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By Caren Weiner Campbell, zagat.com staff editor

Besides the fact that their team finally reversed the Bambino's curse, Boston Red Sox fans have another reason to feel smug these days: their ballpark dining options are on the upswing, mirroring a trend happening around the U.S.

For the first time in its 93-year history, Fenway Park is now home to a full-service eatery: *Game On!*, a slick, bi-level sports bar/New American restaurant opened by local nightlife impresario Patrick Lyons (*Sonsie*) just in time for this season's Red Sox home opener.

And ballpark concession stands continue to raise their game as well, often adding signature items from local restaurants to their culinary lineups. At Fenway, options include the acclaimed clam chowder from *Legal Sea Foods*, voted the Most Popular restaurant in our *Boston Survey* (the chowder "really is all that," attest surveyors), as well as beef-tip sandwiches from the *Hilltop Steak House*, known for dishing up "kitsch" along with "grand portions of cheap meat." Fans at Philadelphia's *Citizens Bank Park* can chow down on classic cheese steaks furnished by local legends *Geno's Steaks* and *Tony Luke's*, or snack on "crab fries" (dusted with Old Bay seasoning) from *Chickie & Pete's*.

Offering restaurant-branded fare makes for a win-win-win situation — fans get a welcome changeup from hot dogs and pretzels, restaurants get to pitch their food to a big audience and concession operators can score a fatter bottom line. "People will wait three or four times as long for the branded foods as they would at regular concession stands," notes Mark Roberts, vice president of marketing for Aramark, a leading concessionaire. And bringing in local eateries reinforces the feeling that "the team is part of the community," he adds.

Other examples of ballpark-restaurant matchups:

- ♦ Atlanta's *Turner Field*, which features *comida* from *Willy's Mexicana Grill* and pies from *Grant Central Pizza*.
- ♦ BBQ from the *Montgomery Inn* helps fuel the crowd at Cincinnati's *Great American Ball Park*.
- ♦ *Gordon Biersch* brews can be found at San Francisco's *SBC Park*, where food choices include the 40-clove garlic-chicken sandwich from the *Stinking Rose*.
- ♦ Tampa's *Tropicana Field* dishes up Cuban sandwiches from the century-old landmark restaurant *Columbia* in nearby Ybor City.

As for *Yankee Stadium*, the biggest culinary news emanating from the Bronx Bombers' home was arguably last season's ill-fated attempt to replace *Cracker Jack* with *Crunch 'n Munch* (fans cried foul and Jack stayed in the game). But whatever is served at the *House that Ruth Built*, New Yorkers no doubt find it tastes better when the Yanks are winning.