

### Food for Thought



This month's Scottsdale Culinary Festival (April 17-22) is best known for the Great Arizona Picnic, which attracts a crowd of more than 40,000 hungry Valley foodies each year. And the 2012 festival might be the best yet, as the picnic will host high-profile culinary celebrities like Andrew Zimmern of "Bizarre Foods" and Adam Richman of "Man vs. Food." Keeping the festival fresh is hard work but James Moser, vice president of the Scottsdale League for the Arts, is up for the job.

The community volunteer, who has been a part of the Scottsdale League for the Arts for 12 years, believes that this is an "organization of action." (The Scottsdale League for the Arts hosts the Scottsdale Culinary Festival, whose proceeds benefit local arts and art education programs.) Moser wants this year's festival to reflect how the culinary world is changing. Food is now seen as an art form; whether it be on "Top Chef," "Cake Boss" or "Cupcake Wars," the culinary world is becoming more creative and is now growing to be a performing media. This growth is beneficial to not only professionals and chefs but also to the culinary festivals. The organizers are now brainstorming how to make each festival more entertaining, like nabbing stars like Zimmern and Richman.

This year, Moser is revealing a few new elements to bring the festival up to date with the changing times. Moser's new additions include the Burger Battle during which chefs fight it out for the best burger, and the Epicurean Expo, which will showcase revolutionary advances in the culinary world. Moser always makes sure to provide to all tastes because, as a vegetarian, he has been in the situation where he could only eat grilled cheese sandwiches because restaurants and events didn't cater to his diet. This picnic will bring a variety of cuisine to the table, as more than 50 food and beverage vendors will be in attendance.

Moser, who grew up in farming country in the Midwest, is an outdoorsman who enjoys hiking, motorcycling and camping in his free time. When asked if he has any hidden talents he replies, "If you are lucky, I might play the guitar for you." Moser has been playing for 10 years and finds that it is the perfect way to entertain guests at the end of a fun evening. It is this artistic side that has helped him facilitate a creative new Scottsdale Culinary Festival.

### TO LEARN MORE

Scottsdale Culinary Festival [www.scottsdalefest.org](http://www.scottsdalefest.org).

Scottsdale League for the Arts [www.leagueforthearts.org](http://www.leagueforthearts.org).