

CERTIFICATION CRITERIA & STANDARDS

UNIQUELY LOCAL, RESPONSIBLE, DELICIOUS



JANUARY 2023

ABOUT TUCSON CITY OF GASTRONOMY CERTIFICATION



Tucson City of Gastronomy (TCoG) is a non-profit 501(c)(3) organization formed in 2016 to manage Tucson's UNESCO Creative City of Gastronomy designation. TCoG's mission is to "grow a sustainable desert community by supporting our creative food cultures."

One of the ways TCoG fulfills this mission is by recognizing local food businesses for a commitment to the Southern Arizona foodshed, use of heritage ingredients, sustainable and responsible business practices, and giving back to the community.

TCoG's certification program began in 2020 certifying restaurants, and has grown every year to include more categories of food businesses. As of January 2023, there were 52 restaurants, 27 food and beverage artisans, nine local foods retailers, and four catering businesses.

This document outlines important information related to TCoG certification standards and processes. We are excited to continue to grow and strengthen the program every year, and hope that you'll help us spread the word!

WHO IS ELIGIBLE TO APPLY?

RESTAURANTS

All cuisines and all types of food service, including food trucks

ARTISANS

Food or beverage producers using local or heritage ingredients and craft methods

CATERERS

On-premise and off-premise food service for events

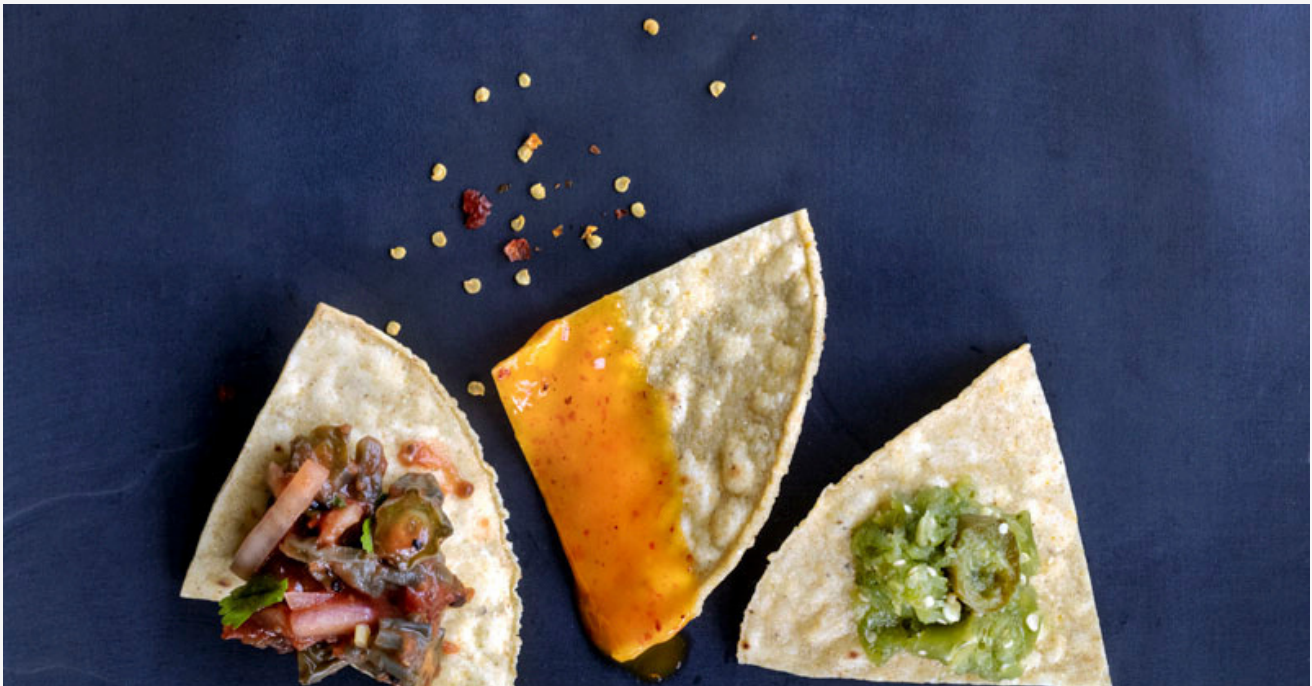
RETAILERS

Brick-and-mortar or online stores selling local ingredients and food products (no wholesalers)

**other categories may be added in the future, please check back if your food business does not currently fall into one of these categories*

BASIC REQUIRED CRITERIA

- Locally owned (south of the Gila River) and independent
- Uses scratch recipes
- Commits to displaying the TCoG certificate
- Participates in a TCoG-sponsored food or beverage event each year
- Meets the criteria of one or both of the first two categories (*supporting the local food economy and keeping our food heritage alive*)



GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

MOVE THE LOCAL CULINARY SECTOR AND FOOD SYSTEM IN POSITIVE DIRECTIONS BY:

- Increasing sales for locally owned food businesses keeping our food heritage alive, supporting the local food economy, and using responsible business practices
- Strengthening the local food value chain
- Supporting our creative food cultures
- Guiding locals and visitors to locally owned food businesses that are setting positive examples and working with heritage ingredients and flavors of the region.



BENEFITS FOR FOOD BUSINESSES

- Association with the internationally visible TCoG brand
- Increased visibility to visitors and locals via promotion by TCoG, Visit Tucson, and Pima County Heritage and Visitors Center - positively impacting sales
- Being showcased in a national marketing campaign and international annual events with Pima County funding
- Recognition of your business for uniquely local food and leadership in responsible business practices
- Growth in customers seeking to patronize responsible, locally owned businesses
- Increased media coverage of your business
- Increased ability to attract and retain skilled employees
- Opportunities to participate in international exchanges and special events



BENEFITS FOR FOOD BUSINESSES



IN ADDITION, FOOD BUSINESSES HAVE THE FOLLOWING MARKETING OPPORTUNITIES

- Display the “Tucson City of Gastronomy Certified” badge on your business door, website, social media, and marketing materials.
- Promote your business as a TCoG Certified business in your digital, print, and event marketing.
- Special promotions by TCoG, Visit Tucson, and Pima County to residents and visitors.



CERTIFICATION STANDARDS

This section details some of the specific criteria we use when determining certification. This criteria is by no means exhaustive, and we also welcome unique ways that individual businesses are going above and beyond in these four categories.

1. SUPPORTING THE LOCAL FOOD ECONOMY
2. KEEPING OUR FOOD HERITAGE ALIVE
3. COMMUNITY-MINDED BUSINESS PRACTICES
4. SUSTAINABILITY LEADERSHIP

SUPPORTING THE LOCAL FOOD ECONOMY

This category assesses business practices related to involvement in the local and regional food ecosystem.

LOCAL SOURCING

A portion of produce, meat, and/or value-added food products used in menu items are sourced from a locally owned food distribution company or directly from local producers.

LOCAL HIRING

Regularly hiring employees or sponsoring interns from a local culinary training program.

PARTNERING & MENTORING

Advising new local food businesses or partnering with other local food businesses on sourcing, purchasing, special events or promotions, or other business activities.

MEMBERSHIP IN LOCAL CULINARY INDUSTRY ORGANIZATIONS

Organizations such as Tucson Originals, Tucson Restaurant Advisory Council, Gastronomic Union of Tucson, American Chefs Association of Southern Arizona, and Slow Food of Southern Arizona





KEEPING OUR FOOD HERITAGE ALIVE

“Heritage Ingredients” are defined as ingredients tied to the history and cultures of Southern Arizona and the Sonoran Desert.

HERITAGE INGREDIENTS

Heritage ingredients are used year round in menu items, artisanal food and beverage products, or retail sale.

REGIONAL DISHES

Traditional recipes characteristic of the region are used year-round (i.e., flour tortilla tacos, green corn tamales, tepary beans, nopales/nopalitos, carne seca, cheese-stuffed chiles, ceviche, etc.)

TRADITIONAL TECHNIQUES

Traditional preparation techniques historically characteristic of this region are used (grilling with mesquite wood, sun drying beef, fermentation, “cooking” seafood with citrus juice marination, sun drying or roasting chiles, nixtamalizing corn masa, flavoring with adobo spice or Sonoran sea salt, etc.).

TRADITIONAL/ CREATIVE RECIPES

Traditional versions or contemporary interpretations of recipes historically characteristic of this region, or newly created dishes made with heritage ingredients.

COMMUNITY-MINDED BUSINESS PRACTICES

This category assesses employment practices and involvement in the community.

EMPLOYEE HIRING, SUPPORT, & DEVELOPMENT

Hiring people facing obstacles to employment, paying above minimum wages for non-tipped employees, and offering benefits to full-time employees (paid sick leave, health insurance, matches for retirement savings, professional development opportunities, etc)

STAFF DIVERSITY

The management staff reflects the diversity of our community.

ADDRESSING COMMUNITY NEEDS

Making donations or fundraising for local nonprofit organizations or agencies meeting community needs (emergency food programs, shelters, counseling, schools, heritage conservation, etc.) or donating directly to needful populations.





SUSTAINABILITY LEADERSHIP

This category assesses commitment to the environment

SUSTAINABLE, HUMANE, AND FAIR TRADE SOURCING

Animal products are hormone-free, antibiotic-free, and/or cage-free; some products used are certified organic; a percentage of products are fair trade certified; seafood is sustainably sourced.

ENERGY & WATER CONSERVATION

Renewable energy and/or energy saving appliances are used; graywater is diverted to on-site foliage, drinking water is only offered upon request.

EARTH-FRIENDLY PACKAGING

Use of plastic and Styrofoam is reduced or eliminated by using refillable and/or compostable containers, utensils, cups, straws, etc.

WASTE DIVERSION

food waste is composted; cooking oil is recycled.

LOW MILEAGE/REDUCED FOOTPRINT

Ingredients are harvested from an on-site or off-site garden and/or edible landscape, and/or urban gleaning program; non food supplies are sourced locally.

TIMELINE & OTHER DETAILS



- Applications can be filled out online, visit: tucson.cityofgastronomy.org/programs
- Applications are open year-round and are reviewed by a committee quarterly.
- Certifications are valid for two years, at which point you will need to recertify
- There is an annual fee to help cover the costs of maintaining the program; fees are tiered by size of business
- If you do not qualify for certification, we are happy to work with you to improve your scores.

PARTNERSHIPS

We believe that partnerships and collaborations are a vital part of our work as an organization and specifically with our certification program. We are grateful for the continued commitment from these organizations, who work with us on events, promotion, and support for Tucson City of Gastronomy Certification and expanding the local food business ecosystem here in Southern Arizona.



STAY IN TOUCH

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IMAGE CREDITS

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