



The silver bullet: Skillet Street Food is a real-deal roving restaurant with items like coconut curry soup and cheesy poutine.



Trailer-made

On the go: Skillet Street Food turns the lunch truck into haute cuisine

BY JESS THOMSON PHOTOGRAPHS BY JOHN CLARK

UNLIKE MOST MAÎTRE D'S, Danny Sizemore dresses in a comfy T-shirt for work. Fitting attire for Skillet Street Food's co-chef and co-owner, who spends his shift greeting hungry customers in the middle of a parking lot.

Skillet Street Food isn't your average restaurant. Launched last summer by Sizemore and Josh Henderson, it's a bistro on wheels, based in a shiny Airstream. The roving restaurant goes from neighborhood to neighborhood each week, serving

breakfast and lunch to an increasingly devoted following.

"Running Skillet is like opening a restaurant for the first time every day," says Sizemore, who grew up in a restaurant family.

Each morning, the guys haul the Airstream to that day's serving spot hours before dawn. They start up a generator, stock refrigerators with the day's supplies, and light the pilots under the trailer's Vulcan range and grill. Today, Henderson

preps a poutine (fries with gravy and cheddar), a Skillet favorite, and roasts fingerling potatoes for a caramelized onion hash. He chats with Rat City Roller girls organizers about the Kobe beef hotdogs he'll be serving at a roller-derby event. He's just found the perfect bun, made by Seattle's Grand Central Baking Company.

Henderson looks happy when Skillet opens its sliding service window for breakfast, and a line forms. He passes trailer-made granola to the first customer.

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Chef-owners Josh Henderson (left) and Danny Sizemore are, obviously, dog lovers.

Another person balances his waffle, topped with succulent maple-braised pork belly and a sunny-side-up egg, on Skillet's makeshift bar and strikes up a conversation with a first-time patron. Breakfast turns into lunch, and the line grows.

"I don't think people necessarily know why they go back to a restaurant," says Henderson, whose tastes gravitate toward hearty comfort food like burgers and fries. "I think they go back when the chef has the basics right: seasoning food well, cooking a burger to just the right temperature, or searing a piece of meat to a golden crisp. And hospitality—that's the silver bullet." He waits patiently for Sizemore to hand him the next order, but Sizemore's having too much fun talking up Skillet's bacon jam.

A 180-square-foot mobile bistro faces unique challenges, of course. Smiling, Sizemore recounts a time, early on, when the entire backside of the trailer fell off. "We've encountered so many, uh, bumps in the road that we're pretty sure we won't have much competition," he says.

"Still, it's so rewarding," Henderson adds. "Seeing the look on people's faces when they eat our food—that's why it's worth it."

INFO Skillet Street Food (\$; typically in SoDo on Tue, South Lake Union on Wed, and Ballard on Thu; visit skilletstreetfood.com for a weekly calendar and exact locations)



URBAN PICNICS: TAKE IT TO GO

When the weather perks up, the city moves outdoors. Here are a few must-try picnic spots to put on your summer list—all located within quick driving distance of a Skillet Street Food location.

FROM BALLARD Pull up a bench in two-year-old **Ballard Commons Park** (5701 22nd Ave. N.W.), where you can ponder sculptures. Or go just a bit farther north to ogle sweeping Olympic views from the picnic table at **Sunset Hill Park** (7531 34th Ave. N.W.), a pocket-size patch perched over Puget Sound.

FROM SODO Take the bridge to West Seattle, where you can soak in stunning city vistas from **Belvedere Park** (3600 Admiral Way S.W.). Or veer north and find a Zen moment in Pioneer Square at the mesmerizing

Waterfall Garden Park (219 Second Ave. S.). If you're going downtown, enjoy the newly revamped fountains on the **Harbor Steps** (1221 First Ave.; harborsteps.com or 206/682-0800).

FROM SOUTH LAKE UNION Mosey down to the newly improved **Lake Union Park** (860 Terry Ave. N.), where you can sprawl on the grass and drink in a lake view. Or rent a sailboat next door at **Center for Wooden Boats** (boat rental from \$30; 1010 Valley St.; cwb.org or 206/382-2628) and have lunch on the water. If you're heading to Queen Anne, take refuge under the quiet arbor at tiny **Bhy Kracke Park** (1215 Fifth Ave. N.).

For additional park information, visit seattle.gov/parks or call 206/684-4075. ■