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Food Network chef Guy Fieri comes to Boise after lots of requests (see photo gallery)

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"Aw, the Cheetos make it, man," says chef Guy Fieri, with a broad smile and a thumbs up to the camera.

It is not often you hear a positive reference to Cheetos on a culinary show, but this is the Triple D, Fieri's popular show "Diners, Drive-ins and Dives," and Fieri - a chef as popular with the Nascar set as he is with foodies - had just created a bely-bustin' monster dish at Donnie Mac's Trailer Park Cuisine in Downtown Boise - the Thunder Plate.

Its ingredients include practically everything on the cooking line - from tortilla chips to something Fieri dubbed the "bad boy bacon blanket" or the "B-4."

Donnie Mac's is one of seven Valley restaurants Fieri and his two production teams visited this week.

The excitement in the Valley's restaurant community has been electric. Several eateries, including Gernika Basque Pub and Eatery, West Side Drive-In, Donn's Hilltop Cafe - Kodiak Grill, and Pizzalchik in Boise; Rick's Press Room in Meridian; and The Orchard House in Caldwell, received the Triple D treatment.

There are no guarantees when an episode will air or that every restaurant will make the cut. That gets decided in the editing room.

But Fieri doesn't actually create a dish on every show. "At about one in 10 places I'll do this. I just get an idea, and it goes," he said.

Fieri swaggers through a kitchen with the confidence born of owning two successful restaurants, winning "The Next Food Network Star," and now hosting four popular Food Network shows.

Fieri is a guys-guy who uses sports metaphors, references Metallica and calls himself a bad boy.

He has enjoyed his time in Boise, he said. He dropped in at the Knitting Factory, appeared on Idaho Statesman sports editor Mike Prater's Idaho Sports Talk with Caves and Prater show on KTIK 1350 AM, and drove the Zamboni at a Steelheads' game this week.

But underneath the funky shirts, scull-chain necklace and bleached hair is the heart and soul of a talented chef who knows the power his show can have.

"Honestly, you'll sell about 1,000 of these the first week. This will be a good time," Fieri told chef Derek Fernandes at Donnie Mac's Trailer Park Cuisine, referring to the Thunder Plate.

Owner Donnie MacKenzie says the visit by Fieri couldn't come at a better time. "With the down economy, our sales are really off," said MacKenzie. "They said it usually doubles sales. So, this is our shot. I hope it works."

For two years, Fieri and his crew have been highlighting the places people love to eat: mom-and-pop joints across the country. He understands what it takes to make them work.

"Passion," he said. "A restaurant is a labor of love, and definitely not for the timid or the weak of heart. We work our butts off in this business. If you like making people happy, that's kind of how it goes."

Fieri has wanted to come to Boise for a while, he said. The show receives a lot of requests from the area and a good friend, Chris Carpenter, moved here.

Unfortunately, Carpenter died from an aggressive form of leukemia in 2006.

"It was a heartbreaker, Fieri said. "But you tell your buddy you're going to come visit him and you got to do it. So, I have to come visit him in my own little way."

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