

Things to do and see in the Grand Canyon State

Find your Inner Chef at the Tubac Culinary School



If you go:

TUBAC CULINARY SCHOOL

50 Avenida Goya
Tubac, AZ 84646
520-398-8501
tubacculinaryschool.com

HOURS/COSTS:

Open Monday
through Saturday

BREAKFAST:
8 to 9:30 a.m.
\$36 plus tax.

LUNCH:
Noon to 1:30 p.m.
\$44 plus tax.

DINNER:
6 to 9 p.m.
\$86 plus tax.

TUBAC, LONG FAMOUS FOR FUNKY ARTIST STUDIOS, STUNNING DESERT VISTAS, AND RICH ARIZONA HISTORY, now boasts a thoroughly modern landmark — the Tubac Culinary School. What better way to learn the inside scoop on Southwestern cuisine than to take a class where the focus is as much on entertainment as it is on cooking?

The Tubac Culinary School, located in the Plaza De Anza, just south of town, caters to all non-professional skill levels, with most classes lasting several hours. Students take home a batch of new recipes and the skills to prepare concoctions that not only fill a home with a savory bouquet, but taste great too. And there's always the chance that you'll make new friends in school.

Classes are taught year-round, six days each week, with a combination of workshops and demonstrations. Menus change daily.

Seminars take place in a state-of-the-art demonstration kitchen, complete with granite countertops

and Viking appliances. The facility can accommodate up to 15 participants, and reservations should be made well in advance, especially for weekend classes. Instructors focus on local ingredients and teach such Southwestern specialties as tortilla soup, beef roulade with chorizo and green chili, and coconut flan.

Chefs pepper each session with useful tips. Attendees learn how long spices last on the shelf, how to flip leftovers into an innovative meal, or even how to tell if an avocado is over-ripe. As enticing aromas permeate the air, teachers demonstrate the correct way to chop onions and garlic. Students can practice crafting tamales or soufflés in a morning workshop or watch the chef prepare a themed lunch or dinner — well fortified with champagne and wine (the students, not the chef).

Executive Chef Noah Aguilar leads a team skilled in preparing regional cuisines.

"I didn't exactly plan to be a chef," says Aguilar, with a twinkle in his eye. Back in college, he'd been more familiar with the works of William

Shakespeare than the teachings of Julia Child. As a freshman, Aguilar studied English Literature at Northern Arizona University, but all that changed the day he began serving potato flautas and beer to vegan friends for a modest fee. "That's when I noticed I was clearing \$400 a day." A new career was born.

Aguilar left the university to attend Vermont's New England Culinary Institute, where he fed his passion for the science behind the art of cooking. Later, he honed his culinary skills by studying in different parts of the country. He learned the ins-and-outs of seafood in North Carolina and, in Colorado, the proper ways to prepare beef. A year in Oregon taught Aguilar the value of fresh, local produce, and the best ways to forage for wild mushrooms, lettuces, and fiddlehead fern. After nearly six years learning Italian food and how to pair wines, Aguilar wanted something new. His chance came when he and his wife moved right back where he started—Tubac. After a year designing menus as Banquet Chef at the Tubac Golf Resort, Aguilar was approached with an offer to jump aboard the new Tubac Culinary School. A year later, he became Executive Chef.

Chef Aguilar's proudest addition is the Saturday morning Junior Chef's Club, a class for kids that he insists on teaching himself. Aguilar recalls that when he was a boy, there wasn't much to do in Tubac. Now kids can learn to cook—and they love it.

His young students prepare everything from simple sandwiches to fare as sophisticated as sweet and savory crêpes and fried calamari, but what's more surprising is that they even eat it. Aguilar says the kids are comfortable



trying a new dish if they prepare it themselves.

The Saturday morning Junior Chef Club proved so popular that in 2007, the Tubac Culinary School ran summer camps—four week-long gastronomical experiences to teach young chefs from all over the country how to be comfortable and creative in the kitchen. Summer camp sold out and was an enormous success.

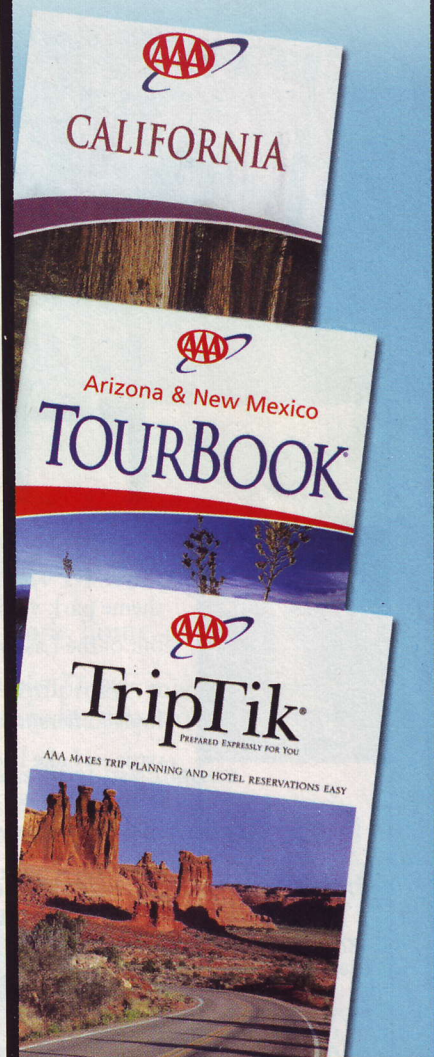
So how does it all come together? A teaching chef must instruct even while checking steak temperatures and grilling zucchini, Aguilar explains. To succeed in such a business, a chef must be competent in the kitchen and a performer as well. "A good chef has three qualities," Aguilar says. "He's a leader, has humor, and is good at math."

In addition to the scheduled classes, the school offers a veritable smorgasbord of customized choices. Groups from Tucson can choose the Dinner and a Limo option to ease the worry of a long drive home. Private parties can prepare appetizers for afternoon tea or learn such specialized skills as cooking with fish, tossing a superb salad, or putting together tantalizing desserts.

Reasons abound for trying out the Tubac Culinary School, but none is better than the school's own motto—just for the fun of it. **H**

KATE REYNOLDS is co-author of The Insiders' Guide to Phoenix.

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