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Delicious autumn

Take a road trip to one (or all) of these three Ontario regions for some fun, fall colours and fantastic food

The days are getting cooler and the lazy days of summer are in the rear-view mirror, but that doesn't mean there's not plenty of fun to be had. These three counties, Chatham-Kent, North Bay and the Ottawa Valley, are all full of wonderful excuses to get away for a weekend. Here's how to spend a delicious and wonderful 48 hours in these welcoming regions.

CHATHAM-KENT

Chatham-Kent is a mostly rural municipality that straddles Lake Erie and Lake St. Clair. To get the most out of your time in the CK, follow the Bakery Trail, a self-guided tour that will lead you right to the best breads and pastries in the region. Some delicious highlights include Maple City Bakery (which has been slinging baked goods since 1960) and Big Ricky's Little Bake Shoppe (which has been dubbed the home of CK's best desserts for two years running). If you're more interested in brews than bread, Chatham-Kent is also home to a number of microbreweries and wineries. Enjoy a cold one by the lake at Bayside Brewing Co. in Erievau or head over to Early Acres Estate Winery for a glass of 100-per-cent Canadian-made wine. If you're hungry for more, head over to Tray Parker's Real Texas BBQ in Charing Cross, which feels like stepping into a small Texan town complete with perfectly smoked ribs and juicy pulled pork. Or, check out Casa Bella in Chatham, which overlooks the Thames River and offers a variety of pasta, veal, seafood and steak entrees – there's something for everyone.

What to do: Because of its location between two lakes, Chatham-Kent is a great place to get in touch with the outdoors. Learn how to kitesurf at Mitchell's Bay on Lake St. Clair or visit the St. Clair National Wildlife Area for prime birdwatching.



Where to stay: Retro Suites in downtown Chatham is right in the middle of the sprawling region and has a stylish vintage vibe. The boutique hotel is also home to the Chilled Cork Restaurant Lounge, for a quick and yummy late-night bite.

NORTH BAY

North Bay is a city in Northeastern Ontario on the shores of Lake Nipissing. Start your day off with a coffee and breakfast at Twigg's Coffee Roasters, which serves up specialty coffees and traditional breakfasts. The North Bay Farmers' Market is a great spot to stock up on snacks for a picnic lunch in one of the area's many hiking spots. For sips, enjoy a beer flight at New Ontario Brewing Co., which also has live music on the weekends. As a bonus, there are often food trucks stopped outside the brewery for a quick bite with your brew. Cap off the day at The Boat, North Bay's landmark restaurant, where you can enjoy a lakeside dinner while enjoying the views off of the sprawling deck. Or, if you're looking for something a bit more low key, head to Greco's Pizza, which has been one of the city's most beloved local spots since 1913, when it started out as a bakery. Its signature pies are baked directly on stone bricks.

What to do: Also called the "gateway to the North," North Bay is close to a number of prime hiking trails and conservation areas where you can lace up your hiking boots and com-

mune with nature, like the nearby Mattawa River Provincial Park and the Eau Claire Gorge Conservation Trails. Downtown North Bay is also home to unique art galleries, museums and cultural centres that highlight the work of artists from Northern Ontario. The North Bay Museum and the WKP Kennedy Gallery are must-visits.

Where to stay: The Days Inn and Suites by Wyndham North Bay is within easy walking distance to many of the city's galleries, museums, restaurants and bars, so you can take North Bay by foot to maximize your sight-seeing.

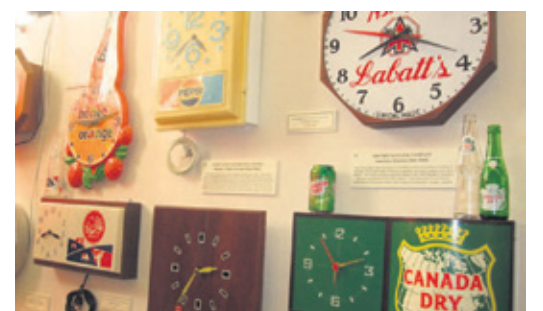
OTTAWA VALLEY

The Ottawa Valley is also known as the Whitewater Capital of Canada and is home to more than 900 lakes, making it a picturesque getaway close to the nation's capital. Grab a morning coffee and some breakfast at Neat Coffee Shop in Burnstown. If you come back to Neat in the evenings, you'll be treated to a delicious cocktail and bites menu that you can enjoy while taking in live music or comedy. The 86 Bistro and Market in Deep River is another must-visit that just opened in late July. On top of its picturesque patio, 86 Bistro also sells fresh burgers, steaks and sausages that you can take home and grill yourself. For a cold bevv, head to Whitewater Brewing Co and Lakeside Brew Pub. Open year round, the brewery is right on the Ottawa River, where you can enjoy one of their

brewskis with something off their seasonal menu featuring local ingredients. For dessert, grab a BeaverTail in Killaloe, the birthplace of the iconic Canadian treat. Pair your BeaverTail with a coffee from Fifth Chute Coffee, where you can also pick up a fresh loaf of bread.

What to do: There's a ton to do and see in the Ottawa Valley region. If you're looking for an outdoor adventure, take a guided ATV and off-road motorcycle tour with Tom Irwin Adventure Tours. Or go white-water rafting with OWL Rafting or Wilderness Tours if you're not afraid to get wet. If it's a rainy day, stay dry by visiting the Canadian Clock Museum, the country's only clock museum where you can learn about timetellers from the early 1800s up to the present day.

Where to stay: The Whitewater Inn located in Beachburg is also home to Jamieson Travel and Valley Cycle Tours, so you can rent e-bikes on the premises for a guided tour around the beautiful property. The inn also hosts farm-to-fork dinner events and there's a brand-new sauna on-site so you can relax after a long day of adventures.



Top: Sweet tooths, take note. Chatham-Kent's Bakery Trail offers visitors a chance to check out more than 20 local bakeries.

Left: Fall is one of the best times to see the Ottawa Valley, especially if you're a fan of leaf-peeping.

Middle right: Enjoy a lakeside dinner at one of North Bay's most iconic restaurants, The Boat.

Bottom right: Learn about modern and historical time pieces at Ottawa Valley's Clock Museum.

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Próst!

The secret history of Ontario's Oktoberfests

To understand how Ontarians began celebrating fall with beer, lederhosen and Bavarian cuisine, you have to go back to 1810, when Prince Regent Ludwig of Bavaria (who would eventually become King Ludwig I) and Princess Therese of Saxony-Hildburghausen celebrated their marriage with a five-day carnival in Munich. It was such a hit with the city's populace – who doesn't love nearly a week of revelry? – that the next year, they did it again, combining it with the state fair. By 1818, it was an annual event, with booths selling the region's signature beer and sausages. Oktoberfest, Germany's famous two-week celebration of the fall harvest, was born.

Fast-forward to southern Ontario in the late 1960s, when a German club in a city once called Berlin (which was subsequently renamed Kitchener during the First World War during a wave of xenophobia) decided to throw its own Oktoberfest to mark Canada's 100th birthday. That first celebration at the Concordia Club in 1967 drew around 2,500 people, so the next year they invited a few other German clubs in the area to join in, almost doubling the crowd.

By 1969, the area's chamber of commerce spotted a promising tourism opportunity, and the event became known as Kitchener-Waterloo Oktoberfest, Ontario's first and longest-running "volksfest," the German term for an outdoor event that combines a beer or wine festival with a fun fair. In the first year alone, it attracted 75,000 people, who ate and drank their way through 57,000 gallons of specially-brewed Bavarian beer and 50,000 pounds of sausages. (Not bad for an event that started with a \$200 budget!)

And while the crowds are a bit bigger now – more than 700,000 people attended at the pre-pandemic peak – the festival really isn't so different from the grainy Kodachrome snaps of those early years, where smiling faces cheers the camera, stein of beer in hand, or laughing children twirl each other around

a dance floor, the skirts of their traditional dirndls spinning around them, a polka band playing in the background.

The spirit of the festival is certainly unchanged, says Allan Cayenne, the festival's president. "We call it 'Gemütlichkeit,' which is a welcoming atmosphere," he says, referring to a word that doesn't quite translate into English, but implies a cross between warmth and good cheer and means something akin to coziness.

How that plays out across the festival, however, is very much a choose-your-own Bavarian adventure. "Everyone has their own thing about the festival that makes it special for them," says Cayenne, who is not German himself but grew

up in the Kitchener area and fell in love with the festival's open-hearted, open-armed joy – not to mention its impact on the community through charitable giving. "Some people book a table for dinner and then they'll move into grabbing some drinks and playing some games," he says. "Other people go straight to the bar and enjoy a beer, while other people will head straight to the dance floor." The annual Thanksgiving Day Parade, which draws thousands, is also a festival highlight. "Everyone can come and be German for the day," says Cayenne of the festival that's running in Kitchener-Waterloo this year from Sept. 23 to Oct. 15.

Key to many Oktoberfest are its "festhallen," which literally translates to "festival halls," but can really be anywhere the tradition is celebrated. At the Kitchener-Waterloo event, along with a centralized "Willkommen Platz" – a literal "welcoming place" in the city center with performers, food vendors, and two beer tents – they have a variety of festhallen across the region, including those hosted by the area's different German clubs, each with its own flavour, literally. "Each of the German clubs were founded by people who trace their roots to different parts of Bavaria or German-speaking Europe," explains Cayenne. "They each have their own atmosphere and unique food offerings." The Alpine Club, for example, is the place to go for home-made strudel (get there early, because it tends to sell out!), while the Transylvania Club is known for the traditional delicacy pig tails, the Schwaben Club is the cabbage roll destination, and Hubertus Haus offers rollbraten, a pork roast you might not find anywhere else. "Concordia Club makes a mean schnitzel," adds Cayenne, who's been in the kitchens with many of the clubs as they've made their specialties.

"You get a different experience depending on where you go," he says. "That's awesome, because sometimes people are looking for that big tent set up, similar to what you'd see in Munich, where you've got two or three thousand people to celebrate with. Sometimes you just want that cozy atmosphere with 200 people where it's a little more intimate."



About 8,000 people attend Toronto's annual Oktoberfest every year, where they consume 25,000 pints of beer and 10,000 schnitzels and sausages.

Oktoberfest has its roots in 19th-century Bavaria, but the very first Canadian event happened in 1967 to mark the country's 100th birthday.



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Six unique fall stays for foodies

From a farmhouse on a working vineyard to a vacation home run by a local celebrity chef, these food-focused accommodations are must-visits

With harvest season in full swing, fewer crowds, and menus brimming with autumn flavours, fall is a superb time of year to take your taste buds on a road trip. Foodies travel far and wide in search of unique culinary experiences, from vacation homes set on vineyards to chef-run B&Bs, and these off-the-beaten path accommodations bring some of the region's best flavours right to your room. Forget thread counts; breakfast, lunch, and dinner are the highlights at these diner-approved stays.

Long Point Eco-Adventures, St. Williams

Foodies looking to reconnect with nature will find the best of both at Long Point Eco-Adventures, which offers zip-lining, axe-throwing, cycling, kayaking, canoeing and glamping accommodations close to some of Norfolk County's best wineries. Located on a 37-acre former tobacco farm, the resort spans scenic marshlands and Carolinian forest.

Although guests are surrounded by distinctive flora and fauna, the accommodations are anything but roughing it with tented suites and cabin-style pods featuring comfy beds, electricity, and running water. Long Point has its own restaurant and brewery; or it's a hop, skip, and a jump across the street to Burning Kiln Winery, which is known for its appassimento-style wines.

lpfun.ca

Cressy House, Prince Edward County

Who better to host travellers on a memorable foodie getaway than a famed local chef? Located in Prince Edward County, Cressy House is owned and operated by Grant van Gameren, the chef behind well-loved Toronto restaurants like Bar Raval and Bar Isabel. Set on 500 feet of pretty waterfront, van Gameren's rustic-chic vacation home promises a serene escape from the city fit for foodies.

An onsite market allows guests to pick up vegetables grown on the property, such as beets and tomatoes, to cook up meals in the accommodation's beautiful kitchen. For a fee, van Gameren can be hired to personally prepare a family-style meal for guests. From Fifth Town Artisan Cheese to County Cider Co., a wealth of dining and drinking spots can also be found nearby.

cressyhouse.ca

The Grove Hotel, Kingsville

The Grove Hotel's 'A Room with a Brew' brings the brewery vibes to your home-away-from-home. Although the Grove Brew House, which the hotel once overlooked, has relocated a short walk away, the room still evokes your favourite neighbourhood taproom with its wood and leather accents, decorative shelf of growlers, and beer-themed artwork.

This room is one of 18 themed rooms at the Grove, a boutique hotel housed in a handsome 19th-century building. After checking in to 'A Room with a Brew' and getting into the sudsy spirit, you can visit some of the top-notch breweries found steps outside the hotel, including Kingsville Brewing Co. and Banded Goose Brewery.

mygrovehotel.com

The Vineyard Estate House at Cave Spring, Beamsville

Immerse yourself in the romance of wine country at the Vineyard Estate House at Cave Spring. This Victorian-style red brick farmhouse, which sleeps up to 10 people, offers gorgeous views of Cave Spring's vineyards and beyond to Lake Ontario and the Toronto skyline. A picturesque 10-minute stroll through the vineyards brings you to the tasting room, where you can sample flights of Cave Spring's sustainably-certified wines.

Pick up some fresh produce at the nearby roadside stands to make meals in the Estate House's spacious kitchen. Alternatively, it's a quick drive down the road to dozens of other excellent wineries, many of which have noteworthy restaurants, such as the acclaimed Restaurant at Pearl Morissette or its sister cafe, RPM Bakehouse.

cavespring.ca

The Waring House, Prince Edward County

If you enjoy preparing great meals as much as eating them, head to the Waring House to combine your staycation with an opportunity to learn new culinary skills. The inn's popular cooking classes, which have been running for over two decades, focus on a different subject each week, ranging from regional cuisines to featured ingredients. Participants often have the chance to cook with herbs and veggies sourced from the Waring House's own garden.

Of course, you can also leave the cooking to the experts. The menus at Waring House's restaurant, Amelia's Garden, showcase the best of Prince Edward County's local, seasonal bounty. Set in a charming 19th-century building, the inn's rich heritage makes it an especially fitting backdrop for the restaurant's traditional cream tea complete with homemade scones.

waringhouse.com

The Farmhouse at 13th Street Winery, St. Catharines

You'd be hard-pressed to imagine a better base for wine tastings than one set directly on a working vineyard. At 13th Street Winery's Farmhouse accommodation, guests can sip exceptional wines while admiring vine views from a private outdoor patio.

With space for up to eight guests, the spiffy Farmhouse includes four bedrooms, three-and-half bathrooms, and a full kitchen. It's a short walk to the winery restaurant, Farmhouse Bistro, to nosh on locally-driven fare or to the Farmhouse Bakery to pick up housemade butter tarts and seasonal preserves. While there's plenty for food lovers to appreciate right onsite, the Farmhouse also gives guests easy access to the Niagara region's many other wonderful wineries.

13thstreetwinery.com



From top: At Long Point Eco-Adventures, tents come equipped with electricity and running water. For beer lovers, there's no better accommodation than the "Room With a Brew" at The Grove, a Kingsville boutique hotel. Extend your stay in wine country by booking a night at Cave Spring's Vineyard Estate House, a red-brick farmhouse that can sleep up to 10. The restaurant at 13th Street Winery offers local, seasonal fare.

Host: Sarain Fox

Chef Aicha Smith-Belghaba

#FEASTIndigenous

Join us in celebrating and learning about Indigenous chefs, foods, traditions, experiences, stories, and practices from across the province.

Scan to learn more about authentic Indigenous cuisine in Ontario & watch for new stories coming soon!

Chef Zach Keeshig

Chef Amede Thompson

How Toronto became a great place to find authentic Caribbean food

From roti shops to jerk stops to high-end culinary destinations, Caribbean immigrants have been bringing the flavour of their homelands to the GTA for decades

It's Friday night and patrons are nestled at Mona's Roti in Scarborough, waiting to get their orders in, the line extending past the doorway. The sounds of soca and chutney music occupy the air, seemingly dancing with the rich smells of curry and paratha that are being made lovingly in the kitchen. Some patrons sway their hips to the rhythm while waiting to hear their order number, while others find a seat, anxiously waiting to take their first bite of the familiar foods they've been enjoying since their youth.

Like Mona's, a plethora of Caribbean restaurants in the Greater Toronto Area – including Rap's on Eglinton West, Rhum Corner on Dundas Street West and Ali's West Indian Roti Shop on Queen Street West – are cultural staples for Caribbean people who live in and around the city, as well as those who are visiting. These eateries aren't just a place to find the flavours that are widely known and loved in Trinidad and Tobago, Jamaica, Guyana, Haiti, Barbados and other islands; they also offer an authenticity that has remained intact since the migration of Caribbean people to Toronto.

Reminiscing on fond memories of learning how to jerk chicken with his late father and watching him build a smoking pit and a grill with a repurposed oil drum as a child, Jamaican-Canadian journalist Vaughn Stafford Gray says Caribbean food has always been a way to connect



Caribbean food hasn't always gotten its due in Toronto but chefs like Kareema Beckles (left), Simone Lawrence (top right) and sisters Donna Charles, Renee Charles and Nicky Charles-Page (bottom right) are changing that.



throughout the diaspora and has been a means of survival. "According to the World Bank, the Caribbean has the 'most highly skilled' diaspora globally. Immigration has allowed the Caribbean diaspora to become one of the largest in the world. But immigration isn't without its difficulties. Someone has to stay behind to keep us connected. Yet, for many, it isn't a person keeping them connected to home – it's a dish."

That's certainly something Simone Lawrence tries to keep in mind. Born in Kingston, Jamaica, Lawrence is the proud owner of Simone's Caribbean Restaurant, a Danforth restaurant that

is approaching its 10th anniversary. She's very committed to making her patrons feel like they're back home.

"You can eat from somebody's kitchen and... they bring you as close to home as possible and that's what we try to create here as well," she says, before revealing the lengths she goes through to acquire ingredients Jamaicans are known for. "Our food is [as] authentic as the ingredients allow. Sometimes it's hard to get things like callaloo, or ackee straight from the tree. We sometimes have it sent and we have to freeze it. But it's just not the same. A little bit gets lost in translation, but we get it

as close to home as possible."

That's not to say that Caribbean food has always been taken seriously.

"Caribbean immigrants in cities like Toronto open restaurants and bakeries as paths to entrepreneurship, financial independence, and, in some cases, citizenship. Toronto is blessed with multiculturalism and people with adventurous appetites. Caribbean food now ranks among the top cuisines in the city, but it wasn't always that way," Stafford Gray says, pointing to the Toronto Patty Wars, a 1985 clash between Jamaican food vendors and the Cana-

dian government, which demanded they rename their beef patties since Canada's Meat Inspection Act at the time classified hamburgers as the only real beef patties. (The two sides reached a compromise at a February 1985 'patty summit' where the vendors agreed to call their pastries Jamaican patties.) "Caribbean people have long had to fight to take up space in predominantly white spaces that have benefitted from their cultural contributions."

Still, in recent years, restaurants offering cuisine that thoughtfully maps out the beauty of Caribbean food with a twist have emerged in the city. Take SugarKane, which is owned by sisters Donna Charles, Renee Charles and Nicky Charles-Page.

Born to Grenadian and Trinidadian parents, the sisters operated a catering business for six years before opening SugarKane in June 2019. The menu boasts sweet and spicy flavours from the Caribbean with a bold Cajun kick; fusion dishes like jerk chicken fettuccine, fish cakes and creole jambalaya quickly became their signature offerings. Charles-Page says SugarKane tries to emphasize the importance of community. More importantly, the sisters want to see the diversity of Caribbean food showcased on a wider scale. "I think that's coming, I really do think that's coming. And that's exactly what we're trying to implement as well," she says. "There is so much variety within the different Caribbean islands and it deserves to be seen."

Gourmet personal chef Kareema Beckles agrees. A lifelong food-lover – she jokes her mom has had her cooking since the 80s – Beckles has found success as a caterer and media personality by cooking both gourmet versions of the dishes she's loved since childhood and new takes on these beloved flavours. That's why, even though her own restaurant closed its doors during the pandemic, she's optimistic about the future of Caribbean cuisine in Toronto and is pushing for chefs to offer a wider range of dishes and delicacies from throughout the Caribbean.

"I just want us, especially our generation or even younger, to be like, 'Let's push and let's get it out there. Let's do it a little bit better than the last generation. Let's get up. Let's really try to get our food into the hearts, mind and bellies of the rest of the world.'"

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Tawnya Brant is making it her mission to revive pre-colonial Haudenosaunee food culture

Through her cooking, the Mohawk chef hopes to share the flavours and traditions of her childhood with all Canadians

Growing up on the Six Nations of the Grand River Territory, food was so much more than just what chef Tawnya Brant's family put on the dinner table – it was a way of life. "We're agrarian people," says Brant, who is Kanyen'kehá:ka, or Mohawk. "Haudenosaunee communities eat according to seasonal cycles," she adds, which is how her family lived. Brant and her three sisters were raised in a timber wood house without running water and limited solar energy. In the spring, they would tap trees for syrup and plant corn in their big backyard garden. During summer months, they ate strawberries and tomatoes straight off the vine. Brant still eats seasonally – in fact, it's how she plans what to serve each week at her restaurant, Yawékon Foods, which is located in Ohswé:ken, a rural community within the Six Nations of the Grand River.

On a typical winter menu at Yawékon, you'll find hearty dishes like bison shepherd's pie or elk chili in a bread bowl. In the summer-time, fresh fruit is offered up in the form of blueberry sweetgrass pulled pork and peach shortcake. The menu celebrates the flavours of her Haudenosaunee childhood and Brant sources ingredients (like corn, beans and squash) directly from the garden her mother maintains as a Mohawk seed keeper. "These seeds have been with us since time immemorial. In our creation story, Sky Woman brought them with her," she explains. That's why Brant fights for Indigenous food sovereignty. Her family garden is small, she says, and Haudenosaunee people need allies to help grow seeds. "I want to teach people that going back to traditional foods is a lot easier than they think."

Brant's love for the food industry developed early – her father, a hunter and fisherman, got her a job waiting tables at a local café in

Ohswé:ken when she was just 12. Brant's favourite part of the gig was talking to the cooks, and she often volunteered to peel potatoes so she could pepper them with questions about ingredients. By high school, she'd moved to the head of the line as a cook herself, and after two years of studying culinary management at Fleming College, Brant left to become a freelance franchise support chef. Over the next 10 years, she helped open restaurants across Southern Ontario, in Western New York and on Manitoulin Island. Her freelance career was thriving, but everything changed when Brant had her own children. She realized that she wanted her kids to have the same kind of upbringing she had back in Ohswé:ken. So she enrolled in the Aboriginal Small Business Management program at Mohawk College and in 2014, founded Yawékon, which means "it tastes good" in Mohawk.

Brant credits her mother with teaching her that the footprint she leaves is important. "The Earth doesn't belong to us; we borrow it from our grandchildren. You want to leave things better than they were when you got there," she says.

That's why she's so passionate about sharing her knowledge. Going back to traditional Indigenous diets can save us, she says, pointing out that many chronic diseases are linked with poor diet. "Peaches and cream corn came from our Haudenosaunee Sweet Buck corn, which is black," she adds. "How many nutrients were lost in that modification process? Foods with dark colours often have antioxidants and are very vitamin-rich."

Brant also believes it's possible for folks with food allergies to enjoy just as much as those without any. Growing up with one sister who was a vegetarian and another who wouldn't eat meat with fat on it

made her enthusiastic about serving meals that everyone can enjoy.

"Through Indigenous cuisine, it's really easy," she says, "because there is no gluten, there is no dairy and there are no processed sugars."

In the future, Brant hopes to create a line of affordable packaged food that can reach isolated communities in northern Canada, where a case of water can cost close to \$50. "I want Yawékon Foods to be like the 'No Name' of Indigenous foods," Brant says. She imagines a collective of growers who have excess food to share from their own crops. "It's heartbreaking to see so many people without access to food when there are gardeners who don't know what to do with an entire harvest."

For now, Tawnya is bringing her message to the small screen as she competes on season 10 of Top Chef Canada on Food Network Canada. Indigenous food is too important to not be included in the national conversation, she says. "Let's see Canadian foods and real Canadians cooking it."

But her main mission with the show is to empower Indigenous youth. "I want kids to see somebody like them on TV. I know what it's like to haul well water, and what it's like to wake up freezing and get the wood stove started," she says. "I want them to know that they can grow up and be successful; to see a girl that looks like me doing it and know they can do it, too."

For chef Tawnya Brant, cooking is about purpose, and hers is advocating for Indigenous food sovereignty. (TOP PHOTO: FOOD NETWORK CANADA.)



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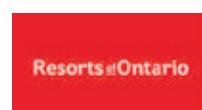
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