



The Dashboard Diner

Our Client Regions Share Their Perfect “Road Foods”

(July 23, 2020) – It’s been widely established that this is the summer of the road trip, and your inbox is probably full of tips about which destinations might be ideal getaways. Maybe you’re up for a road trip yourself this year; maybe you’re sitting this summer out. We encourage you to do whatever is right for you, just so long as you’re staying safe and healthy.

Whether we’re staying at home (which I am right now) or decide to venture out on the road, we here at [Mindy Bianca Public Relations](#) tend to plan our adventures around meals. So, rather than giving you guidance about WHERE TO GO, we thought it would be helpful to share WHAT TO EAT – in your car or perhaps your RV – while you’re out on the highways and byways of our client regions.

Let’s face it: An inevitable part of a road trip is completely trashing your vehicle by dropping food and spilling drinks as the miles roll by. I bought a new vehicle on May 23, 2019 and took my first road trip to one of our client destinations just four days later. I stopped for french fries – because this is why McDonald’s exists, I believe – and then missed my mouth while I was inhaling them. So ... a petrified fry is now wedged between the driver’s seat and center console, refusing to be pried or vacuumed out. I chose to look at this as a fond

memory of my SUV's and my first adventure together as we made our way to Cooperstown, and I don't care if the guy at the detailing place chose to look at it as me being a slob. Hey ... at least I eat my fries ketchup-free, so we didn't have THAT mess to contend with!

We surveyed our clients to find out what local delicacies they recommend as sustenance on a road trip through their regions, and their top choices appear below. If you're not traveling right now, you can always dream about these goodies for future trips.

To get things started, I surveyed the MBPR team to find out what they can't live without while they're on the road. Here are our answers. We want to hear yours!



Best road food combo ever. Sweet + salty = perfection!

Mindy: Cheez-Its and Peanut M&M's. (*Mindy's note: I learned this combo from my father, who's never been without either ... on a car trip or in life. The benefit to M&M's is they don't really melt; the drawback to Cheez-It's is that they're easily crushed. But check my pantry today and – yep – they're both there, just waiting for the day when we leave the house again.*)

Sara: A big bag of Twizzlers, which – fun fact! -- in a pinch can double as straws. (*Mindy's note: Sara and I worked together in Hershey and we're full of interesting tidbits like this. Yes, Twizzlers are a Hershey product. M&M's are from competing candy company Mars, however ... so I had to sneak mine into my travel bag on business trips. But offline, ask me about the second "M" in the candy's name ... because there IS a Hershey connection!*)

Mallory: A cup of cold brew/iced coffee and McDonald's fries. (*Mindy's note: I've been in Mallory's car and she does not have petrified fries in there. So, she's clearly better at getting food into her mouth than I am.*)

Ashley: A Starbucks Café Macchiato. She loves the bold but sweet taste, and of course the caffeine pick-me-up for those longer drives. (*Mindy's note: This is the most decadent thing I've ever heard Ashley mention, food-wise. See below for how she blew my mind with her snack choice on one road trip we took together.*)

Moneé: Pringles, Haribo Peaches gummi candy and any Snapple lemonade drink. (*Mindy's note: Moneé lives in Germany today but will be moving to South Korea over the weekend, so the fact that she's usually able to find these items is pretty impressive.*)

And here's what our clients recommend, plus a photo link so you can see each item. Special thanks to all our clients who took one for the team by snapping these!

<https://www.dropbox.com/sh/wqhw9lgjsyohcpu/AACpg1EAHc6irJm-z3NrbDUia?dl=0>

Frozen Custard (shout-out to journalist Arthur Levine ... this one's for you!)
Branson, Missouri

Wisconsin gets dibs on being the state that most enthusiastically supports this special type of ice cream – its rich texture comes from the addition of eggs – but we're going out on a limb to say that Missouri might do it a bit better. In Branson, the best place for frozen custard is the [Andy's](#) stand on Highway 76, right next to the giant Ferris wheel that moved from Chicago to Branson in 2015. (And this all kind of makes sense, since frozen custard became very popular after being served at the World's Fair that Chicago hosted in 1933.) Andy's is headquartered in nearby Springfield, Missouri, and we've visited many of its locales throughout the state. But our favorite is right here in Branson. Pro tip: Pull up to the drive-thru speaker and ask for a “concrete with espresso syrup and toasted almonds.” It's a pretty sure bet they'll say back to you, “Are you that PR lady from out east?” Yes, that's how frequently I stop by when I'm in town.



This is a “Snowmonster” concrete from Andy's, where they take your favorite toppings and spin them into custard.

Lemonade

Allegheny County, Maryland

We just told you that Moneé loves Snapple lemonade, but that's probably because she hasn't tried [Western Maryland Lemonade](#) yet. Well, honestly, though they ship all over the place, I don't think they can guarantee delivery of their cold bottles to Europe or Asia ... so she's out of luck for now. Owner Todd Helmick hand-squeezes, bottles and dates his lemonade and refrigerates it immediately. Made with fresh local ingredients from the garden or wild ingredients picked directly from the heart of the Appalachian Mountains, Western Maryland Lemonade sells 130 flavors in convenience stores and other locations throughout the mountains of Western Maryland and neighboring Pennsylvania, as well as on [Amazon](#). (Not all 130 flavors can be found on Amazon, but the star of the show – Paw Paw Lemonade – most definitely is.) I may not be on the road right now, but I'm consuming plenty of lemonade on the back deck. My personal favorite is Local Peach, which features actual little hunks of peach. Up in the next order: Lavender. Hmmm ...

Fish Jerky

Gulf Shores and Orange Beach, Alabama

Part of the draw of a visit to the beach communities along the Gulf of Mexico is the incredible fishing, with anglers of every age and skill level reeling in scale-tipping specimens that are no fish story. Some enterprising folks along Alabama's coast have turned the fish that live in the Gulf into a memorable snack, "fish jerky." With flavor options like Sriracha Shark, Lemon Pepper Swordfish and Peppered Ahi Tuna, [Beach Jerky](#) in Gulf Shores and [Gulf Coast House of Jerky](#) in Orange Beach offer a full array of snacks ideal for eating with one hand while driving with the other – whether it's a vehicle or a vessel, since folks here travel by both land and sea. They also offer fruit jerky and vegan jerky, just so they're taking care of the needs of every type of snacker. Both shops also ship around the country, in case you have a hankering and can't get to the beach this summer.

Chix de Femme

Houma, Louisiana

Leave it to the Louisianans to take food that's already amazing and take it to the next level: AWESOME! The name "chix de femme" translates from the French "bun of a woman," and it's pronounced "shicks duh fem." If you need a

visual so you can better understand what these sweet and sticky rolls look like, think about Princess Leia's hair in the original *Star Wars* movie. [Bertinot's Best Bakery](#) is THE place to get these delicious treats, which are baked fresh daily, but you can also find the bakery's buns in local gas stations and supermarkets. The Shack Restaurant, a favorite stop for Houma locals, uses the buns in their popular bread pudding. The bakery's owners use a family recipe that's more than 100 years old and that's been passed down for generations. They combine sweet dough with cinnamon, then top it with sugar sprinkles and a sugar glaze. We think there's another ingredient in there, too, and knowing what we do about Cajun cuisine, we can take a guess at what it is: a heaping helping of pure love.

Caramel Popcorn

Metairie, Louisiana

Located just minutes away from New Orleans, the town of Metairie is a place you can easily reach on a road trip to or around the Crescent City. And if you want to do as the locals do, stop by [Todd's Frozen Yogurt](#) on Severn Avenue to get some popcorn. Sure, there's frozen yogurt here and it's really good; but as you walk through the doors, your ears will be greeted by feel-good music and your nose will be drawn to the aroma of sweet and salty caramel popcorn. Come for the frozen treats, which you'll want to eat quickly in the summer heat, but definitely take the popcorn with you for the road. Maybe get two bags, though, because this addictive concoction won't last long.



Salty and sweet: the perfect combo for a road trip!

Mini Pecan Pies and Pralines

Cut Off, Louisiana

There's no need to tell you that Louisiana has an incredible food culture. The state also has tremendous and delicious resources with which to work. This is sugar country -- Louisiana produces 13.5 million tons of the sweet stuff each year -- but it's also where you'll find plenty of pecans. Around the United States, 15 states grow pecans commercially ... and it's not likely that you'll find any two states where its name is pronounced the same. But no matter what it sounds like to you -- PEE-can, pee-KAHN, puh-CON, PEE-kin, pih-CAN -- it tastes delicious. (For the record, in most of Louisiana you'll hear "pick-AHN.") If you want the best taste of the nut blended with that sugar, stop by the [Cajun Pecan House](#), where cakes, candies, cookies and pies are baked fresh every day. Their small pecan and chocolate pecan pies (because you can only make something better by adding chocolate, right?) are just \$4 -- a bargain for a sugar rush of this magnitude. But the Cajun pralines, a simple blend of white sugar, brown sugar, heavy whipping cream, butter, baking soda, salt, vanilla and plenty of pecans (and yeah, they'll throw chocolate in there, too, if you want), are perhaps even more portable. What the heck? Why not get one of everything and conduct your own taste test.

Patties and Ting

Montego Bay and Negril, Jamaica

When we go to Jamaica, we're usually not driving ourselves. The resorts we work with (like Sunset at the Palms in Negril) generally provide us a driver, but that doesn't mean we're not stopping for snacks on the way from the airport. (And on our way back home, we have patties IN the airport. Say what you want about airport food; we're here to tell you that the patties served in the Club MoBay departures lounge are pretty darn amazing.) A Jamaican patty is a savory hand pie or turnover. It's filled with protein of some sort -- we recommend beef, but there's chicken and even goat and vegetarian options -- and some yummy Jamaican spices. The pastry is incredibly flaky, so be prepared for crumbs on the car seat. And it's often an electric-orange color; that's because of the turmeric that's blended into the dough. (But it's the color of a Cheez-It, so maybe that's why I love these so much?) To wash it down, we recommend a bottle of Ting, a Jamaican soft drink flavored with tangy grapefruit. The combination of sweet and savory is perfection!

Apples

Cooperstown, New York

You didn't see THIS one coming, did you? Not all road food has to offer questionable health benefits! And yes, we've been known to enjoy a fruit or vegetable on the road. (I still laugh about the car trip I went on with my colleague Ashley. We stopped for a quick bite at a Chick-fil-A. Of course, I got chicken nuggets and fries, which are very easy to eat while driving; she went with a kale side salad. WHAT?) Anyway, back to the apples. New York produces the second highest number of apples in the nation (a very distant second behind Washington), but no state grows more varieties. New York is home to nearly 700 apple growers and more than 10 million apple trees, collectively producing enough apples to bake 500 million pies. The area around Cooperstown provides the perfect weather for growing apples, and there are farms where you can pick your own or you can stock up at a local farmers market, roadside stand or even a supermarket. We love visiting [Fly Creek Cider Mill](#), less than 10 minutes from [The Otesaga Resort Hotel](#), National Baseball Hall of Fame and other landmarks in the village of Cooperstown, to stock up on fresh apples. If we're feeling a little indulgent, we might go with a mini pie, dumpling, or cider donut. And they even sell cider in adorable apple-shaped to-go bottles. But truly, just a plain old apple here is the sweetest dessert you need!

Peaches

Chesnee, South Carolina

Okay, since we went there with apples, let's represent our other favorite fruit ... peaches. And it's July, which means we're at peak season for peaches in South Carolina. Our favorite place to get them is in Spartanburg County at [Strawberry Hill U.S.A.](#), a family-run operation that includes a farm, open-air fruit market called The Shed, and café and ice cream shop. The Cooley family has had its farm here in upstate South Carolina since the early 1900s, and they've built up quite a fan base over the years. The farm is home to more than 800 acres of peach trees boasting nearly 30 different varieties. That means that from late May all the way through the end of summer, there's always something peachy happening here. Fair warning: These peaches are JUICY. We suggest coming to a full stop and eating them outside your car rather than trying to drive while ingesting one. Or get them in ice cream form at the café. We never judge ...

Potato Candy

Pigeon Forge, Tennessee

[Dollywood](#) theme park is right at home in the Smoky Mountains of east Tennessee, and it shares the mountain way of life with its guests. This park is about so much more than roller coasters and thrills; it's also about preserving the culture, crafts and spirit of the people who are proud to call this beautiful place home ... you know, people like Dolly Parton herself. In the early 1900s, many families living in the Smoky Mountains couldn't afford the expensive chocolate candies found elsewhere around the country. Potato candy, which is made from potatoes, sugar and peanut butter, became a popular treat because it was both affordable and easy to make. The theme park's potato candy, which is served at [Dollywood's Sweet Shoppe](#), is as beautiful as it is delicious. The pinwheel-shaped treat packs a gloriously sweet punch. Grab some to fuel your day in the park, and it'll likely last you through at least part of the trip home.



These taste as good as they look!

For more information about all our client destinations, hotels and resorts, and attractions – which at this time have all reopened – please check out our website, www.mindybiancapr.com, or contact us via phone or email. We're always happy to help you discover fun and fascinating stories and can

give you the latest updates about the status of each client. When the time is right for you to travel, they're ready for you ... but we're always happy to help you experience them virtually.

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MEDIA CONTACT

Mindy Bianca

919-200-6060

mindy@mindybiancapr.com

[Mindy Bianca Public Relations](#)