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Monthly
Meet Our Makers Newsletter



Meet Tyler Melo and Rene Durazo

This month, we sat down with Tyler Melo and Rene Durazo, whose coffee business, rooted in community, hospitality and the flavors of the Sonoran Desert, is rapidly expanding throughout Tucson. Read more about their journey, the inspiration behind Talega Coffee and what's next for the local brand. Or, click the link below for the latest and greatest media updates from Tucson.

What's New



When Tyler Melo and Rene Durazo first started roasting coffee during the early days of the pandemic, they weren't trying to open a coffee shop. They were simply looking for a new hobby and a way to make something they loved a little more accessible.

What began with a tiny countertop roaster, a whole lot of experimentation and more than a few smoke alarms quickly became something much bigger. The two friends discovered a shared passion for coffee, food and the flavors of the Sonoran Desert. That passion eventually became Talega Coffee, their co-owned business founded on the belief that high-quality coffee can be inclusive without feeling intimidating.

That philosophy also shaped how they approached their coffee, drawing inspiration from the region's culinary identity.

"We figured that we should be using the land and the local ingredients to incorporate into our flavor palate with our coffee," Tyler said. "Tucson is one of the (UNESCO) Cities of Gastronomy and we thought we should be using what's around us."

The name Talega reflects a blend of tradition and place. Inspired by café de talega, a brewing method from northern Mexico that uses a cloth sack filter, it honors Rene's childhood memories of watching his grandmother prepare coffee over a wood-fired

stove. Today, Rene and Tyler are bringing that sense of warmth and heritage into every cup, pairing specialty coffee with local ingredients, unexpected flavors and a commitment to hospitality.

Talega opened its first brick-and-mortar location in October 2023, transforming what began as a passion project into an intimate gathering place for Tucson's coffee community. At only 18 seats, the location has been small enough that they've used it as a test kitchen of sorts, trying out different recipes, flavors and beans, while solidifying their place in the community.



Many of those experiments draw directly from the Sonoran Desert and the region's culinary traditions. One standout ingredient is chiltepín, a small but mighty Sonoran pepper that Rene grew up using in savory dishes. Together, Rene and Tyler have reimagined it in sweet coffee drinks, creating combinations that are unexpected but distinctly Tucson. Other regional flavors they've experimented with include piloncillo, an unrefined Mexican sugar with deep caramel notes; dark cacao, used to create a rich, chocolate-forward base; and mazapán, the beloved Mexican peanut-and-sugar

confection. The menu changes regularly, but the goal always remains to create flavors that tell a distinctly Sonoran story.

The shop is also known for its classic espresso and drip coffee, crafted from coffee beans primarily from Latin America, including Brazil, Guatemala, Colombia, Mexico and Costa Rica. Though they're always open to trying new beans, Tyler and Rene rely on customer feedback to help shape their offerings.

Over the past three years, the combination of thoughtful sourcing, regional inspiration and community connection has helped Talega grow from a small coffee shop into a Tucson staple.

"We've made some awesome friends who we go out drinking with and go out to eat with now. There are a few people dating now because we've introduced them over there," Tyler said. "People have come to us crying several times. We're turning into therapists at the same time, in some regards."

Creating that kind of connection wasn't accidental. As a queer-owned business, Tyler and Rene have always been intentional about creating a welcoming space for people from all walks of life. That commitment is also shaped by the experiences and perspectives they each brought to Talega.

Rene, a Tucson native, grew up surrounded by the flavors and traditions of the region, with frequent trips to Mexico shaping his appreciation for using ingredients from the land and making the most of what is available. Tyler, originally from Massachusetts, was stationed in Tucson while serving in the Air Force. When his duty concluded, he chose to stay and work in the restaurant industry, having developed a deep love for Tucson.

"I haven't learned enough to leave," Tyler said, jokingly.



This month, the duo is preparing to open a second location downtown, bringing their signature coffee program and seasonal drinks plus a few extras, including expanded food offerings, cocktails and community-focused events to a much larger space. Featuring a full bar, a kitchen, a larger dining area and a spacious patio designed for gathering, the second Talega will be a place to grab coffee in the morning, enjoy a drink in the evening and everything in between.

While the menu is still being finalized, guests can expect a mix of familiar favorites and globally inspired dishes, from breakfast sandwiches, fresh salads and charcuterie boards to a Portuguese-inspired breakfast and evening tapas.

As an added bonus, the patio, complete with fans, speakers, retractable shade sails and space for performances, opens the door for even more programming: from live music and trivia nights to vintage markets, community gatherings and even drag brunches.

“We want the same vibe we have with coffee to translate to the bar,” Tyler said. “Everyone is welcome.”

The expansion doesn't stop there. Tyler and Rene revealed they have also signed on for a third Talega location as part of the new Tucson GastroPark featuring local culinary talent and Tucson-focused food experiences. That location will take on a different personality, embracing a more historic Sonoran aesthetic with reclaimed furniture, rustic touches and a focus on single-origin heritage spirits like sotol and mezcal in addition to coffee and food.

For Tyler and Rene, the future is exciting, if a little busy. Between planning and debuting new locations, they're also hoping to expand their roasting operation, which will open the door to acting as a wholesaler for restaurants throughout Tucson, a request they say they receive often.

But despite the rapid expansion of Talega, the two remain upbeat and optimistic about what the future holds.

"We love what we do," Rene said. "Being able to share it with the community and see people enjoy it is what makes it special."



Rene and Tyler's Top 5:

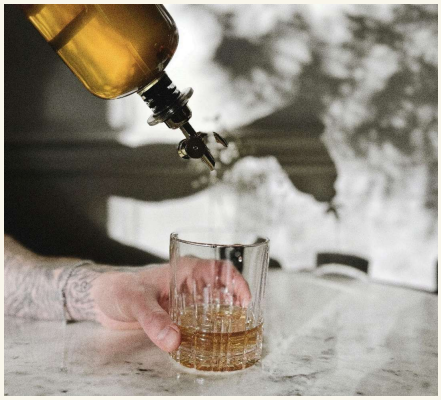
Che's Lounge: If you ask Tyler and Rene where they go when they actually get a night off, Che's is their first answer. They recommend the watermelon shot, which they describe as "dangerous" in the best possible way.

Zemam's Ethiopian Cuisine: For Ethiopian food, they head to Zemam's and order the sampler, a plate filled with a little bit of everything. Their advice: trust the menu and try it all.

Raptor Canyon: For breakfast, Raptor Canyon is a go-to and their favorite thing to order is the breakfast tacos.

Coronet Café: Another breakfast favorite is The Coronet, where Tyler always orders the çılbır, a Turkish dish that brings a little tang and a lot of flavor.

Ursa: For a special night out, Ursa earns high praise. Rene and Tyler recently enjoyed the 12-course tasting menu to celebrate Talega's business anniversary.



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