

Tucson 23: A Mexican Food Fiesta Delivers a Taste of Tucson

Written by Allison Young



I love Mexican food. Dream about it. Which is why I thought I was hallucinating when I first heard about [Tucson 23](#), a culinary fiesta at the [JW Marriott Starr Pass Resort & Spa](#) featuring food samplings from Tucson's Best 23 Miles of Mexican Food, a strip of mostly family-run restaurants that claim to serve the best Mexican fair this side of the border, including the famed [El Charro Café](#), the nation's oldest Mexican restaurant and inventor of the chimichanga, that deep-fried burrito of deliciousness that can send me into a food frenzy of *Mmmms*. Where was I...oh yeah, Tucson 23. So I didn't waste any time snagging my ticket and before I knew it I was headed south towards the skyscraper saguaros of Tucson for a culinary force of flavor and history.

Yes, you could hit up all the restaurants along the 23-mile stretch, but food stall hopping through JW Marriott's grand ballroom was decidedly more convenient. I crunched my way through a red chili and bean tostada topped with lettuce from [Molina's Midway Restaurant](#). I sunk my teeth into a chorizo and queso fresco empanada from [Gringo Grill + Cantina](#). I savored a chicken taco with bell peppers and onions from [La Parrilla Suiza](#) and then I got thirsty. I sipped back a Roasted Ricky, a chili-infused gin cocktail with hints of cilantro from [Pasco Kitchen & Lounge](#)—OK, I chugged it. I sampled small-batch premium tequila from [CRUZ Tequila](#) so smooth and tasty I wondered why I ever bothered with Jose Cuervo in college. I sighed over prickly pear and jasmine kombucha from [Fermented Tea Company](#), the best I've ever had and smiled over a fresh-pressed gingery drink from [Pure Love Juice](#) that tasted like health in a glass. And I kept on stall-hopping, to [El Cisne](#), [Crossroads Restaurant](#), [Sonoran Sno-Cones](#) and more, happily spooning and chewing my way around the room while enjoying watching local artists in action and traditional Mexican dancing. I ended the evening on a sweet note, with the deliciously dense and impossibly chocolaty Mexican chocolate cake from [Blanco Tacos + Tequila](#) followed by a pineapple empanada from [La Estrella Bakery](#) that had just the right amount of sweet and tart to melt my taste buds into submission. And then I went back for another Roasted Ricky which definitely won my vote for best cocktail, like, ever, not that there were any prizes being given out (unless a wink counts).

The trophy of the evening was the collective food-loving atmosphere, patrons scraping their plates in delight and going back for more and restaurants happily spooning up food they'd proudly honed. Food dreams really do come true!