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# ROAMING GOURMET'S Food Tour for Valley Visitors

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BY KATHY COUTURIÉ

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*We invited Kathy Couturié (a.k.a. the Roaming Gourmet) to come visit us from Edible Communities in California. When she arrived in the Valley, we asked her to devise the perfect day for food-obsessed, out-of-town visitors. After a whirlwind of research on Kathy's part and many admonishments from the editor to keep the article to a reasonable length, here's what she came up with.*



**Breakfast:** There can be no better way to start your day in Phoenix than at Matt's Big Breakfast. It's small and centrally located downtown. It's cheerful—lots of cheerful bright orange surfaces, on 50's style diner furnishings. The service is beyond friendly, and the food is divine.

Matt himself took our order—hard to decide between The Hog & Chick (2 eggs, choice of thick bacon, country sausage or

off the bone ham), The Chop & Chick (2 eggs and a skillet-seared Iowa pork rib chop) or the Salami Scramble (3 eggs scrambled together with soppressata salami). Fortunately Matt made the decision easy; the special was chorizo and eggs scrambled with jalapenos. I've yet to meet a chorizo I didn't like, and Matt's was some of the best ever—and he didn't even take credit for making it! The chorizo came from AJ's, and my friend's sensational thick-cut bacon came from The Pork Shop in Queen Creek.

Matt's philosophy is explained on the back of the menu: "We think that food tastes better when prepared simply with better ingredients. That's why we have sought out items to serve in our restaurant that are of a very high quality. We use only cage-free eggs from humanely raised chickens, grain-fed natural Iowa pork, all natural beef, and we use local organic produce where appropriate and possible." Say no more—this is my kinda place.

Matt's serves lunch starting at 11 a.m., and I was hard-pressed not to return to enjoy a Big Butter Burger that same day. We often photograph some of our favorite meals, and when we asked Matt if it was OK to take a picture he said, "Sure—it's your plate. Do whatever you want."

After I demolished the chorizo and eggs, I kindly assisted my friend with finishing her thick cut bacon, and enjoyed a thick-cut piece of 9-grain toast with Terra Verde's blackberry jam. I didn't want to miss a thing—every bite was sensational.

*Matt's Big Breakfast is at 801 N. 1st Street Phoenix, (602) 254-1074, [www.mattsbigbreakfast.com](http://www.mattsbigbreakfast.com).*

## Housewares/Cooking

**Classes:** No food-lover's visit to Phoenix can be complete without a stop into Kitchen Classics. This deceptively small-looking retailer stocks an astonishing amount of housewares, including appliances, bakeware, blenders, butcher blocks, cleaning supplies, cookware, cutting boards, flatware, food processors, gadgets, tools, knives, pots and pans, pot racks, pressure cookers, steamers, smokers, aprons, mitts, wine accessories and more...



There is an awesome wall of gadgets—I counted eight different thermometers, and six different types of kitchen shears, and found locally made "Bear Paws"—useful hand extensions from Hungry Bear Creations in Mesa. There are fantastic overhead hanging pot racks throughout the store, as well as an impressive selection of espresso machines and martini sets.

Kitchen Classics features Messermeister knives. While I was there a professional chef was lingering over the knife display, trying to identify which Messermeister he would be purchasing to use in his own home. He loved using them so much in his restaurant, he'd found he couldn't live without them near at all times.

While paying for my organic Loofah Art scrubber (in the shape of an orange, but they also have bananas and pineapples!) customers came in asking for: a rotary ricer, a mushroom brush, and an ice crusher—naturally, Kitchen Classics had them all.

I picked up a schedule of cooking classes. The next time I visit Phoenix I will have to check this schedule in advance, as all their classes sound fabulous. During the four days I was in Phoenix, seven classes were being offered, including "Soups and Breads" from Chef Julie Wood, "Now We're Smokin'!" from Chef Christopher Green, and "Cookies and Brownies" from Chef Anne-Marie Blanco.

*Kitchen Classics is at 4041 East Thomas Road Phoenix, (602) 954-8141. They have an extensive website with an alphabetical listing most of the products they carry, visit [www.kitchen-classics.com](http://www.kitchen-classics.com).*

**Food Shopping:** For gourmet food enthusiasts, it can't get much better than the scene at La Grande Orange. Described to me as "food heaven, in one city block", this was a must-stop.

Owners Craig and Kris DeMarco have assembled an amazing array of edible delights in a hip grocery store, and that's just the start of it. There's a coffee bar, a juice bar, a price-friendly wine department, a pizzeria, and a café serving breakfast and sandwiches until 5:00 p.m., plus salads and sushi all day. During the day, the restaurant space that houses the pizzeria is open for customers to sit and enjoy such delicacies as a chopped salad for two (containing Hobbs turkey, crisp greens, tomato, egg, avocado, bacon and Huntsman's cheese) or any number of Tammie Coe's amazing pastries including Zebra cake (white chocolate mousse layered with chocolate cake and raspberries), or Bananas Foster (banana cake laden with orange brandy and caramel cream).

This is the first time I've spotted Hobbs' excellent meat products outside the San Francisco Bay Area, proof that the folks at La Grande Orange know their stuff. In a refrigerated section adjacent to an exquisite flower stand, I spotted the aptly-named Divine pastas and sauces from Los Angeles, superb Humboldt Fog and Cowgirl's Red Hawk cheeses from Northern California, and Maya Kaimal's divine Indian tikka masala and vindaloo sauces. There's even a "housewares" section with cookbooks from some of my favorite Bay Area restaurants: César, Boulevard and The Zuni Café.

The gourmet market is divided into sections, where you can find goodies such as Maestri's gorgeous pastas, C. Steele's Arizona preserves, Los Chilenos green chile stew mix, Marilyn's locally made chips and salsas, two of my all-time favorite California olive oils (DaVero and McEvoy), and even heavenly organic Dagoba chocolate bars from Oregon.

I took a walk around the complex, and was delighted to see Tammie Coe's bakery, (her wedding cake samples are amazing), as well as Michael Coe's "MJ" breads (a complete array is also sold at La Grande Orange). Across the parking lot, is Postino Winecafé—also owned by the DeMarcos. The café features panini, bruschetta, salads and an impressive array of wines and beers. This is a great-looking industrial style space, with huge roll-up doors enabling customers to enjoy fresh air dining, both in and out.

*La Grande Orange is at the corner of 40th St. and Campbell in Phoenix, (602) 840-7777, [www.lagrandeorangegrocery.com](http://www.lagrandeorangegrocery.com).*

**Lunch:** I'd read about Pizzeria Bianco as a "Must Enjoy Before You Die Foodie Destination" in Phoenix, and was thus delighted to find myself at Chris Bianco's new take-out restaurant, Pane Bianco for lunch.

The menu is very simple—there are four sandwiches, all served on wood-fired focaccia bread made on the premises, and two salads—a housemade mozzarella, local tomato and basil, and a tuna with

red onion, gaeta olives and lemon on arugula. I ordered the day's special: a pancetta sandwich with housemade mozzarella and fresh basil, along with a glass of delicious iced coffee from Lux coffeebar, immediately next door. My friends enjoyed the housemade mozzarella, local tomato and basil sandwich—the tomatoes were divine, and melted beautifully into the outstanding bread.

Pane Bianco has a dramatic concrete interior with a counter up front, and a large wood burning oven looming in the spacious rear area of the building. While you wait in line to order, you can watch the bread for your sandwich being baked. There are bottled drinks: Hildon still or sparkling waters, a house cola, cream soda, Bubble Up and sweet leaf tea. We ate at picnic-style tables on the outdoor patio - by the time we'd finished our lunch there was a line to order, and a line for seats at the tables.

There are also select gourmet goodies to take home—jars of pickles, Au Beurre Salé caramels from France, and packets of ancho red chili peppers from New Mexico, to name a few.

*Pane Bianco is at 4404 N. Central Avenue Phoenix, (602) 234-2100.*



**Dining:** Three of us enjoyed a spectacular dinner at Mosaic Restaurant in North Scottsdale—the perfect way to end to a hard-core Foodie excursion to Phoenix. Owner/Chef Deborah Knight and her partner, Matt Rinn, did everything humanly possible to ensure that this would be a meal that will go on my Top 10 list of memorable meals I’ve enjoyed while writing for Edible Communities.

We ordered three appetizers from the ever-changing seasonal menu: Thai shrimp and coconut soup, Persian lamb kebabs, and black quinoa stuffed Hatch chiles. The Thai soup was extraordinary—dark and smoky, with a huge shrimp floating amidst shitake mushrooms, scallions, and cherry tomatoes. We loved the quinoa-stuffed chiles—it was a delight to find a unique chile dish in this part of the world. We then split two entrees: Citrus poached Maine lobster, and sesame dusted Barramundi. The lobster melted in our mouths, along with the mashed potatoes it was served with. I’d never tried Barramundi, which was similar to halibut in its consistency, and I savored every bite.

Wine Director Matt Rinn’s wine list contains over 400 vintages, and reads like a page-turning novel. I was thrilled to see Sean Thackrey’s exceptional red wines from Bolinas, CA—proof that Matt has fabulous taste in my humble opinion.

Since we were leaning toward seafood, we ordered the reasonably priced 2003 Lageder Alto Adige Pinot Grigio from Italy. But then we found that Matt does wine pairings as requested, along with Mosaic’s three nightly five-course tasting menus. Fortunately Matt gave us sample pairings: a Torre Oria Tempranillo “Grand Reserve” for the lamb, a Barnett Chardonnay from Spring Mountain Napa for the lobster, and a Tablas Creek Viognier/Marsanne Cotes de Tablas Blanc from Paso Robles for the barramundi. All three were sensational, and I will have to return in order to sample a Mosaic Tasting Menu, along with Matt’s wine pairings.

We completed our meal with the restaurant’s signature chocolate cupcake—a Valrhona chocolate dream-come-true.

Mosaic is a physically beautiful restaurant, made up of small dining rooms that can be enjoyed for private parties or corporate dinners. Chef Knight uses the freshest, organic, seasonal ingredients to create a unique, eclectic style of cooking, and the menu offers an amazing selection of tastes too divine to list here. Trust me—just get thee to Mosaic, the next time you’re in Phoenix. You won’t be sorry.

*Mosaic Restaurant is located at 10600 East Jomax Road in North Scottsdale, (480) 563-9600, [www.mosaic-restaurant.com](http://www.mosaic-restaurant.com).*

**Beverage:** Sportsman’s Fine Wine & Spirits is a wine shop/tasting bar/café all rolled into one. You can come here to enjoy appetizers (housemade hummus, classic bruschetta with fresh mozzarella, etc.), daily specials such as a BBQ beef melt, salads (caprese, pesto chicken caesar, chopped, etc.), cold sandwiches (albacore tuna, roast beef, etc.), panini (caprese or turkey), quesadillas (BBQ chicken, garden and Spanish melts) or cheese and charcuterie platters that serve two to three people—along with your choice of 67 wines by the glass.



If these don’t strike your fancy, then you can pick out any wine in the store—there are hundreds. Sportsman’s offers a jaw-dropping selection of wines, liquor, dessert wines, beer, wine accessories, wine-related giftware and even exquisite gourmet gift baskets. Sportsman’s is Arizona’s largest Riedel glassware dealer. Their horizontal displays of wines in tiers make label reading easy. I spotted a recent discovery from a very small winery in Healdsburg, CA—a Copain Pinot Noir, as well as well known favorites such as Kermit Lynch’s Domaine Tempier ‘03 Bandol Rosé, and an Alexander Valley Silver Oak Cabernet.

There are regularly scheduled complimentary wine tastings, and they frequently host special events such as wine education classes, wine luncheons and dinners. During my visit, there was a Wednesday evening “Flight Night” featuring Paso Robles Cabernet blends—the following week the flight was from the Stags Leap District in Napa, CA.

I briefly considered delaying my flight home in order to stay and enjoy a Duckhorn tasting extravaganza on Saturday, featuring 11 wines from four vintages of the Howell Mountain Merlot. Lunch, plus a \$10 voucher for use in the store that day was an incredibly reasonable \$25 per person.

*Sportsman’s has multiple Valley locations; we visited the one in Phoenix at 3205 East Camelback Rd., (602) 955-7739, [www.sportsmans4wine.com](http://www.sportsmans4wine.com).*

*Since it’s impossible to stop the Roaming Gourmet once she’s gotten started, we allowed her to write about a few more of her favorite stops in Phoenix. You’ll find her description of the Vincent’s Market on Camelback on the articles page of the Edible Phoenix website: [www.ediblephoenix.com](http://www.ediblephoenix.com).*