

# From Farm (and Vineyard) to Table

MICHIGAN EMBRACES CULINARY TOURISM DESTINATIONS

/ By Dianna Stampfler

WITH AN ESTABLISHED HISTORY in agriculture and tourism, it's only natural Michigan would proudly embrace an expanding "foodie" culture drawn from the public's desire to whet their appetite with all that is local.

A growing number of retail outlets and restaurants around the state are forging partnerships with local farmers, growers and creators of a wide variety of food and beverage products—from jams and sauces and artisanal cheeses and breads to handcrafted wines and microbrews, and so much more. Michigan residents and visitors alike are fueling this initiative, as they seek out those establishments that reinforce their "local first" philosophies.

Travel Michigan has taken an aggressive step to showcase culinary tourism destinations around the state on its award-winning website, Michigan.org—the catalyst for the Pure Michigan branding campaign.

A series of "Foodie Tours" have been added to the website, highlighting more than a dozen routes spread throughout the state. Each route identifies a variety of destinations, from wineries and breweries to restaurants serving up locally infused menus, lodging properties that offer farm-to-table experiences such as cooking classes, and other food-based destinations. Routes specific to Michigan's four designated wine trails can also be found online. Find all these tours at Michigan.org under "Things to Do" and "Road Trips."

Many local communities have followed suit, establishing tour routes throughout their



region. Traverse City has taken great strides in cataloging and promoting its culinary destinations into self-guided foodie trails just waiting to be experienced. Grand Rapids launched its first-ever Restaurant Week last November, which highlighted more than 50 area eateries. Tecumseh's "Taste Experience" highlights foodie destinations in its walkable downtown district. Tour operators—such as Learn Great Foods, Dining in the D, Culinary Escapes and Tasty Moesel Culinary Excursions—have found a niche when it comes to offering guided tours for select cities with strong culinary offerings.

Uncommon Adventures, based in Benzie County, takes a recreational approach to culinary tourism—offering both wine and craft beer kayak trips in the Traverse City area. With "Dining on the Fly," anglers around Traverse City can explore the art of fly fishing and then end the day with a locally infused dinner, served riverside by the culinary team at the Boathouse Restaurant and paired with wines from Bowers Harbor Vineyards. Over at Thunder Bay Resort in Hillman, guests can enjoy a horse-drawn carriage ride to view elk in the wild, followed by a gourmet dinner—prepared

## Thunder Bay Resort



## Dining on the Fly



## Trillium Haven Farm



on antique wood cook stoves—and wine tasting from Stoney Acres Winery in Alpena.

An increasing number of festivals and events spotlighting local cuisine can be found in all corners of the state.

"Farm-to-table" wine and beer dinners are becoming popular at restaurants such as Salt of the Earth in Fenwick, Trattoria Stella in Traverse City, Mind Body & Spirits in Rochester and Mission Table on Old Mission Peninsula.

The JW Marriott's Grand Rapids restaurant, six.one.six, took the experience a step further with its "Speak to the Earth" tour with Trillium Haven Farm in Jenison. Participants enjoyed an *al fresco* brunch next to the restaurant's Chef's Garden before heading to the farm for a gardening class, owner-guided tour and family-style *al fresco* lunch. A group harvest wine dinner was held last fall, showcasing autumn's bounty and concluding the four-month program.

Porterhouse Productions in Traverse City has found that foodie-based festivals—pairing local wineries and breweries with nearby chefs—draw big crowds to venues such as The Village at Grand Traverse Commons, Grand Traverse Resort and Clinch Park.

Of course, wine trail events around the state continue to draw record crowds for their seasonal events. Of particular culinary note is the Mac & Cheese Bake-Off, which pairs wineries and restaurants along Old Mission Peninsula for a full day of passion for pasta and vino.

As the second most agriculturally diverse state in the country, Michigan serves up the best of all worlds—from the orchard, farm and vineyard, to the shelves, table and glass. *Bon appetit!*

*Diana Stangler is a freelance writer and president of Promote Michigan, an independent marketing and consulting business.*

## TASTY SITES FOR FOODIES

Travel Michigan [www.michigan.org](http://www.michigan.org)

Traverse City Foodie Tours  
[www.tcvisitor.com/self-guided-foodie-tour-254](http://www.tcvisitor.com/self-guided-foodie-tour-254)

Experience Grand Rapids  
[www.experiencegr.com](http://www.experiencegr.com)

Tecumseh's Taste Experience  
[www.downtowntecumseh.com](http://www.downtowntecumseh.com)

Learn Great Foods  
[www.learngreatfoods.com](http://www.learngreatfoods.com)

Dining in the D  
[www.diningintheD.com](http://www.diningintheD.com)

Culinary Escapes  
[www.culinary-escapes.com](http://www.culinary-escapes.com)

Tasty Morsel Culinary Excursions  
[www.tastymorseltours.com](http://www.tastymorseltours.com)

Uncommon Adventures  
[www.uncommonadv.com](http://www.uncommonadv.com)

Dining on the Fly  
[www.diningonthefly.com](http://www.diningonthefly.com)

Salt of the Earth  
[www.saltoftheearthfenwick.com](http://www.saltoftheearthfenwick.com)

Trattoria Stella [www.stellatc.com](http://www.stellatc.com)

Mind Body & Spirits  
[www.mindbodyspirits.com](http://www.mindbodyspirits.com)

Mission Table [www.missiontable.net](http://www.missiontable.net)

six.one.six [www.ilove616.com](http://www.ilove616.com)

Trillium Haven Farm  
[www.trilliumhavenfarm.com](http://www.trilliumhavenfarm.com)

Porterhouse Productions  
[www.porterhouseproductions.com](http://www.porterhouseproductions.com)

Michigan Grape and Wine Industry Council  
[www.michiganwines.com](http://www.michiganwines.com)

Michigan Brewers Guild  
[www.michiganbrewersguild.org](http://www.michiganbrewersguild.org)

International Culinary Tourism Association  
[www.FoodTrekker.com](http://www.FoodTrekker.com)



MICHIGAN  
CULINARY  
TOURISM

The Michigan Culinary Tourism Alliance (MCTA)

is a partnership

of the Michigan

Department of Agriculture and Rural Development and the Michigan Grape and Wine Industry Council, in cooperation with

the Michigan Restaurant Association and

Travel Michigan. MCTA is the state chapter of the International Culinary Tourism

Association. For more on the MCTA and its ongoing initiatives, log onto

[www.michiganwines.com/culinarytourism](http://www.michiganwines.com/culinarytourism)

TRILLIUM PHOTOGRAPH BY DAVID ELLISON; OTHER PHOTOS COURTESY THUNDER BAY RESORT AND DINING ON THE FLY