

LOCAL FOODIE TOUR

BY BARBI WALKER

Locals know the best places for food, drinks, and all-around atmosphere. Whether you want laid-back and super casual, urban, hip and trendy, or just good old-fashioned food, ask a local. The local kitchen scene is alive and well in Arizona, and here are just some of the locals' favorites, and not so best-kept secrets.

PHOENIX



Le Grande Orange Market & Pizzeria

Better known as LGO, but it IS the spot for locals. From handcrafted cocktails, including a white sangria with fresh-cut fruit and Lucy's "spiked" lemonade with handmade vodka and fresh rosemary, to the ridiculously delicious brick oven pizzas, LGO is a local favorite. With a European-like market that sells fresh-baked bread and pastries, yummy sea salt chocolate chip cookies and other delightful desserts – LGO is not to be missed. Swing by and pick up homemade English muffins with your crisp fresh market salad. Both the market and pizzeria are kid- and dog-friendly. lagrandeorangegrocery.com



BLISS/reBAR

Come to BLISS/reBar to relax, unwind, or take in the groovy chill vibe. If you are looking for late-night noshing, BLISS/reBar is the place for you. With both indoor and outdoor spaces, finding the

right place to grab a bite is easy. Inside you can have a more relaxed laid-back dining experience, or pick up the pace and head outside to the outdoor lounge, which delivers a more up-tempo beat. Either way, food and drinks are served in both spaces, where you'll find just the right "bliss" for you. blissonfourth.com

Crescent Ballroom / Lounge

This local favorite is a mixed, reuse space which joins music aficionados, foodies, and lounge-loving locals all in one downtown Phoenix hot spot.

From supporting local bands and accommodating crowds from 300 to 500, this mid-size music venue is the place to see new and old favorite bands. Crescent Ballroom is also a lounge that is open every day with full-bar service and live music. Cocina 10 is the ballroom's kitchen, featuring a unique menu and operated by two of Phoenix's premier chefs, Chris Bianco of Pizzeria Bianco and Doug Robson of Gallo Blanco.

The menu has a bit of history, just like the building, and with the collaboration of Bianco and Robson, Cocina 10 offers what Bianco calls "Mexican-accented road food." Here you'll find many delicious items you can eat with just one hand, so you can enjoy the food, the vibe, and the music all in one space. Check out Crescent Ballroom's website for the live music calendar. crescentphx.com/calendar/

Gallo Blanco Cafe & Bar

This little gem has given Mexican food lovers a taste of Mexico City. With great food, affordable prices, and fresh, local ingredients, Gallo Blanco, the Clarendon Hotel's restaurant, is not to be missed. A casual and welcoming atmosphere from the bar to the restaurant, Gallo Blanco also supports sustainable fishing practices and local agriculture, so you are sure to get great, fresh-tasting food and support the environment too. Breakfast is served all day. galloblancocafe.com

NORTHERN ARIZONA

Cottonwood / Crema Cafe & Courtyard

For fresh homemade soups, quiches and pastries, try Crema Cafe & Courtyard in Historic Old Town Cottonwood. Open for breakfast and lunch, the cafe has an onsite creamery to serve up made-from-scratch gelatos and sorbets, including specialty gelato cocktails.

Located between Jerome and Sedona along Historic 89A and the Verde Wine Trail, Crema Cafe & Courtyard is open daily and serves local wines by the glass and craft brews on tap, as well as grown-up espresso drinks. cremacafe89a.com

Winslow / The Turquoise Room at La Posada Hotel

Started in 1935 by Mary Jane Colter as a private dining car for the train the Super Chief, The Turquoise Room began its love affair with the stars of Hollywood after the famed dancer and movie star Eleanor Powell became the first passenger.



The Turquoise Room has not lost its flair or flavor over the years – in fact, Chef John Sharpe was nominated for a James Beard Award this year. Here Sharpe infuses classic European cuisine with authentic American West ingredients. Well-thought-out sauces are nuanced with complex flavors that are perfectly balanced. The elk medallions served with Washington State fresh huckleberry sauce, or the quail in cherry sauce served with a wild chili tamale of venison, bison and wild boar are not to be missed. Each entree has a suggested wine pairing right on the menu as well. theturquoiseroom.net

SOUTHERN ARIZONA

Bisbee / Café Roka

Just south of Tombstone, you will find a hidden gem in Arizona restaurants. Owned and operated by Rod Kass, a well-seasoned chef with roots in Phoenix's premier eateries, Café Roka serves up modern American food inspired by California, the Mediterranean, and Italy.

Although Kass's signature is more a "style" than a dish, you'll find delicious items like his spectacular Portobello Mushroom and Artichoke Lasagna. Fresh, seasonal ingredients and local organic produce, sustainably harvested seafood, and farmed grass-fed meats make all the dishes delicious. Café Roka still offers four-course dinners but without the prix fixe menu. Fine dining in Southeast Arizona doesn't get any better than this. caferoka.com

Tucson / Cafe Poca Cosa

Mexican food with a modern flair. Here at Cafe Poca Cosa, owner and chef Suzan Davila makes sure that everything leaving the kitchen is more than perfect, it's amazing. This restaurant has authentic Mexican food, with hand-selected ingredients every day, served in an upscale but casual downtown bistro. Davila makes her menu come alive with a wide range of flavors.

From the house margaritas, which have fresh orange slices, to the Plato Poca Cosa, you won't be disappointed with your experience at Cafe Poca Cosa. The menu changes daily, but the chicken mole is not to be missed, nor is the green tamale pie.

A modern take on your usual Mexican restaurant, Cafe Poca Cosa takes the dining experience a bit more upscale with modern lighting, furniture and design. cafepocacosatucson.com

Tucson / El Guero Canelo

Started in 1993 by the Contreas family from a simple taco stand where Mexican hot dogs and true carne asada were staples. The stand evolved into multiple locations and what is now one of the local's favorite spots for Mexican food in Tucson. Serving up excellent street-style Mexican food, this walk-up, take-out small restaurant has outdoor covered seating that is packed at all hours of service. The Sonoran hot dogs are not to be missed, but if your tastes lean to the taco or burrito, there is a giant fixings bar where you can load up on your favorite toppings. Be warned, though, the burritos are huge! elguerocanelo.com

KINGMAN

Mattina's Ristorante Italiano

Voted third-best Italian restaurant by the *Arizona Republic*, Mattina's is located in the middle of a 100-year-old mining town. This upscale restaurant is an authentic Sicilian Italian restaurant and serves homemade pastas, true Italian sauces and delicate seafood dishes on its diverse menu. From pasta to steak to the lobster ravioli, there's something for everyone here. Sauces are prepared daily to accompany the variety of pastas. House specialties include grilled rack of lamb or fillet medallions topped with golden melted Italian cheeses. Start your course with antipasti platter or insalada caprese, and finish off with their famous tiramisu and an espresso. The menu changes weekly with a chef's choice of entree *and* pastry! mattinasristorante.com 

Arizona's food and dining options are as varied and as colorful as its terrain. Local chefs, vintners, and business people have turned Arizona into a great place for locals to eat, meet, hang out, and just enjoy more of what Arizona has to offer.

Photography courtesy of La Grande Orange, Cafe Poca Cosa, The Turquoise Room, and BLISS/reBAR