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MEDIA RELEASE

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STEP ASIDE, FRIED!: *Barbecue is the Thing at Abilene's West Texas Fair & Rodeo, Sept. 7 - 16*

ABILENE, Texas – It's fair food frenzy time in Texas. And this year, the State Fair has some friendly and flavorful competition from its counterpart down the road in Abilene.

But it isn't the aroma of all things fried that will permeate the air at Abilene's West Texas Fair and Rodeo September 7 – 16. For ten delicious days, visitors can feast on barbecued *everything*, thanks to the Fair's new "Step Aside, Fried" competition celebrating the true local flavor of Abilene.

Dozens of fair vendors will be entering their barbecued best in three different categories: main dish, side, and dessert, and vying for the "best in show" award, with bragging rights and cash prizes at stake. Dishes will be judged on taste, presentation, creativity and how well they interpret the barbecue theme. Contestants will also be selling these dishes in their booths for the duration of the fair. Visitors will receive a special passport when they enter the grounds at Taylor County Expo Center.

"Our vendors have really stepped up to the plate to create dishes that will take an already impressive fair food offering to the next level," said Jodi Riggan, West Texas Fair & Rodeo exhibit coordinator. "This is the start of a new, annual Abilene and West Texas Fair & Rodeo tradition, one that we expect will become a popular, much anticipated part of our event."

The barbecue dishes on offer will run the gamut from savory to sweet, and from old school to outrageous. Among dozens of smoky temptations, hungry fair-goers will find barbecue street tacos, roasted barbecue corn, "French brisket" (French toast with brisket and sauce), barbecued chicken jalapeno poppers, "barbecue" frozen yogurt, pulled pork-cole slaw "klobasneks" (a savory version of a kolache), "pineapple porker bowls" (half-pineapple filled with pulled pork, rice pico de gallo and barbecue sauce), and even shave ices or "konas" billed as the perfect barbecue "chaser." And for die-hard fried fanatics, the Fair will still oblige with what may be the best of both worlds – fried barbecue. Think brisket egg rolls, barbecue topped funnel cakes, and barbecued chicken and bacon stuffed deep fried pizza dough. The judging will take place at 4 p.m. on Friday, September 8th with results announced at 6 p.m. that evening.

Participating vendors include Old Timers' Funnel Cake, Seafood Cajun, Momma Sally's, Kona Ice, KB Burger, Vittle Barn, Nikki's Swirl Shoppe, WMC Corn, Elmwood West, Abilene A & M Club, Little Babe BBQ, Texas Dough Boys, and Mom's Country Cooking

Besides barbecue, the West Texas Fair & Rodeo has a little something for everyone – outrageous carnival rides, bucking broncs, livestock shows, tractor pulls, and more. The family-friendly festivities kick off with a parade through the quaint streets of downtown Abilene. For more information, visit <http://www.taylorcountyexpoctr.com/events/west-texas-fair-rodeo>.

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