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tucson

MEET OUR *makers*

This month, we're taking our foot off the gas pedal with the founders of one of Tucson's most talked-about breweries and taprooms: Slow Body Beer. Get to know Corey Shaver and Lawrence Combs, the duo behind this venture, built with the goal of reflecting and serving the community they call home. Plus, catch the latest happenings in Tucson at the link below.

What's New in Tucson

Meet Corey Shaver and Lawrence Combs

When I interview Corey Shaver and Lawrence Combs, the duo behind Slow Body Beer, they're seated beneath the shade of a pomegranate tree. The setting feels almost enchanted: lush, comfortable, and rich with history. They tell me the building now housing their brewhouse was once home to Jane Poynter and Taber MacCallum, original members of the Biosphere 2 experiment. The couple transformed the outdoor spaces into a sanctuary of sorts, and today, the one-year-old brewery and taproom is the grateful inheritor of that legacy.

While the property has worn many hats over the years, the brewery and taproom showcase Tucson's quirky, layered identity: unexpected, a bit offbeat, and deeply rooted in community.

The easygoing charm of the place is reflected in what they pour. Of the 12 beers typically on tap at Slow Body, at any given time, six to eight are "highly drinkable" lagers.

"They're beers you can enjoy with friends without having to talk about the beer," Combs, the brewer, said. "We put a lot of time and effort into making the beer the best it can possibly be, but they don't necessarily need to take up space in that way."

Their flagship lineup showcases this philosophy. It includes one of Combs' favorites, Blue, a Czech-style lager that's made with Oaxacan blue corn masa, alongside Helles, a German-style lager, and Pils, a German-style pilsner. For those who enjoy other beer styles, the menu boasts IPAs, sours, and even a few non-alcoholic beers.

Still, Slow Body is about more than beer. Since opening last June, Slow Body has established itself in a warehouse-lined neighborhood, becoming both a brewery and a gathering space. A short walk from where they're seated for the interview, there's an outdoor stage that regularly hosts musical acts and community-centered events. It serves as a platform for causes they care about, like abortion rights and immigrant advocacy – a place where collaboration quite literally takes center stage.

"If people have ideas for things they want to see happen here, we're like, let's make it happen," Shaver said.

That openness is reflected in the space itself. Inside, guests are welcomed by large windows that pour in sunlight, and an abundance of plants that soften the industrial edges. The long bar is punctuated with bursts of pink, blue, and green. One wall is dedicated entirely to a collection of tchotchkes: shelves lined with vintage glass bottles and quirky curiosities thrifted by one of their managers.

Their favorite review of the space? It was “equal parts craft brewery, grandmother’s living room, and dive bar,” Shaver said with a laugh.

Beyond the taproom, the work of brewing unfolds. The entire setup was built specifically for lager production, including the ability to perform mash decoctions, a traditional German brewing method that’s both central to Slow Body’s lagers and a key flavor differentiator. Once considered old-school, decoction mashing is seeing a quiet revival. Combs explains the process: a portion of the mash (the mixture of grain and water) is removed, boiled, and returned to the main batch to raise the temperature and deepen the flavor. “The result is quite subtle, but you can definitely taste it in the final beer,” he said.

It’s a fitting technique for a brewery named Slow Body. Lagers take time to produce, typically six to eight weeks, and while they’re often light in body and have a lower ABV (under 5%), they’re anything but rushed.

But the name isn’t just about beer. It speaks to the ethos of the space itself, one that invites visitors to slow down, settle in, and maybe strike up a conversation with a stranger or get wrapped up in a book.

“We’re trying to move away from this quick-turnaround mentality of capitalism,” Shaver said. “And try to find a middle groove where we can, yeah, slow it down a little.”

Shaver, a Tucson native, met Combs in 2014, working at Pueblo Vida, one of Tucson’s most well-loved breweries. It didn’t take long for their paths and passions to align.

That shared love of craft beer and curiosity eventually carried them to Vermont where Combs joined the team at the acclaimed Hill Farmstead Brewery while Shaver managed a cheese lab at Jasper Hill Farm. They remember those days fondly, joking that they were living the dream while “swimming in beer and cheese.”

They returned to Tucson during the pandemic before moving to Central California, where Shaver – also a scientist – pursued a master's degree in paleoclimatology.

Still, Tucson kept calling them back and opening a brewery in the city they love was always part of the plan, they said. On one of their earliest dates, they made a lighthearted but telling vow: someday, they'd both like to die in Tucson. That promise became a kind of compass, cementing both their compatibility and their commitment to place.

Now, just over a year after opening Slow Body, the pace has been anything but slow. Though it's been a "sleep depriving" whirlwind, it's also been surreal. Just three months in, the brewery had already maxed out beer production, Combs said.

They've also expanded their offerings beyond beer. Thanks to their front-of-house manager, Parker Dean, Slow Body is producing seasonal fruit- and herb-based shrubs. Crafted with local produce and offered as hard seltzers or non-alcoholic spritzes, these ever-evolving creations have "taken on a life of their own," surging in popularity among bar-goers, Shaver said.

Now, something even bigger is on the horizon. Earlier this year, they announced a partnership with Holy Focaccia, known for its panini pop-ups and weekend breakfast sandwiches at Slow Body. In the coming months, Holy Focaccia will move into the brewery permanently, opening a full bakery and café.

When asked what they're most looking forward to in the coming year, Holy Focaccia's opening is at the top of their list. Only second to that is finding more balance in their lives. Though they're considering adding equipment to meet the brewery's ever-increasing demand, Shaver and Combs are approaching growth with caution.

"We want to figure out life a bit before adding more to our plates," Combs said.

"Sleep," Shaver added, laughing. "I'm looking forward to sleeping a lot."

Touché. After all, that's the intention at the heart of it all: Slow Body.

Shaver's and Combs' Top 5:

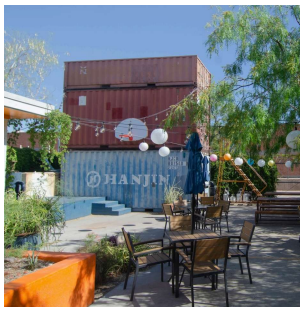
1. Anello – Their go-to for date nights, where they indulge in great wine, fresh salads, and the standout veggie plate.

2. Sawmill Run Restaurant – A cool summer retreat in Summerhaven, just an hour from downtown Tucson, serving up comfort food alongside a variety of Slow Body brews on tap.

3. Cariño Coffee – A beloved coffee pop-up inside Saturday Generation, a vintage furniture and design store just down the street.

4. Sunshine Wine – Just a short bike ride from their home, they frequent this bungalow-style house, where beer, draft cocktails, and shareable small plates are always on the menu.

5. Rosebud Bakery – Owned by their close friends, this bakery is their top pick for breakfast sandwiches on busy mornings.



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