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Notes on Eating, Drinking and Cooking

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After a Call for Better Park Vendors, Six Are Picked

By **GLENN COLLINS**



Freya Estreller, left, and Natasha Case will be setting up one of their Coolhaus ice cream sandwich stands by the American Museum of Natural History as part of the parks department's selection of new food vendors around the city.

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Yearning to soar above its tired, rote roster of hot dogs and pretzels, the New York City Parks Department [put out a call](#) five months ago for the food vendors of New York "to propose your most inventive, exciting food idea," adding, "Whatever the idea, we want to see it."

The response was not overwhelming: the department received 58 applications to sell food in some 50 locations that were made available. But the invitation provoked enough interest for the department to designate six new vendors who will field trucks and carts offering everything from kimchi fried rice and epicurean grilled-cheese sandwiches to organic ice cream and ginger slushes.

[Purple Yam](#), the Filipino and Korean fusion restaurant in Ditmas Park, Brooklyn, will establish two outposts adjacent to the Broadway median near

Columbia University called Li'l Purple Yam. One, at 114th Street and Broadway, will offer savories, and the other, at 113th Street and Broadway, will offer desserts and sweets. (The center-avenue median is parks department property; the sidewalks that surround public parks are also considered to be parkland and under the department's jurisdiction). By the main entrance to Columbia, at West 116th Street and Broadway, Borough Fare will offer soups and sandwiches on a sidewalk under parks jurisdiction.

At the Bleecker Playground at Bleecker Street and West 11th Street in Greenwich Village, [Je & Jo](#) will be presenting handmade organic ice cream blended with cookie dough. Food Freaks will be selling grilled-cheese sandwiches in Fort Greene Park in Brooklyn. At the front entrance of the American Museum of Natural History, a cart from [Coolhaus](#), which has two trucks on the streets of New York, will offer its ice-cream-and-cookie-sandwich architecture to museum visitors. And the [Kelvin Natural Slush Company](#) will have a truck serving its signature slushes at the Little Red Square park at Bleecker Street and Avenue of the Americas in Greenwich Village.

Natasha Case, chief executive of Coolhaus, said she hopes to deploy by mid-July. Others may not establish outposts until next fall, and Li'l Purple Yam may not be up until next year. And Adrian Benepe, the city's parks commissioner, said these vendors would open "subject to the successful completion of contract negotiations, and other required review and approvals."

Some of the food will be available Wednesday by the parks department headquarters at 64th Street and Fifth Avenue, when 15 concessionaires, new and previously approved, will assemble for a media event open to the public from 11 a.m. to 2 p.m.

The department has so far designated only a few new specialty vendors "because there were no bids for some locations, and because some bids just didn't measure up," said Betsy Smith, the department's assistant commissioner for revenue and marketing.

Beyond that, deployment has been slowed because park applicants must wend their way through the city's cumbersome contract-approval process, which requires background checks and verification of the vendors' financial resources.

The parks department application “is very difficult, beyond the skills of many cart holders,” said Sean Basinski, director of the Street Vendor Project, a nonprofit advocacy group for some 1,200 merchandise vendors, carts and trucks. “It’s not designed to attract immigrant street vendors — you need a Harvard M.B.A. to fill it out.”

Mr. Basinski said his group believes that “the process should be democratized, and some of the burdensome requirements for application should be done away with.”

Ms Smith said that within the legal requirements of city bureaucracy, “we’ve done a lot of hand-holding, trying to walk people through the process,” adding that the department holds educational sessions for would-be concessionaires at the department’s headquarters. She acknowledged, though, that the department could do more, “and going forward, we are going to focus on fewer locations and do more outreach for each one,” she said.

“We have to go out and drum up business,” she said.