

TRUCK & ROLL

A Look at the Food Truck Scene in Phoenix. Wait, Phoenix has a Food Truck Scene?



The Mariscos Nuevo Altata truck raises its prices for groups, often laborers who stop by for all kinds of seafood

Here at EATERAZ, we've always joked: Flip through any copy of *New York* magazine from about two years ago, and you'll get a sense of the food trends now hitting the Valley. Don't get us wrong, we're not bashing on Phoenix. It's a known fact that trends hit us last — be they fashion or food. Wayfarer sunglasses were back in style on New York City streets about two summers before ours. Same goes for skinny jeans. On the food front, burger bars were a big deal in big cities years ago, and now there's a rush to open them in Phoenix. Even frozen yogurt ... New York and LA were mixing Heath bar pieces into nonfat vanilla long before we became one giant Yogurt Land.

So what's next? The answer may lie on our city streets. Food trucks have all but taken over Los Angeles and New York, and we're starting to see them crop up in Phoenix too, but not in ways that other cities enjoy them. In LA, trucks stake out a corner, send out

a tweet, and within minutes the hungry and trend-savvy descend for cheap but gourmet chow. Food-wise, the fare is far from a construction site roach coach — think Korean BBQ tacos, gourmet ice cream and grilled cheese.

Surely the trend will hit Phoenix. It always does. But there are some hurdles these trucks must get over, hurdles that involve city codes and health department rules and other regulations. Without getting into the bureaucratic details of why food trucks cannot currently just stop and serve on our city streets, we've put together a list of the first trendy and gourmet trucks out of the gate. They generally serve at farmer's markets and special events, which should be better for someone's schedule than dropping everything and rushing to Sixth and Grant for a quick taco. Mixed in the list below are a few of our standby favorites that tend to vend in a set location almost everyday.



Jeff Kraus of Truckin' Good Food servin' up Parisian fare in Phoenix



A light and fluffy crepe from Truckin' Good Food

SHORT LEASH DOGS

Although it's not so much a food truck as it is a food trailer, it's no less lovable. The husband and wife who run Short Leash are everything food truck owners should be — happy, friendly and livin' the dream. They start with locally made Schreiner's hot dogs and serve 'em up in a pita-like bun, which allows them to top dogs with wacky combinations such as mango chutney, diced jalapeños, red onions, cilantro and mayo. We've been hitting the Downtown Phoenix Public Market every Saturday for a Breakfast Dog with scrambled eggs, green chiles, veggies and a bunch of other goodness.

Twitter: @shortleashdogs

MARISCOS NUEVO ALTATA

This one is definitely the slipperiest of the bunch. Sometimes located at about 16th Street on Van Buren and sometimes deep in the avenues along Glendale, this truck sets up a nice blue-tinted dining room outside its small ordering window. The menu, ironically, is huge. About 25 items are listed, including a ceviche tostada for \$3, shrimp cocktail for \$12, marlin tacos for \$2 and a whole collection of seafood for \$20. We've gone through a couple of taste tests and think this is a fun food truck to check out. Plus, fresh coconuts are on ice and ready for the straw poke.

TORCHED GOODNESS

After 17 years in the hectic restaurant industry, it was time for Eric Ireland to focus on one thing and do it well. So, really, why the hell wouldn't that thing be crème brûlée? Served in single-size, foil cups, these little \$4 desserts are becoming all the rage wherever Torched Goodness throws down the parking brake. Lately, that tends to be the Town & Country Farmer's Market on Wednesdays, the Scottsdale Airpark at varied times and the Ahwatukee Farmer's Market on Sundays. Check its Facebook page for updates.

Twitter: @torchedgoodness

NOGALES HOT DOGS

Set up in a parking lot at 20th Street and Indian School almost every night of the week until midnight or 1 a.m., Nogales Hot Dogs has become a pop-up icon in Phoenix. It serves Sonoran hot dogs (meaning the dog is wrapped in bacon) in a not-so-subtle way. The dog is topped with pinto beans, pico de gallo and a light mayo. Not enough? Hit the side cart stocked with *cotija* cheese, guacamole sauce, mushrooms, peppers and more. You'll eat under tents right on Indian School Road, soaking in the glow of 7-Eleven's fluorescent lightbulbs across the street. Dogs are only \$2 each, but we suggest doubling up — two dogs per bun. You'll thank us for it.



Freshly made pomme frites from Truckin'



Brad and Katherine Moore, the owners of Short Leash Dogs

TRUCKIN' GOOD FOOD

This truck's been holed up in the refurb garage for the latter half of the summer and is making its big No. 2 debut about now. The menu's great — Parisian street food, meaning savory crepes, sweet crepes, *pommes frites* and beignets, along with fruit tarts and other surprises. This truck is definitely one of the most popular, making appearances at almost every farmer's market in the area throughout the week.

truckingoodfood.com

SWEET REPUBLIC

If someone hasn't heard of Sweet Republic by now, they're either living under a rock or in some weird cone of silence because the media coverage on these guys has been frenzied to say the least — and it's all well-deserved. Republic was one of the Valley's first truly creative artisanal ice cream makers, and the shop at 92nd Street and Shea quickly became a big draw. But its best move? Deck out an old ice cream truck with, well, ice cream. They brought scoops of Point Reyes bleu cheese ice cream, a signature mint lime and others that make for a perfect refresher.

Twitter: @sweetrepublic



.....➤ The Phoenix Public Market is inviting all food trucks and carts to join forces on Friday afternoons for a Downtown Mobile Food Court lunch. Stay tuned to EATERAZ.com not only for more details, but also news of other trucks hitting the streets. There are at least eight that we know of that should debut in the coming months. Meanwhile, we'll be reading *New York* magazine to find out what's happening in Phoenix in 2012.