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Food Trucks Seek Salvation in Queens Parking Lot

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By Sumathi Reddy



Natalie Keyssar for The Wall Street Journal

The Mexicue Truck parked curbside in Midtown last March. A recent crackdown has largely forced food trucks to leave Midtown this summer.

It's been a rough summer for New York City's food trucks.

After city authorities began enforcing a longstanding law that prohibits vending from metered parking spots, the burgeoning fleet of gourmet trucks have largely been forced out of Midtown and sales have drop anywhere between 20% to 70% as a result, according to David Weber, president of the newly formed New York City Food Truck Association.

But the trade group is hoping an experiment with a food truck lot in Long Island City, Queens, will create a new model that could help food-truck entrepreneurs stem their losses. Starting this week, three trucks will be stationed in an 11,000-square-foot parking lot near the Citicorp building on weekdays from 11 a.m. to 3 p.m.

The city's first so-called food-truck lot was created after Rockrose, a real-estate developer that owns the space, reached out to the association. While only three trucks are set to serve the lot at the outset, the venue has the capacity for up to 16, according to a publicist for Rockrose.

The initial lineup at the lot, located on Crescent Street near Jackson Avenue, will feature two savory trucks and one sweet truck. On Tuesday, for example, Eddie's Pizza truck, the Desi Food truck and the Cupcake Stop are slated to be there. On Monday it was the Kimchi Taco truck, Taim Mobile and Andy's Italian Ices.

"We have the flexibility to add more trucks easily if there's demand," said Weber. "Every day it's going to be different trucks, which is part of what I think will make it fun and interesting."

Such truck lots are common in other cities, such as Portland, Los Angeles and Austin.

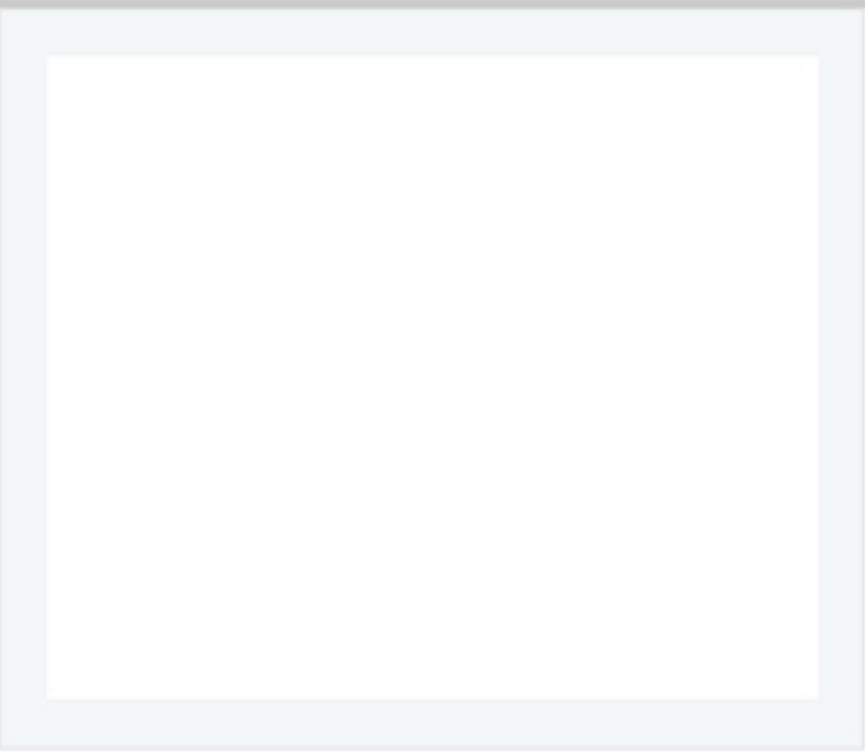
A similar food-truck lot is operated by the city's Department of Parks and Recreation outside the former site of Tavern on the Green in Central Park. But the city-sponsored lot, which opened in the fall, has met with questionable success. One of the four trucks leasing space at the site has already closed.

The New York City Food Truck Association, which consists of 28 members operating 40 trucks, does not have to pay rent to use the lot in Long Island City; instead, Weber said, members pay a small fee to the association, which is coordinating the schedule.

"With all the challenges of operating on the street this summer we thought that a food-truck lot would be an exciting opportunity," said Weber.

Although the new lot is just up and running, Weber said there have already been inquiries from two other organizations interested in setting up similar lots. He declined to say where these potential lots are located.

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