New Orleans has hosted three previous BCS title games, with LSU playing in two of them, 2004 and 2008.

NEW ORLEANS (AP) -- With the sweet smell of powdered sugar and rich coffee wafting through the air, trumpeter John Mitchell plays to the audience savoring the French Quarter morning and the anticipation of the weekend ahead, tooting a brassy version of "When the Saints go Marching In" before segueing into "Hold That Tiger."

It's music to the ears of many in New Orleans as the New Orleans Saints and LSU get ready to strut their stuff primetime in the Superdome. The Saints on Saturday night in a first-round NFL playoff game against the Detroit Lions and the Tigers on Monday night against Alabama for the BCS title.

The games have stirred the hearts of fans and filled the tills of merchants, restaurants and hotels in a city that is finally shaking off the last vestiges of Hurricane Katrina.

"I play a little of everything," said Mitchell, who said he's performed on the city streets for 30 years. "But the big tips are in those two songs."

New Orleans is riding a sports tidal wave into the new year. The 2012 NCAA Final Four and Southeastern Conference men's basketball tournaments, the 2013 women's Final Four and the 2013 Super Bowl all will land in the Big Easy over the next 18 months.

The city also will celebrate the bicentennial of the War of 1812 - which ended with the U.S. defeating an invading British force in New Orleans - with a fleet of tall ships and military vessels in April and an air show featuring the Navy's Blue Angels that is expected to draw more than 100,000 people.

Add those to events the annual Mardi Gras and Jazz Fest bashes and it's easy to understand why spirits are soaring in a city that was devastated by Hurricane Katrina a little more than six years ago.

"This city is rocking, rocking, rocking," said Tommy Cvitanovich, owner of Drago's Seafood Restaurants. "Every place will be jammed all weekend long, with a lot of happy people."

Ground zero will be the Superdome, newly sponsored by Mercedes-Benz and spiffy as can be after a massive renovation following Hurricane Katrina. Elsewhere in the city, restaurants, clubs, hotels and cab drivers will carve up their share of a bounty of visitor spending.

Finding an open table at the city's leading restaurants will be almost impossible from Friday through Monday, restaurateurs said.

"A friend called and wanted to book a table for 11 Saturday night," said Ti Marten of Commander's Palace. "I told him I couldn't get my mother a four-top, let alone him an 11-top."

Brennan's in the French Quarter was booked all day on Monday by an LSU group, said Ted Brennan.

"I feel kind of bad for the Lions fans," Brennan said. "If any of them come, I don't know where they're going to stay. And if they get here and can get rooms, I don't know where they are going to eat."

Asked if there are hotel rooms available in New Orleans this weekend, Andrew Done, sales manager at the Hotel InterContinental said simply, "Nope."

"We were about 96 percent full before the Saints game was announced, now we are totally full," he said.

Although some Michigan fans who came in for the Sugar Bowl game against Virginia Tech intended to stay for the Lions game, they might have trouble finding tickets for Saturday night's matchup, said Mike Stanfield, the Saints' director of ticket sales.

"Our season-ticket holders bought up the tickets before the game was even announced," Stanfield said. "It's going to be a very difficult ticket to find."

Tickets are equally tight for the BCS game, with prices going well above $1,000 on ticket websites.

Each school gets 17,000 tickets, said John Sudsbury of the Sugar Bowl organization, which hosts the BCS championship when it's in New Orleans.

"I would assume the crowd will be a little more LSU," he said. "But I've been seeing a lot of LSU and Alabama gear for several weeks."

Fans have been scooping up LSU and Saints clothing and gear for the weekend - hot items include black-and-gold bumper stickers, pompoms and "Who Dat?" T-shirts, purple-and-gold flags, rally towels and "Beat Bama Again" T-shirts.

"I think it's going to be the biggest weekend we've ever seen in the city," said Pam Randazza, owner of the Black and Gold Sports Shop in Metairie, La. "We've just been swamped."

New Orleans has hosted three previous BCS title games, with LSU playing in two of them, 2004 and 2008.

The Sugar Bowl and BCS combined in 2008 had a $400 million dollar economic impact for New Orleans, according to Kelly Schultz of the New Orleans Convention and Visitors Bureau. But the real value is the publicity, having the city shown on national TV, the announcers discussing the food, the entertainment and other good qualities is a catalyst for future economic development, Schultz said.

"I'll tell you what, there are a lot of happy Who Dats and Tigers in Louisiana right now," 47-year-old John Atkins said as he was watching both games at friends' houses. "I just hope both teams win, because if they don't this will be one depressed place next week."