

DINING OUT SPRING 2009

inthe mix

We've got the scoop on what's new and happening in Phoenix and Scottsdale.

THINGSTODO

Mmmm ... Beer

Have we got the hops portion of your diet covered or what? We'll keep your thirst for all things ale, lager, and stout quenched with a trio of beer-swilling soirées. The **Great Arizona Beer Festival** floods Tempe Town Lake with suds March 7-8. Next, we have Flagstaff's **Made in the Shade Beer Tasting Festival** on June 20. Finally, a quick road trip in September to quaff at the **33rd Annual Great Tucson Beer Festival**. Just doing our duty to make sure residents and visitors alike don't go thirsty. {azbeer.com}

All-Star Extravaganza

If you find yourself feeling a little vertically challenged in mid-February, gazing skyward to catch people's gazes, fear not. Phoenix plays host to the **NBA All-Star Game** {nba.com/allstar2009} February 13-15, meaning all manner of freakishly large and impressively coordinated individuals will be descending on Arizona for a weekend of hoops-related festivities. A myriad of ball-centric events and experiences will be on display all over Phoenix, including, of course, the fan-favorite dunk and three-point competitions. Rumor has it they might even get Shaq out for a free-throw demonstration.

Feelin' Hot Hot Hot!

Join some of the valley's top chefs and their top restaurants September 5 for **Phoenix Cooks!** {phoenixcooks.com}. Phoenix Cooks in September, nope, the irony isn't lost on us either. At any rate, this full day of food-worshipping delight is billed as "Arizona's premier culinary event," and certainly seems poised to prove it. Chock full of cooking demonstrations, competitions between local chefs and restaurants, and plenty of samples, this year's event promises to keep your palate and stomach satisfied.

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NEWINTOWN



Blanco Tacos + Tequila

Blanco Tacos + Tequila {480.305.6692; foxrc.net}

A local favorite in Tucson, Blanco opens a second casual and cozy location at The Borgata in Scottsdale. "The new location at The Borgata is amazing and the space is very cool. The menu will be similar to the Tucson location, but we are also adding a really great ceviche bar featuring four different items including lobster, crab, and shrimp," Executive Chef Christopher Cristiano says. Blanco's distinctive and clever menu succeeds in updating Mexican favorites to 21st century sensibilities: Blanco Tuna Tartare, Braised Short Rib, Avocado Queso Crisp, and the house specialty, Beef Enchiladas. The food is delicious, but Blanco is just as much bar as it is restaurant. They offer nearly 30 premium tequilas, signature drinks, and cocktails (made with fresh, seasonal fruits), and a wine and beer list with many of Arizona's most-loved varieties.

District American Kitchen and Wine Bar

{602.817.5400; districtrestaurant.com}

Inside the Sheraton Phoenix Downtown, District brings a decidedly independent spirit and clever design to this new building. "We serve comfort food in a contemporary, upbeat atmosphere," General Manager Heinrich Stasiuk explains. District creates what they call "twists on American classics" with a specific focus on local ingredients and showcased artisan farm products. The menu boasts big hearty plates like Grilled Cedar River Farms Rib-Eye and great American snacks like the Local Jerky Plate—a variety of jerkies served with pickled garlic, radish, and scallions. Guests seem to be impressed with the thorough Arizona-heavy micro draft selection (only \$3.75 apiece). For dessert, try the Pumpkin Whoopie Pie with a Bourbon Malt Shake. In the dining room (featuring local art from the Paulina Miller Gallery), at the bar, or on the street-side patio, District is proving to be one of the new hot places to be.