Minerals makeup center giving people makeovers. Walking back north towards the beginning of the taste but on the parallel street, I saw bright colored flowy clothing and handmade bracelets as well as handbags and a promotional center for Google and others.

That was the beauty of the taste. There were so many things that I missed walking the first time around that had to double back to get the full experience.

A woman who attended the taste said this festival is better than the Taste of Chicago because she can walk around, enjoy herself and walk into local businesses because they are more involved with this festival. She also said it's better quality food. "This should be the Taste."

## **The Music-By Hannah Courtney**

I won't lie, going to outdoor festivals that promise musical entertainment tends to send up a sort of red flag to me. I anticipate the kind of scene where a bunch of men with graying hair stand around with guitars and banjos and play a slew of classics that are about fifty years over my head. But after having trudged my way up and down six blocks of Randolph street, stretched from side to side with so many humans I might believe the over seven billion people in our population had gathered there on this Friday night, I found that the Taste of Randolph offers a musical selection as diverse as that of its food.

On the West Stage, a band called [Great Divide](#) performed. If their band name had anything to do with the make-up of band members, I'd believe it. One guitar player resembled a late Kurt Cobain grunge era, the other your typical rock star quality lead guitarist and vocalist. The bass player reminded me of the kind of guy in high school that walks the halls playing air guitar and wearing band tees along with his Chuck Taylor Converse shoes. The drummer had a punk rock vibe going on with the green streak in his gelled up, buzzed at the sides hairstyle. And then on keyboards, we had ourselves a hipster. They all had one unifying factor though: sunglasses.

It might be a gimmick, it might not, but their music was as diverse as their look. Here we go with that dividing theme again, huh? They incorporate keyboards, rocking guitar tunes, and brass instruments to create a sort of laid back, coffeehouse vibe musical sound.

Their set list had some of their own stuff, such as "Why Should I Pretend," a song lead singer Teddy Grossman claims was written by his grandfather, and "Ain't No Roads," which had several members from the otherwise stiffened audience tapping their feet along in secret. Along with this, they played great cover songs, like Etta James' "Tell Mama" and Marvin Gaye's "Don't Do It."

Speaking of the audience, I don't know if they were scared of the band or what, but they all stood back away from the stage leaving a huge gap between us and the band and seemed afraid to show they enjoyed what they were hearing. It can't be because they didn't, though, because these guys had some serious musical and vocal talent going on.

The only downfall of the performance was the fact that I'd decided to watch from a little corner back by the recycling bin and that resulted in the incessant sound in my ear of cans crashing against plastic. At least people were doing plenty of recycling?

Walking from the West Stage to the East Stage felt kind of like I'd wandered on the other side of the tracks. But if that's the case, I certainly wandered myself over to the upbeat and fun side. I stumbled in the middle of [BS Brass Band](#)'s set, greeted by trumpet player Joe Clark chanting, "We gonna have a hurricane." Later, this turned out to be an actual lyric from a song of theirs that was about, well, hurricanes.

Perhaps everyone in the crowd was at least to some extent feeling tipsy, but the audience was definitely more engaged; dancing in the streets and laughing with one another as if they weren't a mass of complete strangers. And what's better, they weren't afraid to bridge the gap between stage and audience! Then again, with lyrics like "You do the palm court strut and shake your butt" from their song "Palm Court Strut," how couldn't you voluntarily jump in and have some fun with it?

The band was for real a brass band. In the line up, there was a trumpet, tenor sax, clarinet, Bari sax, trombone, sousaphone and drums.

They had a vibe far more laid back than your average concert. It wasn't rehearsed and synthetic, but rather felt like they'd just walked up on stage with nothing planned past the initiative to play music and have a good time together. During one song, Clark bumped arms with trombone player Dan "Fuzzbone" Sniderman in the middle of his solo and once he'd stopped him, he interrupted and started up with a solo of his own.

In regards to their song "Glory, Glory," Clark said "I wouldn't miss that for a monkey on a rock!" I still haven't figured out exactly what he was going for with that one, but whatever it may mean, I feel like BS Brass Band is the kind of band you wouldn't want to miss for a monkey on a rock.

On the same stage, but with an entirely different musical offering, [The Heard](#) performed. For all Taste of Randolph attendees that fancied some good ole' brass band music without lyrics, this band came to the rescue.

I spotted a trombone, saxophone, guitar, keyboard, tambourine, bass guitar and drum set in the six man show. Each man bound together to form powerful melodies that had a little bit of dance, a little bit of funk, and a little bit of soul packed into one complementary wavelength and sent out for the listener's enjoyment.

The songs were lengthy; the kind of song that perhaps may take all of the 80's lovers back to a time where a song wasn't a song without several minutes worth of guitar solos. The air waves weren't dead and unstimulating, though. Every moment encompassed sounds so groovy that I found a way to dance along despite juggling a camera, purse, recorder and reporter's notebook. It was as if I wandered into an underground jazz club and discovered a new, funky era born out of the marriage of jazz and rock and a little affair with pop on the side.

## Overall

The Taste of Randolph combined food, fashion, games, beer and music for a fun experience that

anyone could enjoy.

A woman who attended the taste said, "How can you not like this? The skyline is to your right, there's smoke in your face and you can drink on the street. It's just like New Orleans."

Check out more photos from Taste of Randolph: <https://www.facebook.com/NowYouKnowEvents>.



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