

EVENT // Délice Network Meeting

DATES // May 1-3, 2019



Only a select number of cities are members of the Délice Network, an international professional organization that focuses on utilizing food and gastronomy as a tool for economic development. The prestigious selection process goes beyond the city's popular food scene and looks deeper into a city's ability to integrate its food with tourism and economic development plans.

Tucson is a member city that holds the honor of representing the United States, a distinction followed by Tucson's designation as a UNESCO City of Gastronomy.

Tucson was given further opportunity to spotlight its position as an international culinary destination when the Délice Network chose Tucson as its host city for its 2019 Délice



Network Meeting. The meeting was centered around "Superstar Foods," which are food or dishes that reflect the local culture of a destination and help define the region's identity.

The team at Visit Tucson collaborated with the Délice Network and local chefs to host 35 delegates from 15 cities—including Barcelona, Helsinki and Lyon—to learn, share and connect with peers about food tourism.

How Local Destination Experiences Were Included in the Conference

Delegates were treated to a taste of Tuc-


son's vibrant culinary and cultural scene, giving its international visitors a chance to engage with local partners involved in Tucson's food movements, including: Mission Garden, San Xavier Cooperative, the University of Arizona Center for Regional Food Studies, and signature food and culture festivals like Tucson Meet Yourself.

The Délice group toured Mission Garden, a nonprofit re-creation of the Spanish Colonial walled garden built in the 17th century that reconstructs the 4,000 years of the region's cultural crops. Local experts demonstrated food-related technologies and various processes like the method of roasting agave, a plant that gives us tequila and mezcal. It's also one of Tucson's Superstar Foods.

The culinary tour continued at the San Xavier Cooperative, a farm developed by the Native Tohono O'odham Nation that serves as a site of cultural education and nourishment. Delegates learned from the local tribe about the cooperative's commitment to organic growth methods of traditional crops and how the farm works to support the economic development within the community.

The Délice Network Meeting delegates also had the unique opportunity to participate in Tucson's 11th Annual Agave Heritage Festival, a tribute to the native plant deeply rooted in Tucson's fibers as a borderlands city.

International mixologists from Délice-member cities were invited to take part in the festival, where they used agave spirits to create drinks that highlighted their connection to Tucson's Superstar Food while integrating their own local flavors.

From gastronomy lessons to agave tasting, the Délice Network Meeting served as a valuable tool to expand Tucson's food and gastronomy potential and to effectively promote urban economic development and global visibility for Tucson and Southern Arizona. 



Planners' Perspective

Tell us about the event.

The Tucson meeting allowed us to discover a recent member, already very active and involved. The participants all left Arizona very satisfied with their trip and the knowledge gained around Superstar Food.

—Olivier Marette // President, Délice Network // Brussels, Belgium

How did the event help situate Tucson internationally?

It helped us vindicate that Tucson is a great destination for gastronomy. The fact that key stakeholders from Madrid, Brussels, Lyon, Barcelona, Gaziantep, Cali and many others came to Tucson



and engaged in a positive conversation validates Tucson's position in this area. This knowledge exchange will help us in impacting the economy and community of Tucson. We were very encouraged

by the dialogue and interaction between the members of the network.

—J. Felipe Garcia // Executive Vice President, Visit Tucson, and Tucson's representative to the Délice Network // Tucson, Arizona

What was the most popular feature of the meeting with attendees?

The most interesting (thing) was to learn about Tucson's heritage food culture. (Also interesting is) the positive cultural and economic collaboration (Tucson has) with Mexico. We don't hear much about that in Norway, so that was very inspiring.

—May Endresen // Délice Network Member and Senior Advisor // City of Stavanger, Norway



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