

Some say winter ends with the coming of spring: clocks go forward, days get longer, and the first buds begin to flower. But in Halifax, a week in late March heralds the end of winter hibernation, no matter the weather. That week is Burger Week.

Out of the doom, gloom and storm warnings comes a beacon of hope: burger specials across Halifax. The burgers cost either \$6, or a higher price with a portion donated to Feed Nova Scotia – a foundation helping feed hungry people at over 150 food banks. Over 95 restaurants participate, and every burger experience results in a stamp on the Burger Week Passport. Instead of crossing borders, this passport takes Haligonians on a magical food quest – how many burger creations can one stomach face? And to raise the stakes even higher, getting three or more stamps means entering a draw to win free Hop City’s Barking Squirrel Beer for a year.

Since *the Coast* first presented Burger Week in 2013, it has become an institution: a citywide celebration of Halifax’s great food and nightlife.

What could compete with a week full of burgers?

Two words: Nacho Week.

As Halifax restaurants bring their bravest, craziest burgers – creating freestanding structures of edible art – imagine the masterpieces Halifax chefs could design on a bed of

crisp tortillas.

The average Tex-Mex nachos are already a perfect concept: tortilla chips are promoted from crunchy, salty snack to full-course heaven. Melted cheese makes everything better – especially when layered with chicken, beef, or just a scattered rainbow of vegetables.

Don't even get me started on the Holy Trinity of dips: salsa, sour cream and guacamole.

Hey, Coast – are you hungry yet?

But think of the possibilities: the ingredients that could take nachos from fun stadium food to an exhilarating gourmet indulgence. They could be savory, sweet and even healthy (just kidding about that last one – let's not go there). Tortilla chips are incredible, but how about Asian fusion nachos using fried wontons as the base, or Irish nachos with thick-cut potatoes. Even, donairs, Halifax's specialty, could be nacho-fied. Nachos are pure messy, sharable, and delicious fun.

With a comfortable base everyone knows and loves, nachos, like burgers, are easy stepping stools for people to try new things. Without Burger Week, I would never have tried a burger topped with pancakes, peanut butter, or fried chicken. But for a one-week only burger deal – anything goes. And maybe it was Burger Week magic, but I loved every bite.

I had four burgers this Burger Week, and at least the resulting food comas were for a noble cause. In the past four years, Halifax Burger Week has served 116,118 burgers –

and raised \$70,655 for Feed Nova Scotia. A Nacho Week could bring more money for those in need.

Burger Week really works: more people go out and experience what the city has to offer. Halifax has more bars per capita than any city in Canada, with 2.3 drinking establishments per 1,000 people. To compare, Toronto has only 1.5. Halifax's Split Crow was granted Nova Scotia's first liquor license in 1749. Back in the day, they sold pork scratching's, pickled eggs, and salted peanuts: the saltier the snacks, the higher the beer sales. More than 250 years later, nachos satisfy the salty craving – and, speaking from experience, are a lifesaver after the bar's Saturday afternoon Power Hour.

But like Burger Week, Nacho Week would still be all-ages. Upcoming events in the HRM like Craft Beer Week from May 5-14, Wine and Chocolate Tasting on May 26, and the East Coast Cider Festival on May 27 all feature alcohol and cost up to \$60. We need more events that are all-ages and affordable.

Burger Week brings a flutter of hope for the end of winter, but it's still only March. When May arrives, it feels like the light at the end of the tunnel leading to summer – but it's often a tease. It snows an average of two centimeters in May; last year, May's highest temperature was 26 C, while the lowest was -1 C. May can be disappointing, but it's also a celebration of everything Canadians are waiting for: we suffer through a tough winter, but always come out the other side. Nacho Week could be chilly, but it could mean warm evenings on breezy patios: some nachos, a cold drink, and a side of summer. I'm willing

to risk it.

So, Coast, I hope reading this made you hungry – or at least as hungry as I was writing it.

Let's push the boundaries – why only one food-focused week in Halifax? We only have one life; we might as well live it to the cheesiest, calorific limit.

And then, after weeks of meaty, cheesy goodness, we'd all need a Salad Week. But it would be worth it.