

Perth County Regional Food Summit – March 22, 2010

8:50 am – Dr. Steve Smith – UW

Culinary tourism is the pursuit of memorable culinary experiences by visitors.

But these experiences are a myriad, and are not limited to restaurants. They can include Cooking schools, culinary tours, distinctive food stores, farms, festivals, breweries, food producers.

Culinary tourism can include the following, but is more than:

-Fine dining, eating dishes from local ingredients, wine/beer tourism, coffee tourism, tea tourism, agri-tourism, cultural tourism, foodies behaving badly (experiences are like trophies!)

Culinary tourism can be used as: A tool for local economic development, a community development strategy (pulls community together, and becomes part of the brand of a destination; For example, New Orleans, which is known for jazz and food, or Champagne in France, Parma in Italy). In total, it becomes a strategy to help promote family farms, small businesses, and community pride.

3.1 Who are culinary tourists? (Good luck!)

-Dangerous question. How many answers do you want?

1. Food tourists. Middle age, middle-class women interested in healthy dining, local farmers markets, learning about foods and recipes, family outings. This partly a “improve our household” motivation
2. Wine tourists. Primarily middle-age or older, upscale men interested in winery visits, tastings, collecting.
3. Cuisine tourists. Also upscale, a balance of men and women who are enthusiastic about all things cuisine, and search those experiences.

3.2 How do you tell?

-Deliberate culinary tourists, food is main motivation for travel

-Opportunistic culinary tourists, experiences sought during a trip, but not a motivating factor. For example, we are in Quebec, there are some nice restaurants, let’s check them out.

-Accidental culinary tourists, take advantage of opportunities if they are available, for example, “This restaurant has a local craft beer, I would like to try that!”

3.3 There are 13 “segments” of culinary tourists.

-Adventurers – Exciting, bizarre, exotic, think Anthony Bourdain’s No Reservations (great show, by the way).

-Ambience seekers – Romantic meals

-Authenticity seeking – Ethnic dining in situ, for example Michael Smith’s Chef at Large

- Budget Diners – Good food cheap - Generally focus on salt and fat, yum. Think Divers,
- Drivers and Dives with Guy from Food Network
- Eclectic diners - Give It all to me! I'll try anything
- Gourmets – “Starred” restaurants, checklists, must-goes
- Innovative diners – Experimental, molecular gastronomy
- Consumers of the Local – Independent restaurants with distinctive local flavours, local - markets, food producers (Anita Stewart)
- Novice culinary tourists – Just beginning to explore, wants something not too strange but still offering bragging rights
- Organic consumers – Not just in restaurants, but markets, food stores, producers
- Social tourists – Conviviality, such as bars, pubs, casual eateries.
- Trendy consumers, looking for the hot spots, cool place, exclusivity, status
- Vegetarians, avoid meat and overlap with organic diners

Ontario culinary tourism profiles, based on the 2007 TAMS (Travel activities and Motivations Survey)

Visitors to Ontario (residence and out of province visitors) who reported three or more dining related activities in the last 2 years.

Top ten include (in descending order):

- Dining at restaurants featuring local food (57%)
- Going to local cafes (40%)
- High end restaurants
- Restaurants with international reputations
- Gourmet/kitchen stores
- Day trips to wineries
- Food processors
- Festivals

9.8 Million “deliberate” culinary trips (15% of all Ontario destination trips)

-\$816.0 million in total trip-related expenditures

11.5 Opportunistic and accidental culinary trips taken (17.8% of all Ontario destination trips)

Culinary Segments (Of 9.8 million deliberate tourists)

Dining – High end restaurants (40%)

Celebrating – Food festivals (24.6%)

Sampling – Wine, breweries (16.4%)

Rural experiences – Farmers markets, farm-gate sales, pick your own (12.9%)

Learning – Cooking schools, wine courses (5.7%)

Good news: Culinary tourists are rich, high percentage in 60K or higher range.

And, culinary tourists have diverse interests. They do a lot of everything. Visit historic sites, lake swimming, live theatre (32.3% vs 11.7 non-culinary tourists)

Plus, they are positive, upbeat, interested in discovery. The thoughts, “I have a lot more energy than my age indicates”. Physically active! Life is more than just eating, sleeping.

And a lot of it stems from personal growth and development. Also, they seem to be in the forefront for new products, and they make decisions easily, quickly.

Culinary tourism trends for 2010:

Local continues to be hot; veg, meats, cheeses, bevs. Especially farm/producer branded products with a story. This apple orchard was built in this year by this person, here is where they came from, and so on.

New cuts of meat, eg. Flat iron pork.

Heritage vegetables, fruits, breeds- similar to what was used in the past, what was used in earlier generations, much of the focus on treasuring the past and celebrating it.

Healthy herbs, spices, fruits – such as blueberries, rhubarb, shallots, pumpkin seeds.

Innovative beverages such as teas, alcoholic and non-alcoholic beverages

Top ten commandments for a successful culinary tourism identity

1. Leadership, a champion, people that pull together other people and communicate a vision, and doing so with trust, not an overblown ego, but will help foster idea generation
2. Market-ready culinary products, that are being produced with the quality, quantity, reliability, and the infrastructure to deliver at a large scale and meet the needs of a market.
3. An integrated strategy, networks between restaurants, producers, growers, government, not-for-profit, infrastructure, media, it all has to come together.
4. Partnerships and community-based collaboration
5. Financial-based support
6. Access to key origin markets (and Stratford is very well positioned)
7. Market intelligence, knowing how people learn about the region,
8. Culinary tourism resources distinct to the region, terroir, the concept that what we offer is specific to us, very unique
9. Multiple culinary experiences
10. An effective destination marketing organization (Such as Stratford Tourism Alliance), getting the word out, gets participation from key players

But AVOIDING...

1. Power struggles and turf wars, this is MY region for this product or idea
2. Being too inclusive, no standards
3. Promoting enterprises, experiences that are not market ready
4. Promising participants too much, ignoring costs/challenges
5. Failing to recognize different goals or players not negotiating common ground