

going out

Globe Travel

The grapes of plenty

JAMIE MAW THE DISH

It's a modern conceit — now buzzily promoted by tourism agencies and glossy gastrozines — that culinary tourism is a recent concept. Not true: Like armies, tourists have marched on their stomachs for centuries.

But suddenly — thanks to the Internet, effective guidebooks and GPS — it's become much easier to connect the dots of culinary tourism and to return, quite literally, to our roots.

In the burgeoning Okanagan Valley, those dots — the farms, wineries, inns and restaurants that evidence locality — are much easier to connect. With a hundred wineries crowding Okanagan Lake, and dozens of farms (many organic) and ranches (and the restaurants respectful of their produce) dishing their ingredients each day, eating and drinking well has never been more accessible, or delicious.

Here, our guide to the top spots for your culinary and wine tour:

Best inside tipster. John Schreiner's delightful *The Wineries of British Columbia* is a pungent heritage of wine information, including what to drink tips along the trail, augmented with useful historical context. It's available in bookshops and at most winery gift boutiques.

Best places to stay: The Eldorado Hotel in Kelowna (500 Cook Rd., 250-763-7500) offers prime lakeside amenities and a bustling outdoor patio. The lobster cocktail (\$16) is a sunny day bargain while admiring the attractive local citizenry, or charter a speedboat to remote beaches. Mid-valley, the best place to book a hammock (or hammock a book) is The Naramata Heritage Inn (3625 1st St., 250-496-6808), which also has a small spa and a pleasant wine bar and is steps from the beach and a short drive to the charming wineries of the Naramata Bench. The inn's Rock Oven Dining Room shows plenty of local ingredients, with dishes calibrated to the wine list.



Best winery tours: Patricia Tetreau knows the valley's vineyards and offers insightful, expertly guided winery tours with interesting dining options. See www.okwinetour.com; call 1-866-689-9463 or 250-868-9463.

Best place to get cidered: Raven's Ridge Cidery (3002 Dunster Rd., Kelowna, 250-763-1091) is the first producer of ice cider in the province; their excellent product pairs well with Poplar grove Tiger Blue Cheese.

Best places to say cheese: Wine and cheese maker Ian Sutherland maintains that "the dairy and beverage alcohol industries are second only to nuclear power in regulations." From his Naramata-based Poplar Grove Winery (1060 Poplar Grove Rd., 250-492-4575) find luscious double cream camembert, pungent Tiger Blue and the milder Naramata Bench Blue — each well-rendered models of their type. At Carmelis Alpine Goat Cheese (170 Timberline Rd., Kelowna, 250-764-9033), you'll find chèvre in about 20 goatly guises, from soft pillows of Blue Velvet and Moonlight Brie, to harder, Italian-styled Lior and Carmel.

Best place to get cooked: Take joy in the Joie Cooking School (2825 Naramata Rd., www.joie.ca), operated by chef Heidi Noble and som-

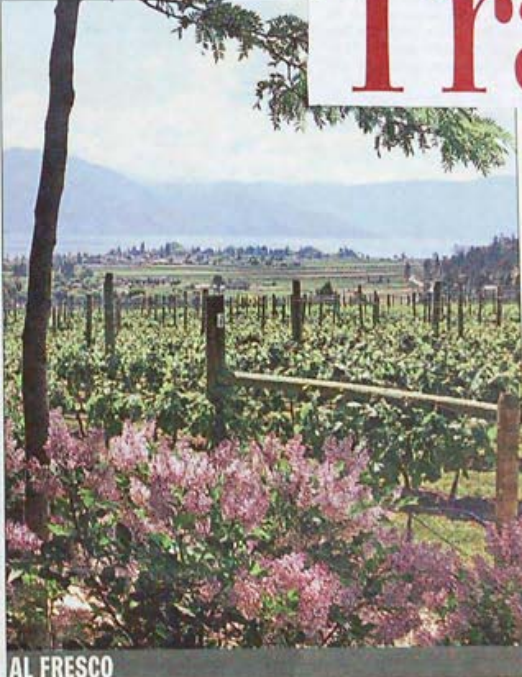
melier Michael Dinn. It offers delightfully rustic accommodation and five-day cooking courses or weekend epicurean retreats. Joie is also central to the emerging local Naramata Bench wineries such as Red Rooster, La Frenz and Poplar Grove, although Joie's own releases, including Noble Blend, Year One, are also worth the visit.

Best places to drink like a queen: This weekend during her visit to Canada, the Queen will be gargling wines from the Red Rooster Winery (891 Naramata Rd., 250-492-2424) and La Frenz, both located on the Naramata Bench. At La Frenz (740 Naramata Rd., Penticton, 250-492-6690), proprietor-winemaker Jeff Martin's shiraz, chardonnay, viognier and sémillon are each worthy of case-lot purchases.

Best place to eat like a king: At Fresco (1560 Water St., Kelowna, 250-868-8805), chef-proprietor Rodney Butters's stubborn grasp of all things local loosens only for prime coastal seafood, a reflection on his past at Tofino's Wickaninish Inn.

Best French immersion: Also in Kelowna, find warm braises, excellent pepper steak frites and snappy salads at Bouchons (1180 Sunset Dr., 250-763-6595), or high-quality baked products and lunches at La Boulangerie (3140 Lakeshore Rd., 250-762-3466), Pierre-Jean Martin's day-only room in a former fast-food taco space in rapidly gentrifying Pandosy Village. Restorative soups, quiches and husky sandwiches en baguette and a terrific retinue of pastries and breads. Martin uses only French flour; the vestigial drive-thru window raises obvious and attractive questions.

Best wine bars: Vintropolis (231 Bernard Ave., Kelowna, 250-762-7682) offers quality downtown tapas and an extensive selection of local and long-distance bottles and by-the-glass options. The Waterfront Wine Bar (104-1180 Sunset Dr., Kelowna, 250-979-1222) is a modern room with a building wine list with decent reach into local wineries and breweries.



AL FRESCO
BEST WINERY PATIOS

In Kelowna, the Cedar Creek Estate Winery (5445 Lakeshore Rd., 800-730-9463 or 250-764-8866) offers fine, quality lunches and one of the valley's best wine and tasting experiences.

Across the lake in Westbank, visit the Old vines Patio at the Quail's Gate Winery, photo above, (3303 Boucherie Rd., 800-420-9463 or 250-769-4451). The expansive views embrace the lake, and the food from local producers accompanies Burgundian-styled pinot noir and chardonnay or dry reisling.

The nearby Mission Hill Family Estate Winery, photo left, (1730 Mission Hill Rd., 250-768-7611) towers above, its dramatic campanile tolling hourly for thee. Informed tours of the winery reveal an almost monastic calm; the Terrace restaurant, directed by chef Michael Allemeier, offers one of the top dining experiences in the valley. Mission Hill proprietor Anthony von Mandl was recently doubly distinguished with The Order of British Columbia and the presidency of The International Wine and Spirits competition, adjudicated in London.

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