



PAV ON JUICE: HILLTOP FUN IN COTTONWOOD

A monthly look at Arizona wine with Valley dining impresario Pavle Milic.

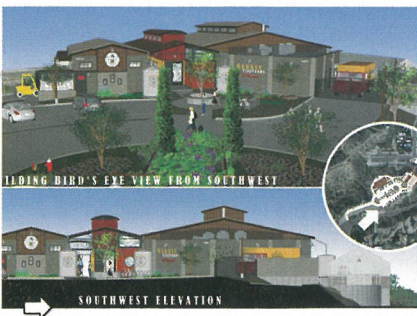
My co-owner at FnB, Charleen Badman, and I started showcasing the bounty of the local terroir almost 12 years ago. We decided early on to reach out to our community to represent our state through the lens of food and wine. None of that has changed, and we continue to inculcate and foment our focus on provenance. Every time we discover a new artisan, farmer or winemaker, we are not only giddy, but also amazed by the evolution and growth of our state's offerings.

Self-described multi-tasker extraordinaire Maynard James Keenan of Caduceus Cellars and Merkin Vineyards is about to give us another reason to toast our state's growth – and to visit Cottonwood as soon as possible. He secured an 8-acre elevated hilltop property at the edge of Cottonwood, where he's building infrastructure for terraced vineyards that echo the city's slogan: "The Heart of Wine Country."

In addition to 5 acres under vine, the property will house a production facility and a restaurant/winery, Merkin Vineyards Hilltop Trattoria. If all goes well, it will yield fruit in 2022 and guests can see the harvest in action, along with 360-degree views of the Verde Valley. In classic Maynard fashion, he'll use as much local produce as possible, including from his very own orchard.

Hilltop parking will be available, but you can also park at the bottom of the hill and use a lift that ascends between the vines. At ground level, shipping containers will serve as modern-day bodegas. The trattoria is slated to open by the end of the year.

An Arizona-focused agro-emporium on top of a hill surrounded by vines? Cottonwood – and Arizona wine hospitality – will never be the same.



PHOTOS COURTESY PAVLE MILIC; BUCK & RIDER; HULA'S MODERN TIKI; LOS SOMBROS; LEAH LEMOINE

SIX-SHOOTER: HOLIDAY PIES

"We must have a pie. Stress cannot exist in the presence of a pie," wrote playwright David Mamet. De-stress this holiday season with a slice or a whole pie, ordered in advance.

1 LEMON MERINGUE PIE

Cut through the richness of a holiday meal with Buck & Rider's bright and citrusy showstopper. Available by the slice at B & R or whole at LGO Bakeshop (\$44-\$55/pie). lgobakeshop.com



2 TROPICAL PIES

Just want a slice? Pop into HULA'S Modern Tiki for a quick trip to a dessert-ed island via coconut or key lime pie (\$7/slice). hulasmoderntiki.com



3 PUMPKIN PIE

Is it Thanksgiving without pumpkin pie? Sweet Provisions' iteration boasts a halo of whipped cream (\$24/pie). sweetprovisionsaz.com

4 VEGAN PUMPKIN & APPLE PIES

Mamma Toledo's The Pie Hole offers traditional pies and cheesecakes, fun creations like green chile apple pie, and vegan pumpkin and apple pie (\$26 each). mammatoledos.com

5 PECAN PIE

This sweet and nutty classic will be available at Los Sombros' Scottsdale and Mesa locations throughout November (\$40/pie). lossombrosaz.com



6 OPIES

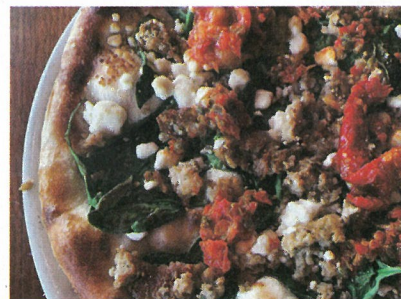
There's no better way to satisfy a pie craving on the go than Ingo's Tasty Food's adorable hand pies, which burst with various fruit fillings (\$3.50/each). ingostastyfood.com

– Leah LeMoine

HAPPY HOUR OF THE MONTH: MORA ITALIAN

THE SCENE

This CenPho spot just launched a happy hour menu in its sleek bar area. Banquette seating, polished tables and coppery light fixtures face a gleaming bar framed by patterned blue tiles.



THE FOOD

With chef-owner Scott Conant (*Chopped*) behind the wheel, the bar bites were bound to be good. Zucchini fritti (\$6) are lightly crunchy thanks to a chickpea flour dredge, showered with Calabrian chile and fresh mint. Foie and crostini (\$10) features rich foie gras with Port gelée, capers and pickled shallots with radish rounds. Most interesting are *tigelle*, petite sandwiches inspired by street snacks in Italy's Emilia-Romagna region. Rounds of fluffy focaccia dough are baked and filled with your choice of porchetta, prosciutto cotto or fried eggplant (two for \$8, three for \$10). The pizza of the day (\$12) is a delicious roll of the dice.

THE DRINKS

Peroni is \$5, well drinks and glasses of wine are \$8, and craft cocktails run \$10-\$12. The blood orange spritz (\$10) and Drunken Wifey (tequila, limoncello, elderflower, honey, thyme, \$12) are stunners.

THE DETAILS

Tuesday-Sunday from 4-6 p.m. in the bar only. 5651 N. Seventh St., Phoenix, 602-795-9943, moraitalian.com

– Leah LeMoine