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**7TH Annual Arizona Taco Festival Heats Up THIS SUMMER
with Characteristically Creative Prelude Events
'Margarita Wars' and 'Rock the Guac'
put Beloved Cocktail & Culinary Recipes to the Test this Summer**

Scottsdale, Ariz. (July 28, 2016) – **Seventh Annual Arizona Taco Festival** is rolling out cocktail and culinary competitions, delivering summertime fun in anticipation of this Fall's ever-popular event, Oct. 15 & 16, at Salt River Fields.

Margarita Wars at Counter Intuitive. Bi-weekly cocktail competitions are slated this summer in partnership with Counter Intuitive, Scottsdale's hottest new cocktail bar. Margarita Wars are a prelude to Arizona Taco Festival's brand new *Margarita Expo Tent*, Sun., Oct. 16, which is a new extension of the event's legendary Saturday Tequila Expo.

This summer, each installation of Margarita Wars features two competing bartenders using different agave-based spirits to create their version of margarita. Participants will advance to the *Margarita Expo Tent* Sun., Oct. 16, at Arizona Taco Festival. There, attendees will vote for their favorites, resulting in the top mixologist of the *Margarita Wars*.

Margarita Wars take place every other Monday, 6pm to 8pm at Counter Intuitive, in Old Town Scottsdale, 7133 E. Stetson Dr #4, Scottsdale, Ariz. 85251, and features FREE samples of the competitive concoctions.

The 'war' began Mon., July 25, a square off between Modern Margarita using *La Fortaleza Tequila* and Clever Koi featuring *Tequila Ocho*.

Next up Mon., Aug. 8, is Crudo featuring *Siete Leguas* vs. Jade Bar featuring *Azunia* tequila.

Schedule to date:

- **August 22.** Oban featuring *Arette* and *Okra* using *Nuestra Soledad San Luis del Rio*
- **September 5.** Casino del Sol (Tucson) featuring *Monte Lobos* and *Bitter & Twisted* using *El Tesoro*
- **September 19.** The Ostrich featuring *Herradura* and *Blue Hound Kitchen & Cocktails* with *El Jimador*.

'Rock the Guac,' Fri., Sept., 16, Hotel Valley Ho. Meanwhile, at Arizona Taco Festival, guests can explore the *Margarita Expo* for \$20, to sample up to 10 margarita cocktails of their choice from participating bartenders.

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The winner of the *Margarita Expo* will receive a trip to *Tales of the Cocktail*, a leading industry event in New Orleans.

Meanwhile on the culinary side of things is *Rock The Guac*, Fri., Sept. 16 – on NATIONAL GUACAMOLE DAY -- which also coincides with Mexican Independence Day.

From 6-9pm, at Hotel Valley Ho, 6850 E. Main St., Scottsdale, Ariz. 85251, *Rock The Guac* will pit (pun intended...!) more than 12 of the metro area's top chefs in a battle for *Top Guac* and provide a festive way for guacamole fans to celebrate the big day, and gear up for Arizona Taco Festival at Salt River Fields.

Participating chefs include:

- Jennifer Russo- The Market by Jennifer's
- Chef Mark Tarbell- Tarbell's & The Tavern and Wine Store
- Doug Robson- Otro Café
- Mel Mecinas- Talavera at The Four Seasons Scottsdale
- Justin Pfeilsticker-Hotel Valley Ho
- Fidencio Alatrister- Bootleggers
- Aaron May- The Lodge & Overeas & Goodwood
- Stephen Jones- The Larder + The Delta
- Bernie Kantak- The Gladly & Citizen Public House
- Anthony Serrano- El Palacio Cantina
- Kim & Tim Cobb: United Luchadores & The Taco & Dilla Parlor
- Aaron Pool- Gadzooks Enchiladas & Soup
- Forest Hamrick- La Hacienda
- Richard Hinojosa- The Wigwam
- Jacob Cutino- Homeboy's Habanero
- Alex Stratta- OAT Restaurant Group

Rock the Guac Tickets. Tickets are \$40 online only at www.universe.com/rocktheguac featuring unlimited guacamole samples and two drink tickets featuring Patron margaritas, Corona *cervezas* and more.

About Salt River Fields at Talking Stick. Salt River Fields is a central landmark within the Talking Stick Destination. Completing its sixth MLB Spring Training season in 2016, the world-class, LEED Certified Gold venue serves as Spring Training home of the Arizona Diamondbacks and the Colorado Rockies, and was named #1 Spring Training Destination by Sports On Earth featured on MLB.com. The facility is surrounded by some of the world's most beautiful mountain panoramas, and is a popular year-round destination for major community events. Salt River Fields is an enterprise of the Salt River Pima-Maricopa Indian Community and has earned multiple awards including Ballpark Digest *Ballpark of the Year*, Trip Advisor *Certificate of Excellence* and multiple *Best Spring Training Field* by Arizona Foothills Magazine. Visit www.SaltRiverFields.com

About Arizona Taco Festival. The Arizona Taco Festival was founded by David Tyda and Rick Phillips of Affordable Food Festivals in 2010. With a combined 40+ years experience in media, publishing, marketing and promotions, the duo created the world's first taco festival, which has grown to attract over 35,000 people. This year marks their first attempt at creating a taco festival-related calendar of events outside of the large-scale, two-day fiesta. They also produce the food blog, EATERAZ.com, and host other culinary festivals throughout the year.

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