

Tucson Culinary Festival 2009

Written by Written by Amy Strand

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That's right, you guessed it—The Tucson Culinary Festival is back and better than ever. Embarking on its seventh year, this foodie fest will begin this Thursday, so we suggest going easy on the heavy fare and desserts until then. Trust us, you're going to want to start saving room now.



Taking place Oct. 1-4 at Loews Ventana Canyon Resort and Maynards Market & Kitchen, The Tucson Culinary Festival is your opportunity to taste the unique Southwestern flavors of the Tucson Originals restaurants (the area's leading group of independent restaurants). The Tucson Culinary Festival features four food-and-fun-filled days, each packed with various events to keep you busy and keep your taste buds interested. Here is this year's culinary lineup:

Thursday, Oct. 1: Milagro Tequila® World Margarita Championship

When: 5:30-8:00 p.m.

Where: Maynards Market & Kitchen patio

What: This year marks the 4th annual Milagro Tequila® World Margarita Championship where guests taste and vote on their favorite margarita, served by Tucson Originals bartenders. The winner is selected through a panel of celebrity judges, in addition to the "people's choice" vote. \$35 per person.



Friday, Oct. 2: Milagro Tequila® Lunch

When: 12-2:30 p.m.

Where: Maynards Market & Kitchen "Boardroom"

What: The Milagro Tequila® Lunch is a new addition to the Tucson Culinary Festival this year, as Milagro Mixologist Gaston Martinez and Maynards Market & Kitchen Executive Chef Addam Buzzalini get together for a tequila luncheon. The event will include a cocktail reception with appetizers, a tasting of six marks of Milagro and a two-course luncheon. In addition, guests will be educated on one of the world's finest tequilas. \$50 per person (not including tax). For reservations, call 520.545.0577.

Friday, Oct. 2: Reserve Tasting

When: 7-10 p.m.

Where: Loews Ventana Canyon, Canyon Café

What: For the true oenophile, the Reserve Tasting is an exclusive and elegant evening where up to 300 guests can sample more than 40 rare and limited wines, in addition to the delicious dishes made by 14 Tucson Originals chefs. A silent auction featuring rare wine and food-related items will also be held. \$125 per person, \$145 at the door.



Saturday, Oct 3: Grilling with Sugar and Spice

When: 2-4 p.m.

Where: Loews Ventana Canyon Resort, the Flying V patio

What: Flying V chef Alexis Martinez and spice guru Jennifer English will lead you in a seminar on grilling with marinades, spice rubs, side dishes and native Arizona ingredients. \$25 per person.

Saturday, Oct. 3: Grand Tasting

When: 6-9 p.m.

Where: Loews Ventana Canyon Grand Ballroom

What: Dubbed "Tucson's best party," the Grand Tasting will feature tastings of signature dishes from all 40 Tucson Originals restaurants and over 100 wine and spirit tastings from around the world. In addition, guests will have the opportunity to purchase cookbooks, wines, raffle tickets

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and more. \$75 per person, \$85 at the door.

Sunday, Oct. 4: Blues, Brews & Barbecue Sunday Brunch with the 4th Annual Copper Chef Challenge

When: 11 a.m. to 2 p.m.

Where: Loews Ventana Canyon, Kiva Ballroom

What: A live blues band plays while guests visit various food stations during Loews Ventana Canyon's signature Sunday brunch. At the Copper Chef Challenge (taking place during the brunch), Tucson Originals chefs compete to prepare the best dish with the use of a mystery ingredient. This year's competitors are Jim Murphy, chef/owner of Bluefin Seafood Bistro and Kingfisher Bar & Grill (back to defend his 2008 title) and Jeff Fuld, chef/owner of Elle, a wine country bistro. \$65 per person.

A portion of the proceeds from The Tucson Culinary Festival will go toward New Beginnings for Women and Children and the Ara Parseghian Medical Research Foundation. For more information, visit www.tucsonculinaryfestival.com.