

Talkin' Tacos

LOOKING AT SOME OF OUR FAVORITE TACOS AROUND TOWN



Maccyo's salmon tacos

At EATERAZ, we believe that tacos are one of the most fashionable food categories right now. Nearly every restaurant serves some form of protein wrapped in a shell, from fine dining spots to neighborhood joints. So for 944's Fall Fashion Issue, we decided to write about the chicest food items around ... tacos!

And like everything we do, there's a shameless, gratuitous plug built into this story: We just happen to be throwing the Arizona Taco Festival on October 9 at the Scottsdale Waterfront. Come

out and watch 30 teams battle for Best Taco in various categories — chicken, pork, beef and seafood. There's \$7,500 at stake! You'll get to sample competition tacos while sipping on cold cervezas in the October sunshine. And because nothing goes better with tacos than tequila, we're building a tequila expo for about 30 brands to pour their best. Tickets are \$10, V.I.P. \$50. Buy them online at aztacofestival.com.



Mission pork shoulder

SALMON TACOS

Macayo's

Some call it corporate, we call it delicious. The Macayo's menu is like a greatest hits album of Mexican food — which also means that everything imaginable is on it. But one of the biggest surprises is a sneaky fish taco that isn't filled with the usual white fish. These are the real pink tacos, done up with salmon and shredded cabbage in street-style corn tortillas. They're served with black beans, pico de gallo, spicy salsa and lime wedges for about \$11.

macayo.com

PORK TACOS

The Mission

One of the hottest restaurants on the scene right now, The Mission is packed nightly thanks to owner Brian Raab, who's pushing some of the best tequila in AZ, and Chef Matt Carter (also of Zinc Bistro), who's created a bevy of mouthwatering dishes by fusing various Latin recipes with French techniques. The stars of the show are Mission's pork shoulder tacos for two. A giant piece of pork slow roasts with pineapple for more than 12 hours and is served up fork-tender. Then, hungry patrons can make their own tacos with their handmade tortillas, served on a warm, salt block. Add cilantro and red onions for street tacos like never before — guaranteed.

themissionaz.com

CARNE ASADA

America's Taco Shop

When the sign says "Best Carne Asada in the Valley," the tacos at least deserve a try. We've got to admit, for a quick, inexpensive, street taco that's served fast and by a fun staff, it really does

win. Another attraction: America's Taco Shop knocks down the price of their beloved tacos al pastor on most Tuesdays for a promo called Taco Tuesdays. These pork beauties are cooked the traditional way — slowly, on a vertical rotisserie, with other ingredients packed and marinating within. The meat is shaved off and placed in small tortillas. So although America's Taco Shop is a quick stop for most, it's a big luxury for anyone ordering al pastor or the best carne asada in the Valley.

americastacoshop.net

MIX & MATCH

Gallo Blanco Café

At \$2 to \$3 a pop for tacos, and with one of the coolest vibes in town, Gallo Blanco really can't be beat. Located inside the Clarendon Hotel in downtown Phoenix, the space is funky and modern, with a design that nods to the building's urban location (exposed ducts, concrete floors, exposed walls). Tacos are served in a metal zig-zag tray that's perfect for a mix-and-match order.

“A giant piece of pork slow roasts with pineapple for more than 12 hours and is served up fork-tender.”

Try one pork taco, a fish (whatever is freshly caught) and a veggie. Or two carne asada and a shrimp. Whatever combo ends up being put together, guests are guaranteed to walk away feeling like they scored a fine dining experience for a fraction of the price.

galloblancocafe.com

HARD SHELL GROUND BEEF

Papi Chulo's

Forget counting calories and wussing out with veggie tacos in a lettuce wrap — it's time to go all out. Do it in the new Papi Chulo's, located right off Scottsdale and Camelback roads. Papi Chulo's offers some amazing, deep fried, hard shell tacos, packed with anything from ground beef to pork cooked in adobo sauce. The soft shell tacos are also available fried, but we're partial to hard shell when we can get 'em. All tacos come simply with lettuce, pico de gallo and cotija cheese, and we recommend adding other items to your taco order (like the Wings El Caliente in chipotle sauce). And since calories don't matter here, it's OK to go ahead and add something else.

papichuloscantina.com