

SPRING/SUMMER 2018

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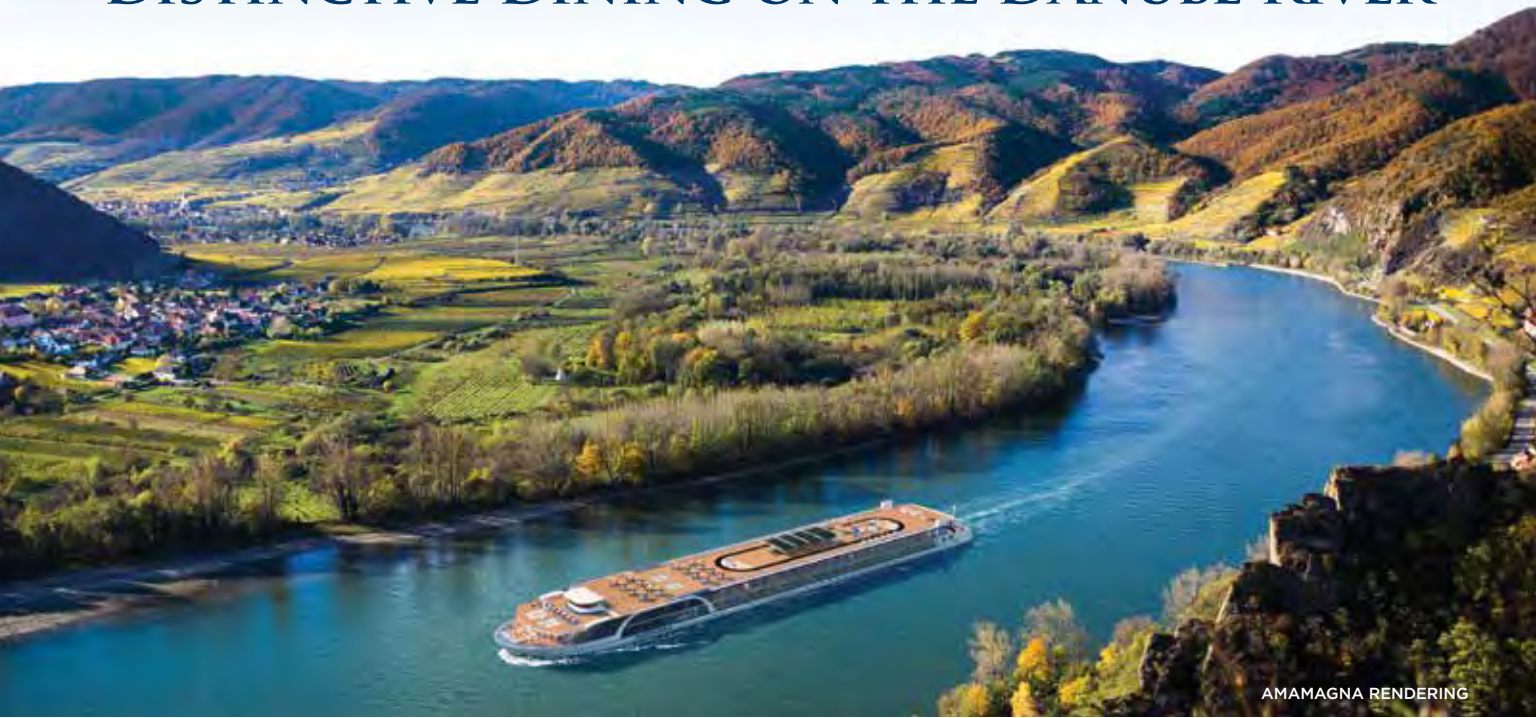
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“What wine is to the French and vodka is to the Russians, beer is to the Czechs – a source of national pride”



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Cover photograph: Austrian National Tourist Office, Florian Sonntag/Jannis Keil



EDITOR’S NOTE

“TO TRAVEL IS TO EAT”

I couldn’t help but laugh a bit during a recent conversation I had with Chef Christine Cushing, as she told me about her and her husband’s habit to plan their vacation days around where they want to eat. I think it’s a reality we can all relate to when you think about it, both at home and abroad; food is always central to planning, whether it’s who’s joining you for dinner, or what restaurants you’re dying to try and the neighbourhoods in which they’re situated.

There’s something about the nourishment – in body and soul – of dining, that drives us to revolve our lives around meals yet to be had;

and this innate search for fulfillment is only enhanced when trying new things in new places, and often, with new people.

But great dining experiences can’t always be planned, Christine and I discuss, as you will read on pg. 57. She shares stories of diverting from her schedule while in Istanbul to see how the best baklava is made, and of a lunch in Greece that turned magical for reasons beyond the food in front of her. I recall my own experiences, like the late-night snack I went searching for in Jerusalem that led to the founding of new friendships, and the best sandwich I’ve ever had thanks to an impromptu stop in a hillside town on the Amalfi Coast.

It’s in these accidental encounters that we truly get to know a place – all the more memorable the further off the typical tourist path we go. This issue of *Bon Vivant* is dedicated to said adventures, as we explore lesser-known regions of some of the world’s most famous tourism destinations, like Galicia, Asturias and Rioja along the Camino de Santiago in Spain (pg. 24) and the German-esque town of Bolzano in Italy (pg. 32). You’ll also be tempted by the beauty of Austria’s Innsbruck (pg. 40) and sure to be craving a beer after reading our piece about the Czech Republic (pg. 48).

We hope that the following pages have you craving your next adventure and inspire you to plan your next trip abroad – but with room for spontaneity, of course.

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• Passau • Linz, Austria • Melk • Dürnstein • Vienna • Bratislava • Budapest
(Disembarkation)

SAMPLERS

WHAT'S NEW IN THE WORLD
OF FOOD, DRINK & TRAVEL? BY MICHAEL BAGINSKI

SKY'S THE LIMIT



Imagine dining in a sky-high alternative restaurant on a platform positioned 16 decks above the ocean. That's just one of the innovations coming on **Celebrity Cruises'** new ship, the *Celebrity Edge*, set to shove off from Fort Lauderdale, Fla., this fall for its inaugural season. The restaurant, which will sit on cantilevered platform called "The Magic Carpet" that can move between decks, promises an experience "like nothing guests have ever experienced at sea." The same goes for the rest of the Edge's gastronomic offerings, which include 29 dining venues (with seven specialty

restaurants), and hundreds of new recipes overseen by Michelin-starred chef Cornelius Gallagher. Taking its award-winning culinary experience to the next level, Celebrity will feature familiar and exotic fare alike, allowing guests, in the words of Celebrity president Lisa Lutoff-Perlo, "to explore the world without ever leaving their table." Setting sail on Nov. 21, the *Celebrity Edge* will spend her inaugural season alternating seven-night eastern and western Caribbean itineraries before relocating to the Mediterranean for a range of seven- to 11-night sailings in 2019.



COME CRUISE, LET'S CRUISE AWAY
Travellers can choose from two new itineraries with Amawaterways come 2019— *Gems of Southeast Europe* and *Medieval Treasures* — but if those don't fit the bill, never fear. There are also 64 exclusive river cruise sailings hosted by North American winemakers, winery owners and wine experts on offer. Two names you might recognize are Mick Schroeter, winemaker for Sonoma-Cutrer in Sonoma, Ca., and Tony Stewart, CEO and proprietor of Quails' Gate Winery, one of Canada's foremost family owned estate wineries. All cruises include onboard lectures, wine tastings and curated epicurean experiences, as well as guided small group visits to private cellars and stunning vineyards in such locales as France's Bordeaux, Burgundy and Alsace regions; Germany's Moselle and Rhine valleys; Austria's Wachau; and Portugal's Douro River area.

AFICIONADOS, UNITE

Holland America Line has something special cooking for guests this year. The cruise line's new **Food & Beverage Aficionado Cruises** will allow passengers to get up close and personal with some of the world's top chefs and wine experts during special sailings that feature cooking, cocktail and wine demonstrations; get-to-know-the-experts presentations; photo opportunities; and an intimate reservation-only dinner in the Pinnacle Grill. Some of the notable names who will be donning aprons include HAL's master chef Rudi Sodamin, plus international chefs Jonnie Boer, David Burke, Elizabeth Falkner, Andy Matsuda, Ethan Stowell and Jacques Torres. Acclaimed wine critic James Suckling and master mixologist Dale DeGroff are also among special guests to be expected.



TASTES OF THE MED

Explore the best Old World wine regions of Spain, France and Italy onboard Cunard's Queen Victoria. Departing Sept. 6, 2019, the luxury line's *Voyage due Vin* will focus on Mediterranean Highlights, with stops in London, Vigo, Mallorca, La Spezia, Cannes, Barcelona and Gibraltar. Oenophiles will unite to enjoy Cunard's extensive list of more than 400 wines onboard, hailing from 23 countries. Wine pairings, talks and dinners are integral to the experience, all hosted by experts and producers. The indulgence will extend off the ship as well, with unique tasting opportunities available with every stop. Contact your Bon Vivant travel advisor to secure your spot at the table.



Palma de Mallorca



DINING AT 30,000 FEET

Mundane (or just plane bad!) airplane food may not entirely be a thing of the past, but increasingly, carriers are upping their game with new offerings, prominent chef-inspired menus and flexible dining options – all in the name of improving the inflight experience. Air Transat is certainly doing its part by serving hot meals to passengers in Economy

Class on all of its flights between Canada and Europe as of May 1. Bistro menu choices include garlic and ginger chicken or Shanghai noodles (Canada-Europe), and chicken Provençal or penne in rosé sauce (Europe-Canada). Guests can also choose from among eight dishes on the *Chef's Menu by Daniel Vezina* (\$25, limited availability).

Celebrity
EDGE
CULINARY
SAIL
2018



Luminae at The Retreat—exclusive for Suite Class guests.

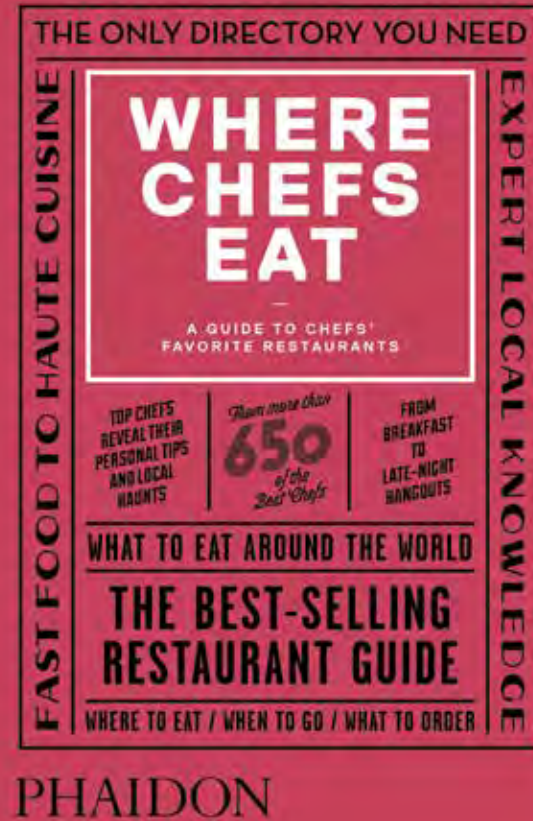
Explore the world without leaving your table.

Introducing Celebrity Edge, a revolutionary new ship designed to expand every horizon. With globally inspired menus designed by a Michelin starred chef, Celebrity Edge offers 29 distinct food and beverage experiences that stand apart from anything else at sea

Bookings now open. Availability limited.

Celebrity **X** Cruises®
SAIL BEYOND BORDERS

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WHERE DO CHEFS EAT, ANYWAY?

Where does Daniel Humm go when he wants a great bagel in New York City? What is Yotam Ottolenghi's go-to place for dim sum in London? And what restaurant does Massimo Bottura admire so much that he wishes he'd opened it? The all-new edition of *Where Chefs Eat: A Guide to Chefs' Favorite Restaurants* reveals personal picks from 650 of the world's greatest chefs. From high-end dining destinations to beloved neighbourhood haunts, this latest edition of the perennial best-seller is expanded and revised to reflect changes in the ever-evolving global restaurant landscape and offers 7,043 recommendations for 4,528 restaurants in more than 65 countries around the world. With 85 per cent new content, the book is a virtual bucket list of all the places that you would ever want to eat, no matter where you may find yourself. The guide is widely available in Canadian bookstores and online.



SUMPTUOUS SOUL

Blues and a steak in Chicago, jazz and jambalaya in the Big Easy? Luxury Gold, which is dedicated to reviving the golden age of travel, has introduced a tour especially meant for embracing two of life's greatest pleasures – music and food – while visiting the American heartland known around the world for both. The 14-day Sumptuous Soul of America tour will take guests through culture-laden cities including Louisville, Nashville and Memphis, before culminating in vibrant New Orleans. There are four departure dates this year from May through September. Highlights include dinner at a classic Chicago-style chophouse; bourbon tasting at distillery in Kentucky; a visit to Graceland in Memphis with an exclusive dinner with Elvis Presley's childhood friend, George Klein; and a demonstration at the New Orleans School of Cooking. The tour is priced from US\$5,825.



FOOD FOR THOUGHT

Beyond jerk seasoning, Blue Mountain coffee and the ubiquitous Jamaican patties, Jamaica's rich culinary heritage has typically flown under the radar for visitors more in tune with dining at the island's great all-inclusive resorts. However, now with the farm-to-table movement having taken hold, the Caribbean nation is fast becoming a popular destination for food lovers. From the capital city, Kingston, to the tourism-friendly north coast and laidback south coast, visitors can eat their way around the island on an epicurean getaway that promotes sustainable local agriculture and great taste. A couple of practitioners of the movement include EIT Café in Kingston, Zimbali Retreats in Negril, and Round Hill Hotel & Villas and the Jamaica Inn, both in Ocho Rios. There are also plenty of farm visits (with meals) to be experienced, such as Stush in the Bush in Free Hill (near Ocho Rios).



Zimbali Retreats



GONE FISHIN'

"Fishing, friends and flavoursome food" are the underlying principles of the David Hawksworth & Friends Culinary Adventure, scheduled for July 15-19 at *The West Coast Fishing Club* in British Columbia's secluded Haida Gwaii. The 12th-annual event, hosted by the renowned Canadian chef, will also involve a variety of B.C. chefs and culinary masters, as well as a guest sommelier. It goes without saying, then, that guests can expect exquisite meals with an awe-inspiring ocean backdrop and with the opportunity to enjoy the luxury suites of The Clubhouse lodge. Travellers will explore open water with the lodge's fleet of first-class fishing boats, followed by daily cooking classes using the finest local ingredients. Since 1988, The West Coast Fishing Club has grown from a top fishing destination for outdoor enthusiasts to the ultimate location for luxury adventure, featuring an array of outdoor activities and equipment, and in-suite amenities such as plush robes and Jacuzzi tubs.

CIAO, ITALIA!

Rome, Venice and Florence are fantastic, but the Globus family of brands has come up with 62 different ways to visit Italy in 2018 that promise to introduce visitors to sites and experiences beyond the trio of aforementioned must-see cities. Via guided or independent tours and city stays with Globus, Cosmos or Monograms, the program features new and traditional itineraries that fit the theme, "Italy off the beaten piazza." The program is also the largest ever for the global tour company and features Italy by itself or in combination with other countries. Not sure how to choose? Consider the newest options, including Globus' *Hidden Treasures of Southern Italy* or *The Sicilian*. Or perhaps the *Gourmet Tuscany* tours with Cosmos, featuring food-flavoured day trips from a base hotel in Montecatini, might be the one for you. Molto bello!



REFRESHING ROCKY MOUNTAINEER

Acclaimed as one of the world's great rail journeys, *Rocky Mountaineer* nevertheless refuses to rest on its laurels, continually refreshing its offerings to entice new guests and appeal to repeat clientele alike. The rail company is adding four new destinations to its British Columbia and Alberta-based itineraries for 2019, including Kananaskis (First Passage to the West Kananaskis Self-Drive), Canmore (First Passage to the West Canmore Self Drive), Sunshine Village (First Passage to the West Sunshine Village Self-Drive), and CMH Cariboo (Journey Through the Clouds Mountain Adventures), the latter comprising a journey into the Cariboo Mountains range by helicopter and a stay at the CMH Cariboo Lodge. If you can't wait to go, you might, in the meantime, try this taste of the Rocky Mountaineer experience from the cookbook, *Eat Play Love: Regionally Inspired Cuisine*, by Rocky Mountaineer.



TOUR



GARLIC AND HERB-CRUSTED HALIBUT

Roasted and served with blackberry cream sauce, Serves 4

ROASTED HALIBUT

700g (24 oz) Fresh halibut fillet, cut in four portions
30g (2 Tbsp) Panko bread crumbs
7g (1 ½ tsp) Fresh thyme, chopped
7g (1 ½ tsp) Fresh parsley, chopped
14g (1 Tbsp) Garlic, crushed
60ml (¼ c) Olive oil
Sea salt to taste
Ground white pepper to taste

BLACKBERRY CREAM SAUCE

60g (¼ cup) Blackberries
60ml (¼ cup) Dry wine white
180ml (¾ cup) 33% heavy cream
Sea salt to taste

FOR THE ROASTED HALIBUT

1. In a bowl, combine the panko bread crumbs with the chopped thyme and parsley, crushed garlic, and a little olive oil. Check the seasoning (salt and pepper) and sprinkle the mixture lightly on top of each halibut fillet.
2. Preheat oven to 190°C/375°F. Place the halibut on a greased oven pan and bake for 10 minutes, or until the fish is cooked medium to the core. Remove from the oven and keep warm.

FOR BLACKBERRY CREAM SAUCE

In a saucepan, reduce the white wine with blackberries for 5 minutes over a high heat. Add in the cream and check the seasoning (salt). Reduce until the sauce starts to thicken, approximately 10 minutes. Transfer into a high-speed blender and emulsify. Check seasoning again (salt) and use immediately.

PLATING

Serve the baked halibut fillets crust side up in the centre of the plate. Drizzle some of the blackberry cream sauce around the fish. Serve with fresh seasonal vegetables and your favourite rice or quinoa dish.



Delectable Puglia, Italy

In Italy's heel, traditions run deep and flavours are fresh and bold. Discover authentic Puglia, with its laid-back, unpretentious charm and simple way of life. Get lost among olive groves, a red-earthed horizon and honey-coloured coastline.

Puglia is blessed with an abundance of food experiences: the famous bread bakery in **Matera**, delicious street food in **Lecce**, seafood cooking classes in **Gallipoli** along the sea, wineries in Otranto, an organic olive oil farm in **Ostuni** and hands-on mozzarella cheese making in **Alberobello**, to name a few.

Overnight in an authentic **trullo house** in Alberobello and take a boat ride in **Leuca** on the emerald waters where the Ionian and Adriatic Seas meet. Customize your journey to your exact specifications with a Gateways International Tailor-made Tour.



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The evolving appeal of cruising

BY SARAH TRELEAVEN

The already-enormous cruising market seemingly expands every year in a bid to occupy every possible travel taste and niche — offering not just something for every member of a multigenerational family, but also for couples, singles and groups of both Boomer, Xer and Millennial friends. The newest trends are an excellent reflection of the desires and preferences of today's contemporary traveller, including upscale and highly boutique food and wine experiences, immersion in local destinations, and more active itineraries full of great, specially guided ways to engage with a new place.



Sea kayaking near icebergs in Tracy Arm, Alaska

A NEW RANGE OF ACTIVE EXPERIENCES

While many passengers still seek out cruising as a method of relaxation, the industry is increasingly offering more active itineraries. Last year, Avalon expanded their range of Active Discovery tours, a product that encourages local immersion through active excursions like bike riding through country roads, wine tasting at local châteaux, painting classes, dance lessons and even a “Roman games outing” complete with togas. And Celebrity's Galapagos

sailings include an onboard marine scientist to lead small-group trips seeking out blue-footed boobies and iguanas.

This trend also ties into an increasing interest in expedition-style cruising, meaning smaller ships with more adventurous itineraries. Ventures by Seabourn, a program launched in 2017, include active excursions on Alaska and British Columbia sailings — including exploring Canada's Inside Passage via double sea kayak.



SELF-CARE HITS THE WORLD OF CRUISING

The enduring stereotype is that cruisers can expect to gain 10 pounds from taking multiple laps around the all-day buffets filled with lobster, pasta and oversize wedges of chocolate cake. But a new trend has emerged: Cruise lines, big and small, are enhancing the wellness offerings on their ships — from dedicated spa suites and specialized Canyon Ranch-endorsed menus to enclosed running tracks and paired onshore biking itineraries.

In 2017, AmaWaterways introduced a wellness instructor to lead classes including yoga, meditation, Zumba and Pilates. Uniworld also has an established wellness program that includes spa, fitness and innovative activities like the Five Tibetan Rites, a system of exercises reported to be more than 2,500 years old. Windstar offers visits to spiritual homes, like Buddhist monasteries, in a bid to help passengers attain inner peace. Seabourn has launched new Wellness Cruises with Dr. Andrew Weil for 2018, Avalon has a new “Avalon Fresh” logo to indicate healthy local dishes, and Oceania recently rolled out vegan menus and introduced “Wellness Tours” that integrate both onboard activities and onshore excursions around the broader idea of mental and physical health — including visiting thermal baths and laughter therapy.

CRUISING FOR A TASTE OF THE FINER THINGS

As culinary tourism becomes increasingly popular around the world, more and more cruise lines are tailoring itineraries and onboard dining programs to indulge this preference. AmaWaterways is now renowned for their Wine Cruises, which wind through the rivers of Europe, taking in iconic wine-producing regions and strolling through local vineyards, experiencing lectures hosted by sommeliers and wine producers, and enjoying fine dining using fresh local ingredients paired with some of the region's best wines. Oceania is becoming an industry leader in culinary shore excursions with their Culinary Creations Land Tours, which offer immersive local food experiences. Think lunch with a winemaker in a romantic Tuscan villa or dinner at an off-the-beaten path family-owned restaurant.

Cruise lines are also taking advantage of culinary brands with existing cache. Crystal River Cruises offers a number of Michelin-star culinary experiences, including a cooking class in Sorrento and dinner in any number of European venues. Windstar recently announced a multiyear partnership with the James Beard Foundation — featuring marquee chefs and beverage partners (such as sommeliers or mixologists) headlining cruises around the world, from Norway to Tahiti. In addition to signature menu items created by the headlining chef, these sailings will offer tastings and demonstrations, wine-paired meals, unique culinary shore excursions and local market tours with the chef.



Street food stall at Indonesian night market

STREET FOODS ARE BECOMING PART OF THE IN-PORT EXPERIENCE

For many years, cruise ship dining was heavily focused on volume (buffets with seemingly never-ending shrimp bowls) and prestige (a large number of celebrity chef restaurants). But now, the cruise industry is starting to show off local culinary scenes specifically through their street foods. Just recently, Holland America announced a new culinary program particularly oriented around street foods, while Regent Seven Seas' Gourmet Explorer Tours emphasize local market tours.

This idea nicely captures the depth of experience a lot of cruise lines are trying to add, while also accommodating the growing obsession (and increasing adventurousness) related to food tourism in general. Now, cruisers can nibble their way across market stalls in Provence or head to Shanghai, where guides will encourage them to compare and contrast a wide range of dumplings steamed, boiled and fried by local vendors. This new trend can bring out the best of both worlds when it comes to cruising: superb, unfussy and highly local food by day, and then a return to elegant interiors, attentive service and a glass of Champagne by night. ☞

© Mark Conlin / Alamy Stock Photo



In search of the best cup of tea

Turns out, there are a host of great options across London

BY FIONA TAPP



AS A BRIT, I KNOW THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN a posh cup of char and a proper builders tea. I know how to make tea properly in a pot and, yes, I own a tea cozy. But on busy mornings, I'll just chuck a teabag (imported from the UK, of course) into a chipped mug and enjoy it just as much.

Tea is part of most English people's daily diet. In fact, we often joke that my mom's blood runs steaming hot and brewed to perfection. She once burst into tears when we arrived at a rustic Canadian cabin to find they didn't have a kettle; campfire tea turned out to be quite nice but it just shows how seriously Brits take this daily calling.

Although you don't really need silver service, sitting down in an elegant setting – in the capital city of tea appreciation, no less – is a wonderful way to see what all the fuss is about. These are the best places in London to enjoy this traditional treat:

CHARLIE AND THE CHOCOLATE FACTORY TEATIME

The whimsical and inventive afternoon tea menu at One Aldwych was inspired by Roald Dahl's unforgettable characters brought to life in the Broadway stage show, Charlie and the Chocolate Factory, which had a home at the Drury theatre, steps from this sophisticated hotel.

Ordinarily, I am not a fan of flavoured teas; why mess with perfection, after all? But I chose the chocolate option to match the theme and can report that it is perfectly balanced with black tea, Madagascan vanilla and Peruvian cacao nibs. Traditional sandwich fillings include coronation chicken and cream cheese & cucumber, and of course the requisite warm scones are presented with jam and clotted cream. Magical creations inspired by Willy Wonka really steal the show, including homemade cola-flavoured cotton candy, chocolate eggs filled with mango cheesecake and bubblegum panna cotta.

One Aldwych, onealdwych.com
1 Aldwych, London WC2B 4BZ
£44 per person, £56 with a glass of champagne or Cocktail Charlie

sohossecrettearoom.co.uk, theritzlondon.com, the-shard.com, yumchaa.com



TEA WITH A VIEW

Inside Aqua, the dining room of The Shard (the tallest building in London at 95-stories), you'll find views of the London skyline in every direction. The afternoon tea here is elevated beyond the usual sandwiches and baked goods; expect lobster, mini quiche and white chocolate cheesecake along with your choice of brews from the Rare Tea Company. The homemade honey toffee is an unexpected inclusion and smeared on a warm chocolate chip scone; needless to say, it fast becomes a favourite. Tables are booked quickly so be sure to reserve your seat in advance.

Aqua Shard, the-shard.com
The Shard, Level 31
31 St. Thomas Street, London, SE1 9RY
£45 per person



PUTTING ON THE RITZ

Underneath the ornate chandeliers with the sound of a harpist and pianist playing in the palm court is the setting for a luxury afternoon tea in this legendary London Institute.

There are five different menus to choose from at The Ritz London, including "celebration" afternoon teas and those with the special addition of champagne. Traditionally tiered platters flaunt brioche ham sandwiches and smoked salmon on sourdough, as well as a selection of beautifully presented cakes, pastries and treats. Try the Darjeeling first flush, one of the most popular teas from the 18 varieties on offer.

The Ritz London, theritzlondon.com
150 Piccadilly, London W1J 9BR
£57 per person



A MASTERCLASS IN TEA

Tea aficionados will appreciate the leaves being front and centre at Yumchaa, a Camden café and the setting for monthly tasting masterclasses. Located in the Camden Lock Market, the balcony overlooks the canal – the perfect place for people-watching or to observe the boats passing by below. More than 40 blends of tea are presented alongside a vast selection of cakes, pastries, muffins

and sandwiches. There are five branches of this little emporium across the city, all of which also have a retail space, so you can buy what you need to make a rich cup of tea once you get home.

Yumchaa, yumchaa.com
91-92 Camden Lock Place, Upper Walkway West Yard London NW1 8AF
Tea from £2.55-£2.65, Scones from £2.45-£2.95 Sandwiches from £3.50-£4.20

SHH, IT'S A SECRET

At SoHo's Secret Tearoom, you'll feel like you have wandered into a café from the 1950s. Check out the pretty crockery, retro styling and listen to tunes from the day played on an authentic gramophone. The teahouse is above a busy pub and offers an affordable menu of sandwiches, scones and petit fours, all washed down with your choice of 19 varieties of Reginald Ames sourced tea. This is a casual and unpretentious spot to enjoy afternoon tea, without the pomp.

SoHo's Secret Tearoom, sohossecrettearoom.co.uk
29 Greek St, Soho, London W1D 5DH.
£23 per person





The wines of the Rhône

Let us take you on a flavourful journey & whet your appetite for French wine

BY TREVE RING



THE VINEYARDS OF FRANCE'S RHÔNE VALLEY HAVE A 2,000-YEAR-old history, dating back to the ancient Greeks. The vinous tradition has survived and thrived up to present day, with vineyards stretching 250 kilometres from Lyon in the north, and south to the Mediterranean Sea, encompassing 250 communes and winding along the mighty Rhône River.

Divided between the heralded, prestigious north and the generous, welcoming south, the final products produced here have fully rooted themselves in the world of wine. Vignerons and sommeliers the world over have grown-up studying the legendary wines of Côte-Rôtie, Hermitage and Châteauneuf-du-Pape, as well as the humble, characterful Côtes du Rhône blends. Here are the three most important red and white grapes of the Rhône Valley, often found together in blends, along with wines found in Canada that will transport you to this legendary region.

SYRAH

Que Syrah? It's Shiraz! Though two different names, the grapes are, in fact, the same. The Rhône epitomizes old world Syrah: fragrant and savoury, with black fruits, high acid, high tannin, ample black pepper and dark floral notes. The thick-skinned, intense grape is built for oak aging, assisting its longevity in the bottle. Syrah loves granite, especially when it's well draining and clinging to a slope, as is often the case in the Rhône.

GRENACHE

Grenache is one of the most widely planted red wine grapes on the globe. This grape is a heat-seeking missile, and its penchant for dry, rocky soils makes it suitable for hot, arid climates. The thin-skinned, light-flesh grape makes wines higher in alcohol and lighter in colour, often desirable traits in a blending partner. Raspberry, strawberry and cherry are hallmark, with characteristic white pepper, spice and dried herb savouriness.

MOURVÈDRE

Wild and meaty Mourvèdre can be hard to tame as a solo grape, but blended, along with powerful Syrah and friendly Grenache, it forms the ideal trio; a harmonious partnership for quaffable bistro wines and as the base for powerful Châteauneuf du Pape. Solo, you can feel its earthy black fruits, streaks of tar and intense tannins.

VIOGNIER

Capital V for Victory – for Viognier. The hedonistic white grape of the Rhône carries exotic jasmine, violet, musk, peach, apricot and honeysuckle perfumes. The higher alcohol and sugar levels provide a fuller bodied, creamy white. These gregarious and expressive traits have made it a welcome blending partner, chiefly with Rhône buddies Roussanne and Marsanne, and infamously, as a secret dab behind the ears with Syrah.

ROUSSANNE

Roussanne is often blended with Marsanne, the two being the only white varieties allowed in the northern Rhône appellations of Crozes-Hermitage, Hermitage and Saint-Joseph. As the name alludes, the grapes are distinguished by their russet colour when ripe ('roux' is French for the hue). Roussanne characteristically shows floral herbal tea, mild honey and pear on an expansive body.

MARSANNE

Marsanne produces deeply hued wines, rich and nutty on the waxy palate, with hints of spice, quince and pear. It takes to warm climates very well, yielding wines higher in alcohol and able to match oak aging. It's an ideal partner to the floral Roussanne and exotic Viognier, as well as a highly characterful, spicy solo wine that can age for decades.



TASTES OF THE RHÔNE. CLOSE TO HOME

Looking to try these varieties but without plans to visit France anytime soon? Watch out for these options at your local wine retailer.



GABRIEL MEFFRE 2014 CÔTES-DU-RHÔNE BLANC CUVÉE SAINT-VINCENT

Taste a fresh mix of Grenache Blanc, Roussanne, Clairette, Marsanne, Viognier and Bourboulenc that opens with a pretty floral blossoms and herbal lees notes. The delicate lees carries through onto a finely spiced, lightly savoury palate, drawing light pear, green fig and citrus along with the flow. The finish is dry and elegant.



DOMAINE DE BEURENARD 2013 CHÂTEAUNEUF-DU-PAPE

Certified organic and biodynamic, Domaine de Beurenard's 32-hectare vineyard is carefully tended by the seventh generation of the Coulon family. Perfumed and expressive, this lush blend of Grenache, Syrah, Mourvèdre and Cinsault is joined by four per cent "other varieties," a mix of the medley of grapes allowed in Châteauneuf-du-Pape. The supple palate is tufted with savoury raspberry, cherry, anise, florals and bramble, cushioned by baked strawberry and spiked with peppercorns. Soft, downy tannins give a lightly grippy tug at the finish.



DOMAINE DES ESCARAVILLES 2014 LES SABLÈRES CÔTES DU RHÔNE

This Grenache-Syrah blend comes entirely from Rasteau, and from vines between 30 and 50 years old. Ample peppery raspberry, wild strawberry, perfumed anise and sweet salami is seasoned with herbal resinous scrub, so typical of the southern Rhône. Tannins are peppery and grippy, and acidity is lifted to a gentle, lingering finish. This is a classic bistro roast chicken wine.



PAUL JABOULET AÎNÉ 2015 PARALLÈLE 45 BLANC, CÔTES-DU-RHÔNE

White florals, lemon blossom and verbena dominate this accessible Rhône blend from one of the Northern Rhône's leading estates, first established in 1834. Biodynamically farmed, this is a blend of Grenache Blanc, Marsanne, Viognier and Bourboulenc, averaging 20 years of age. Succulent but streamlined in form, this is lean and lemony, with a palate padding of herbal oils and citrus cream, textural spicing, before a snappy, stony finish.



M. CHAPOUTIER 2015 HERMITAGE CHANTE ALOUETTE BLANC

What's not to love about heady, earthy, pointed and exotically-perfumed, granitic quartz mineral-laced full bodied whites – especially if it's this stunning 100 per cent Marsanne from the sacred hill of Hermitage in the northern Rhône, biodynamically farmed? You'll notice oily intensity, heady honey blossom, grapefruit chalky notes, exotic white flowers and spice, quince and green fig. Round yet focused, with an endless length, this has the structure and heft to age gracefully over the next decade and beyond.



LES HALOS DE JUPITER 2015 CÔTES DU RHÔNE

Named for the king of all gods, this is a blend of old vine Grenache with 10 per cent Syrah and five per cent Mourvèdre from a high-altitude vineyard near Roaix (northern point of the Southern Rhône). Dusky blue florals, plum and dried rosemary are softly drawn across grippy, gritty tannins to a drying finish that lingers with violets. Authentic, honest and ready to drink.

PILGRIM TRAILS & COUNTRY ROADS OF NORTHERN SPAIN

On the web-like foot paths and rural roads that weave together the ancient sacred sights, soulful villages, and mountains, valleys, rolling hills, and coast-lines of northern Spain into a colourful tapestry, it's easy to go down any lane and land in a splendid adventure that indulges the sense and serves up local fare. BY BEEBE BAHRAMI

Pilgrims walking through endless green fields, Camino de Santiago, Navarra

STEP UP TO THE THICK WOODEN BAR IN a granite and slate village inn, dried mountain herbs and garlic hanging from the timbered roof and a warming fire blazing in the corner. I place an order with the innkeeper for espresso with steamed milk.

It's pre-dawn and I want caffeine before venturing back outside to take in the sunrise in this mountaintop village of O Cebreiro in Galicia, a place to which I spent hours climbing yesterday. On the third highest peak on the Camino de Santiago – the pilgrimage road across northern Spain to the shrine of Saint James in Santiago de Compostela – the sunrise here is celebrated among fellow pilgrims. And so, I wait, espresso in hand.

THE WHOLE OF NORTHERN SPAIN IS ONE wonderful tapestry of web-like footpaths and country roads, many unified by Christianity's third greatest pilgrimage since the 9th century to Santiago de Compostela (Rome and Jerusalem are the other two). These routes traverse – sometimes in one day – ocean, mountain, and rolling hill and vineyard vistas where each turn can reveal an adventure. And not only in this vast natural wealth but also of the human kind – coming upon a winemaker, farmer, herder or fisherman in a setting untouched by the industrial world, doing things by hand – often an ancient village, church or hidden cave as a backdrop to an already stunning setting.

I recently visited both Rioja and Asturias in the north, and while I was now on the Camino Francés – the most popular route to Santiago de Compostela – it still has many tributaries that crisscross in that direction, several connecting to another major route, the Camino del Norte, that shimmies along the Atlantic coastline. It is easy to shift from one to the other on a whim. As the saying goes, Santiago (Spanish for Saint James) is not in Compostela, but on the trail.

IN LATE SPRING, I'D BEGUN IN THE PYRENEES and crossed into Navarra, walking through green foothills of coffee-toned earth, wildflowers and wheat fields, slipping into the rolling dark red hills and radiating green rows of vines in Rioja by early summer. One stretch in particular intoxicated me through sheer beauty: Soon after the village of Navarete, 13 kilometres west of Rioja's capital, Logroño, the Camino passed through the heart of infinite undulating vineyards looking like a striped beach blanket flapping in the wind. I saw a man and a woman stooped at the base of a row of vines, each selectively pruning branches and leaves, and asked what grapes and where I could taste the results. "These are Tempranillo and Garnacha," the woman said. They then directed me to a hamlet on the nearby hill, the only landscape feature other than endless striped ►



Rows of vines in Rioja

hills, and made of the same dark red earth. “Ventosa has a bar. Just ask for the house red, *tinto de la casa*.”

Founded in the 11th century, Ventosa’s most distinctive feature was its heavily fortified church that stood out like a beacon on the highest point of the hill. The bar, meanwhile, was hidden at the foot. I took a seat as a French pilgrim from Picardy and two women from London arrived, and we all ordered the house *tinto*. The waiter poured us each a deep red burgundy liquid from an unlabeled bottle. He also brought us a bowl of dark green olives with a robust nutty fragrance. We toasted and drank, the wine of a classic full-bodied, mineral-rich Rioja. But this one’s molecules pulsed on my tongue because of the surrounding air and nearness of the land of its birth. The olives tasted like the sun.

Before pressing on to Nájera, 11 kilometres away, I climbed to the church and discovered several whimsical creatures engraved in the stone doorway. One was of a pig snarling down acorns. Nearby him wriggled two serpent-dragons who looked like depictions of medieval lore about the earth possessing a fertile, serpent-like energy that one could feel underfoot. Some modern Spanish and French pilgrims subscribe to this idea ▶



WALKING TOURS OF SPAIN

If you’re interested in trekking the **Camino de Santiago** but would prefer not do it alone, consider an organized tour, as recommended by your Bon Vivant travel advisor. Numerous options are available with itineraries in different durations, to immerse travellers in the various cultures, cuisines and communities throughout different sections of the pilgrimage route.

Of course, there are plenty of other walking tours to enjoy throughout Spain – some much sweeter than others, depending on the route (and the vineyards it passes).

▶ The **Rías Baixas Wine Route** ventures to Galicia, where you will find Albariño wines in the Rías Baixas region. Meet the winemakers and visit the vineyards where wine is produced, while indulging in Galician gastronomy. Sanxenxo, Cambados, O Grove and Vilagarcía de Arousa are the suggested destinations to visit along the route, each with something to be discovered, from beautiful beaches, to cultural attractions, to luxury accommodations.

▶ **Marco de Jerez Wine and Brandy Routes**, in the south of Andalusia is equally as tempting as the Rías Baixas Wine Route, though uniquely appealing. Visit towns like Jerez, El Puerto de Santa María, Sanlúcar de Barrameda, Rota and Chiclana, embracing the opportunity to partake in local festivals and events along the way. Delight your palate by enjoying the range of wines throughout. Pedro Ximénez and Moscatel varieties come especially recommended.



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Dec 21	16	Hawaii	Round-trip Los Angeles	<i>Crystal Serenity</i>
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and consider the Camino a walk along an old feel-good energy path. I have to agree.

By the time I made it to Nájera, a town and monastery built into a red sandstone cliff with the wide blue-green Najerilla river flowing through its centre, too late for lunch and too early for dinner, I stopped at a riverside café and ordered small tastes, *tapitas*, of the house specialties: snails stewed in tomato-garlic salsa; wild mushroom stuffed roasted red peppers; and thin slices of cured *jamón Ibérico*.

The café owner brought my order, along with a bottle of the local rosé – Tempranillo grapes pressed briefly with the skins to give a salmon pink hue – and filled my glass while filling me in on two pilgrims behind us seated inside at the bar, a man from Madrid and a lady from Amsterdam.

“Those two,” he said proudly, “only just met in my café, but are already in love.”

I toasted him and them, and discovered the rosé was a perfect marriage – dry, fruity, and rounder than its Provençal cousin, and ideal with the eclectic plates before me.

Soon after Rioja, to the ocean and Asturias I went, slipping up north from the interior Camino to the Atlantic Camino del Norte, the coastal trail to Santiago de Compostela – the ocean to my right and the Cantabrian mountains to my left.

I touched in at the fishing town of Llanes, with its stucco, stone and timber homes of traditional hanging wooden balconies. Each house was painted a bright colour – cherry red, burnt orange, mustard yellow, pea green and Mediterranean blue. The small fishing boats in front of them in the long, narrow harbour reflected the same colours back.

Before heading west on the fern-lined trail past cliff-side cow pastures and forests, I fortified myself in yet another harbour-side café just as the waiter picked up a thick green Champagne-like bottle from the bar, flicked the cork off with an exploding pop, and angled the bottle overhead, his other hand holding a pint glass at mid-thigh. A sudden shot of golden liquid lightening – *sidra*, hard cider – flew out of the bottleneck, over his head, and arched perfectly around his shoulder, landing in the glass. He filled it to three-finger height, a frothy, floral and slightly dry elixir made from only locally grown apples, pressed and fermented in chestnut wood barrels.

“*Buenos días, la joven,*” the waiter greeted me. I sat and ordered a *sidra* and the chalk-board’s daily special: sirloin steak with Cabrales cheese, the blue cheese of Asturias that is wrapped in chestnut leaves, and grilled vegetables, *verduras a la parilla*.

“Why do you call me young lady?” I asked him ▶



Backpacker walking
the Camino del Norte



O Cebreiro mountains in Galicia

when he set down my order and refilled my cider glass. “I’m twice your age.”

“Because,” he smiled, “youth is an attitude; I like your smile.”

I took a first bite of the steak and Cabrales. The flavours of the cider and the cheese, each kissed with chestnut, danced in my mouth.

It was also coming to the realization that local, sustainable, small-scale and healthy food practices were the norm across northern Spain, so much so that no one bothers to label them as such; it’s just normal.

I continued west, along a small road that gave way to the pilgrimage trail, which meandered along sinuous green paths lined with ferns, apple trees and sloping green fields of grazing cattle, sheep and, occasionally, goats. I could see the ocean most of the time and was mesmerized by a group of surfers bobbing up and down, waiting for a set. A few times, the path dipped down and cut left and the ocean disappeared, and I found myself immersed in deep gray granite mountains and narrow valleys, a river flowing out toward the sea – the only sign the ocean was still a stone’s throw away.

BACK ON THIS MOUNTAINTOP OF O CEBREIRO, I finish my coffee and step out to watch the sun rise over the layered mountains, morphing from dark purple, ruby red, blood orange, dusty rose and pale lavender before reaching sky blue.

I pressed west, entering dense green mountains, passing through ancient chestnut, oak and pine forests. I reach, at last, the verdant river valley of Santiago de Compostela but continue to the Atlantic, where the trail ends naturally, tumbling into the sea.

At land’s end in the fishing village of Muxía, I celebrate with a plate of steamed percebes – hard to harvest cliff side clam-and-lobster-tasting gooseneck barnacles – and a glass of granite and sea-salt kissed Albariño. I dangle my feet over the ocean on wind-polished boulders and watch the sunset.

In this threshold between day and night, ocean and land, ending and beginning, I realize that, aided by the country roads and trails of northern Spain, I’ve become more confident to strike out on my own, more adventurous, and better connected to myself. 🍷

SAVOUR THE EXPERIENCE

Rural northern Spain overflows with chances to experience ancient sights and gorgeous landscapes alongside the seasonal and fresh bounty of ocean, mountain and rolling vineyards:



➤ Visit Rioja’s hilltop wine town of **Laguardia** to taste Rioja wines in the underground bodegas, visit the town’s polychrome painted 12th church, and with a map from the tourist office, view several 4,000-5,000-year-old dolmens, standing stones, in the surrounding vineyards.

➤ Do a pinchos and wine tasting crawl along **Calle Laurel** in **Logroño**, each place known for showcasing local Rioja wines and creating innovative little bites.

➤ Visit **Tito Bustillo**, in the fishing town of **Ribadesella, Asturias**, dating to some 14,000 years ago and distinctive for its painted and engraved herds of Paleolithic horses; enjoy Ribadesella’s harbor-side cafés and restaurants, and on Thursday mornings, the weekly farmer’s market.

➤ Take the coastal road to the pretty fishing town of **Viveiro** in **Galicia** and head to the hilltop chapel of San Roque and the hill-top grill, **Parillada San Roque**, with large wood burning fire where locals enjoy family style barbecued pork ribs, steaks, fresh caught fish, local red and green peppers, and *grellos*, the Galician name for collard greens, perfectly sautéed with olive oil and garlic.



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Finding common ground in Bolzano

There's something about Italy's South Tyrol province that is world's away from the traditional way of life traveller's expect of this country BY ELIZABETH HEATH

Valley Santa Maddalena in the National park Puez Odle, South Tyrol.



MY HUNGER WAS MAKING me cranky by the time we stopped for a late lunch at one of Bolzano's beer-centric eateries, and having to wait for a table didn't do much for my mood. "I want one of those pretzels," I told my husband, Paolo, who insisted I wait until we were seated to begin indulging. Since moving to Italy nearly 10 years ago, soft, German-style pretzels rank very high on the list of "Foods I Miss and Can Never Find," but there they were – salt-flecked, glossy brown knots dangling in all their glory on a rack at the bar, inches from where we waited. "They're like bar snacks. I think I can just take one." Before Paolo needed to slap my hand away, we were called to our table.

I finally got my pretzel – then, and several times over in the next few days – even though one might not expect this specific treat in Italy, of all places. This speaks to the uniqueness of the Alto Adige, or South Tyrol province. It's a cultural island unto itself – part of, but apart from Italy, yet not Austria, the bordering nation with which it more



Top to bottom: Torre Bianca of Bressanone, Pretzels for sale in Bolzano, Summer sunset in Parco Naturale Puez-Odle

© South Tyrol Museum of Archaeology/foto-dpi.com



Historic city centre of Bolzano



Nova Levante

closely identifies; its architecture, culture, costume and cuisine all represent its past belonging to the Austrian Hapsburg Empire. With a charming, walkable historic centre, Bolzano, the provincial capital, offers a convenient small-city base for exploring the region's castles, museums and mountains.

And the history is deep here. This northernmost province of Italy shares a border with Switzerland and Austria. Its two mountain passes at Reschen and Brenner have made it a strategic trade route and hotly contested territory for thousands of years. The province was granted to Italy at the end of World War I, even though a majority of its residents spoke German and identified as Austrian. When Mussolini rose to power in the 1920s, he forced the Italianization of the province, imported tens of thousands of Italians from elsewhere in the country, and made the teaching and speaking of German punishable crimes. After World War II, the South Tyrol's German-speaking population was granted special protections and the province's dual identity was recognized and celebrated.

Beyond Bolzano's vibrant streets, markets and bustling town squares lie castles, mountain hiking trails and quaint Alpine villages.

The German heritage of South Tyrol (the province is called Alto Adige in Italian but here, it's the *Südtirol*, and Bolzano is *Bozen*) is evident everywhere, from the countryside – dotted with characteristic farmhouses with sturdy, concrete and stucco ground levels for livestock and upper floors made of rough-hewn, dark-stained wood – to cities like Bolzano, with its mix of medieval, Renaissance, neo-Gothic and Art Nouveau architecture that creates the ambiance not of an Italian centro but of a Bavarian market town. When South Tyrolians speak Italian – and most everyone in businesses serving tourists is tri-lingual – phrases come out with a cheerfully Germanic rhythm and inflection, and always seem to end with a “*ja*” and a question mark.

In Bolzano's cozy taverns, rustic brew pubs and shady beer gardens, menus may be in Italian and German, but the flavour of the city is all Teutonic. There may be hundreds of kinds of pastas in the country but here, thick, eggy spätzle noodles are the preferred first course or side dish. Beef stews like gröstl or goulash come with a hearty, herby *knödel* (*canederli*, in Italian) dumpling or two on the side, and shockingly large platters of ribs, steaks and sausages are served with sauerkraut and spicy mustard. Nothing too Italian about any of that. Yes, you can find places serving Mediterranean-style pasta or pizza. But those aren't the sort of dishes for which you come to South Tyrol. ►




Prato Piazza famous plateau
in the Dolomites in South Tyrol

Summer in the South Tyrol is perfectly lovely, particularly when the temperatures in Italy's major cities are topping 40 degrees Celsius and the crowds are at their sweaty, frazzled peak. Beyond Bolzano's vibrant streets, markets and bustling town squares lie castles, mountain hiking trails and quaint Alpine villages.

The 12th-century Schloss Maretsch castle is within walking distance of Bolzano's centre, while a few kilometres from town, Schloss Runkelstein contains important frescoes from the 1300s. At Schloss Sigmundskron, which dates to at least 945 AD, the eclectic Messner Mountain Museum examines humankind's relationship with the mountains. In keeping with the spirit of the museum, visitors are encouraged to hike the five or so kilometres from Bolzano up to the castle. From just outside the centre, the Rittner cablecar

transports riders a smooth 15 minutes to the cute town of Oberbozen, where high-meadow hikes fan out in every direction, with the toothy Dolomites as a dramatic backdrop.

Back in town, Bolzano's most famous resident is, without a doubt, Ötzi, the Copper-Age "Iceman" – a glacial mummy found in 1991 near the Austrian border. The South Tyrol Museum of Archaeology, through fascinating, comprehensive exhibits, tells the story of this mystery man, who lived more than 5,300 years ago – making him older than the pyramids of Egypt – and who died when he was murdered on the mountaintop. Ötzi's clothes and tools are painstakingly preserved, and the detailed scientific analysis of his mummy and effects are presented in a highly accessible manner. Gaze at the model of Ötzi as forensic specialists believe he may have looked, with his weathered skin, diminutive stature and piercing dark eyes, learn of his painful, mysterious demise and well, I dare you not to come away moved.

It's as complex as some might argue Bolzano, and the Alto Adige at large, to be. But it's in this complexity – the various cultural influences, the history, the languages – where you could say true beauty lies. 

SAVOUR THE EXPERIENCE

A soft pretzel and a mug of locally brewed beer taste best in a historic setting. These Bolzano taverns and brewpubs, some with on-site breweries, all jostle for the title of "oldest restaurant in Bolzano."



- » At **Hopfen & Co.** (Piazza Erbe 17), they brew the beer down in the cellar and claim to have been serving wayfarers for 800 years.
- » There's been an inn on the site of **Batzen Häusl** since at least 1404. The current, woodsy iteration was lovingly restored after wartime bombardment.
- » Upscale **Cavallino Bianco** (or Weißes Rössl, if you wish) serves South Tyrolean fare amid wood-beam ceilings and muraled walls, and says it's the oldest in town.
- » Despite its chic modern interiors, **Restaurant Lowengrube** dates to 1543 and claim to be the "oldest wine bar in Bolzano." Its stone cellar, built in 1280, keeps 1,000 or so bottles nicely chilled.

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FILLING UP ON TRADITION IN

INNSBRUCK

Whether a feast for your eyes or a feast for your belly,
the beautiful experiences of Innsbruck are sure to satisfy

BY TOM OWEN

Hiking in the
"Hoettinger Alm",
Innsbruck



Hiking at the
"Rangger Koepfl",
Innsbruck

TVB Innsbruck/Mario Webhofer

FROM THE TOPMOST STATION ON the Nordketten cable car, you can see Innsbruck in its entirety. My overwhelming impression of the city is that it is not actually that big.

As high-mountain cities go, it's a whopper, but as you look over it from 2,200 metres above sea level, it seems a tiny place. The city has a small-town feel, too, when you're down at street level some 1,600 metres below. There are a few touristic hotspots – the big house in the centre of town with a gold roof, inventively known as Goldenes Dachl or 'Gold Roof', which teems with photo-snapping foreigners every hour of the day – but many quiet and peaceful idylls too.

Naturally, Innsbruck has a strong association with snow sports. It has hosted the Winter Olympic Games twice, and boasts some of the best slopes anywhere in Europe. It is uniquely well-situated too – there aren't many ski resorts that also happen to offer gorgeous mediaeval architecture – so you can stay in the city, then take the downtown cable car up to the top of a choice of runs.

Going somewhat against the grain, my visit to Innsbruck fell in late summer. I was mainly there to explore the opportunities for road cycling (of which there are many), but found time to experience some of the city's character beyond boards, bindings and big dumps.

DINNER WITH FRIENDS

Without question, the gastronomic highpoint of my stay in Innsbruck was dinner at Oscar Kocht, a stylish, esoteric restaurant in the Pradl district of the city centre. Pradl is a fast-developing part of town, but is still largely considered to be off the beaten path – giving a trip to Oscar's an almost adventurous feel.

The titular Oscar is a Mexican émigré who decamped to Innsbruck from Chihuahua some 20 years ago. In the intervening two decades, he has perfected the art of cooking delicious seasonal meals with produce solely grown within the Inn Valley.

Before each course he recites a litany – in German first, and then in English purely for my benefit as the only non-local dining that night.

"The Brussel sprouts were grown four kilometres away. The potatoes were grown eight kilometres away. The shallots were grown 14 kilometres away." At this last mention, Oscar flinches a little, almost as though he is ashamed of using produce of such far-flung origin.

The reason Oscar can give a commentary on each course is that his is a tiny restaurant – one with just a single table and eight seats. The dining experience is intimate and – as you can imagine – fairly exclusive. On the evening of my visit, the conversation flows freely between the clientele, which is composed of three separate parties. By the end, it feels as if we're one big family, with the locals musing on the changing face of Innsbruck.

If you can secure a table, Oscar's is a must-visit – the menu is fixed each night, but changes as rapidly as the nature of the ingredients available. The restaurant is vegetarian, with most of the dishes suitable for vegans too, and those that are not can be substituted or modified on request. My advice is to book early!

OLD FAVOURITES

While Oscar Kocht undoubtedly leads the way, there are plenty of other bars and eateries offering something innovative – particularly in the bohemian quarter around Wiltener Platzl. Top spots to visit here include the bar Kater Noster, hip brunch café Immerland, or vegan restaurant Olive.

The flesh-free food at Olive and Oscar Kocht stands in stark contrast to the traditional cuisine of the Tyrol, of which Innsbruck is the capital. The farmers that lived here for centuries before the rise of 'clean eating' and 'plant-based lifestyle' tended to subsist on potatoes, meat and cheese – a far cry from the trendy diets you can readily encounter in the city these days.

If a bit of hearty peasant food does appeal though, there are plenty of places you can find it around the city. Top dishes I enjoyed on more than one occasion were gröstl (bacon, onion and potato, with optional fried egg on top) and käsespätzle (an Austrian take on mac & cheese). Indeed, I hadn't really read the menu properly when I ordered that latter option for the first time – and ▶



Clockwise: Old Town Innsbruck, Maria Theresien Street and St. Anne's column, Grötl

was absolutely delighted when a huge pile of sticky cheese and small nuggets of chewy gnocchi arrived, so hot the vapour was still rising from the surface. Wieße Rossl and Ottoburg are my top tips.

GREEN AND PLEASANT

The Tyrolean countryside is something marvellous to behold, with endless green pastures rolling along the valley floors and sheer mountainous edifices hemming them in. It feels like you might be in some hidden world, a lost land of enchanted castles and heroic princes. While I spent much of my time pedalling about the area, you could also make a fantastic driving day trip out of exploring the Inn Valley – heading north-

east towards Kufstein, being sure to stop at the Tiroler Bauernhöfe for a taste of how people in the region used to live as far back as the 16th century. From there, you can head onto Rattenburg and finally Kufstein – two charming and ancient Tyrolean towns that enjoy a sleepy and peaceful pace of life.

If you are very, very lucky (like me), you may even time your late summer visit to coincide with the annual Almbtrieb festival – when villagers across the Tyrol celebrate the coming down of the cows from their high-mountain pastures to spend the winter at lower, warmer altitudes. The cows are bedecked in huge garlands of fresh flowers cut from the nearby meadows and trudge in a vaguely downhill direction over the course of

TVB Innsbruck, TVB Stubai Tirol/Andie Schönherr, TVB Innsbruck/Christof Lockner

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180125 (05/2018)




Top to bottom: Nordketten cable car, Cattle being lead down alpine pastures during Almabtrieb

a weekend – usually mooching around the gardens of the houses in the villages on their way through and wandering off down side streets before being gently redirected by the residents. It's not so much a cattle drive, as a cattle wander.

While the cows make their annual pilgrimage, the locals cook on barbecues, drink beer and play games in the fields. One popular sport is the competition to see who can push a giant plastic-wrapped bale of hay the furthest across a broken, rock-strewn field (presumably the game ends when somebody sprains an ankle). In the larger hamlets, there is even oompah music played by the local brass band. It's hard to think of a phenomenon more Austrian.

THE LAST WORD

Innsbruck is a deeply immersive city to visit, steeped in history but simultaneously straining at the constraints of traditional thinking. Its population of 30,000 students (out of 130,000) ensures a culture that always looks towards the new, while the majestic, immutable surroundings give the city a sense of timelessness. 



Hiking along the Eagle Walk from Hintersteinersee to Kufstein

SAVOUR THE EXPERIENCE

- » **Almabtrieb** usually falls in early-to-mid September, but really it depends on the weather more than the calendar.
- » The menu is always different at **Oscar Kocht**, but it's best not to plan a visit at the very start of spring – the variety and amount of freshly grown produce available is at its lowest after winter.
- » The **Nordketten cable car** is only the city's most spectacular line. There are many to choose from – each with their own particular highlights, from secluded forests to semi-legal mountain bike trails, to an alpine zoo.
- » Even those who speak a little bit of German should expect to struggle with the Tyrolean dialect – it leaves even native German speakers baffled at times.

TVB Innsbruck/Tommy Bause, Österreich Werbung, Fankhauser, Tirol Werbung/Jens Schwarz


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TWENTY YEARS OF VELVET

A journey through the secrets of Czech success, from peace to prosperity to rock and roll – and some of the very best beer in the world. BY TIM JOHNSON

Panoramic view of Vltava river and Charles bridge

IT IS LATE IN THE EVENING, PITCH DARK outside. I am lying flat on my back in the basement of a 700-year-old monastery. And I am completely covered in beer; practically drowning in it, in fact. The warm, dark brew soaks me from chin to toe, its syrupy-sweet smell filling my nostrils. It is an unusual feeling, to be sure. But somehow, coming to the Czech Republic, I sort of expected that I would end up in a position like this.

After nearly a half century as a Soviet satellite under the unwelcome control of Moscow, Czechoslovakia emerged from its communist shadow during the 1989 Velvet Revolution, a bloodless and (yes) smooth handover of power from an unelected and extremely unpopular regime to the democratic leaders who had been agitating for change in this Central European country for more than a decade. Four years later – 20 years ago this year – the Czech Republic completed its path to becoming a truly independent nation, splitting from its forced and often awkward union with next-door Slovakia. In the years since, this small nation of some 10 million has proven itself to be a great success, surging ahead economically while preserving and celebrating its unique cultural institutions.

And if there's one product that has undoubtedly set the Czech apart, proving to be both a time-honoured cultural item and runaway best-seller, it is most definitely beer. What wine is to the French and vodka is to the Russians, beer is to the Czechs – a source of national pride, marketplace profit, and, above all else, a beverage to be consumed in large quantities (Czechs drink 145 litres of beer per capita every year, the most in the world).

At the Augustine Hotel, a luxe Rocco Forte property in the heart of Prague's picturesque Lesser Town, the monks still brew the stuff on site. Built inside a centuries-old monastery, a number of the brothers occupy space there, brewing St. Thomas, a dark beer that serves as the main ingredient in the Augustine spa's St. Thomas Body Ritual, which is how I found myself in this position, covered in liquid gold. Wael, my therapist, explains that he calls ahead when guests order this treatment, and a monk hand-delivers the beer to the spa in a sort of metal urn. ►

narvikk



Clock tower and Tyn cathedral on the old square in Prague.

After being exfoliated with a combination of scrub, lotion, beer and hops grown in the north of the Czech Republic (reportedly the best in the world, Czech hops are exported all over the globe), Wael covers me in a wrap of towels that have been soaked in warm beer and water (he assures me that beer is very good for the skin, with solid detoxifying powers). It's a two-part treatment, finishing with a massage, and broken up by an intermission in the spa's relaxation room to – what else? – drink down a pint of St. Thomas.

Not satisfied with being bathed in beer, I set out to find its historic source, and thus find myself travelling south toward the town of Pilsen with a guide named Michal van der Laan, a Czech man of partial Dutch descent who was raised during communist times. He recalls for me the exciting days in 1989 when Czechs saw their world change, including the pivotal student protest on November 17 that was brutally suppressed by police (he

was there on that fateful day), leading to mass protests in Wenceslas Square and, soon after, the overturn of the government.

We arrive in Pilsen – the basis for the word *Pilsener* – and find a hardworking town, home to a number of factories, but it is also picturesque, boasting a beautiful 13th century cathedral and lovely examples of gothic, renaissance and baroque architecture. But its main attraction is undeniably the Pilsener Urquell brewery that sits near the centre of town, the place where Pilsener, a pale lager that's popular all over the world, was born back in 1842. The tour is interesting, recalling the story of how a number of brewers banded together more than 150 years ago to produce a premium beer. It includes a unique opportunity – the chance to taste pure, unfiltered and unpasteurized beer, tapped directly from an oak lager barrel where it is being aged; it is crisper and smoother than any beer have I have tasted heretofore in my life. ►



Tim Johnson

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ALL ABOARD AMAZING



Pilsen beer with a view

"...when we separated from Slovakia, there was no argument at all. Here, we don't negotiate with a knife on the table."

On the way back to Prague, I ask Michal why his country has been so successful when others in the region have not. He ponders for a moment and then answers, thoughtfully, "Here, it wasn't like the former Yugoslavia, which was a catastrophe. Even when we separated from Slovakia, there was no argument at all. Here, we don't negotiate with a knife on the table."

Over the following days in Prague, I see what Michal was talking about, as well as a number of other secrets of Czech success – its well-developed industrial prowess, aided by the nation's prominent position in the Austrian Empire, evidenced in magnificent places like the Prague's Hrad (Castle) and in proud and beautiful towns like medieval Cesky Krumlov. I attend a hockey game to see the country's athletic might – best displayed in its gold medal victory in

ice hockey at the 1998 Olympics, a sort of international coming out party in sport – still exhibited in its elite domestic hockey league, where a number of future and former National Hockey League players showcase their skills.

And then there's rock and roll. Of all the countries to shake their communist bonds in 1989, the Czech arguably had the coolest revolution. Prague rock band Plastic People of the Universe, named after a Frank Zappa song, played a key role as a subaltern voice, and leader Vaclav Havel – a poet and essayist who went on to be the nation's first democratically elected president – had strong personal ties with musical icons like Zappa, who became an official advisor to the government on matters of culture soon after the revolution.



Top to bottom: Wallenstein Garden, Prague castle and historical Old Town

On the last day of my visit, which happens to be November 17, 2012 – exactly 23 years after the fateful student protest that eventually brought down the communist regime – I visit the monument in Prague, which commemorates the event, adorned with flowers and lit by a thousand candles. And then I go straight to the nearby Rock Café, the city’s best-known rock and roll club. In honour of the anniversary, and of the 20th year since the split, the bar is holding a special night of concerts, featuring three Slovak bands. In attendance are the former Slovak president as well as two candidates for president of the Czech Republic, one of whom is Karel Schwarzenburg, the country’s minister of foreign affairs and an heir to a number of noble titles, as well as a prominent human rights advocate and voice of dissent during the communist era.

I have a chance to sit down and chat with him and ask him why he, an older man clearly a fish out of water in his sweater and bow tie, is at this event tonight. “Before 1989, the whole dissident movement was connected to rock and roll, which the communists told us was decadent and Western. We’re all interconnected,” he tells me. “It’s natural for us to meet here, to see old acquaintances and share the joy of freedom with our Slovak friends.”

A little later, midway through the set of headliners Billy Barman – a group far too young to remember those revolutionary days – Schwarzenburg takes the microphone to make a speech. He speaks exclusively in Czech and I don’t understand a word, but then he appears to make a special request, whispering in the ears of the band and then announcing something on the mic. I ask the guy next to me what’s going on. “We’re going to sing the old national anthem of united Czechoslovakia,” he says. “Probably no one remembers it.”

But they do remember it. Everyone sings, although they do so while looking at one another with a bemused look on their faces, as if they’re doing something strange that they haven’t done in a very long time. It seems to go on forever, but soon enough it finishes and the concert continues. The lights lower, Billy Barman strikes a power chord, and the night descends back into a pure, beer-soaked celebration of nationhood – and rock and roll. 🍷



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Canada's Christine Cushing: Making the magic happen

Eating her way around the globe has been a big part of **Christine Cushing's** career – exploring destinations and cultures through food. But along the way she's learned a thing or two, like how real connections and the best memories are made when you just go with the flow.

INTERVIEW BY TERRILYN KUNOPASKI



“Travel is essential to my career – they are so intertwined. I think I was a born traveller.”

Let's talk about your travel experience and how it has played into your career.

Travel is essential to my career – they are so intertwined. I think I was a born traveller. I came to Canada as a baby from Greece. I didn't travel a lot as a kid but my parents would send me back there in the summer-time. And then, I went to school in Paris. When people ask, "What is your inspiration for food?" I say that travel is definitely the thing that awakens my curiosity and teaches me new things.

How do you plan your travels?

It really depends what's happening. For my husband and I, Greece is the place that we go every year in the summertime. As a result of that, we've seen Greece in a different way, even from when I was a child. I'm kind of a foreigner there, but kind of not; it's a very interesting dynamic. In the last four years, I've been working on this show where we travel to different parts of the world. It's a Chinese show called "If Confucius Was a Foodie." It has afforded me the opportunity to go to various Asian countries for the first time. I had only been to Hong Kong before. We visited Hong Kong again, and we went to Thailand, Singapore, Malaysia and Taiwan, plus a lot of places in Europe to connect the pieces of the show.

And you get to do this for a living!

Yes, it is really cool. I mean, I'm not going to play the violin but it is a lot of work; travelling when you're shooting a show is a whole other thing. But we love it.

So throughout your career, have you noticed trends and changes in the way people cook and the way people appreciate food?

Oh yeah. It's completely changed. I think it's partly because of travel and partly because of the online world. Food is so visual for me. After I left my restaurant job and before I got into television, I was a food stylist for quite a few years because I love the visual aspect – and I still see food in that way; it has to look great, even if it's just a sandwich. I think that visual aspect of food has really connected us; you can see this random photo online of a dish, and you think it looks mouthwatering and delicious, or you wonder what it is; it sparks your curiosity. The Internet affords us that connectivity in a way. Then, when you get to a

place, you can dig beyond that. The Instagram moments are OK, but that's just the surface; it's about the smells, the sounds, the tastes – the full story of the food, which is what really makes you remember it and be inspired by it.

I was on a media trip to Spain in November – again, mind-blowing – and we went to this beautiful coastal restaurant in Valencia. The chef was making paella with me and we shot it as a video for my YouTube channel. We were cooking side-by-side, with the water as our backdrop, and it was so great. I said to him, "I'm going to be your ambassador for the true Paella Valenciana." I'm never going to make paella the same way again. I could taste it, I could smell it; I know what the place feels like – and if I hadn't gone there, it just wouldn't mean the same. It's these experiences that help us to really connect with all the amazing food culture, which is also not static anymore. There's a sort of duality to it – there are so many examples but take pizza Neapolitano; you might hear how there's one right way to make it and a set list of ingredients. But at the same time, dishes like that are snapshots in time; they represent recipes that have been replicated over and over again to be as close to the originals as possible. But now, we're all moving together in a new way, with a new style of cooking, bringing in elements from all over the world. And that's magic of it – it's never the same. It's just always progressing in some way.

I'm curious to know if you feel like food has always been an integral part of the travel experience, or is that importance increasing?

I think it has always been integral to the travel experience, though maybe that's because I cook for a living and I'm just crazy about food. When my husband and I travel, the first thing on our minds is: "Where are we going to eat?" When we go to Greece in the summer, we pick a beach based on where we want to have lunch that day. But I think that for travellers, dining is no longer about going to a touristy restaurant to get something and the people there know you're never going to come back again so it doesn't matter. Now, the connections to food – and the experiences people have around food – are much more profound. So I think it's happening everywhere; you can't travel and not ask: "Where are we going to eat?" "What is going to be the interesting thing?" "What are we going to learn?" ▶



Christine Cushing. © Lofty Sky Entertainment.



Clockwise: Plaza de la Reina, Valencia, Celebration at the beach, Christine navigates Hong Kong



Navagio Beach, Zathynkos

So a few years ago, you did an Oceania Cruise with Ensemble Travel Group. Tell us about it!

Yes, I was leading a group of about 20 people. I had no idea who they were going to be but I knew we were going to be spending 13 or 14 days together, which is quite a substantial amount of time. It's just amazing because you share all these meals together and you come together like family for these 14 days, and food is the connector – it's the conduit.

One of the most memorable experiences of that entire trip on a culinary level was in Istanbul. My husband and I were talking about baklava. He's Serbian, I'm Greek, so it's a big thing. And you always hear, "This is the best baklava you'll ever have!" So we went to one of these cafés, but we were later told, "No, you did not have the best baklava. I know the guy who makes the best baklava." Next thing you know, we planned a behind the scenes visit at the factory where they make this baklava. Another tour was already planned for the morning, so I gathered the group together and said, "Here's the thing. We were going to go to the market, but who wants to go behind the scenes for the making of this baklava?" And they were all in. So the owner of this place took us right into where they were making it by hand – I can still smell the aromas, and everybody was just clamoring to see. We had our translator but the guy was so animated – he was speaking Turkish, grabbing my hand, telling me

to do stuff – it was amazing. It shows you how food – and the desire to understand and seek a tradition that's long standing in a culture, in a city – can bring people together. It was just epic. That day will go down in history. It was the best baklava, to this day, that I have ever tasted.



Christine with the Baklava master in Istanbul

So had you cruised before?

The experience with Oceania was my first cruise. It's an odd thing because, first of all, we didn't think we are cruising-type people so when the opportunity came up – I loved the itinerary but I really wanted to make sure that we were going to enjoy it because I didn't think cruising was for me. But now, I wouldn't be able to go on another cruise line. We started at the top. And it would be impossible to replicate – it was such a great experience. Even the food was shocking to me. The quality at every level with Oceania is really at a high standard. They spare no expense. It leaves you feeling about as good as a cruise can make you feel.

Any other especially memorable moments from that particular trip?

Yes. We went to Zathynkos – a place in Greece I had never been before. There's a lot of Italian influence there; it's very close to Italy. There are these beautiful cliffs and then blue water that you think is Photoshopped, and it's just incredible. Our guide was this amazing Dutchwoman. She was a musician – a singer – and she had moved to Greece years ago as a young student. She said she fell in love with it; with the culture of singing. She took us to a variety of places and it was just spectacular. There was a rawness to it; we were slack jawed at all the ruggedness. She said she would go back to Holland to see her extended family over Christmas and she would think, "Oh my god, how did I ever lived here?" because she was just so in love with Zathynkos.

She took us to this beautiful tavern for lunch– she had with her a local guide; she was singing and he was singing and playing guitar. I was completely moved by the whole afternoon. The food was delicious; it was very classic, traditional Greek food in a beautiful little small

Christine Cushing, © Lefty Sky Entertainment.



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DAY 1 Polignano a Mare

Individual arrival to Polignano, homeland of Domenico Modugno, the singer of "Volare". Meeting with the tour guide at hotel. Dinner in one of the restaurants, renowned for its fresh fish and excellent fish soups.

DAY 2 Polignano - Gioia del Colle (60km)

We will go exploring the hinterland, surrounded by almond trees and cultivated fields. After a few kilometres we will reach Conversano, ancient county of the Acquaviva's family and now headquarter of Canapuglia. Back on our bikes, we will cycle through the countryside around Bari to arrive to the castle of Gioia del Colle. A tasting of Primitivo di Gioia (local red wine) with the typical fiordilatte will be the final goal of the day.

DAY 3 Gioia del Colle - Martina Franca (50km)

We will cycle towards Noci, for an interesting meeting with a true sandwich maker. Towards Alberobello, among dry stone walls and olive trees we will get to Itria Valley to discover ancient wine traditions. In the afternoon we will reach the baroque town of Martina Franca to taste its traditional pork cold cut, Capocollo. For the sweet lovers: the bocconotto, best known pastry of the Itria Valley.

DAY 4 Martina Franca - Ostuni (55 km)

We will head to Cisternino to visit its old town, listed as one of the most beautiful villages in Italy. After the visit, a few kilometers away, Locorotondo and Mrs. Antonella of the Taverna del Conte, where we will get our hands dirty making pasta. After lunch we will head towards the Natural Park of Coastal Dunes to learn about olive oil. In the oldest rural landscape of Europe, we will taste the extra virgin olive oil in one of the farmhouses. Later we will get to know Ostuni, the white city with its inimitable bakeries and the olive wood craftsmen.

DAY 5 Ostuni - Ceglie - Francavilla - Avetrana (55km)

A day dedicated to sweetness: the biscuit of Ceglie Messapica, the curly almond of Francavilla Fontana, the royal pasta of Oria and the sweet and natural Primitivo of Manduria will be our loyal traveling companions for the day. Furthermore, you will have salted breaks in the Salento plain, to end this day in the beautiful and popular Primitivo Valley.

DAY 6 Avetrana - Manduria - Gallipoli (60km)

We will cycle through ancient vineyards to reach Manduria. Visit of the museum located inside the Cantina Produttori

Vini Manduria, the most popular wine cellar of the area. The museum collects objects of daily life and work tools of the peasants of the past, to narrate the social history and agricultural economy of Salento. After the visit we will savor the dishes of authentic local cuisine, accompanied by a good glass of wine. Then we will follow the coast to the south, ancient coastal towers and fine sand, to reach Porto Cesareo, and finally Gallipoli. This evening our culinary research will be dedicated to fish: seafood, mussels, clams and the delicious sea urchins will delight our palate.

DAY 7 Gallipoli - Lecce (50km)

This day will be devoted to one of the most famous DOC wine of Puglia. We will cycle in a landscape made of olive trees and vineyards. After a tasting of Negramaro and Salice Salentino wine, we will reach Lecce, elegant baroque city of southern Italy offering us the best of the food traditions of Salento. A splash in the history and...in the magic lively night of the Salento capital.

DAY 8 Lecce

For a last taste of sweetness, we recommend a visit to the Franchini Pastry to try one of the many delicacies of Lecce confectionery.

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town. And then they just started singing these traditional Greek island songs. And it was just a moment; it was beautiful. Even being Greek, with the food and the music, it really introduced me to something that I was not familiar with and I responded to it right away. It was just magic. And ultimately, I think that's also what I love about travel; you really see those magical moments. It's not written on any itinerary; things just happen. I don't think you can go anywhere with a preordained idea of what it is that you want or what you don't want. I think you just have to be open. And I think that's probably a template, if I were to tell people how to have a great time – obviously pick the places that you're drawn to, but allow for things to happen. People are always focused on a schedule – but magic doesn't happen in a schedule. ❖

** This interview has been edited for brevity and clarity.

Christine Cushing, © Lefty Sky Entertainment.

FROM CHRISTINE: GREEK FIG AND CARAMELIZED ONION PIZZA (Makes 6 appetizer servings)

This fig and onion pizza is my grilled interpretation of a southern French favourite. I've topped this one with slow cooked caramelized , onions, thyme, olives and creamy, salty Quebec Benedictin cheese. When fresh figs are in season, it's a delicious alternative to a red sauce pizza.



INGREDIENTS

2 tbsp Christine Cushing's extra virgin olive oil (25ml)
2 medium Vidalia onions, sliced (6 cups sliced) (1.5L)
½ lb frozen pizza dough, thawed, or homemade (225 gm)
4 sprigs fresh thyme, leaves only
6 fresh Greek figs, quartered lengthwise
8 Kalamata olives, pitted and quartered
3 ounces Benedictin blue cheese, crumbled (90g)
or other variety
Cracked black pepper
Semolina for sprinkling

METHOD:

1. Preheat a Pizza stone in 500 D oven or BBQ on high, for at least 20 minutes.
2. In a large skillet heat oil over medium heat. Add onions and pepper. Cook for 20 minutes, stirring frequently until onions soften and begin to turn golden. Reduce heat to medium low and, add thyme leaves and cook for 10 more minutes, stirring often until onions are soft and take on a caramel colour and liquid has reduced completely. Set aside to cool.
3. On a lightly floured surface roll out pizza dough into a round about 1/8 inch thick, moving dough often to prevent sticking. Dough must be thin to ensure crisp crust.
4. Sprinkle semolina onto pizza paddle or baking sheet covered in parchment paper.
5. Transfer dough onto semolina and arrange cooled onion mixture evenly over entire surface of dough. Sprinkle with fig wedges and black olives , dispersing evenly. Sprinkle with crumbled blue cheese and more thyme leaves.
6. Quickly place pizza on hot stone and bake for 5-8 minutes, depending on heat of oven. Dough must be crisp and figs softened. Use a large spatula to check bottom of dough isn't burning. Transfer to wooden board and cool slightly before cutting. Cut and serve.

Want to learn a thing or two more from Christine?

Visit her YouTube channel for great cooking demonstrations and recipes, coming to you from her home and across the globe. www.youtube.com/user/ChristineCushing



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MONTE CARLO TO BARCELONA NOVEMBER 5, 2018 | 7 NIGHTS

Ports Visited: Monte Carlo, Florence/Pisa (Livorno), Rome (Civitavecchia), Naples/Pompeii, Provence (Marseille), Palma de Mallorca, Barcelona

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YOUR TURN TO HOST A Scandi Tasting Party

Think of a Tasting Party as the traditional dinner party's little sister: short and sweet, indulgent and free-spirited, that is, well put-together but capable of spinning deliciously out of control. BY **REBECCA FIELD JAGER**

IN THE SUMMERTIME, WHEN the days are long and the evenings take on an achingly beautiful light, Scandinavians flock to their porches and patios and patches of land to revel in the glory of this brief, highly revered season. Despite dark, seemingly endless winters, the people of the region are surprisingly social year-round, but the warmer weather and abundance of sunshine seem to make the pull to party even stronger.

Especially in each other's homes.

Nordic cuisine has taken the world by storm during the past decade, but here, the restaurant culture is a relatively new one, says Trine Hahnemann, a Copenhagen author and author of several Scandi cookbooks.

"It's nice to go out, yes, but most of us still prefer to celebrate friendship around our own dining-room tables."

During a recent trip to Scandinavia, I had the pleasure of experiencing aspects of the culture that not only contribute to the high scores Nordic nations receive in happiness surveys, but also can be seamlessly integrated into an informal tasting party. My favourite, the Danish concept, *hygge*, (pronounced hoo-gah) is defined in the Collins dictionary as the practice of creating cozy and congenial environments that promote emotional wellbeing. Think knickknacks sourced from nature (wood, slate, stone) natural fabrics and neutral hues, and the glow of many candles. Mindset-wise, *hygge* is about setting out wine glasses you love while accepting they might get broken. It's about creating a space in which guests feel welcome and comfortable just being themselves, like they've been wrapped in a blanket of acceptance.



Now then, as Canadians, most of us own at least a few *hyggeligt* housewares so a Scandi Tasting Party is easily doable. And, as inhabitants of a cold-weather country ourselves, lord knows we understand the pull to party in the days leading up to, and well after, the Solstice.

We'll begin our get-together outdoors ideally, with a toast to summer starring *akravit* (aka aquavit), a herb-and-spice flavoured spirit that has been produced in Scandinavia since the 15th century. Keep the bottle, along with shot glasses or small stemware, in the freezer beforehand so guests can knock back the concoction in one icy swig after singing out *Skål!*

After a shot or two (be careful, the stuff is 45% proof), you can move the party indoors – if you wish – for the actual tasting part of the festivities. Food-wise, we're going with *smørrebrød* (pronounced smuhr-broht), open-face sandwiches wherein a piece of bread plays canvas to a smattering of selected toppings that turn it into a work of art. To further enhance this palate-pleasing experience – and add even more merriment to the party – we'll pair each type of *smørrebrød* with a different wine or beer.

Simon Paulin/imagebank.sweden.se

Happily, Hahneemann has shared four delicious recipes from her recently released cookbook, *Open Sandwiches: 70 smørrebrød ideas for morning, noon, and night*. As guests make their way through each, let them know that according to the author, when creating smørrebrød, there are a few unwritten rules to follow. Note how each boasts different colours (garnishes help with this); involves at least three of the five taste sensations (salty, sweet, sour, bitter and umami) and in terms of texture, includes something soft and something crunchy. Note too that smørrebrød must be eaten in a certain order: herring first, then salmon or fish, then meat or vegetarian, and finally, cheese.

After guests have devoured and imbibed and bantered about which pairing they like best, wind up the evening with *fika*, the Swedish tradition of getting together with friends over some hot bevvy and a little sweet treat or two.

Of course, if your tasting party falls on one of those lovely warm summer nights that we all long for, don't be surprised if some guests prefer to circle back to the icy akravit. ❄️

WHAT YOU'LL NEED (for 6 to 8 guests):

- › One bottle of Aquavit
- › Cans/bottles of fruity beer (1 per guest)
- › 1 or 2 bottles of Riesling; Pinot Noir (slightly chilled); and Port
- › Appropriate glassware for all of the above
- › 4 rustic serving trays (one for each type of smorrebrod)
- › 2 small plates per guest; one for herring, one for 3 remaining smorrebrod
- › Cutlery
- › Fika fixings – coffee, cream, sugar, mugs, desert tray

Set up and Ambience:

- › Strings of tiny white lights and candles galore
- › Summer hits playlist (include Sweden's Abba, if you're a fan)
- › For extra seating, floor pillows are very *hyggeligt*
- › Gather guests around your island, patio, dining-room or coffee table
- › Arrange each type of smorrebrod on its own platter; bring out trays/drinks one at a time so guests have time to savour each pairing
- › Line up four different glasses in front of each guest prior to tasting OR set out appropriate glassware with each pairing



PICKLED HERRING (paired with Beer)

- 4 slices of rye bread, cut in half
- butter
- 4 pickled herring fillets, cut into pieces
- 1 shallot, finely sliced
- 2 tbsp finely chopped chives

Butter each slice of bread. Top with herring pieces. Add a few slices of shallot. Sprinkle with chives.

BLUE CHEESE AND PEAR (paired with Port)

- 1 large pear, sliced into 8 wedges, leaving stalk on and core in, if possible
- 2 tsp salted butter
- 1 tbsp honey
- 1 vanilla pod, spit and seeds scraped out
- 4 slices of rye bread, cut in half
- 7 oz Danish blue cheese, sliced

Melt the butter in small frying pan and then fry pear wedges for a few minutes on each side. Add the honey and vanilla and turn gently. Turn off the heat and let cool in the pan. Toast the rye bread and then top with blue cheese. Finish with pear wedge.



TOMATO, EGGPLANT MAYONNAISE AND PROSCIUTTO (paired with chilled Pinot Noir)

- 4 slices of prosciutto or Serrano ham (omit for vegetarian)
- 4 slices of rye bread, cut in half
- 4 medium tomatoes, sliced
- 8 tsp eggplant mayonnaise (see below)
- 4 tbsp watercress
- freshly ground pepper

Preheat oven to 425 F. Place prosciutto slices on a baking sheet lined with parchment and cook for about 8 minutes. Cool and then crumble.

Place tomato slices on bread, then place 1 tsp of eggplant mayonnaise on each. Divide the crumbled prosciutto on top, decorate with watercress and sprinkle with pepper.

FOR THE EGGPLANT MAYONNAISE:

Preheat the oven to 400F. Cut 2 eggplants into cubes, skin on, and mix with 2 tbsp olive oil and some salt and pepper. Bake for 20 minutes, then cool. Whisk in 1 cup of mayonnaise.



SALMON ON SOURDOUGH (paired with Riesling)

- 4 slices of sourdough bread, toasted, cut in half
- 8 slices smoked salmon
- 1/3 cucumber, finely chopped
- 4 tbsp horseradish cream (see below)
- 4 tbsp freshly grated horseradish
- freshly ground black pepper
- sprigs of dill

Place a slice of salmon on each sourdough bread. Divide cucumber between the pieces, then add ½ tbsp of horseradish cream to each. Decorate with grated horseradish, sprinkle with pepper and add a sprig of dill.

FOR THE HORSERADISH CREAM:

mix 1/3 cup of Greek yogurt with 1/3 cup full-fat crème fraîche. Mix in 1 oz freshly grated horseradish. Add 1 – 2 tbsp lime juice and 1 tsp sugar and gently mix. Season with sea salt and freshly ground pepper.

European take-homes to tempt the taste buds

Food and drink always taste better when you're travelling, but that doesn't mean you can't try to prolong – or relive – the experience a little by bringing home a tasty souvenir or two for later, especially when it comes from a unique establishment or special place you've discovered abroad. Here are a few suggestions for your next trip to Europe that will inspire your palate both in the present and, perhaps, in the future too. BY MICHAEL BAGINSKI

SPAIN

Spain's northwestern Galicia region is renowned for its breads, cheeses and shellfish. And while it may be tempting to try to pack some prawns to take away, we recommend sticking to the equally tasty local **Albariño wine** instead. Synonymous with Spain's best white wines, the vintage thrives in the coastal Rías Baixas area; considered light with high acidity and citrus flavours, it will pair perfectly with the seafood you cook back home.

AUSTRIA

Visitors to Vienna can truly take a piece of the city home with a slice of **Sachertorte cake**, considered, by some, to be the most famous cake in the world. The Viennese speciality, invented in 1832 by Franz Sacher as a treat for Austrian royalty, is a dreamy combination of chocolate cake and icing, lined with apricot jam. Pick up a beautifully packaged piece to take home at the **Sacher Hotel's** cake shop, Kärntner Straße 38.

ITALY

Trentino-Alto Adige is a unique autonomous region in northern Italy that clings to its own rich gastronomic traditions – not the least of which is spectacular **Speck**, or preserved ham. Based on secret recipes handed down for generations, the smoky-spicy-salty South Tyrolian snack is best eaten straight up, accompanied by cheese and, of course, vino. Look for packages marked **Speck Alto Adige IGP** (or PGI) to be sure you're getting the real thing.

BRITAIN

The **Cadbury Dairy Milk** bar has been called a "national treasure" in the United Kingdom, and while it may not rank with posher or custom-made brands amongst chocoholics, it's certainly a worthy snack to throw in the purse or carry-on for the long plane ride home. Besides, anyone with a taste for chocolate will tell you that British Cadbury is far superior to the North American-made version.

FRANCE

Spicy brown Dijon mustard is a staple of any kitchen worth its, er, mustard. How marvellous then to have a crock or two in stock directly from France where the sauce dates to the 14th century. A great place to discover your favourite type is the tasting room of **Edmond Fallot La Moutarderie** in Beaune (near Dijon), a mill that has been cutting the mustard since 1840.

GREECE

As much you may want to bring back some of the famous souvlaki, a more practical option is the delightful **ouzo** you'll undoubtedly wash it down with while in-destination. A bottle of the anise-flavoured aperitif is guaranteed to reignite images of that harbour-side or hill-top café you discovered it in. Many ouzophiles believe the best stuff comes from Lesbos, where local brands worth trying (and packing) include Barbayanni, Giannatsi and Mini.

MONTENEGRO

Rakia, or fruit brandy, is the national drink of Montenegro and is uncorked at any time of day for almost any occasion. Made from plums, apricots, peaches and other fruits, the liquor is served as a symbol of hospitality, which is where most travellers get their first taste. Strong, fragrant and unforgettable, local varieties like loza grape brandy will never be out of place in the home bar.

SCANDINAVIA

Found throughout Norway, Sweden and Finland, **wild cloudberry** are nevertheless extremely rare, partly because they cannot be commercially produced. Dubbed "Arctic gold," the raspberry-like fruit is a prized ingredient in sauces and desserts, but you can bring home this tangy taste of Scandinavia by picking up a jar or two of jam or preserves at an outdoor market, artisan shop or supermarket.

Edmond Fallot, Cadbury.uk.com, Peco and Lola



AGENDA

Culinary & wine
events across the
globe, taking place
July-December 2018

BY SARAH HARRIS

JULY

TASTE OF CHICAGO

JULY 11 - 15, Grant Park, Chicago, Illinois
Fill up on flavour at Chicago's free outdoor food festival, set to showcase the diversity of its culinary community. Stroll through Street Art & Graffiti Alley, take in a live performance or gaze at the magnificent city skyline while you delight your palate with local eats.

LA NUIT EN ROSÉ

JULY 18 - 19, New York, New York
Summer's favourite drink is making its way to the Hudson River. The world's first festival dedicated to the love of rosé has been delighting senses coast-to-coast since 2014. With wine labels sourced from around the world, celebrity chef appearances and merriment all around, this chartered yacht experience is set to some serious make waves.

DAEGU CHIMAC FESTIVAL

JULY 18 - 22, Seoul South Korea
The Chimaec festival is an ode to the love of fried chicken and beer in Seoul. The five-day function is set to take place in the capital of South Korea, and will feature everything from craft brews to live tastings and regional vendors.

AUGUST

LOS ANGELES

FOOD & WINE FESTIVAL

AUGUST 24 - 27, Los Angeles, California
This fifth-annual, four-day festival will highlight the food and drink culture throughout the city. With more than 250 wine labels and a slew of personalities at the helm, including Chef Curtis Stone and Wyclef Jean, this culinary commemoration is set to be the toast of Tinseltown.

MAD SYMPOSIUM

AUGUST 26 - 27, Copenhagen, Denmark
Mad, taken from the Danish word for "food," is a non-profit organization that brings together a global culinary community with a social conscience. This two-day event will engage with local farmers, students, chefs and the general public for one great cause – an appetite for change.

EPCOT INTERNATIONAL FOOD & WINE FESTIVAL

AUGUST 30 - NOVEMBER 12,

Walt Disney World Resort, Florida

This theme park jubilee is now entering its 23rd year of epicurean fun. With live entertainment, global food stands, beverage seminars and premium events, this will be a Disney celebration fit for the whole family.

SEPTEMBER

MARATHON DES CHÂTEAUX DU MÉDOC

SEPTEMBER 8, Médoc, France

Known as the "longest marathon in the world," this annual run takes sprinters through prestigious French vineyards, and sees its fair share of serious athletes. This full marathon – run in fancy dress – will have many tasting points, accolades and an orchestra.

OKTOBERFEST

SEPTEMBER 22 - OCTOBER 7,

Munich, Germany

Oktoberfest is a bucket list bacchanal fit for beer drinkers around the world. Revelers are encouraged to camp out in tents and spend their days in their finest lederhosen, while devouring and drinking with like-minded ale aficionados.

OCTOBER

HAWAII FOOD & WINE FESTIVAL

OCTOBER 6 - 28, Hawaii

Set in the lush tropical paradise of Hawaii, this eighth-annual food and wine festival will take place over three weekends and across multiple islands, including Maui and Oahu. The exhibition will host over 100 internationally-renowned chefs including Jeremiah Tower, and will offer island excursions and exotic eats.

BARBADOS FOOD & RUM FESTIVAL

OCTOBER 18 - 21, Barbados

Barbados is often referred to as the culinary capital of the Caribbean, and for good reason. Coming into its ninth year, the Food & Rum Festival highlights the colourful epicurean culture on the island. Begin at Oistins for a cook-off, followed by a rum and food-pairing event on Friday, and an afternoon of polo and spirits on Saturday.

The evening can be spent tasting local Bajan eats, followed by a finale festival on the beach and a fine dining experience.

SALON DU CHOCOLATE

OCTOBER 21 - NOVEMBER 4,

Paris, Porte De Versailles

The world's largest and arguably most delectable chocolate event will span five contents in Paris, with over 500 participants and 60 global countries represented. With a chocolate fashion show, competitions, tastings and more, anyone with a sweet tooth will savour this event that has already reached millions of cocoa lovers worldwide.

FOOD ON THE EDGE

OCTOBER 22 - 23, Galway, Ireland

This two-day annual symposium will take place in Galway city and host chefs and foodies from around the world. Over the course of the event, attendees can come together to listen, talk and debate the future of the food industry, while dining on truly delectable local eats and taking in the soaring sights of the coastal Irish city.

NOVEMBER

FIRE, FLOUR & FORK

NOVEMBER 1 - 4, Richmond, Virginia

As they say, Virginia is for food lovers. Over the course of four days, this inspired gathering will marry Southern hospitality and global cuisine with nearly 40 food and drink related events. All five senses will be met with extraordinary touches, including a curated mix of demonstrations, tours, and talks from cookbook authors, James Beard-nominated bakers and more.

SAN DIEGO BAY

WINE + FOOD FESTIVAL

NOVEMBER 12 - 18, San Diego, California

One of the largest food and wine festivals in the world happens to take place in stunning San Diego Bay. This precursor to the U.S. Thanksgiving holiday features an assortment of personalities, intimate luncheons, 150 beverage offerings, local goods and more.

ZIBELEMÄRIT ONION MARKET

NOVEMBER 26, Bern, Switzerland

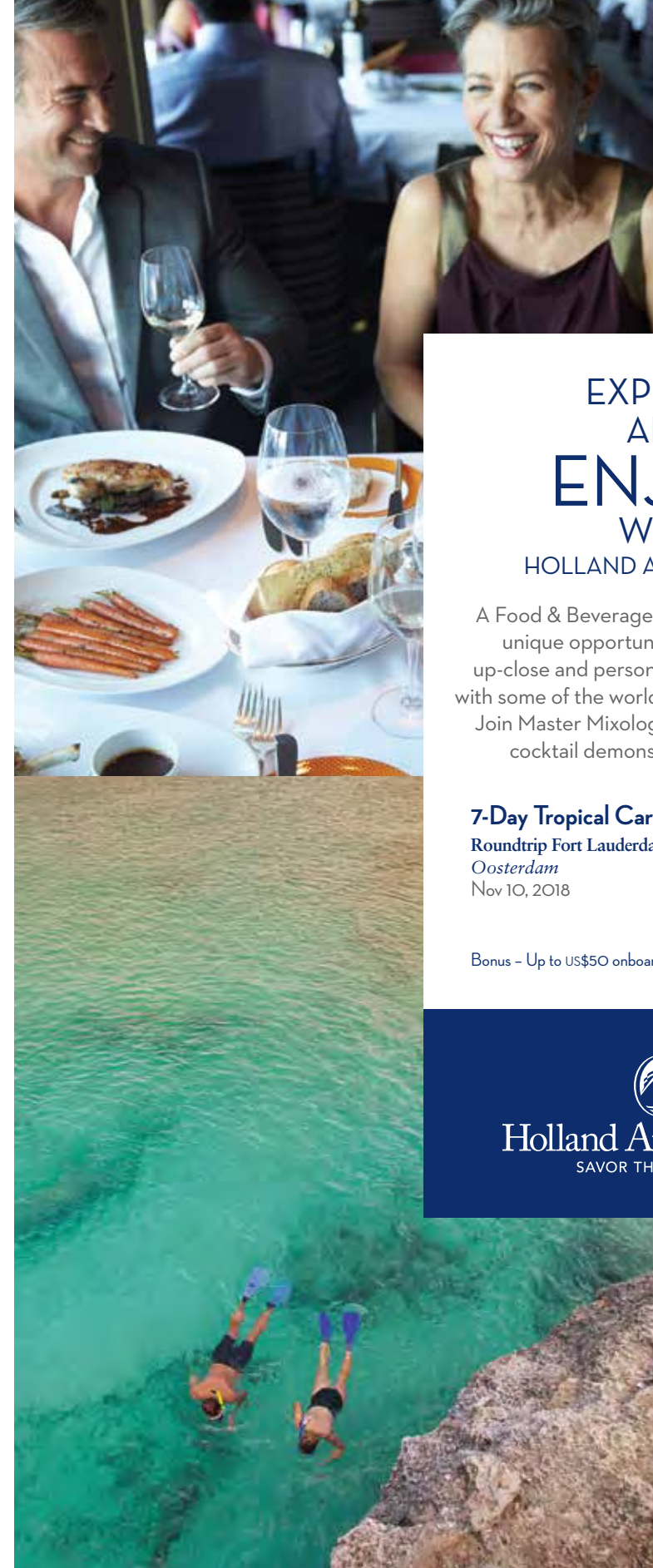
The Zibelemärit is a traditional folk festival held on the fourth Monday of every November. This esteemed affair brings in farmers and locals from around the area, as they marvel at artistically woven onions and garlic. Spectators can spend their day taking in the vibrant scent of the Old Town, or strolling through artisanal market lanes.

DECEMBER

TAMALE FESTIVAL

DECEMBER 2, Houston, Texas

The largest tamale festival happens to take place in the southern state of Texas, y'all. Rain or shine, foodies can slip into a southern state of mind while enjoying fun and games in the form of a wrestling match and an eating contest.



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