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In Some Circles of Friends, the Big Game Is Tuesday



Monica Almeida/The New York Times

Tammi Jaeger pouring a beer representing Senator Barack Obama of Illinois at a Barney's Beanery in Santa Monica, Calif.

By JENNIFER STEINHAUER



SANTA MONICA, Calif. — At the Barney's Beanery here, bartenders have assigned a brand of beer to each presidential candidate, inviting patrons to vote with their lips. In Leonia, N.J., a group of friends who have been gathering since 1980 to eat dinner and watch returns on election night will celebrate their first Super Tuesday meal over a nice tablecloth.

Four roommates in Flagstaff, Ariz., are preparing Romney waffles and Huck-a-burgers for

festivities there. "We want this to be epic," said Josh Conner, one of the hosts.

Nearly two dozen state contests, tightening polls and a diverse slate of candidates have turned this Tuesday into something of a national obsession — nearly as anticipated as a general election night, nearly as exciting as a [Super Bowl](#) and, as a bonus, falling on Fat Tuesday.

In bars across America, television screens still warm from Sunday's football game will

be lighting up with returns, celebrities in the canyons of Los Angeles are gaming the best place to sip their Malbec, and the rest of the riveted citizenry is loading up on guacamole and settling in for the first wide-open Super Tuesday in a generation.

"I can't remember another day like this in my life," said Mary Martire, 56, who is holding the sit-down dinner for 10 at her home in Leonia. Ms. Martire has been having the election-night dinners with volunteers from her local chapter of the [National](#)

[Organization for Women](#) for three decades, rotating houses and menus, but this will be the first Super Tuesday supper (and New Jersey's first entry in the Super Tuesday sweepstakes).

Propelling the ferment is the feeling among millions of Americans, led by their states' decisions to move up individual primaries, that their participation in the outcome is actually meaningful.

"We feel like we have a greater responsibility to make our choice," Ms. Martire said.

Drinks have been created — see Barack's Hope, with vodka and pear eau de vie, and McCain's Straight Talk Espresso Martini on drinksfoodandfun.blogspot.com — and menus designed on candidates' qualities and puns on their names.

At Barney's Beanery, Senator [Hillary Rodham Clinton](#)'s surprised visage is attached to the Coors Light tap, while Senator [Barack Obama](#) is affixed to Miller Lite. Senator [John McCain](#) and [Mitt Romney](#) are also beer choices, which will be tallied by the pub's three locations in the Los Angeles area at the end of Tuesday.

By midday Monday, Mr. Romney was leading the pack, but that might have had more to do with customers' beer preferences than with their political ones.

Other bars across America are readying for a repeat of Sunday night, monetarily if not thematically, when the New York Giants beat the New England Patriots in a huge upset.



Barney's will total up the number of each candidate's beers it sold at its three locations in the Los Angeles area

"It's fired a lot of people up," said Robert Eno, who is planning a young Republican watch party at a bar in downtown Boston, which will meld with others nationwide through a podcast and teleconference with [Newt Gingrich](#) at 10 p.m. "There's a choice on both sides this time. And things like blogs and [Facebook](#) have gotten more young people politically involved."

Mr. Conner of Flagstaff, who will be serving Clinton sausage balls at his party, said he had friends who never had an interest in politics now sitting through entire [presidential debates](#). "Even though everyone has become cynical about the whole process, there are still a lot of young people who want to believe," he said.

Other voters have their own connections to this primary contest, beyond their partisan leanings. "Being activists for women's rights for the past 30 years, we are thrilled at the possibility of a woman president

in our lifetimes," said Leigh Hallingby, who will be attending Ms. Martire's dinner party. "The fact that we are longtime feminists rooting for Hillary Clinton to become the first woman U.S. president certainly gives this Super Tuesday very special meaning for us."

Georgia will be one of "at least seven or eight" Super Tuesday states where real-time primary results will be displayed on giant digital billboards, said Jeff J. Golimowski, a spokesman for the Outdoor Advertising Association of America.

Atlanta will have four billboards posting results, including one across from Turner Field, said Conner Poe, executive director of the Outdoor Advertising Association of Georgia. "We'll be putting them up as fast as the secretary of state's office can report them," he said.

In the spirit of globalism, the fascination extends beyond the country's northern borders. Mark Stephenson, 23, of Victoria, British Columbia, is holding a party in which guests will dress up like their favorite candidates, watch CNN and eat organic burgers. He plans to assign each candidate a drink.

"Mrs. Clinton might be a piña colada," Mr. Stephenson said. "McCain's a vodka guy. Every state they win, we'll make a drink."