

Traveling with Jewish Taste

But It's A Dry Heat – Praising Arizona

By Carol Goodman Kaufman



Joel and I were recently in Arizona, he for a one-day meeting, I to tag along. We had planned to stay an extra couple of days to enjoy the sunshine and visit some sights. However, as Winter 2015 would have it, Juno the Great Storm blew in, canceling flights to the Northeast and adding 3 more days to our stay. Not to worry. Phoenix has lots to do and see, all under bright sun, and with no snow.

The only potential problem was that 1.5 million people were in the process of descending on the city for both the Phoenix Open golf tournament and the Super Bowl. Our hotel threw us out in favor of the NFL, so we were lucky that the same storm that kept us in

town also kept many sports fans from flying in, making a room available for us in Scottsdale.

The first Jew on record in Phoenix was Dr. Herman Bendell, who arrived in 1871, one year after the town was laid out. He served as the Superintendent of Indian Affairs for the Arizona Territory. The first Jewish settlers followed a year later. Among the earliest families were the Goldwassers, who established the Goldwater's department store chain. Episcopalian Senator Barry Goldwater was a member of this family, but he was far from the only MOT active in Arizona's political and civic life.

Between 1907 and 1914, great numbers of Jews were fleeing pogroms in Russia and Eastern Europe, so the Jewish Immigrants Information Bureau, under the baton of New York-based banker and philanthropist Jacob Schiff, established The Galveston Movement. The goal of this initiative was to divert these immigrants away from the East Coast of the United States and to the country's interior. Some say the program was a means of preventing anti-Semitism that might result from an onslaught of Jews and thus lead to immigration restrictions, while others with a less charitable bent believe that the established eastern Jews just didn't want their unwashed brethren in their neighborhoods.

By the time the Movement ceased operation, the Bureau had sent 10,000 immigrants from Galveston port to cities and towns throughout the West. Some of those Jews arrived in Phoenix, joining co-religionists who had been there for decades.

The Jewish population of Arizona increased dramatically after World War II, as soldiers who had been stationed there returned to set up housekeeping. Phoenix continues to be one of the fastest-growing cities in the country, with an estimated 2,000 Jewish families moving to the area every year. Over 40 congregations, a Federation, and many agencies serve almost 100,000 Jews today.

Jewish life in Phoenix is varied and full. The Arizona Jewish Historical Society



Glass sculptures by Dale Chihuly at the Desert Botanical Garden

operates the Cutler-Plotkin Jewish Heritage Center in what was originally Temple Beth Israel, the first permanent Jewish congregation in the area. Built in 1921, the Spanish mission-style building is listed on the National Register of Historic Places. The Center serves the community as a museum and cultural center, as well as a venue for events open to the community – one is just as likely to see a young Latina's quinceañera as you are a bar mitzvah party.

You may want to sign up for a tour of Phoenix and Scottsdale that will take you to 12 sites of Jewish history. These include The New York Store, the early locations of historic synagogues, and even the one-time home of director Steven Spielberg. The tour is followed by a light lunch and a talk about the resources of the Cutler-Plotkin.

This past February, Phoenix inaugurated Limmud Arizona, an offshoot of the United Kingdom-based organization that sponsors volunteer-led Jewish learning experiences.

The Greater Phoenix Jewish Film Festival, showing Jewish-themed films from around the world, has been going on for 19 years. What started with three films in 1996 has grown to 24 films shown in multiple locations.

And Arizona Adventurers is an all-volunteer Jewish outdoor club for both singles and couples.

'An estimated 2,000 Jewish families are moving to the Phoenix area every year'

JEWISH TASTE, continued on page 6



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JEWISH TASTE, *continued from page 5*

The Musical Instrument Museum bills itself as “The World’s Only Global Musical Instrument Museum,” a unique institution in which over 6,000 instruments from about 200 countries and territories are displayed. Interactive exhibits allow the visitor to see and hear instruments performed in their native context. Among the exhibits of particular Jewish interest are those about klezmer and Israeli music, featuring both modern and vintage footage. A beautiful silver-clad shofar is also on display in section about the use of rams’ horns.

Taliesin West, set in the spectacular desert foothills of the McDowell Mountains, was the winter home and school of famed architect Frank Lloyd Wright. During a docent-led tour of the facility, we learned about Wright’s personal and professional life, sat in his living room on furniture designed by him, and wandered among the orange trees enjoying beautiful sculpture on display. The buildings now serve as the eponymous school of architecture and foundation.

The Heard Museum of American Indian Art and History is a gem in downtown Phoenix, where the histories of Native American peoples are illustrated through their arts and crafts. We found most interesting the gallery focused on the Indian schools, private boarding academies whose mission was to “de-Indian-ize” their students. Concurrent with the huge sports events in town that week, the museum mounted a special exhibit, “Beautiful Games: American Indian Sport and Art,” which remains on view until late November 2015.

Wherever we go, I like to visit a botanical garden, so our last stop was Phoenix’s own Desert Botanical Garden, located on 140 acres, 55 of which are under active cultivation with over 50,000 plants on display. We got quite a surprise when, approaching the entrance gate, we saw a grouping of very bright and sparkly green cacti. It turned out they were glass sculptures by Dale Chihuly, the remains of a large exhibition of his work.

Despite our extended stay, we didn’t



Taliesin West

get to see everything in town, but given that enticing mixture of sun, warmth, and culture, we are inclined to return.

Fish Tacos

Adapted from Chow.com

The first two times I tried fish tacos were in the Northeast, where fish is easy to come by. The tacos were, well, fishy and I couldn’t figure out what the attraction was. It wasn’t until I got to the Arizona desert where, as far as I know, fish don’t thrive, that I tasted the most divine fish tacos. Of course, fish flash-frozen at sea is probably fresher than what passes for “fresh” in the market. In fact, the ones I ate were so good that I had them several times over the course of our visit. So, here is my version. Enjoy!

Ingredients:

- 1 lb. mahi mahi or cod
- 2 limes, halved
- 2 cloves garlic, finely chopped
- ¼ teaspoon ground cumin
- ¼ teaspoon chili powder
- Canola oil
- Kosher salt

- Freshly ground black pepper
- ½ small head of cabbage cored and thinly sliced
- ½ medium sweet red onion, thinly sliced
- ¼ cup coarsely chopped fresh cilantro (optional)
- 6 to 8 soft (6-inch) corn tortillas

Directions:

1. Place the fish in a baking dish and squeeze one-half lime over it.
2. Add the garlic, cumin, chili powder, and 1 tablespoon of the oil. Season with salt and pepper.
3. Turn the fish in the marinade until evenly coated.
4. Refrigerate and let marinate for about an hour.
5. Meanwhile, combine the cabbage, onion, and cilantro in a large bowl and squeeze a half-lime over it. Drizzle with 1 tablespoon oil, season with salt and pepper, and toss to combine. Taste and add more salt and pepper if necessary; set aside.
6. While the fish is cooking, warm the tortillas by heating a medium frying pan over medium-high heat. Add 1 tortilla at a time, flipping to warm both sides. Wrap the warm tortillas in a clean tea towel and set aside while you prepare the fish.
7. Brush the grates of a grill pan or large skillet with oil and heat over medium-high heat until hot. Remove the fish from the marinade and place on the grill.
8. Cook without moving until the underside of the fish has grill marks and is white and opaque on the bottom, about 3 minutes. Flip and grill the other side until white and opaque, about 2 to 3 minutes more. Transfer the fish to a plate.
9. Taste the slaw again and season as needed with more lime juice. Slice the remaining lime halves into wedges and serve with the tacos. To construct a taco, break up some of the cooked fish, place it in a warm tortilla, and top it with slaw and any optional garnishes.
10. Serve with guacamole, green chile sauce, and sour cream.

Serves 3 or 4



The Musical Instrument Museum’s silver clad shofar

Carol Goodman Kaufman is a psychologist and author with a passion for travel and food. She is currently at work on a food history/cookbook, tracing the paths that some of our favorite foods have taken from their origins to appear on dinner plates and in cultural rites and artifacts around the world. She invites readers to read her blog at carolgoodmankaufman.com and to follow her on Twitter @goodmankaufman.

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