



Zoobilee Participant Handbook

Thank you for your interest in our 34th Zoobilee event. By participating, you will help generate funds which support the valuable work done by Roger Williams Park Zoo. The event itself produces terrific exposure for the Zoo and all Zoobilee participants.

Each year, Zoo staff and volunteers make it their goal to provide participants with a fun, well-organized event that truly highlights our food and beverage providers. This handbook will provide you with all the information you need to better understand the event, what is required to participate, and how to make it a successful experience for your company.

I am new to working with Roger Williams Park Zoo and am very excited to be a part of the Zoobilee Committee. Zoobilee, which began in 1992, is a true Rhode Island summer tradition. This long-standing fundraiser continues because of the generosity of our food and beverage providers, like you.

I hope you can join us on June 27, 2026 to “Party With A Purpose”. Please feel free to contact me with any questions about Zoobilee or the information contained in this handbook. I look forward to working with you to create another fabulous event.

Sincerely,

Elisa Iacono-Mears
Event Project Manager - Zoobilee 2026
eiacono-mears@rwpzoo.org
Cell: 401-573-1279
Fax: 401-941-3988

Table of Contents

- General Overview of the Event4**
- Participant Benefits.....5**
- Event Logistics6**
 - How to Participate6**
 - Participation Fees6**
 - Arrival and Serving Time6**
- Department of Health Regulations.....7**
- Event Materials8**
- Certificate of Liability Insurance.....9**
- Food Serving Selections9**
- Food Ingredient Requirements10**
- Electricity10**
- Staffing10**
- Use of Name, Logos and Images11**
- Decoration and Promotional Materials.....11**
- Alcohol Beverage Policy11**
- Refuse & Recycling.....12**
- Other Sponsorship Opportunities12**
- Event Cancellation/Acts of God.....12**
- Zoobilee Forms13**

General Overview of the Event

Since 1992, Roger Williams Park Zoo (RWPZoo) has hosted, *Zoobilee* – a premier fundraising event that marks the beginning of summer in Rhode Island.

This is the largest, single-night fundraiser for Roger Williams Park Zoo. Money raised from this event will be used throughout the Zoo to finance necessary exhibit improvements, support education and conservation programs, and save threatened and endangered species around the world and in our backyard.

Zoobilee is unique because it allows over 1,100 adult guests an opportunity to stroll the Zoo at night while enjoying sample size treats from dozens of Rhode Island and Southern Massachusetts's best restaurants, eateries, caterers, and beverage outlets. Animal encounters and roaming entertainers help create a party atmosphere. The evening culminates with entertainment by a great headlining band which never fails to get the crowd dancing – it is a fabulous evening!

This year's event is scheduled for **Saturday, June 27, 2026**, from **6:00pm to 10:00pm**. Food and Beverage participants are asked to serve for 2 to 3 hours based on their location in the Zoo.

Zoobilee Participant Benefits**

Personal Interaction

- Dazzle 1,100+ guests with your menu selections
- Promote your brand to 1,100+ guests with giveaways, coupons, games, and other promotional materials as determined by participants (be creative!)

Digital Media Reach

- Logo and link on rwpzoo.org (over 1+ million visitors)
- Listing in the Zoobilee evite and RWPZ eNewsletter (over 300,000+ households)
- Name in the digital event program

RWPZoo Social Media Reach

- Facebook: 190,000+ followers
- Instagram: 85,700+ followers

Print and Television Advertising

- Rhode Island Monthly magazine full-page 'thank you' ad
- Press releases in major Rhode Island news mediums
- Promotional television spot
- WPRI Rhode Show event promotion and restaurant cooking segment

Event Signage

- Name on prominent event signage
- Customized booth signage

Zoo Perks

- Participant event staff can enjoy Zoobilee at the end of service
- Four (4) free daytime RWPZoo General Admission passes

**** Please note, the availability of benefits is dependent upon the date of participant confirmation.**

Event Logistics

How to Participate

Please contact Elisa Iacono-Mears, Event Project Manager Zoobilee, directly at 401-573-1279 or eiacono-mears@rwpzoo.org

Participation Fees

There is no charge to participate. We understand and appreciate the commitment and cost of serving at the event and believe that is payment enough.

Arrival and Serving Time

All participants are required to arrive at the Zoo early, any time between 2:30 pm and 4:30 pm to drop off equipment and/or begin set up. We stress that all participants must be set up and **ready to serve by 5:00p.m.** for the RI Department of Health inspection or we cannot start the event on time.

Based on the assigned location, we ask that Food and Beverage providers serve during the following hours: Lower Zoo: 6:00 pm to 8:00 pm; Upper Zoo: 6:00 pm to 9:00 pm. Locations and arrival assignments will be forwarded at least one week before the event.

The event cannot open to ticket holders until all booths have been inspected by the Department of Health. **Participants not ready to be inspected at 5:00 pm will not be able to participate in the event.**

Department of Health Regulations

All food participants must maintain a valid Rhode Island Department of Health (DOH) Food Service License and comply with RI DOH licensing and vendor requirements for Mobile Food Service for Temporary Events.

The evening of Zoobilee, the RI DOH will arrive at the Zoo anytime between 2:30 and 5:00 pm to inspect participants as they enter and set up. All food and beverage stations must be inspected before the gates open.

Participants must read and comply with the RI DOH Office of Food Protection “Temporary Food Service Vendor Requirements”. We would like to call special attention to the following DOH requirements:

- All food providers must maintain the proper RI DOH licenses which allow for Zoobilee participation (Food Service License, Mobile Food Service License Temporary Event).
- Hot foods will be served **135°F** or more, cold foods will be served **41°F** or less.
- All food prepared offsite must be prepared in a licensed facility.
- Each vendor must have a hand washing station consisting of a water dispenser, hand soap, paper towels and a catch basin.
- Participants must bring sufficient amounts of ice to cool down food products and keep products cold.
- Utensils, cutting boards, and food preparation surfaces must be sanitized, and vendors must bring a 3-bay sink setup.
- No bare hand contact is allowed with any ready-to-eat foods.
- Hair restraints must be worn when preparing and serving food.
- Food must be protected from environmental contamination.

Zoobilee evening, ALL food providers must be set up and ready for DOH inspection no later than 5:00 p.m. The event cannot open until all participants have been inspected.

Event Materials

RWPZoo will provide many of the materials to help make the evening a success. However, participants are asked to provide specific items. Please review the following lists for more details.

❖ **RWPZoo will provide:**

- A COMPLETE SERVING BOOTH :
 - 9x10 Tent & two (2) 8' tables with black linen tablecloths
 - Electrical power & lighting
 - Booth signage
 - Plates, bowls, utensils & napkins (all eco-friendly!)
 - Serving gloves & trash receptacles
- Event marketing promoting your brand
- Physical assistance with load-in and load out
- (4) Free daytime RWPZoo General Admission passes

❖ **Participants will provide:**

- Sample-sized menu item, 1,100 servings
- Staff, up to six (4) 21+ years old
- Food prep/serving equipment
- Required paperwork: COI, Zoo application, RI DOH Mobile Food Service License for Temporary Events & applicable RI DOH forms
- Equipment to comply with RI DOH requirements (i.e. fire extinguisher, hand wash station, etc.)
- Ice, coolers, extension cords *if applicable
- Decorations & promotional materials (be creative!)

Certificate of Liability Insurance

Participants are required, at their own expense, to provide a Certificate of Liability Insurance in the amount of at least \$1,000,000 for the specific date of Zoobilee. Certificate must name "Rhode Island Zoological Society and The City of Providence, 1000 Elmwood Ave, Providence, RI 02907". The Certificate of Liability Insurance must be submitted to RWPZoo four (4) weeks prior to Zoobilee.

Food Serving Selections

Deciding what to serve can often be one of the biggest challenges for participants. It is important to select an item that showcases talent and individuality, yet is easy to transport and serve. We ask that each participant submit their selection as early as possible to the Zoo before the event. While we try to limit similar menu offerings, vendors are not guaranteed exclusivity with their menu selection.

Participants may choose to use a gas grill at the event. Local rental companies are familiar with Zoobilee and will deliver equipment directly to the Zoo on the day of the event. Please inform Jennifer Foster if you will have equipment delivered so it can be sent to the appropriate gate. All establishments using gas grills are required to have an appropriate fire extinguisher at their tent.

Items should be sample-sized portions with ample quantity to feed 1,100 guests throughout the evening. We highly suggest serving bite-size samples to ensure you have enough product for the entirety of the event.

We do not allow establishments to serve alcohol. We have several established sponsors that offer wine or beer tastings each year. Serving alcohol also cuts into our bar sales which provide significant funding for the Zoo.

Please be sensitive to the Zoo's mission "to contribute significantly to the conservation of the earth's dwindling natural resources" and do not offer food selections from threatened or endangered species. Contact RIZS for more information. Also, due to Department of Health (DOH) restrictions, if you plan on serving hamburgers or tuna, you need to speak to the Zoo directly so we can receive DOH approval before the event.

Food Ingredient Requirements

Due to potential food allergies of our Zoobilee guests, our participants must follow these instructions:

- Participants must have an ingredient list available to patrons on the evening of the event.
- All participant event staff working Zoobilee must be aware of all food ingredients used.
- Participants should take particular care in identifying the ingredients associated with generally recognized food allergies.
- If serving raw seafood, please post the appropriate disclaimers.

Electricity

The Zoo will provide each tent with lighting and electricity for the event. We ask that you let us know of any electrical requirements 30 days before the event. This includes voltage and amperage requirements of the equipment you are bringing (pictures of your equipment may also be requested by the Zoo). By providing us with this information, we can assure you that you will be placed in an area with the correct electrical capacity. It is impossible to change your location the night of the event, so we must have this information before establishing a location for your tent.

Staffing

Participants are allowed up to **6 staff members** to serve at the event. We require that staff be **21 years of age or older**. Each staff member will register upon arrival and given a bracelet for exiting and re-entry to the Zoo as necessary. Each vendor is responsible for the conduct of their personnel and volunteers.

Participants must communicate staff names to the Zoo any time before the event. Participants requiring extra staff can purchase up to 4 extra tickets to the event at the Zoo employee discount of \$50.00 per person. Please contact Elisa Iacono-Mears if you require additional ticketing for staff.

Use of Names, Logos and Images

Participants will allow RWPZoo to use their name and/or logo for any advertising or marketing of Zoobilee in any medium at any time prior to, during, or after the Event.

During Zoobilee, food and beverage providers may be filmed/video recorded and/or photographed. Participants agree that all such footage is the property of the RWPZoo and participants will not receive any compensation for the use of any images. The Zoo reserves the right to use all photos in Event promotional materials.

Decoration and Promotional Materials

RWPZoo will provide each participant with a tent, identifying signage, two (2) 8' tables, and black linen table covers. Vendors are encouraged to be creative with their spaces, which may include decorations, logo napkins, menus, business cards, etc. Decorations must be in good taste and in the best interest of the Zoo. Zoo staff has the right to require the removal or modification of any display. Helium balloons and tiki-type torches are prohibited.

Due to space constraints, please consult the Zoo if you would like to bring larger displays so we can evaluate whether they can be accommodated. At the conclusion of Zoobilee, we ask participants do their best to leave their area as they found it, neat and clean.

Alcohol Beverage Policy

For your safety and the safety of our guests, we ask that you do not bring alcohol for personal consumption into the event. You and your staff are welcome to join the festivities when you are finished serving. Any staff member arriving or serving intoxicated will be asked to leave the premises.

Also, you may not serve alcohol at your tent unless you receive Zoo approval. If you have questions about our alcohol policy, please contact Elisa Iacono-Mears.

Refuse and Recycling

Our Zoobilee team works closely with the RWPZoo's Green Team to "enhance green practices such as recycling and waste reduction" at Zoobilee. We encourage our participants to use reusable, compostable, or recyclable items where possible. Please use the provided composting, recycling, and landfill receptacles to dispose of your Zoobilee waste. Volunteers will be available to assist you with proper and responsible waste disposal. "Green" questions should be directed to Jennifer Foster.

Other Sponsorship Opportunities

Each year the Zoo holds an online silent auction and a wine & beer bazaar in conjunction with *Zoobilee*. If you would like a further opportunity to promote your business, we welcome the donation of a gift certificate (valued between \$25.00-\$100.00) to your establishment or other larger items (i.e. catered meals, brewery tours, etc.). Donations are greatly appreciated and will be acknowledged in our marketing materials.

Event Cancellation / Acts of God

If RWPZoo should be prevented from holding Zoobilee by any cause beyond its control or if it cannot permit a participant to participate due to circumstances beyond its control, RWPZoo will have no further obligation to participants.

Additionally, RWPZoo shall have no liability for any damage to any person, matter or thing resulting from storm, wind, fire, strikes, lockouts, or other acts of God.

Zoobilee Forms

Zoobilee forms can be found on Zoobilee page of the RWPZoo website (<https://www.rwpzoo.org/event/zoobilee2026/>) under the “Interested in joining us as a food or beverage provider?” section.

Participant Application –This form provides us with contact information, proper name and address information for publishing, logistical information to help us prepare your serving location, and general information to ensure DOH compliance. This is due four (4) weeks prior to the event.

Employee List – Included in the Participant Application. If names are not available by application submission, a separate form will be distributed to collect staff names two weeks before the Event. Please supply the names of the employees working at the event. We will have this information at the gate for check in. Names may be substituted by contacting Jennifer Foster before the event.

Department of Health (DOH) Office of Food Protection “Temporary Food Service Vendor Requirements” – Participants must review and comply with all requirements in the DOH packet. All requested information must be forwarded to the Zoo at least 4 weeks prior to Zoobilee.