

Quantum of snacks: How to survive a spy-themed Trivia Weekend

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(Photo: cyano66, Getty Images/iStockphoto)

Strategies. Secrets. Spies. Snacks.

It's all fair game for KVSC 88.1 FM's 39th annual Trivia Weekend, taking place on the fast-approaching weekend of Feb. 16-18.

This year's theme is "Codename Trivia: Strategies, Secrets and Spies," which will inform some of the questions posed, along with a range of additional questions on pop culture, science, sports, history, plus visual and audio trivia.

"We're not talking mystery novels, we're not talking detective things — this is international espionage," said Jim

Gray, operations director at KVSC.

Justin Helmer, 39, of Milaca has been participating in Trivia Weekend since 1999. He said when it comes to food for the duration of the contest, a little foresight goes a long way.

"Just remember that you are going to be in close quarters with your teammates, and plan your foods accordingly," Helmer said. "Keep it as fresh and as healthy as you can, eat a vegetable from time to time, and drink some water when you're not pounding coffee."

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Coffee is one of the many important food and beverage items Helmer and his team keep on hand for the 50-hour trivia marathon.

"Chili, turkey meatballs, the most amazing chocolate chip cookies ever ... So much coffee. Just, so much. Like, Herculean amounts of coffee," he said of his team's preferred snack supply.

And while Helmer recommends that Trivia Weekend players "listen to (their bodies)" and try to stay as healthy as possible during the grueling contest, he does have one vice of his own: Twizzlers, which he said are his No. 1 Trivia Weekend snack.

"It goes back several years to an inside joke, which wouldn't be funny to anybody who wasn't there," he said, "but it just isn't Trivia without Twizzlers."

But if junk food and "Herculean amounts of coffee" aren't quite your style, or you're looking for a way to play along at home without actually, you know, staying glued to the radio for 50 hours, here are some on-theme Trivia Weekend snacks to try.

Deep Trouble (Umm, Fried) Stuffed Olives

Is there any food more duplicitous, more spy-like than a stuffed appetizer? You bite in expecting one taste and texture then, lo and behold, get another entirely. These stuffed, deep fried olives take a classic bar snack (and martini garnish) to another level.

INGREDIENTS

1 6-ounce can of large, pitted green olives

1 mozzarella string cheese stick, diced

1 egg

¼ cup milk

1 cup Italian seasoned breadcrumbs

Salt

Vegetable oil, for frying

Marinara sauce, for dipping

Stuff each olive with a piece of the diced mozzarella and set aside. In a bowl, whisk together the egg and milk. To another bowl, add the breadcrumbs. Dip each olive in the egg, then in the breadcrumbs, then repeat to double coat. (Use one hand for the wet ingredients and one hand for the dry to limit mess.) Repeat until all olives are coated.

Heat ½ inch of oil in a heavy-bottomed pot over medium-high heat. When the oil sizzles (check by adding a droplet of water), fry olives in batches until golden brown, stirring often, about 2 minutes. Using a slotted spoon, carefully remove the olives from the oil and place onto a paper towel-lined plate. Sprinkle with salt and serve immediately, with your favorite marinara sauce for dipping.

The Name's Eggs, Scrambled Eggs

While it might seem hard to believe, there's no dish mentioned more in Ian Fleming's James Bond novels than eggs. Eggs! So simple, yet so versatile, just like any good spy. Bond, though, preferred his eggs prepared very specifically. So specifically, in fact, that Fleming felt compelled to include his recipe for "Scrambled Eggs 'James Bond'" in a footnote to his short story "007 in New York." Fleming's recipe is below, altered only to reflect a single-person serving (pink Champagne and low music optional.)

INGREDIENTS

2 fresh eggs

Salt and pepper

1 oz of fresh butter

Break the eggs into a bowl. Beat thoroughly with a fork and season well. In a small copper (or heavy-bottomed sauce pan) melt ¾ ounce of the butter. When melted, pour in the eggs and cook over a very low heat, whisking continuously with a small egg whisk.

While the eggs are slightly more moist than you would wish for eating, remove the pan from heat, add the rest of the butter and continue whisking for half a minute, adding the while finely chopped chives or fine herbs.

Serve on hot buttered toast in individual copper dishes (for appearance only) with pink champagne (Taittinger) and low music.



Scrambled eggs with an elegant garnish on toast. (Photo: CGissemann, Getty Images/Stockphoto)

Espresso Royale (Chocolate-Covered Espresso Beans)

A good spy, and a good Trivia Weekend player, is going to need energy — a lot of it — to get through a mission (or 50 full hours of trivia). Energy drinks aren't for everyone, but chocolate? Chocolate is universal. Try these super easy, homemade chocolate-covered espresso beans for a quite pick-me-up.

INGREDIENTS

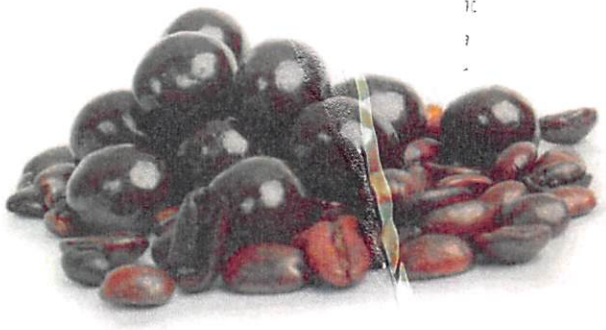
½ cup espresso coffee beans

1 bar high-quality chocolate, broken into pieces

Cocoa powder (sweetened or unsweetened, your preference), for dusting

Line a baking sheet or plate with parchment paper and set aside. Carefully melt the chocolate by slowly warming it in a heavy-bottomed sauce pan or double boiler. Once completely melted and smooth, remove from heat. Stir in coffee beans and mix, being sure to coat each bean entirely.

Using a fork, remove the beans and place on the parchment-lined baking sheet or plate. Sift cocoa powder over the beans and let sit until the chocolate is fully hardened. Remove from parchment using a palette knife or butter knife and store in an airtight container. Keep refrigerated.



Chocolate-covered espresso beans are a perfect sweet snack that also packs a caffeinated punch. (Photo: ReaganRule, Getty Images/Stockphoto)

Shot in the Dark

Could we really make a list of Trivia Weekend snacks without including coffee? No way. Desperate times call for caffeinated measures. A Shot in the Dark a.k.a. a Dead Man Walking, a.k.a. Coffee Suicide, a.k.a. a red-eye, is a shot of espresso in a coffee cup (or mug, or I.V. bag ... kidding. Sort of.) that is then filled with drip coffee. You can make this with as many additional shots of espresso as you like, but be warned: It may keep you up the full 50 hours of Trivia Weekend, and then some.

You can order a Shot in the Dark at your favorite coffee shop, likely under its more recognized name, a red-eye, or make one at home. Simply brew one or more shots of espresso, then brew your favorite (preferably caffeinated) drip coffee directly into the same cup. Add cream if you prefer it, but remember that a true hard-boiled spy would likely take it black as night.



Vodka martinis were James Bond's drink of choice - will they be yours this Trivia Weekend? (Photo: Stockphoto24, Getty Images/Stockphoto)

The Trivia-tini

It simply wouldn't be right to round out a spy-themed Trivia Weekend snack list without the favorite tippie of that sultan of spies, James Bond. Everyone

knows how Bond prefers his martinis, which are typically of the vodka variety: "Shaken, not stirred." Beyond that, there's dozens of variations on this classic cocktail, including our personal favorite recipe courtesy of Sir Winston Churchill, which includes a brief glance at the bottle of vermouth on the other side of the room as a method of inclusion.

This recipe, however, is a straightforward martini well-suited to a celebratory post-Trivia Weekend drink — or a toast to a mission: accomplished.

INGREDIENTS

2 ounces premium vodka

¾ ounces dry vermouth

2 dashes bitters (Optional)

Lemon twist or olives, for garnish.

Pour the ingredients into a cocktail shaker filled with ice. Shake well, then strain into a chilled martini glass. Garnish with a lemon twist or olives, to your preference.

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