

SEE YOU *in* PHOENIX

Top restaurants, events, and agritourism attractions for a **FOOD-FOCUSED** getaway in **THE VALLEY OF THE SUN** BY ERIN JACKSON

To the uninitiated, Phoenix's sizzling, arid climate might not seem a likely locale for a hotbed of culinary creativity, but a revolution led by brave pioneers with a sustainable vision is brewing — and now's the time to discover it.



Photo credit: Visit Phoenix

■ FOOD, FARMS, AND OUTDOOR ART

Just an hour (by air) from San Diego, Phoenix is best explored with a set of wheels. Worthy destinations a short drive from downtown include Queen Creek, home to agritourism attractions like **QUEEN CREEK OLIVE MILL**, an olive oil mill and high-end market/eatery; **HAYDEN FLOUR MILL**, a hand-cultivated heritage grain mill; and **SCHNEPF FARMS**, a working family farm with “u-pick” organic gardens, amusement rides, a bakery, and more. On the way back to Phoenix, wander through **AGRITOPIA**, a planned community set around a 16-acre organic farm with lambs, chickens, peach and citrus orchards, and heirloom vegetables. A coffee shop, farm-to-fork restaurant, and farm stand are located at the heart of the 160-acre property. For the best experience, time your visit for a Wednesday evening so you can enjoy the weekly Farmstand and Food Trucks event. The **DESERT BOTANICAL GARDEN**, a 140-acre oasis with looping trails that takes visitors past towering saguaros and desert wildflowers, is always worth a look. British artist Bruce Munro's site-specific installation, “Bruce Munro: Sonoran Light,” will be on display until May 8, 2016. The exhibition features eight large-scale, light-based installations throughout the grounds.



Agritopia

■ DESTINATION-WORTHY DINING

From established winners to stylish new additions, add these dining (and drinking) venues to your Phoenix hit list.

WELCOME CHICKEN + DONUTS

{1535 East Buckeye Road; 602.258.1655}

Unique flavors like Chipotle Limón and Cherry Meringue make this old-school-meets-artisanal doughnut and fried chicken shop a must-visit. Better yet, it's located right near the airport so you can indulge minutes after touching down. ► WELCOMECHICKENANDDONUTS.COM

THE CLEVER KOI {4236 North Central Avenue #100; 602.222.3474}

Custom-built rice and noodle bowls make a great flavor-loaded and budget-friendly lunch option, with tasty small plates like Edamame and Corn Fritters and Kung Pao Chicken Wings. Bonus: \$6 classic cocktails also make it a great pick for happy hour. ► THECLEVERKOI.COM

OKRA COOKHOUSE & COCKTAILS

{5813 North Seventh Street; 602.296.4147}

Southern-style eats with an Italian accent (think Catfish al Forno, Umbrian-Style Fried Chicken, and Buttermilk Meatballs with polenta) are served here alongside a stellar selection of wine, craft beer, and cocktails. When in doubt, choose one of the seasonally inspired juleps. ► OKRAAZ.COM

PIZZERIA BIANCO {623 East Adams Street, 602.258.8300} and

{4743 North 20th Street; 602.368.3273}

Many critics—including the folks at Bon Appétit and GQ, and Andrew Zimmern—agree that this Phoenix institution serves the best pizza in the nation. Lines are inevitable at the downtown location, so come early (or visit the Town & Country mall outpost). Sublime Neapolitan pies, like the Rosa (with red onion, Parmigiano-Reggiano, rosemary, and pistachios), are worth the wait. ► PIZZERIABIANCO.COM

QUIESSENCE {6106 South 32nd Street; 602.276.0601}

Romance is in store at this sophisticated New American “garden-to-table” spot tucked away in a historic home at The Farm at South Mountain. The freshly picked produce highlighted on the progressive menu (and in the cocktails) is harvested from the surrounding organic vegetable gardens.

► QATTHEFARM.COM

POSTINO WINECAFE {multiple locations}

Enticing wines and a palate-pleasing menu of salads, sandwiches, and bruschetta boards make this collection of wine cafés with locations in Scottsdale, Tempe, Gilbert, and Arcadia a popular pick. On Monday and Tuesday evenings, score bruschetta and a bottle of house wine for \$20.

► POSTINOWINECAFE.COM

BITTER & TWISTED COCKTAIL PARLOR

{1 West Jefferson Street; 602.340.1924}

A team of expert bartenders employ obsessive attention to detail—like hand-cutting ice into crystal-clear spheres and crafting housemade infusions. The result? Stunning cocktails. A menu of craveable fusion fare like Green Chile Mac and Dumpling Burgers significantly ups the appeal.

► BITTERANDTWISTEDAZ.COM



Bitter & Twisted Cocktail Parlor



Postino Winecafe



The Clever Koi



■ **STAY HERE**

Situated on 2,400 acres within the Gila River Indian Reservation, the **SHERATON WILD HORSE PASS RESORT & SPA** is in a world all its own. Onsite amenities include a Native American spa, golf and tennis, luxurious pools with a 111-foot water slide, an equestrian center offering trail rides, and Kai, the state's only AAA Five Diamond/Forbes Five Star restaurant with a unique menu inspired by the Pima and Maricopa tribes. For the ultimate luxury experience, book a suite at **ARIZONA BILTMORE**, an architectural showpiece with eight dazzling pools, two 18-hole PGA golf courses, and elegant onsite dining. The chic and centrally located **HOTEL PALOMAR PHOENIX** offers perks like free loaner bikes and an evening wine hour, and is just steps from downtown sports, comedy, and music venues—along with the light rail system (which connects to the airport).

■ **SHOP LOCAL, EAT LOCAL**

Each Saturday morning and Thursday evening, local farmers, artists, and specialty and prepared food producers gather in downtown Phoenix to sell their wares at **PHOENIX PUBLIC MARKET'S OPEN AIR MARKET {721 North Central Avenue}**. Highlights include certified organic produce from **MAYA'S FARM**, artisan bread from **PROOF BAKERY**, and flavored milks from **DANZEISEN DAIRY** (including mocha, strawberry, and root beer). On Friday afternoons, rotating food trucks offer a variety of inspired eats. ▶ PHXPUBLICMARKET.COM



■ **EVENTS AND TOURS** *Cooler daytime temperatures make spring an ideal time to visit Phoenix. Here are some of the season's top diversions.*

Photo Credit: Kelli Tregallo



GREAT AMERICAN BBQ & BEER FESTIVAL - MARCH 19

Barbecue fans converge in Downtown Chandler to feast on saucy fare from more than 50 vendors at this fun event that also features craft beer, eating competitions, and a farmers' market. Ticket prices range from \$10 to \$125 for VIP. ▶ CHANDLERBBQ.COM

TAPPED BREW FEST - MAY 7

Attendees of this free-wheeling event at Camelback Ranch enjoy bottomless beer from 30-plus breweries, cold brew coffee, food truck fare, and games. Tickets run \$35-75. ▶ TAPPEDBREWFEEST.COM

SCHNEPF FARMS PEACH FESTIVAL - MAY 14 AND 15; 21 AND 22

This celebration of all things peachy features a peach pancake breakfast, fun activities for kids, and a plethora of peachy treats, like peach pies, peach cinnamon rolls, peach cobbler, and more. Free admission. ▶ SCHNEPFFARMS.COM/EVENT/PEACH-FESTIVAL



ARIZONA BREWERY TOURS - ONGOING

Beer fans can explore Phoenix's burgeoning beer scene on a behind-the-scenes tour, complete with a meal and plenty of samples. Public tours run Friday-Sunday, with a special "barrel-aged" tour each Wednesday. ▶ AZBREW.COM