Fall Food Festivals

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There's no need to wait until Thanksgiving to let the feasting begin. The Valley is chock-full of fabulous food and wine events this fall that are sure to cure any hunger pangs.

The Sixth Annual Phoenix Cooks
Clear your Labor Day travels as the most happenin' event is right here in town. The event takes place on Sept. 4 at JW Marriott Desert Ridge Resort. In addition to oodles of food, wine and beer tastings and culinary demos, this year's lineup welcomes the First Annual Latte Art Throw-down and the SRP Green College Football Tailgating Zone. Tickets are $75 in advance and $90 at the door, with proceeds benefiting Phoenix Children's Hospital. http://www.phoenixcooks.com/.

Arizona Restaurant Week
This September, more than 150 of Arizona's finest restaurants will be providing their same amazing service and fare but at a special price. From Sept. 18-26, Valley favorites like Fogo de Chao, Bistro 24, BLT Steak, Iruña, Tarbell's, Roaring Fork and Zinburger will all be offering tasty three-course meals, starting at $19 per person.
http://www.arizonarestaurantweek.com/.

Fifth Annual Dine Out With the Chefs
On Oct. 3, more than 20 of the Valley's shining culinary stars will gather at Scottsdale Center for the Performing Arts for Dine Out With the Chefs. Guests will have the chance to rub elbows with local chefs and sample their fare as well as take in live entertainment from the Beth Lederman Trio. Advance tickets are $55 or $65 at the door, with proceeds benefiting Scottsdale Center for the Performing Arts' programs and youth education and outreach initiatives. http://www.scottsdaleperformingarts.org/.

Arizona Taco Festival
On Oct. 9, the Arizona Taco Festival will make its debut. The festival will host a taco cook-off between 30 culinary teams and guests get to get a bite of the potentially award-winning tacos for $2 each (admission is $10, with a portion of the proceeds going to Waste Not). There will also be plenty of salsa, guacamole, shaved ice, tequila samples, margaritas and Mexican beer for purchase. www.aztacofestival.com.

Cupcake Love-In
The Hotel Valley Ho will host the city's first-ever Cupcake Love-In on Oct. 10 from 11 a.m. to 3 p.m. The Love-In, which was co-organized by Kelly Garcia of Butter & Me and chef Tracy Dempsey, will spotlight plenty of mmm-inducing cupcakes, a cupcake-eating competition, a raffle, kid-friendly activities and more. Plus, proceeds from the event will aid Singleton MOMS and Safe Haven for Animals.
http://www.cupcakelovein.com/.

Third Annual Crave AZ
For three days, Oct. 22-24, Crave AZ will take over Downtown Scottsdale. Notable events include the Grand Tasting along the Scottsdale Waterfront where guests can enjoy eats from more than 40 restaurants (the late October date promises glorious weather for an outdoor eating event) and the new VIP wine-tasting event, Decanted. http://www.craveaz.com/.

Ninth Annual First Press Weekend of Wine
Raise your glass: On Oct. 29 and 30, the First Press Weekend of Wine promises a sippin' good time. Friday's Grand Tasting, which takes place at the new Musical Instrument Museum, will offer more than 100 wines to sample while Saturday's First Press Fine Wine Auction will host a pre-dinner wine tasting reception, live entertainment and a live wine auction at the Westin Kierland Resort & Spa.
http://www.firstpressarizona.com/.