

GREAT
TASTE OF

Ontario

Winter
delights

Ready to experience all that winter in Ontario has to offer? Here are the province's coolest outdoor activities, plus must-visit pit stops and (of course!) where to eat along the way

**BUNDLE UP FOR
A WALK-THROUGH LIGHT SHOW
IN THE HEART OF ONTARIO**

Take a jaunt to the Hamilton/Halton/Brant area for an illuminated walk in the woods at Winterlit, along the wooded trails at Mountsberg Conservation Area. There are stunning light displays and art installations to enjoy, and even soundtracks from local musicians.

Nearby hotspot Make a pit stop at Freelon Antique Mall on your way to the trail, where you can shop from over 200 vendors offering unique antiques and collectibles.

Local eats Head over to Freelon's Feast On-certified West Avenue Cider House, which serves up a wide variety of ciders to try – think Spanish-style sour cider, Kentucky bourbon barrel-aged cider, not to mention a classic version made from 100-per-cent Ontario heritage apples – alongside simple but satisfying snacks. There's pizza, sausage rolls and charcuterie and cheese plates featuring some of Ontario's best cheese and cured meats. Bonus: guests can book a private firepit in the cidery's meadow for an extra-cozy meal.

**SKATE YOUR WAY THROUGH
A PARK IN BRAMPTON**

Grab your skates for a trip to the Chinguacousy Park Skate Trail. Designed in an irregular 'canal' shape, this 2,000-square-metre trail is perfect for skaters of all skill levels.

Nearby hotspot Enjoy all the park has to offer with a scenic walk past the Chinguacousy Park Greenhouse to the Clock Circle. Then, take in more sights to see at Historic Bovaird House, a mid-19th-century Ontario farmhouse and Brampton's only historic residence that's open to the public (tip: if you time your visit right, you can get in on a free tour of the residence).

Local eats Warm up from your time outside with a bit of spice at Get Grill, where chef Bab T marries the flavours of his Nigerian heritage with Asian and other international cuisines. Try a tasty wrap or bowl – there are steak, chicken, seafood or veggie options – featuring a wide array of flavour profiles including jerk, suya, shombo, basil, tandoori and Mediterranean.

**ENJOY A HORSE-DRAWN
CARRIAGE RIDE IN THE SNOW
IN HASTINGS COUNTY**

If you'd like a winter experience right out of Narnia, head over to Littlebrook Farm in Madoc, which offers horse-drawn carriage tours of the region's backcountry trails. Guests can take in the wintry views – and even spot wildlife – in comfort thanks to the farm's hard-working horses, Guinness and Cocoa.

Nearby hotspot: Eagle's Nest Look-out is a must-visit for the breathtaking views.



Local eats Round out your day with some sweet treats from Madoc's Historic Goldmine Bakery. The butter tarts here are renowned, but you might also want to dig into some wintry specialties like mincemeat tarts and pies, shortbread, gingerbread – and you can't go wrong with their good old-fashioned chocolate chip cookies.

**VISIT A SKI RESORT
IN SIMCOE COUNTY**

Get out in the snow at Horseshoe Resort where you can try out a world of winter activities like skiing, snowboarding, snow tubing, snowshoeing, skating, fat biking and even snowmobiling, all in the scenic surroundings of Horseshoe Valley and the Copeland Forest.

Nearby hotspot Take warming up to the next level with a stay at Vettä for a Finnish Nordic Spa experience. Recharge with the age-old Finnish tradition of hydrotherapy, visit the steam rooms or indulge in a massage, all while surrounded by nature.

Local eats Keep the coziness going at The Common Stove. Built around a wood-fired grill, the ambiance is warm and welcoming, while the menu is stacked with locally-sourced meats and vegetables.

**TRY SNOWTUBING
IN PERTH COUNTY**

During the winter months, River Valley Golf Course transforms into a thrill-seeker's dream thanks to its 800-foot-long tubing slides. Visitors can fly down the hill solo or link up to four tubes together for a group ride, but either way, they're guaranteed an adventure. Be sure to stop by the property's newly-renovated chalet for home-made fries and a warm drink.

Nearby hotspot Get a hit of history at the Museum of Ontario Archaeology, which is "devoted to the study, display, and interpretation of the human occupation of Southwestern Ontario over the past 13,000 years." In addition to its indoor exhibits and activities, including paint nights, the museum also offers access to the Lawson Architectural Site, a sixteenth-century, pre-contact Iroquoian village where visitors can check out a reconstructed longhouse.

Local eats Located in charming Listowel, Höm offers elevated comfort food that won't break the bank. Opt for oat-crusted chicken breast served with pumpkin gnocchi, house-made linguini or a perfectly-cooked steak. Visit on a Tuesday to experience the restaurant's seasonal five-course tasting menu.



Top: Guests at West Avenue Cider House in Freelon can book a personal outdoor firepit.
KAYLA BETH PHOTOGRAPHY

Middle left: Orillia's The Common Stove serves up hearty meals featuring locally-sourced ingredients.

Middle right: Horses Guinness and Cocoa are the stars of the show at Littlebrook Farm in Madoc.
GABRIELLE ASCOTT

Bottom left: Horseshoe Resort in Barrie offers outdoorsy fun for the whole family.

Bottom right: Find unique treasures at Freelon Antique Mall.

**CHECK OUT A LIGHT FESTIVAL
IN NIAGARA**

Canada's largest free outdoor light festival, the Winter Festival of Lights, returned this November and runs until February, boasting spectacular displays with millions of lights and larger-than-life displays. To commemorate 40 years of the festival, they've added a new illumination light show inspired by winter in the north. There's also a self-guided hot chocolate trail that promises an indulgent winter warmer for every taste. The trail hits 17 restaurants and bakeries across Niagara Falls, where visitors can try versions of hot chocolate made with homemade marshmallows.

Nearby hotspot Keep up the pace with a visit to Woodend Conservation Area for a winter walk down the trails to take in views of Lake Ontario and the escarpment. Or, take an indoor break with a visit to the Butterfly Conservatory, an oasis featuring more than 2,000 butterflies fluttering amid tropical plants and trickling waterfalls.
Local eats Head to Redstone Winery in nearby Beamsville for an indulgent meal at its Feast On-certified on-site restaurant, where locally-sourced ingredients and alcohol are the stars of both the food and cocktail menus.

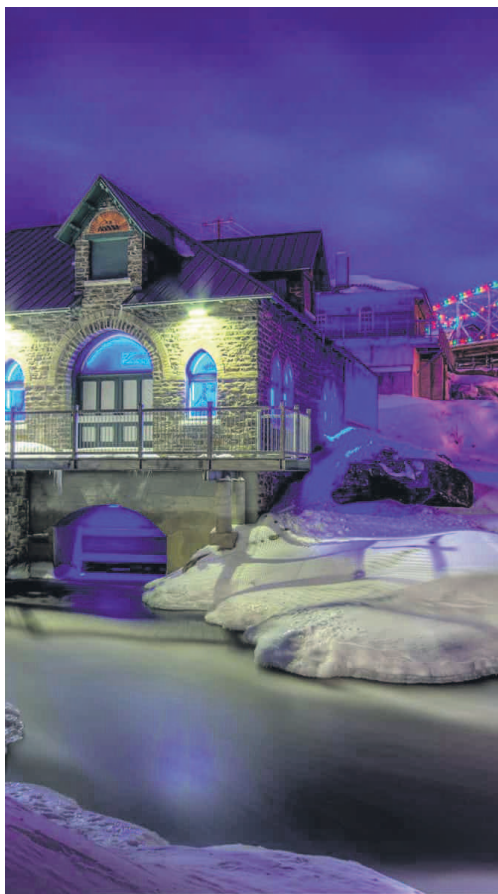
**BONUS: THE NIAGARA ICEWINE
FESTIVAL IS BACK!**

Calling all wine fanatics! The Niagara Icewine Festival is (finally) back in Niagara-on-the-Lake. In January, experience the best that winter in wine country has to offer with the Discovery Pass, a passbook containing eight experience vouchers, redeemable at participating wineries. The event kicks off with the annual Icewine Gala, Canada's largest black-tie dinner and most luxurious VQA icewine and table wine tasting event, with more than 35 wineries represented.

Fall in love with the Great Taste of Ontario again and again. Visit ontarioculinary.com/ great-taste to download curated passports to our province's most delicious destinations.

Three foodie-favourite regions for a winter getaway

There's no better way to beat the winter blahs than by taking a mini-adventure. Make the most of the snowy season with a staycation that celebrates one of the many winter wonderlands found close to home. Whether your ideal weekend away involves hitting the slopes, warming up with some of the region's best food and drink or admiring snow-dusted historic architecture, you'll find your perfect winter escape in Bracebridge, Durham Region and Temiskaming Shores. Start planning the cold-weather getaway of your dreams with these ideas for how to spend a memorable 48 hours in each destination.



Bracebridge

Known for its beautiful lakes, rivers, and waterfalls, Bracebridge is a mainstay for summer getaways to Ontario's cottage country, but winter in the "Heart of Muskoka" offers just as many outdoor activities – not to mention an abundance of culinary delights. For fresh coffee and home-made baked goods that will warm both your hands and your belly while exploring downtown, there's no better spot than Big River Bakery.

When the midday munchies strike, stop by Main St. Delicatessen for old-school deli-style sandwiches like pastrami on rye or Montreal smoked meat. You also can't go wrong with a pizza from The Oven, a petit bakery and pizzeria that serves its wood-fired pizzas on tangy sourdough.

At El Pueblito, a comforting bowl of sopa de tortilla or hearty mole poblano are surefire bets to chase away the cold. For a sweet treat, head to Kitchen's Buttertarts for one of its indulgent tarts, which come in flavours ranging from classic raisin to salted caramel chocolate.

You'd be remiss to leave Muskoka without visiting its namesake brewery, but up-and-coming brewery Katalyst, which occupies Muskoka Brewery's former digs in the historic Granary Building, is also well worth a visit. If you're passing through on a Friday, stick around for its fun-filled weekly trivia night.

What to do

While Bracebridge is typically associated with outdoor pursuits, the town also offers plenty of attractions to catch the eye of culture vultures. Lined with handsome red brick buildings, downtown Bracebridge oozes historic charm. Keep an eye out for the Clock Tower, which was built in 1915 and now houses cute boutiques and studios, then continue getting acquainted with Bracebridge's artistic side at Chapel Gallery. Set in a striking replica of the town's first Presbyterian church, the gallery hosts rotating exhibitions by local and provincial artists.

Where to stay

For a place to stay that also offers a bevy of wintry joys in its own right, opt for Touchstone Resort. There's a spa, sauna and steam room, locally-driven restaurant, as well as snowshoeing trails and a seasonal ice rink. Inviting rooms range in size from comfy standard rooms with kitchenettes to sprawling three-bedroom lakeview suites that are big enough for the whole family.



Durham Region

Located an hour east of Toronto, Durham Region offers the urban conveniences that come with proximity to the city, along with a serene rural ambiance that feels a world away from the hustle-and-bustle. Kick off your culinary tour at Navarra's Eatery in Uxbridge, a homey restaurant known for its hearty weekend breakfasts.

Don't miss a stop at Slabtown Cider Co. for barrel-aged ciders made with Ontario apples. Uxbridge is also home to Urban Pantry, a farm-to-table restaurant that takes inspiration from Durham Region's fresh, seasonal bounty for dishes like Ontario grass-fed ribeye steak frites. In Whitby, KB Food and Bistro '67 dish up more tasty locavore fare.

In the evening, head to Chúk in Pickering for modern Mexican cuisine served in a bright and breezy setting that will leave you dreaming of warmer weather. For another bite that will transport you to the tropics, order Jamaican patties from City Patties in Oshawa's up-and-coming SoJo neighbourhood.

Street Momo is another Oshawa must-try, specializing in eclectic, South Asian-inspired dishes that span from chicken tikka masala to the restaurant's popular momos, which come in varieties like korma and vindaloo.

What to do

Winter activity options in Durham Region range from scenic snowy walks to ice fishing and snow tubing. The diverse trails at Lakeridge Ski Resort are well-suited to skiers of various skill levels or, if you prefer an alternative to the slopes, the resort also offers wonderful snowshoe and winter mountain biking paths.

Warm up with a visit to Oshawa's Robert McLaughlin Gallery to check out its impressive Canadian art collection, which includes works by Painters Eleven and the Group of Seven, as well as thousands of historic photographs of Oshawa and Durham Region.

Where to stay

Set in a lovingly restored 19th-century building in Port Perry, Piano Inn's old-fashioned allure has made it an in-demand filming location for TV series and movies, such as *Reacher* and *Season for Love*. Each cozy room features vintage details like picture windows, solid pine flooring or vaulted ceilings. Tuck into winter warmers like mac n' cheese or oven-baked sandwiches at the onsite café.



Temiskaming Shores

This lakefront city, which encompasses the communities of Haileybury, New Liskeard and Dymond, combines gorgeous natural scenery and a thriving culinary scene with oodles of small-town charm. Temiskaming Shores is a haven for foodies thanks to its fertile farmlands and location bordering both Quebec and Ojibwe land, the latter of which brings a distinctive blend of cultural influences to its regional fare. At L'Autochtone restaurant in Haileybury, Anishinaabe chef Gerry Brandon combines First Nations, French, and English cooking techniques with local ingredients to create intriguing dishes like seasonal frybread doughnuts or a riff on deviled eggs made with pickled beets and candied bacon.

While in Haileybury, be sure to swing by WhiskeyJack Beer Company to sample a wintry craft brew like the Chocolate Chaos stout. For a delectable dish mash-up, head to Dida's in Earlington to try the Burger Cordon Blue, made with breaded chicken breast, local swiss cheese and housemade honey mustard.

A short detour north will bring you to Thornloe Cheese, which has been producing artisan cheeses and grass-fed butter since the 1940s. Pick up a wedge of its signature Devil's Rock, a mild blue cheese with a deliciously creamy texture.

What to do

Thornloe Cheese's Devil's Rock is named after a nearby landmark cliff, which offers jaw-dropping views over Lake Temiskaming. If the conditions are icy, strap on some snow shoes or snow cleats to take on the pleasant, two-kilometre trail leading to the top of the cliff. Winter sports fans will also enjoy Temiskaming Nordic Ski Club, which offers a series of cross country skiing trails that traverse through lovely forest scenery. Take a break from the cold to check out the Haileybury Heritage Museum or Little Claybelt Homesteaders Museum, where you can learn about the history of Temiskaming Shores.

Where to stay

Rest and relax after a day of eating and exploring at the Waterfront Inn. The inn's large, well-kept rooms are spacious, with some offering views of the lake. The inn is easily accessible from nearby snowmobile trails, plus an attached public fitness centre includes a pool, sauna and hot tub.

Winter warmers: Five wintry drinks worth indulging in

Raise a glass to friends, family and the season with these drinks, made with care at some of the province's best restaurants, breweries and cideries

If there's one thing Ontario always delivers, it's a delicious drink. Home to ciders and unique cocktails, the province is filled with a variety of options that will have you content and coming back for more during the winter months. From Waterloo to Simcoe County, here's where you can go to grab some sweet or savoury sips.

Guelph

Spring Mill Distillery's Smoked Maple Bourbon Sour

Situated in Southwestern Ontario and known as "The Royal City," Guelph is home to Spring Mill Distillery, a craft distillery built by the Sleeman family in 1836. Serving a curated drink list that changes from season to season, the mixologists at Spring Mill use carefully-chosen ingredients sure to wake up your taste buds. The Smoked Maple Bourbon Sour contains a mixture of lemon juice, maple syrup, Angostura bitters, egg whites and more, easily making this drink a standout on the menu.

www.springmilldistillery.com

Thunder Bay

Tomlin's French Connection

Who doesn't love Thunder Bay? It's the sunniest city in Eastern Canada (trust us, it's true), and it's also home to one of the best restaurants in the province: Tomlin. But the food menu at this cozy restaurant isn't the only thing worth checking out; their cocktails also deserve equal appreciation. This winter, try the French Connection, a festive masterpiece composed of brandy, bosc pear, clove, lemon and sparkling wine.

Collingwood

Gibson & Co.'s Hot Toddy

Gibson & Co., an elevated cafe and bottle shop located in the heart of downtown Collingwood in Simcoe County, flaunts an array of enticing drinks on their robust menu, but the Hot Toddy is definitely the perfect drink for winter. A classic since it was invented in the early 18th century, Gibson & Co.'s spin on the Hot Toddy contains Maker's Mark Bourbon, maple syrup and fresh lemon juice, and is finished with a cinnamon stick.

www.gibsonandcompany.ca



Kitchener

Sugar Run's Inside Out

One must-visit in Waterloo Region? Sugar Run, a speakeasy with a swanky lounge catering to drink enthusiasts in the city's downtown core. Their cocktails are elegant and refined and tend to keep the sweetness minimal, instead focusing on the flavourful notes of each spirit. One sure bet is the Inside Out, which is made with aged bourbon, cognac

and Nonino Prunella Mandorlata, then aged for 30 days in decanters made from local beeswax, a technique that adds floral notes and changes the mouthfeel of the drink. Also worth trying? The nostalgically named Nothing Compares (2U), made with American rye, a house-made strawberry-amaro blend, smoked turbinado syrup and Angostura bitters.

sugarrun.ca

The Smoked Maple Bourbon Sour at Spring Mill Distillery in Guelph is a delicious combination of bourbon, lemon juice, maple syrup and more.

Sarnia

The Tin Fiddler's Mama's Mangos

A relatively new addition to downtown Sarnia's dining scene, this brewpub is all about made-from-scratch eats, inventive cocktails and cozy, vintage vibes. Made with beer from another Sarnia small business, River Run Brew Co., the beer cocktails are standouts. Try Mama's Mangos, which is made with vanilla, mango rum, orange, zest, sugar and Here We Go, Mango, a River Run cream ale. Or, opt for one of the pub's signature cocktails. Girl Gang, made with peach and Orange blossom vodka, orange and grenadine, or Hot Mess, a spicy mix of pineapple, jalapeno, orange, white rum and tajin, are both good bets.

www.thetinfiddler.com

Mark Marsolais-Nahwegahbow is building a coffee business that gives back

Through Birch Bark Coffee, the entrepreneur is helping support First Nations communities across Canada



Mark Marsolais-Nahwegahbow founded Birch Bark Coffee Co. to draw attention to the lack of clean water on reserves in Canada.

As a child, Mark Marsolais-Nahwegahbow spent most of his summers with his grandparents on the Whitefish River First Nation, located on Ontario's Birch Island. The reserve was life, he says. "It was alive with animals, comfort food, berries, fresh air and sunshine. My childhood was full of adventure because I was so mischievous and always up to something."

Marsolais-Nahwegahbow has especially fond memories of going hunting during harvest season, when the percolator was always on the stove. "There's nothing like good food and great coffee over an open flame outdoors," he says. These days, as the founder of Birch Bark Coffee Co., Marsolais-Nahwegahbow carries on that tradition.

He didn't always plan to launch a coffee company, but nearly five years ago, he saw a need for change when he attended a water symposium hosted by the Assembly of First Nations in B.C. "That's when the light turned on," he says. "I wanted to draw attention to the problems in our communities." So in 2018, he launched Birch Bark Coffee Co., an Ottawa-based fair-trade, organic coffee company with a goal: Bring clean drinking water to every Indigenous home that is subject to a water advisory by providing and installing certified water purification systems. For every purchase of a 12-ounce

bag of Birch Bark coffee, 50 cents to \$1 is put toward the purchase of a certified water purification system for a home, giving a family access to clean drinking water. Through Birch Bark Coffee Co. and its social media, Marsolais-Nahwegahbow does his best to bring awareness to poor infrastructures in 635 communities across Canada. "We use our platform to educate people who want to learn," he says.

Birch Bark Coffee Co. also supports Indigenous families in other parts of the world. Its growers are part of the SPP (Small Producers Certified), the first fair trade, farmer-owned certification system. "These farmers are part of a quest to provide better, more sustainable and ethical products while staying true to the word 'organic,'" Marsolais-Nahwegahbow says – though he believes that word is overused. Most of Birch Bark's premium coffee is grown and harvested in Latin America, specifically Honduras and Guatemala, and is blended with beans from parts of Africa. All of the beans are hand-picked, because the coffee mostly grows in mountainous areas that machines can't reach.

"Business reconciliation plays a key role in change and is an integral part of Indigenous entrepreneurialism," he says. "We just want an equal opportunity to show that we can play on the same field as some

of the big companies." Being recognized and heard is not just important in business, but in our life's journey, he adds.

Marsolais-Nahwegahbow sees supporting social causes as a crucial component of the "Indigenous Inclusion Continuum" business model, which includes paying it forward and ensuring everyone succeeds. He's noticed a positive shift occurring in the world as business models slowly evolve and people begin to move away from corporate thinking. "Our Elders have told us through prophecies that now is the time to speak up, because our Elders are getting older and will not be around forever," he says. "We must be voices for many. This is all important because, like walking in the snow and leaving footprints, there will be others that look to walk that same path in our next generations."

He also believes in the importance of gratitude and uses his position to lift others up, "regardless of who they are or where they are at in their lives." He advocates for self-care, too, because "if you're not on your game, you are not at your best for your family and the community."

Right now, Birch Bark Coffee Co. ships across Canada and internationally, and is sold in many retail locations throughout the country. In the future, Marsolais-Nahwegahbow hopes to have a manufacturing

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When it is time for me to meet the Creator, I want to know I provided a good living for my family and did some good in my life – for my communities and for the world.

facility and distribution centre in his community to create employment opportunities that can extend to other nations.

His other biggest goal? To make Birch Bark Coffee Co. a household name. He wants to bring smiles to people's faces as they sit around their table sharing cups of coffee while talking about what they want to be remembered for. More than anything, Marsolais-Nahwegahbow hopes to leave an amazing legacy. "When it is time for me to meet the Creator, I want to know I provided a good living for my family and did some good in my life – for my communities and for the world."

Five places to grab a cup of Birch Bark in Ontario

BlackFly GrubHub in Perth
Coffee and doughnuts are a match made in heaven. Pre-order a dozen homemade doughnut flavours, like maple bacon and lemonade stand, to avoid disappointment when you visit this sweet spot, which often sells out.

L'Autochtone Taverne Americaine in Haileybury
Celebrate English, French and First Nations culture with dishes like roasted squash risotto and herb-crusted salmon fillet at L'Autochtone. Finish with some coffee and delicious seasonal trifle for dessert.

Salty Dog Bagels in Hamilton
Grab a cup of coffee and watch bakers prepare fresh, handmade bagels. Don't forget to order a sandwich to go. (Options include porchetta and caprese.)

Loco Beanz Coffee House in Little Current
Enjoy a hot cup of coffee and take home your favourite Birch Bark beans from this café, which offers daily specials like bacon and cheddar egg bites.

Pow Wow Cafe in Toronto
This spot in Kensington Market is home to the much beloved "Indian taco" created by Anishinaabe chef, Shawn Adler. Stop by for lunch and refuel with a good brew.

EXPERIENCE BRAMPTON

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Six unique Ontario accommodations for foodies

Thinking about a winter vacation? Consider booking a stay at one of these local food-oriented spots

If you usually think of a winter holiday as a chance to escape the snow, here's an alternate idea: Stay close to home and experience the joys of winter. Whether that means cozying up with a private fireside chef or luxuriating at a spa, Ontario has stays to make you (and your tastebuds) appreciate the season in a whole new way.

Lungovita, on Lake Erie in Harrow

Although heading to a beach resort might seem more like a summer plan, Lungovita makes the most of the Canadian winter in Ontario's Southwest. Heated tents (or geodesic domes, if you're feeling extra fancy) can accommodate two to four people and come equipped with a personal bonfire pit. The premises also boast luxury bathrooms, as well as hot tubs and saunas, which are available year-round. Although the nature retreat does not sell food, it is walking distance from three wineries – North 42 Degrees Estate Winery, Colchester Ridge Estate Winery (CREW) and Viewpointe Estate Winery – where guests can enjoy delicious meals and of course, wine tastings.

Glen Oro Farm in Oro-Medonte

Say yes to glamping. Glen Oro Farm's luxury eco-retreat in Simcoe County isn't just chic and comfortable, it also gives visitors the option to book a private chef. Chef Paul LaForet of LaForet Catering will head to your "glampsite" and cook dinner over an open fire. Choose from a set menu (which allows for dietary accommodations) or splurge on a seasonally-inspired five- or seven-course tasting menu. If you're not into the private chef idea, there's another delicious option: Chef Melanie Robinson, 2015 *Chopped Canada* champion and owner of local restaurant Eclectic Cafe, will deliver a brunch box, charcuterie platter or seasonal dinner for Glen Oro visitors. Each tent and geodesic dome at the farm also include an ensuite bathroom and kitchenette, in case you want to cook for yourself.

Calabogie Peaks Hotel in Calabogie

If you love winter unapologetically, Calabogie Peaks Resort, in Ontario's Highlands, is an excellent place for skiing, skating and snowshoeing. Guests have marveled at how friendly the ski slopes are for visitors of all levels, from the new to highly experienced. Then, once you have had enough time in the snow, head back to the hotel for Feast On-certified fine dining at Canthooks Restaurant. Enjoy a cozy après ski dinner with the Swiss/German inspired menu, complete with spaetzle and schnitzels made in house. Beer lovers: Be sure to order a flight of brews sourced from the Canadian Beer Award-winning Calabogie Brewing Co.

Primeau's Ice Castle on Lake Nipissing

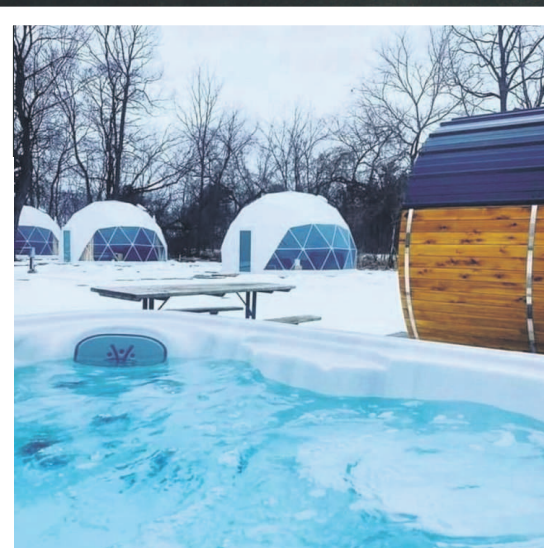
For the truly adventurous foodies out there, consider catching your own food this winter – in style. Couple Pat and Stephanie Primeau created their "ice castle" fishing business in 2017. Overnight ice fishing requires staying in a heated ice hut, but the Primeaus are no ordinary outfitters. Their luxury huts are converted trailers with predrilled holes in the floor for fishing. Even better, they're fully decked out with satellite television, couches, beds, washrooms and propane stoves. That means you can catch some of Lake Nipissing's whitefish, pickerel and perch without leaving the sofa, literally. Just make sure you have a fishing permit.

Heather Lodge in Minden

Go for a classic cottage on the lake at this Haliburton Highlands adults-only resort, which has been around since the 1940s. Cozy up in one of its 12 studios, all of which boast king-size beds, classic Canadian lodge-inspired decor and all the creature comforts you need for a relaxing getaway. Then, head to the Feast On-certified restaurant, which offers three and four course meals – just make sure you make a reservation in advance. Executive chef James Jennings has 25 years of experience and the menu changes seasonally, so you will want to go back year-round! When you aren't eating a stellar meal with a view of Twelve Mile Lake, be sure to take advantage of the Lodge's snowshoes and cross-country skis. There are plenty of trails near the property, and Algonquin Park isn't far away. The charming riverside village of Minden also offers plenty of unique cafes and a riverside walking trail.

Point Pelee National Park's Otentiks in Leamington

If you're not exactly the roughing it type, consider booking a stay at one of Point Pelee National Park's Otentiks, which are a cross between an A-frame cabin and a prospector tent. Each all-weather structure features hardwood floors, heat, electricity and high-density foam mattresses, so guests can relax in maximum comfort, even during the winter months. Importantly, four of the park's Otentiks are accessible and two are pet-friendly. And while there's no eating inside the tents themselves, each one is equipped with dishes and a gas barbecue for outdoor cooking. Or, head into town for a handmade burger at Freddy's, a family-owned restaurant that Freddy and Maria Makhoulouf have been running since 1988. Freddy's gets glowing reviews, and sweet tooths take note: There are 32 flavours of ice cream on offer.



Top: At Heather Lodge, executive chef James Jennings whips up delicious three- and four-course meals.

Middle: Beach resort Lungovita is a refreshing escape, even during the cold months.

Bottom: Heather Lodge in Minden has snow shoes on offer so guests can explore nearby trails.



Brewing up winter fun

These five craft breweries offer outdoor ambiance and cozy spots to gather 'round and share stories over Ontario-brewed pints

Parsons Brewing

Prince Edward County

Grab your pals, strap on a pair of ice skates and hit the rink at this family-owned brewery. Then, take a break with a pint of the Guv' nor, an ale with notes of toffee, or a Soft Hues lager inspired by long walks on the Sandbanks Outlet Beach at dusk. Stick around for dinnertime – the chef works with local farmers to source fresh ingredients. Warm up with a hearty serving of roasted cauliflower and apple chowder or a 72-hour cooked beef torta and enjoy some tunes as part of Parsons' live winter music series.

Paris Beer Company

Paris

Located inside the cozy, historic Paris Winery Mills Co. market, this brewery (the first to open in Paris in over 100 years!) offers up award-winning beers for every palate. Grab a spot on the heated, dog-friendly patio – on Thursdays, there's live music to enjoy. Or, check out the website to find out about fun weekend events, like holiday markets with mulled wine, or just stop by for a drink and yummy meal. We recommend their holiday special, St. Bartholomew Dark Wheatbock (with notes of caramel, oats and hops), and the Nashville fried chicken or P.E.I. mussels.

Muskoka Brewery

Bracebridge

Head out to cottage country and take a load off in classic Muskoka chairs surrounding fire pits on this dreamy winter patio. Order a charcuterie board featuring local cured meats, and some warm pretzels with three-cheese cream ale beer dip to share and snack on. Toast the occasion with a can of Winter Beard (a brew with notes of chocolate and cranberry that's perfect for the season) or the brewery's classic Cream Ale, the first beer they brewed upon opening in 1996. There are plenty of alcohol-free drinks (like the Mindful Wandr, infused with lemon, lemongrass and orange peel) and kid-friendly food on the menu, too.

Bench Brewing

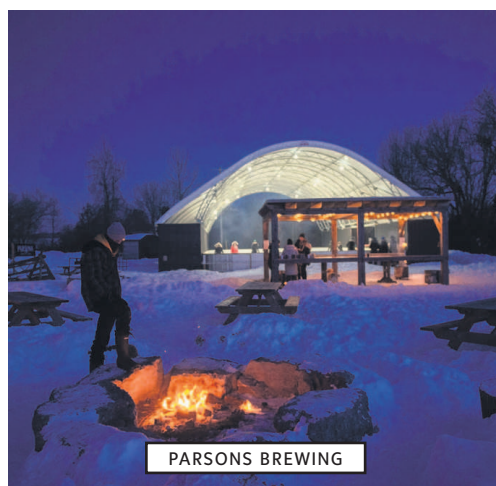
Beamsville

Spread out across eight acres, this brewery in Niagara Benchlands features a welcoming winter patio complete with fireplaces and heaters. The outdoor space offers a beautiful view overlooking the Twenty Valley vineyards and orchards. Try a Mountainview Stout for a bold, creamy brew with notes of chocolate and roasted coffee, or Appellation No. 6, a golden ale that's aged in local wine barrels with notes of orange, lime zest and stone fruit. Don't miss out on the patatas bravas, which are potatoes fried in duck fat with salsa, chili sauce and roasted garlic.

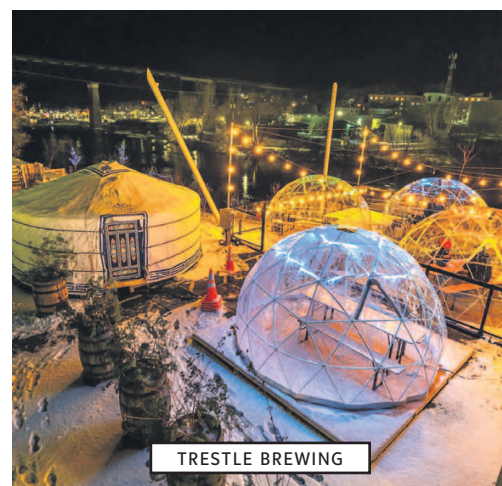
Trestle Brewing

Parry Sound

Gather with friends inside a heated yurt or book a geodesic dome for a romantic date at this brewery that overlooks Parry Sound's waterfront with a view of the historic CPR Trestle Bridge. Once tucked inside, enjoy a Trestle Golden Ale, modelled after European Pilsners with a blend of malts and hops, or An Ocean In Front Of You, A Fire Behind You, a wild ale aged in French Oak barrels that once held Cabernet Sauvignon for a unique fruity taste. Share a poutine (made with cheese curds from St. Albert) or the Georgian Bay trout board, which features Milford Bay trout pate and smoked filet, gravlax, mustard and more.



PARSONS BREWING



TRESTLE BREWING

Tasty New Year!

Expert advice on where to go, what to eat or how to host an epic New Year's Eve fête from some of Ontario's best chefs



There are two types of people in this world: Those who see New Year's Eve as a chance to dress up and hit the town and those who regard it as the ultimate invitation to stay in for a cozy celebration that may or may not end before 9 p.m. Whatever your flavour of New Year's Eve revelry, the menu should play a central part in the evening's activities – which is why we've tapped some of Ontario's coolest food professionals for their favourite ways to ring in the new year, featuring the very best of local produce, restaurants and celebrations for the whole family.

SAM VANDENBERG
chef at *sixthirtynine* (Oxford County)

"If I can be biased, we do a New Year's Eve tasting menu at *sixthirtynine*. That's a low-key vibe, unless you're the last seating, which gets to stay and celebrate with the staff. It's fun, because everybody at the restaurant gets to celebrate as a family with champagne. We always try to do something special for the menu. This year, we're in talks with a local duck producer. Usually, duck is hard to come by, and not a lot of people have duck at home on an average Thursday night. We also have a great trout provider in St. Thomas. We try to stay very local.

If you're doing an at-home thing, people love appetizers. You're with friends, and it gives you a chance to party more than just having a sit down, which can take the fun out of it. Being in Oxford County, we have Your Farm Market, which has all local produce. I'd do a baked brie with Brigid's Brie from Gunn's Hill Artisan Cheese. They're award-winning local cheesemakers and we use them for everything. If you're more meat-oriented, Your Farm Market carries Norpac meat; they use smaller farms for their beef, and they dry age it for 55 days. I'd probably sear it, make a salsa verde for it and put it on a board so people can grab a bite.

A cool thing to do if you have a smaller party is get different couples to make different cocktails. Every hour or so, a couple brings out a cocktail. You might get a martini, then a negroni. All the cocktails aren't on the host, and it's a surprise for everyone.

For dessert, it has to be chocolate – it's decadent, and it goes really well with dessert wines. We have Habitual Chocolate here in Woodstock. They do bean-to-bar, and they source all their own beans. They make their chocolate right in the store, and we use their chocolate a lot."

CHEF TAMMY MAKI
owner and CEO of *Raven Rising Global Indigenous Chocolates* (Sudbury)

"Charcuterie is always on the menu for my New Year's celebration. I try to make the crackers myself, and I love making gougères as well. I add apple butter, candied pecans, dried cranberries with local meats and cheeses. I also pair this with some great Ontario wine. I usually spend New Year's with my brother and sister-in-law. We're a pretty easygoing crowd, so for drinks it's usually a really nice sparkling rosé for early evening and then a great prosecco or wine from Niagara close to midnight.

The best NYE is not only with the best people, but the best tunes. Anything from David Bowie to Queen, a little Lynyrd Skynyrd, you can't forget Phil Collins and pretty much anything else from the '60s through to the '80s. If all else fails and I'm by myself on New Year's, I curl up with Dexter the cat and Frankie the Boston Terrier and watch old musicals like *Fiddler on the Roof* or *The Sound of Music*, which makes me fall in love with Christopher Plummer yet again."

NICK BENNINGER
culinary director of the *Fat Sparrow Group* (Waterloo Region)

"As we – and our restaurant group – have matured, we find ourselves with New Year's Eve off so we can spend it at home with the kids. We tend to treat ourselves pretty well: Seafood is always the theme, and lots of it. Usually we will have an outdoor fire and cook at least a few dishes out there: fire-roasted calamari, grilled clams, oysters shucked in the moonlight with sparkling firmly planted in a snowbank. We keep things very low-key in the sense that it's just us, but we also go full-out on the feasting, living our best lives in the twilight of the year!

If you're hosting, my tip is to keep the party near the kitchen! That's why I love a good grazing-style menu. It keeps the action close to the chef and everyone chips in. Oyster shucking is a great group activity, so put those friends to work and teach them a cool skill. Keep it simple, and leave flexibility so you can skip or add courses if needed. Treat the event like a line cook treats dinner service and have all

your *mise en place* done ahead of time – lemons cut, herbs picked, oysters washed and ice crushed. Rushing around in a panic is not the vibe you are looking for.

For the menu, choose dishes that might also work for a New Year's day brunch, so any courses that get missed due to too much reveling can easily be enjoyed the next day. I'd do lots of local cheeses – Mountin oak three-year-old gouda will without a doubt make that list – accompanied by our own Fat Sparrow Apple Chutney. Local fishmonger T&J's Seafood makes the best cold smoked salmon in the world. New Year's is always a great excuse for caviar and oysters, both coming from the east coast for me. Acadian Sturgeon Caviar is my favourite source for wild and farmed. Beers, ciders, pét nat and grape ales all help mark a festive event. Locally, we are fortunate to have Revel Cider, Short Finger Brewing and Block Three that excel in those categories."

RICKY CASIPE AND OLIVIA SIMPSON
co-founders *Ricky + Olivia pop-ups and events* (Niagara Benchlands)

"If you're planning New Year's Eve out, start your day by checking out Pearl Morissette's RPM Bakehouse in Jordan. Great coffee and absolutely delicious pastries, baked goods as well as breakfast or lunch options. You might even run into us there, as we live just a few doors down and are always there!

After that we highly recommend swinging by Westcott Vineyards for a tasting by the fire of some of the best Pinot Noirs and Chardonnays in the region. Ball's Falls Conservation Area is great for a midday family walk. Good Earth Winery is a favourite of ours and they are one of the most family-friendly wineries, so we would recommend checking out what they have planned for the holiday season.

We also love to stop by Bushel & Peck, a neighbourhood farm shop that carries small batch Ontario products and also lots of fun zero-proof beverages."

JASON BANGERTER
chef at *Langdon Hall Country House and Spa* (Cambridge)

"New Year's Eve menus are celebration menus! Lobster, smoked oysters, pickled ramps, and cheese come to mind. I love clothbound PEI cheddar. You can also never go wrong with pasta and winter truffles. I'd probably include some late-night surprises as well, like a grilled cheese sandwich close to midnight. For a really low-key menu, pizza, of course, champagne, and definitely late-night ice cream.

At Langdon Hall, we offer a black-tie celebration with champagne and canapés to start, live music, and a multi-course tasting menu. My truffle soup is always a favourite and usually makes an appearance by popular demand. (The recipe can be found in my cookbook, *Langdon Hall: A Cookbook*.)

If not Langdon Hall, I would head out to Stratford to the Braai House for a tasting menu and dancing. I live in Milton, so in that area I'd recommend Pasqualino's Fine Dining."

ZACK KEESHIG
head chef and owner of *Naagan* (Owen Sound)

"We do a New Year's Eve service, so my celebration depends on what time I get home. We're a tasting menu restaurant, and we focus on hyper-local food. I go foraging when I can, and that's what we showcase. We make our own drinks, and we make medicinal drinks to pair with the food. For New Year's, we'd probably make our wild ginger beer or a blueberry spruce beer, made with ingredients that we go and forage, and add a touch of yeast to and ferment. When we use cheese on our menu, we get it all from Thornloe Cheese.

At home, if I'm hanging with the kids, we love going out for sushi at Yummy Yummy in Owen Sound and coming back and watching TV. If you're looking for a family-friendly activity, in recent years, they've been doing fireworks down at the farmer's market, and the local YMCA has something where you can take children to go blow off some steam in the gym. In Harrison Park, they make an ice rink that's open to the public, and a lot of people go down there and skate, play a bit of hockey.

If you want to go out somewhere, I would suggest Sumac and Salt, which does a tasting menu of local food, or The Pine in Collingwood. Mudtown Station is a nice casual spot in Owen Sound to grab a beer."



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Exploring the Route Champlain

Running from Chute-à-Blondeau to Kingston, this history-inspired route is full of activities, culture and delicious food

In 1615, legendary French explorer Samuel de Champlain set out to forge a trail through what would, in 175 years, become part of Upper Canada. Today, four centuries later, the mark made by Champlain during his travels throughout the territory we now call Ontario remains in the form of a rich Francophone culture that flourished along the route of his 1,500-kilometre journey.

"He kept meticulous journals and he was a meticulous cartographer," says Anne-Marie Forcier of the Société Économique de L'Ontario (SEO), before going on to explain how his original journey has become a path that contemporary travellers can follow themselves.

Created by SEO and its tourism partner Salut Canada in an effort to highlight Francophone history and culture in Ontario, the scenic Route Champlain skirts the historical path taken by the French explorer, following the waterways Champlain traversed by canoe. Along the way, travellers will pass through provincial parks, visit historical sites that document Champlain's relationships with his Huron-Wendat guides and his visits to Indigenous communities (the Route was created in consultation with Indigenous Tourism Ontario), and take in the same views of the province's magnificent wilderness that Champlain himself saw so long ago.

"His voyages and exploits had an enormous impact on the formation of Ontario's geographical boundaries, trade, and culture in the 1600s – outcomes that still have relevance today," says Louisa Mursell, executive director at Transportation Options, the group responsible for creating the cycling itineraries for each of the Route's regions.

The Route Champlain covers seven regions in Ontario and can be travelled as a whole, or visitors can limit their explorations to one or two destinations. Beginning east of Ottawa in Chute-à-Blondeau, they will pass through the capital onto

Renfrew, then head to North Bay and Lake Nipissing before turning south to visit places like Algonquin Park, the Bruce Peninsula, and Prince Edward County, then coming to the Route's end in Kingston.

In addition to an immersion in history and nature, the stops mapped out along the Route include places where travellers will taste Franco-Ontarian and Indigenous foods, from traditional dishes to modern ones crafted by local producers, growers, and chefs. This is very deliberate – food occupied a significant place in Champlain's journals. He wrote at length about the diets of the Indigenous peoples he met, including the types of berries they foraged for. Blueberries were a personal favourite of the legendary explorer's, which is how Hugli's Blueberry Ranch in Pembroke, where visitors can pick berries in summer or pick up preserves in winter, became a stop on the Route.

Mountain Ash Farm and Country Inn is another destination that showcases both French Canadian and Indigenous cuisine. After a guided Champlain-themed tour of the town of Creemore created by owner Patricia Cleary-Clark, visitors are invited to sit down to dine at an off-grid sugar shack to taste local maple syrup, an Indigenous invention enthusiastically adopted by French Canadians. You'd be advised, however, to save room for dinner. In the village's downtown, locally sourced ingredients go into making the dishes at Chez Michel. Offering hearty bowls of bouillabaisse and plates of canard confit, the menu is designed to celebrate the essentials of French cuisine.

In the Lanark Highlands north of Kingston sits another culinary gem that offers hearty and traditional breakfasts with a side of maple syrup history. Wheelers, an unofficial but recommended stop on the Route, was started by Vernon Wheeler and his wife Judy, who began tapping the trees on their farm back in 1978, before opening a pancake house 18

years later. The project has grown to include a Maple Museum and a Logging and Chainsaw Museum; Vernon is the Guinness World Record holder for 'Largest Collection of Maple Syrup Artifacts.' In peak season, the family serves pancakes slathered in their house maple syrup to hundreds of visitors a day, says Forcier, who adds that the business is a family project that employs multiple generations of Wheelers.

Ottawa, too, offers a not-to-be-missed food themed destination: "Near Dow's Lake," suggests Mursell, "stop at the Canada Agriculture and Food Museum, located in the world's only working farm in the heart of a capital city. Visitors can learn all about the food they eat, where it comes from, how it's grown, and interact with a variety of breeds of farm animals."

Mursell has a few final pieces of advice for Route Champlain travellers: "Stop at Grounded Coffee in Midland, a hip little cafe with a passionate coffee roaster, artisan bakers, and real baristas," she says. "And sample local treats at Dooher's, a long established and well-loved bakery in Campbellford. In picturesque Warkworth, Our Lucky Stars Café and Coffee Roastery is an award-winning, bicycle-friendly location with a delicious menu that also has vegan, vegetarian, and gluten-free menu options made with local ingredients."

In his journals, Champlain wrote, "Let us prepare the road for those who will follow." The Route Champlain has prepared the road for visitors looking to uncover the Francophone history of Ontario on multiple levels. "It's all the senses," says Forcier. "You're hearing French, you're seeing French menus, you're really immersed in the experience."

At sugar camp and pancake house Wheelers, visitors can get a glimpse of history thanks to Tim the Voyageur.



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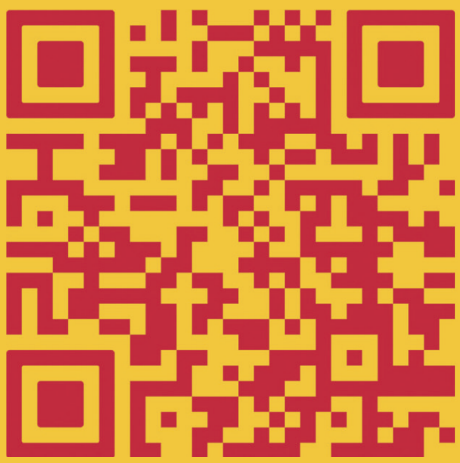


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