

Sam Fox
Founder
Fox Restaurant Concepts



62 Biz Tucson <<< Fall 2023



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Culinary Like a Fox

Sam Fox Brings Flower Child, Doughbird to Thrilled, Hungry Tucson

By Tara Kirkpatrick

Forget King Midas, let's talk about the Fox touch.

Sam Fox, Tucson's native son who grew his culinary empire from Southern Arizona, has opened more than 100 restaurants across the country and will launch a posh hotel this fall. The founder of Fox Restaurant Concepts is a nine-time James Beard Award nominee and is recognized as one of the most influential people in the restaurant industry today.

Yet, he continues to invest in his hometown, opening his Flower Child and Doughbird concepts here this spring to welcoming patrons who dutifully wait in lines to dine on his delicious, modern food. Fox's eateries are literally economic development engines in themselves.

"From my time working and growing up in Tucson, from my first restaurant to our growing businesses there...Tucson has always been somewhere that

I'm very proud to say that I'm from," said Fox. "We want to continue to evolve and bring concepts there every time we have an opportunity."

Together, Flower Child and Doughbird replace the former Old Chicago Pizza in Campbell Plaza, a central location Fox was thrilled to nab. "We know the traffic patterns and we do really well with hospitals and we do really well with universities," he said. The University of Arizona and Banner-University Medical Center are just down the street, and if the crowded lunchtime parking lots are any indication, it's a winning strategy.

"When we found the location in Tucson, we knew it was perfect for this combo," Fox said. "Opening two restaurants around the same time is not a small feat, but it has been a goal of ours to bring these two concepts to the city. We loved the idea of combining the two and being right next to each other in a shared

space; it worked out perfectly."

Flower Child offers "healthy food for a happy world," including tasty salads, wraps and bowls with fresh ingredients and numerous vegan, gluten-free and paleo options in a fast-casual space. Its signature app offers easy ordering and take-out, along with designated pickup spots. The dine-in line here starts right after it opens at 11 a.m.

The adjacent, dark-blue paneled Doughbird features comfort food, including pizzas with Detroit-style or traditional crusts, homemade chicken tenders, mozzarella sticks and salads for more sit-down fare. Repeat customer, realtor and pizza lover Tim Harris sums it up, perfectly: "Whenever I'm there, I run into the nicest people. Also, the pizza is good!" he said.

Flower Child and Doughbird are welcome additions to Campbell Plaza, which has a rich history in Tucson, ac-

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AND GAIN THE HAPPINESS ADVANTAGE
W/ LESLIE BOSCH, PH.D. | WELLNESS COACH
11/14/23 | 11:30 - 1:00 PM | VIRTUAL



HARMONY AT WORK
YOGA TOOLS FOR HR MANAGERS
W/ HILARY BASS | ALIGN SELF CARE
12/01/23 | 3:30 - 5:00 PM | IN PERSON



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– Sam Fox, Founder
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According to Michael Sarabia, principal and CEO of plaza owner DSW Commercial Real Estate. Additional parking canopies behind the nearby World Gym have been installed to increase parking and TESLA is in the process of installing charging stations, he said.

“The deal with Fox Restaurant Concepts to bring Flower Child and Doughbird to the shopping center has helped make the shopping center one of the more relevant centers in the entire corridor,” said Sarabia. “Sam Fox was from Tucson, and his attention to detail and awareness of culinary trends is literally unparalleled and we absolutely love the energy they have brought to Campbell Plaza.”

A Sabino High School graduate who grew up working in his family’s The Hungry Fox restaurant, Fox left UArizona and a finance internship to forge his own way. “I’m a self-starter and as it turns out...a serial entrepreneur,” he said. “I’ve always wanted to bet on myself and believe in myself. Having started my first business and struggling from the beginning really taught me a lot about who I am.”

Fox Restaurant Concepts’ first restaurant, Wildflower, opened in Tucson in 1998 and the rest is history. Fox also continues to give back to the city that launched him, supporting Boys & Girls Clubs of Tucson, which gave him the Click for Kids Award in 2018, and the UArizona Steele Children’s Research Center.

He’s now poised to open his first boutique hotel, The Global Ambassador, in Phoenix in November – a long-desired venture in which Fox has touched everything, from the room décor to the luxe rooftop bar.

“It’s been an incredible journey,” he said. “We’re excited to show it off in the fall and I hope there will be a lot of people from Tucson that go there, as well.”

