

Food Trucks and Good Eats



BY BARBI WALKER

For food lovers, good eats are just around the corner, thanks to the food truck revolution. Food trucks or “street eats,” as they are often called, have taken the country by storm in the last few years. Downtown Phoenix now has a regular fleet of them and will be celebrating the first anniversary of Food Truck Friday this November 4.

Food Truck Friday has been a staple at Phoenix Public Market, located at 14 East Pierce St., where food trucks set up for the Friday lunch crowd. These aren’t the “roach coaches” of years past, but delicious and even gourmet meals, all served in a casual neighborhood setting.

The food truck has been a part of Americana for many years, says Marshall Shore, who was recently named Best Unofficial Phoenix Historian by the *Phoenix New Times*.

But it wasn’t until around 2008, when the recession hit, that these once construction-site-taco-trucks found a niche in the haute cuisine world, according to a historical account of food trucks on Mashable.com. The popularity of food trucks has grown so much that the *Food Network* dedicated a show to them—“The Great Food Truck Race.”

At Food Truck Fridays you can find everything from unique hot dogs and vegan dishes to Filipino fusion and artisan ice creams. There truly is something for everyone here—the goal of the PHX Street Food coalition.

The coalition brings this unique food experience to the Metro Phoenix area in hopes that the city and local businesses will see how valuable street food is to the community it serves. Vendors use local, fresh produce and ingredients whenever possible and support local growers and farmers.

One food truck vendor whose passion for providing good, healthy food at a reasonable cost is Clea Senneville, who cooks up amazing vegetarian dishes for the beet strEAT truck. “I love food...I love good food and we were thinking of how I could support my social justice food aspirations,” Senneville says of her decision to buy a food truck.

Senneville and her partner, Jason Edwards, conjure up great vegetarian menu options that are healthy, full of flavor, and easy on the budget. Senneville says she wants people to experience good food and encourages the vegetarian lifestyle.

“We aren’t loud and proud about being vegetarian or vegan,” she says, “I just want people to have a good meal.” Senneville says the idea of doing a food truck really came from her and Edwards’ unique backgrounds, his in business and hers in social and environmental justice. “Together we wanted to make an impact on our local community, and the food truck idea seemed to be the right way to do it.”

The day I visited beet strEAT, the line stayed constant and long, and patrons were in good spirits while they waited for their food. Shore, who frequents Food Truck Fridays, says the weekly event is creating a community. People are coming together in this urban space, waiting in line together and then sitting at picnic style tables together and sharing experiences, he says.

Senneville agrees and says Food Truck Fridays is a great event to create a stronger sense of community. It seems like the trucks and the market are not only creating a community; they are gaining loyal repeat customers.

One diner, Steve Hart, said that he comes every week and has been eating his way through the various gourmet hot dogs from Short Leash Dogs - so far he likes the Poor Boy the best.

What truck owners have found that even in the technological world, word-of-mouth has been the best advertising for their business. However, social media has played an integral part in building a client base for these mobile restaurants, and many believe it helped launch and grow the gourmet food truck



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revolution. By tweeting locations, times and daily menu specials, customers can follow the trucks when they are on the move. Every food truck vendor at Food Truck Friday has a Twitter feed and logo on their webpage or menu, which helps to create a loyal customer base.

Delicious, fresh and local, food trucks are a medium that is bringing our community together.

Visit Food Truck Friday every Friday from 11:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. at Phoenix Public Market, 14 East Pierce St., Phoenix, AZ, 85004. Call (602) 254-1799 for more information, and for a list of food vendors, check the Phoenix Street Food's website: phxstreetfood.org. ■



RESOURCES

beetstrEAT.com

History of food trucks: mashable.com/2011/08/04/food-truck-history-infographic/
Marshall Shore: phoenixnewtimes.com/bestof/2011/award/best-unofficial-phoenix-historian-2730055/

Phoenix Street Food Coalition: phxstreetfood.org

Short Leash Dogs | @ShortLeashDogs

Sweet Republic | @SweetRepublic

Photography source: phxstreetfood.org

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***“We do not inherit the earth from our ancestors.
We borrow it from our children.”***

- Native American Proverb



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