



magnets.com



FREE SHIPPING
CODE: SHIP2018

SHOP NOW

Phoenix restaurants are cooking up a bold, new future and culinary culture unique to Arizona



(Photo: Rob Schumacher/The Republic)

...so he planted a 3/4 acre farm just to feed the restaurant.

Both triumph and frustration have marked our rapidly evolving food culture, and the progress we've made has rarely followed a linear path. And yet, brilliant work is on display. A diverse group of forward-thinking culinary pioneers are helping Arizona cuisine find its voice, laying the groundwork for what's to come.

This weekend, dozens of local chefs will gather at the third annual azcentral.com Food and Wine Experience to show the best of what Arizona cuisine has to offer.



(Photo: Rob Schumacher/The Republic)

Dining in Arizona has taken immense strides and there is no lack of talented people who are moving beyond the steakhouses, Arizona-Mex and cowboy chow of old to develop a mature, contemporary cuisine to rival that of any American region.

Both triumph and frustration have marked our rapidly evolving food culture, and the progress we've made has rarely followed a linear path. And yet, brilliant work is on display. A diverse group of forward-thinking culinary pioneers are helping Arizona cuisine find its voice, laying the groundwork for what's to come.

This weekend, dozens of local chefs will gather at the third annual azcentral.com Food and Wine Experience to show the best of what Arizona cuisine has to offer.

As we consider where Arizona cuisine is going, we look at what we're doing right, and what will shape our state's food culture for years to come.



A little bit of flavor from the azcentral.com Food and Wine Experience at Salt River Fields at Talking Stick in Scottsdale, Arizona, Nov. 4-6. Hannah Gabari/azcentral.com

Better produce, better product

Great cooking starts with great products, and the depth and variety of local products has grown immensely over the past decade.

Chef Charleen Badman, who has earned national attention for [working sorcery with vegetables](#), describes an explosion of small, independent growers driving a sea change in Arizona produce.

"I have conversations with some farmers and they're like, 'You're not buying as much from us,' and I'm like, 'I'm really sorry, but eight years ago there were only two of you.'"



Chef Charleen Badman. (Photo: Dobby Wilcox)

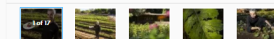
"Even up until the last couple of years, by the time August came around we had to get such a large quantity of stuff from California," says Badman, the chef at FNB in Scottsdale. "And I feel like we're becoming more and more independent with our produce."

That gives Badman, a semifinalist for the James Beard Awards, the tools she needs to do her best work. Along the way, Arizona's unusual growing seasons have become less of a hindrance and more of an opportunity.

"We have butternut (squash) all summer long," Badman notes. "And I used to dread it. How do you cook butternut in August? And actually, it's a lot more exciting. You change it and make it a little lighter in the summer. You play with it differently."



Photos: Quiescence at the Farm at South Mountain



Today, produce comes to the Valley from nearby parts of the state, where different climates expand and diversify growing seasons for local produce.

Dustin Christofolo, the chef at Quiescence and a second-generation talent in a farm-focused family, used his restaurant's summer break to seek out sources for lobster mushrooms from Flagstaff, blue oyster mushrooms from Sedona and Thompson grapes from Aravaipa. But he also has put local growing into practice in his own backyard.

Quiescence is at The Farm at South Mountain, and when longtime farmer-in-residence Maya Daley departed for a new location, Christofolo — along with a group of the farm's owners and friends — planted three-quarters of an acre to provide produce for the restaurant.



Executive Chef Dustin Christofolo slips some greens for a dish that he is preparing on Oct. 25, 2017 at Quiescence at The Farm at South Mountain in Phoenix, Ariz. Quiescence has planted a 3/4 acre farm to provide the produce for the restaurant. (Photo: Rob Schumacher/The Republic)

"It's really a dream come true," he says, "because I got to order the seeds. I know exactly where the seeds are coming from. I know that they're all organic. I know where they're being planted, I know what kind of succession we're planting them in, and I know that I'm going to have these ingredients at this time, so it's really easy for me to plan around that."

Christofolo is the first one to point out: "You don't need an acre property to have your own garden. But it's inspiring to me when I see a chef with a garden outside of the restaurant, even if it's just a little something with herbs in there."



Share your feedback to help improve our site experience!

FROM THE USA TODAY NETWORK



Urban Meyer's wife says she'd rather have Tim Tebow at QB in a shot at Colin...



Flip for Olympic snowboarder Julia Marino



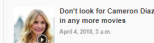
Lin-Manuel Miranda's son reviews 'Hamilton'

These clips are part of the USA TODAY NETWORK. Their content is produced independently from our newscasts.

MORE STORIES



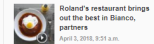
Sushi fans will love 2 new Japanese restaurants



Don't look for Cameron Diaz in any more movies



4 festivals to check out this weekend



Roland's restaurant brings out the best in Bianco, partners



Tempe's Alamo Drafthouse to open in May



'Walking Dead' finale + premiere on big screen