

# Oil used at AZ Taco Festival to be recycled into biodiesel

BY PATRICK O'GRADY  
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Affordable Food Festivals LLC is kicking off the inaugural Arizona Taco Festival, and it's already finding ways to make the event green.

Used cooking oil from the festival will be donated to the Arizona Green Dining Network to be recycled into biodiesel, said David Tyda, founder of the Scottsdale-based event company.

That could be a significant amount of oil, given that more than 30 vendors will be frying up tacos for more than 3,000 expected attendees.

"We know these events are huge energy suckers, and we wanted to do something to promote sustainability," Tyda said.

This is Affordable Food Festivals' second effort to promote a green event. The group had some success this past spring by using compostable plates and utensils at its Arizona Barbecue Festival, he said.

The Taco Festival represents a different challenge. There will be plenty of used oil, but Tyda said the company is having a hard time securing donations of eco-friendly tableware.

The connection between Affordable Food Festivals and the Arizona Green Dining Network was made by Timothy McGovern, the kitchen manager at Dos Gringos in Tempe.

Dos Gringos uses the network to collect and recycle its used fry oil. The network has been operating for about two years, and has been working for the past year under a new ownership group that's looking to expand.

Marv McCarthy, the group's president, said he's seeing more restaurants interested in recycling their used oil.

The network sells the used oil to Amereco Biofuels Corp., a Phoenix company that refines it into biodiesel and other products.

McCarthy said food festivals present the network with more opportunities to increase awareness about recycling cooking oil.

"I'm just trying to educate people that this exists," he said.

The Green Dining Network has lined up other events to collect used oil, including the Scottsdale Culinary Festival last April, the Taste of Chandler on Oct. 2, and the Arizona Barbecue Festival next spring, McCarthy said.

"At Scottsdale Culinary, we didn't get a lot of oil because not a lot of people were frying, but we still got about 200 to 300 gallons," he said.

The used oil also will help provide power for the Taco Festival. Affordable Food Festivals

has worked out a deal with Amereco to buy biofuel to run its generators, a need Tyda said he'd been looking to fill since the barbecue festival, which used a generator to power all the cooking equipment. "We were just burning fuel," he said.

## GET CONNECTED

**Affordable Food Festivals LLC:**  
www.affordablefoodfestivals.com  
**Arizona Green Dining Network:**  
www.greendiningnet.com



Marv McCarthy, foreground, president of the Arizona Green Dining Network, will sell used fry oil from the Arizona Taco Festival to Amereco Biofuels Corp. in Phoenix to be recycled into biodiesel.

JIM POULIN | PHOENIX BUSINESS JOURNAL

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## ARIZONA TACO FESTIVAL

**WHAT:** A competitive festival featuring local restaurants making their best tacos

**WHEN:** 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. Oct. 9

**WHERE:** Scottsdale Waterfront, 7025 E. Via Soleri

**ENTRIES:** More than 30 professional and amateur taco makers

**COST:** \$10 general admission, \$50 VIP

**WEB:** aztacofestival.com