

GROUPS

The Blue Toro tailgaters have fun together while cheering on their favorite team, the Houston Texans



Mary and Al Grimaldo started the Blue Toro tailgating group in Katy



KATY TAILGATERS

Houston Texans football fans take the bull by the horns by grilling up fun and cheering their favorite team to victory

Written by Tassie Hewitt | Photography courtesy of the Blue Toro Tailgaters



“I love meeting new people and making new friends. I love saying we’re from Katy.”

- Al Grimaldo

Nothing fires up fans more than food and football. But for these Houston Texans supporters who teamed up with friends and a truckload of Katy spirit to form the Blue Toros, nothing beats tailgating - Texas-style.

Bring Enthusiasm

“The first thing everybody needs to know is that Texans fans have been voted the number one tailgaters in the NFL by John Madden,” says Fatima Donaldson, a Katy resident who has been tailgating with her husband for 10 years. “It can be anything from a couple of people gathering at the trunk of their car to buses with big-screen TVs and a huge party set-up, from small-scale to Texas-big.”

Donaldson, a Texans season ticket holder and member of the Blue Toros, enjoys the camaraderie of tailgating, especially with fans that understand and appreciate the game. “I’m one of those unique females who love football,” says Donaldson. “Watching it with other women and men who know the game and can speak the lingo is a really cool thing.”

Tailgaters rally around grills and coolers and celebrate before, during, and after the game, but the party does not happen without preparation and the enthusiasm of the ones who organize the weekly event.

Pre-Game Prep

“We’ve been tailgating forever, but people weren’t as friendly,” says Al Grimaldo, who started the Blue Toro group with his wife, Mary, last year. “So we decided to start our own. I love meeting new people and making new friends. I love saying we’re from Katy.”

The Grimaldos, who began tailgating with a handful of friends, watched their group grow to over 45 fans. It was then that they decided to give themselves a name, and chose Blue Toro, after their favorite team’s mascot. “You don’t want to name your group after a player because players come and go,” says Al, who credits his wife for coming up with the name. “Choose a name that will always be true.”

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Tailgaters can expect to be treated to a 60-inch TV, fajitas, burgers, and friendship

On game day, the two transport all the comforts of home to the stadium parking lot. “We try to leave our house by 6:30 a.m. to get to the game,” says Mary, who grew up in Fort Worth as a Cowboys fan, but fell in love with the Texans when she moved to the area. “The truck is full to capacity. We wait in line, then race to get our spot. We like to have the same spot so our friends can find us.”

Tailgating Essentials

The Grimaldos set up the tent like a living room complete with fans, heaters or air conditioners, banners and flags, and a 60-inch TV. Tailgaters can expect to be treated to fajitas or burgers before the game. Ticket holders will go in the stadium to watch the game, while the others settle down under the tent in front of the TV. During halftime there is music and dancing. After the game, the celebrating continues. The group even travels to away games to support their team.

“I think anybody can do it, but you have to have the desire to be there and invite your friends,” says Mary. Participants are required to have tailgate passes that are sold to season ticket holders to enter the lot. “It takes time, patience, dedication, and a lot of preparation.”

Contagious Spirit

You can't have a successful tailgating group without a tent full of team spirit. “We always have our Texans gear on,” adds Mary. “People ask if we own any other clothes. I have work clothes and I have Texans clothes. That's all I have.”

Their spirit is contagious. “Al and Mary are just so welcoming and friendly. The group has grown because of their generosity,” says Donaldson. “Everyone gets excited. It's a collective force that helps build even more energy and excitement around it.” KM

TASSIE HEWITT is a freelance writer who is convinced the only way to enjoy football is with friends, food, and a portable air conditioner.



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