

to, pickles and cheddar. Gourmand? The Le Bleu is piled high with bacon, grilled Portobello mushrooms, blue cheese, caramelized onion and Dijon mustard. Adventuress? Two fat shrimp are plopped on top of the Surf 'n' Turf. Personally, we love the Dellepiane. It's topped with bacon, cheddar and onions along with grilled provolone, pickles and barbecue sauce. This restaurant is big on booze, too. You'll find six beers on tap and even more in cans and bottles. The cocktail list is creative with an emphasis on Latin American drinks like margaritas and caipirinhas. We appreciate the wine list, which focuses on Argentinian Malbecs. Open Wednesday through Saturday, 11 a.m. to 9:30 p.m. (10:30 p.m., Friday and Saturday), for lunch and dinner. Open Tuesday, 4 to 9:30 p.m., for dinner. • 671 AZ-179, Ste. E1, at Hillside Sedona (928-862-4129) (\$ TO \$\$)

El Rincon Restaurante Mexicano (Mexican)

Since April of 1976, El Rincon has served Arizona-style Mexican food. Diners will also see Navajo influences on this unique menu, and the oversized margaritas are some of the best in town. The "secret" is the fresh ingredients. These are made with fresh homemade sweet and sour with real lime juice, powdered sugar, fresh egg white, tequila and triple sec. When we last visited, we ordered the house specialties: Chimichangas and Navajo Pizza. The first dish consists of hand-rolled sopaipilla masa stuffed with either meat or veggies and topped with your choice of red or green chile sauce. Instead of fry bread, El Rincon's Navajo Pizza is built on top of a thin sopaipilla crust. Toppings include beans, lettuce, tomato, cheese and your choice of sauce. On Sunday through Tuesday evenings during the summer months, enjoy live flamenco music. Open daily, 11 a.m. to 8 p.m., for lunch and dinner. • 336 AZ-179 at Tlaquepaque Arts & Shopping Village (928-282-4648) (\$ TO \$\$)

Javelina Cantina (Mexican)

This might be obvious, but Mexican classics are the name of the game at Javelina Cantina. For entrées, it's hard to choose our favorite. We've been ordering the chile relleno platter for over 20 years (not exaggerating). It features two fresh poblano chiles stuffed with jack cheese and dipped in batter and fried. It's topped with more cheese and green enchilada sauce. Factor in the rice and beans that come on the side, and you have lunch the following day. The Rocky Point Fish Tacos are available fried or grilled (one of each, please) and feature tilapia topped with a southwestern tartar sauce, lettuce and pico de gallo, all wrapped in a flour tortilla. The Baja Shrimp Tacos include the same toppings – just substitute grilled shrimp for the tilapia. You'll also find us ordering the Del Mar Salad when we're trying to be a bit virtuous. Mixed greens are topped with tomatoes, pecans, blue cheese, caramelized onions, cucumbers and your choice of blackened shrimp or scallops tossed with a house-made cilantro-lime dressing. The restaurant is also offering a fur friends menu for dog guests. Entrees include burgers, salmon and steak. Ongoing events: Margarita Mondays and bar specials from Monday to Thursday. Happy hour at the bar, 3 - 6 p.m.; Taco Tuesday/Tostada Thursday, 11 a.m. - 6 p.m. at the bar. Open daily, 11 a.m. to 8:30 p.m., for lunch and dinner. • 671 AZ-179 at Hillside Sedona (928-282-1313) (\$\$)

René at Tlaquepaque (French)

Sipping a glass of wine on the shaded patio at René at Tlaquepaque is one of the best experiences to be had in Sedona. It's an intimate, relaxing experience, one that invites you to linger over lunch or dinner. And it perfectly complements Executive Chef Walter Paulson's French Continental cuisine. During our most recent visit, we spotted a new addition to the menu: Tenderloin of Antelope. The seared, medium-rare pieces of antelope are topped with a whiskey-juniper-berry sauce and served with mashed potatoes. It's hard to skip the Roasted Duck when you dine at René's, and we didn't. Two duck legs are topped with a sundried-cherry sauce and served with an unforgettable wild-rice-and-mushroom cake. Desserts are made in house or, in our case, tableside. The Crêpes Suzette for Two features six delicate crêpes flambéed with fresh orange and lemon juice, orange zest and butter. Open daily, 5:30 to 8:30

TOM PITTS

THE TILTED EARTH FESTIVAL IS BACK

The Tilted Earth Festival is back. The festival season has finally truly returned in full to the Sedona Verde Valley region. Beginning with the 13th Annual Sedona Winefest last September at Posse Grounds Park, followed by the huge turnout for Camp Verde's Pecan and Wine Festival in March and the success of this year's Verde Valley Wine Festival in Cottonwood in April, people have shown that they are ready to enthusiastically rejoin the party in person. And now, after a two-year break thanks to the pandemic, we can once again celebrate the summer solstice on the banks of Oak Creek at Page Springs Cellars this month. The Tilted Earth Festival returns on June 18, the closest Saturday to the actual solstice, which officially occurs this year at 2:13 a.m. on June 21. The summer solstice is the longest day of the year, with the shortest night - the day each year that receives the most daylight and marks the official start of summer. From now until the winter solstice, the days get shorter, and the nights get longer. And what a great place to kick off the summer season.

Part of what makes this annual get-together so special is the spectacular outdoor setting and the opportunity to celebrate the start of the summer season outdoors in the evening in the Page Springs vineyard along Oak Creek. The parking lots open at 3:30 p.m. The doors open at 4 p.m., with live music from 4:30 to 11 p.m. This year's event will benefit two nonprofits: the Yavapai Big Brothers and Big Sisters and the Friends of the Verde River.

And once again, the festival will feature a solid musical lineup. It leads off with Barnaby and the Butcher performing roots rock and what they call Southwestern Americana. Damon Barnaby and Joshua Butcher head the Tucson-based group. The two have played together for years, featuring Damon's complex and innovative guitar work and Joshua's heartfelt vocals in their rendering of a mix of originals and classic covers. This is serious music from musicians with a sense of humor to get the party started.

They will be followed by Little Cloud, Joshua's project with his daughter Jonica. This is a highly eclectic group, featuring the vocals of the father - daughter singing duo, backed by a solid rhythm section, electric lead guitar, trumpet, trombone and more than a hint of New Orleans energy.

Speaking of New Orleans, next up is Eric Lindell, the well-travelled, New Orleans-based singer songwriter. He began his career in Sonoma County in 1996 and began touring nationally and internationally after signing

with Alligator Records in 2006. His style shows echoes of 1970s blues-rock, soul, and R & B and has been compared to artists like Van Morrison. He tours regularly in Europe and did his first Australian tour in 2007. He made his network debut on the Conan O'Brien Show in 2008. USA Today described his music as "pumping soul into funk, blues and roots-rock." He's well respected for his original songs and excellent musicianship. He writes, records and produces his own material and has released 10 albums.

Rounding out the musical presentations this year is Josh Hoyer & Soul Colossal.

This five-piece soul/funk/R & B band is based out of Nebraska. Josh was a contestant on NBC's The Voice in 2017. This is a hard-working band. The band has done over 150 shows each year since 2015 and went on two headlining tours in Europe in 2017 and 2018. The group has multiple albums out on Silver Street Records.

Think of this as a combo wine festival, concert and dance party in a marvelous outdoor location as you welcome the official change of the seasons.

Food will be served from the Page Springs Cellar's kitchen. Area wines will be served from wineries located here in our newly recognized Verde Valley AVA, including Page Springs Cellars, Arizona Stronghold Vineyards, Burning Tree Cellars and The Oddity Wine Collective. Don't overlook the Page Springs Cellars' Cocktail Tent or the opportunity to enjoy a relaxing massage or a creek tour. Play classic games like horseshoes, bocce ball and cornhole. Kids are welcome. No pets are allowed. Consider participating in the silent auction benefiting Yavapai Big Brothers and Big Sisters and the Friends of the Verde River.

Here's something you don't see every day. To help control traffic, encourage carpooling, lighten the load on the environment and maximize parking capacity, Page Springs has put together six bottles of its rarest library wines for a special drawing.

The winery will give you a raffle ticket for every person over two people in your car. Bring a van with 10 people and receive eight tickets for a chance to win a half case of wine worth over \$500. Cheers to the return of in-person festivals.

Tom Pitts is an author, business consultant and grant writer. He was the founding president and chairman of the board of the Verde Valley Wine Consortium. Reach Tom at verdevalleywine.tom@hotmail.com.

