

BY YUKI HAYASHI

One of the ironies of being a parent is that at the time in your life when you most rely on that glass (or two) of wine to get you through the evening, you're least able to appreciate it. Gulp, gulp, OK, time to get Junior ready for bed. Logic would therefore dictate that this isn't the best time to take off on a wine-festival weekend. Even less so, across Canada into the Interior of British Columbia. Least of all, bringing your kids along.

I say do it, and as soon as possible. At the first opportunity, get thee to B.C. for the **Okanagan Wine Festival** ([owfs.com](http://owfs.com)), the perfect getaway for foodie families. There's one every season, though the best one takes place in fall (and wraps up this weekend).

In the heart of the Okanagan Valley, gorgeous-beyond-belief Kelowna ("land of peaches and beaches") has been a family travel destination for generations, even as the region has transformed into an upscale food, wine, golf and ski destination. Though you won't be able to tote your offspring to all of the events sprinkled through Kelowna and surrounding towns, many of the participating wineries are kid-friendly, a few going so far as to cater to young oenophiles in the making.

Top of your list should be **Mission Hill Family Estate Winery** ([missionhillwinery.com](http://missionhillwinery.com)), with its stunning Mission Revival architecture, expanse of vineyards and huge manicured lawns, perfect for horsing around

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on. During a guided tour, my four-year-old daughter, Esmé, was entrusted with the "very important task" of counting pelicans (the winery's logo), in the hope of winning a prize. She was also conscripted to "assist" in the wine cellar and barrel rooms. The best part, for mother and daughter alike, was the tasting. As I sampled the winery's world-renowned Chardonnay and Pinots, Esmé enjoyed swirling, sniffing and sipping her "wine" — a bright young raspberry juice, fruit-forward, tart and sweet. That the little ones get a real stemmed glass,



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CATHERINE CALLARY

not a plastic disposable, makes them rise to the occasion and, well, behave. Tour over, we returned to the winery's amphitheatre to burn off some energy. The grassy, terraced hill is perfect for rolling down.

Another great winery for families is **Summerhill Pyramid Winery** ([summerhill.bc.ca](http://summerhill.bc.ca)). Kids will love exploring the four-storey stone pyramid where the wine at this organic vineyard is aged. Also onsite are a pioneer house and a hand-hewn shelter built in historic First Nations style. When my daughter just about lost it when the only duck on the menu at the winery resto proved to be duck-fat-seared halibut, the server graciously saved the day with a special serving of nectarine, the only other thing she was willing to eat that night. Which brings me to another point: When doing a wine tour with a little person, remember to keep your expectations real —

one fancy meal, tops.

One definite foodie beacon is **Carmelis Goat Cheese Artisan** ([carmelisgoatcheese.com](http://carmelisgoatcheese.com)). Israeli expats Ofri and Ofer Bar-mor came to Canada three years ago and quickly found a niche in the local food industry. While the farmers' markets are bursting with regional produce and artisanal breads, there wasn't any fine goat cheese until the Bar-mors hit the scene. Their hilly goat farm was destroyed soon after it was built, thanks to the wildfires that swept through Kelowna in 2003, but the animals were sheltered at a nearby llama ranch and the farm was rebuilt. Watch the goats being milked, take a peek at the cheese-making room and the ageing cellar ("Mmm, smells yummy!" said Esmé) and enjoy a tasting in the cheese shop. Your palate will tire long before you get through all 20 varieties.

You'd be remiss if you didn't



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pay a visit to **Kelowna Land & Orchard** ([k-l-o.com](http://k-l-o.com)), one of Canada's biggest commercial apple orchards. Home to the iced cider from Raven Ridge Cidery (like icewine grapes, the apples are left to freeze on the tree before being picked), KLO has a great two-storey goat house and bantam chickens and bunnies aplenty. Hit the onsite Ridge Restaurant for a bite and, if it's warm enough, sit on the ravine-

Above: The cellars at Mission Hill Family Estate winery. Middle: Kelowna's marina, and the Gatzke Farmers' Market. Bottom: Yuki Hayashi and her daughter, Esmé, indulge in a tasting at the Mission Hill winery; Kelowna's Sails sculpture; Quail's Gate Vineyard.

some breads, local cheese, cookies and regional produce, or the homey **Pioneer Country Market & Museum** ([pioneercountrymarket.com](http://pioneercountrymarket.com)) for its great pies. Little kids will love hanging out with Jackson, the market's six-year-old host.

As for accommodation, opt for a family-focused resort to avoid ticking off that couple in the next room who, you know, planned on a grownup getaway after stashing their kids at Grandma's.

For a taste of "new" Kelowna, try the luxe waterfront **Manteo Resort** ([manteo.com](http://manteo.com)), with its feather beds, Pima cotton sheets, gourmet room-service menu and close-to-the-action location. For a more old-school Kelowna experience, drive your rental car across the lake to Westside and stay at the **Lake Okanagan Resort** ([lakeokanagan.com](http://lakeokanagan.com)). There's no room service, but there are kid-friendly restaurants, trail rides, tennis courts, heated outdoor pools and a laissez-faire kids-in-the-hot-tub-why-not? attitude parents will appreciate.

While you're in town, take the family to downtown Kelowna's many artisan boutiques, galleries and bookshops for a bit of retail therapy. Be sure to pop over to the Kasugai Garden right by the gallery district. The Japanese garden's dinner-size koi goldfish and mossy stones will seem an oasis of calm during your family's wine-country feeding frenzy.

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