



GREAT
TASTE OF

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FALL
FAMILY
FUN

From cutting your own bouquet of wildflowers to taking an enchanting stroll with alpacas, getting lost (temporarily) in a corn maze, tasting the season's flavours and picking (almost) your weight in apples and pumpkins, Ontario is ripe with fall family activities

Weekends are the perfect time to round up the whole family – kids, grandparents, aunts, uncles, cousins – and hit up a local destination for some play, laughs and seasonal bounty. From strolling with alpacas in Lakefield to apple-picking in Thorndale, visit one or all of these destinations (all of which can be found on Great Taste of Ontario passports) and make it an autumn to remember.

Barrie Hill Farms
2935 Barrie Hill Rd., Springwater
SIMCOE COUNTY PASSPORT

A multigenerational trip to this second-generation-run farm is an obvious fit. The Gervais family offers reasonable rates for the u-pick operation, which spans the farm's 200-plus acres, because as they see it, visitors are helping them harvest their crops. September and October are the perfect time to pick apples for fall baking, pumpkins for carving, popping corn for Halloween movie nights or squash and beans for cozy soups and holiday recipes. You can pack a lunch and enjoy it in the designated picnic area, but for the full experience, hit up the on-site Silo Cafe. The menu utilizes locally-sourced ingredients along with farm-grown produce. Their frozen yogurt is legendary, and the apple cheddar panini is a must-try. Open May through Halloween, and BYOB (bring your own basket).

Arrowwood Farm and Harvest Table
6460 Riverside Dr., Melbourne
MIDDLESEX, SARNIA, LAMBTON PASSPORT

Blueberry season – Arrowwood's specialty – is a summer thing, but the powerful antioxidant-packed berries are available frozen and in baked goods year-round at Kathy



and Phil's sprawling property. Plan a fall visit to this charming spot to shop for frozen berries or a cut-your-own-bouquet from the farm's field of wildflowers, zinnias, snapdragons and gladiolus. Or join owners Kathy and Phil for a monthly meal at the harvest table or weekly lunches on the patio with tasty, laid-back grub like in-season soups and grilled sandwiches. And if you want a tour, just ask. Someone will be happy to show you around.

Wanderlight Alpaca Experience
874 Lynchs Rock Rd., Lakefield
PETERBOROUGH & THE KAWARTHAS PASSPORT

Ever wanted to spend some quality time with fluffy alpacas? Wanderlight Alpaca Experience is the way to do it. Situated on rolling hills just outside of Peterborough, this family-run experience allows young and old (kids aged two to five will need to walk with an adult) to spend 60 magical minutes bonding and trail-walking with one of the 11 on-site alpacas. Do note, though, that there is no food or washrooms on-site, but guests are welcome to bring litterless snacks. Availability varies, book your tickets online.

Sainte-Marie Among the Hurons
16164, Highway 12 East, Midland
ROUTE CHAMPLAIN PASSPORT

Take a step back in history to the 1600s with a visit to Sainte-Marie Among the Hurons, a museum and original French settlement. Enjoy an interactive tour with captivating storytelling and demonstrations by costumed interpreters that illuminate the lives of the Huron-Wendat People, as well as their culture, practices and ways of life. The award-winning museum engages touch, sound and smell with 750 loaned, donated and purchased artifacts. And while the on-site restaurant is temporarily closed, refreshments are available at the retail store, Flint & Timber Co., for those who worked up an appetite exploring. Open daily until October 8.

Thames River Melons
775530 Blandford Rd., Innerkip
OXFORD COUNTY CHEESE TRAIL PASSPORT

What began as an experimental acre of cantaloupes has blossomed into a thriving 500-plus acre family-run farm serving the Innerkip community and beyond since 1984.



The famous melons and summer produce are finished come fall, but pick-your-own veggies and pumpkins are available up until Halloween – and when we say veggies, we mean veggies. The farm offers tons of good-for-you foods, including beans, carrots, cauliflower and okra. You can even dig up your own potatoes! Family members of all ages can reward their labour with a pit stop at the Farm Kitchen, which sells baked goods like pies and scones, as well as several ready-to-eat meal options, using farmed ingredients. Or, head to the on-site food truck, which serves up delicious eats made from the farm's own ingredients, including fresh-cut fries, milkshakes, and smash burgers made from their Black Angus beef. There are take-home treats, too, including uniquely flavoured melon honey (the bees pollinate in the melon fields!), strawberry BBQ sauce and candied jalapeños. The farm is open daily from 8 a.m. to 6 p.m. from September to Halloween, and by appointment in November and December.

Apple Land Station
329 Richmond St., Thorndale
MIDDLESEX, SARNIA, LAMBTON PASSPORT

With a name like Apple Land, there's no question that this southern-Ontario farm takes its commodity seriously. Depending on the time, up to 18 varieties of apples – like sweet-but-a-bit-tart Paula Reds, crisp-and-juicy Cortlands and sweet-honey-flavoured Ambrosia – are available for picking. But nothing pairs with apples quite like family fun, which is why admission includes playing all day with a train ride to explore the farm, animals to greet, a playground and a corn maze. The pumpkin patch is where you can find your family's next great gourd for carving or eating. And the delicious smells wafting from the shop will lure you into some amazing culinary purchases like a turkey pot pie, garlic and chive biscuits and apple-cinnamon-you-name-it baked goods. Apple season starts September 2.

Above: The pumpkin patch at Barrie Hill Farms makes for perfect fall photos. Clockwise from far left: Everyone can make some adorable new friends at Wanderlight Alpaca Experience; apple picking is an autumn activity that's fun for the whole family; it's all in gourd fun at Barrie Hill Farms.

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CENTRAL COUNTIES
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Ontario's sweetest treats

If you're looking for fall flavours, this province is bountiful – especially when it comes to desserts

The last few days of summer can feel melancholy, but any end-of-season blues will definitely be soothed by the flavours of fall – pumpkin spice everything, cinnamon apple goodness and buttery, melt-in-your-mouth pastries. Trade the summer sun in for the soothing warmth of autumnal spices that'll carry you through to the next sign of light in spring by traveling around Ontario this fall. From London to Campbellford, here's where to find your next favourite fall treat.

For a delicious apple galette, head to Isabella's Chocolate Café in Oshawa

The galette is a quintessential French pastry named for its flat shape. But don't mistake the simplicity of its looks for a basic flavour or construction – the apple galette, especially the one you'll savour at Isabella's Chocolate Café, is far from ordinary, with some even calling it "magical." Similar to a tart, the apple galette takes on a freeform shape, normally a circle, and is topped with sliced fruit. Unlike a pie, this pastry features an open top, allowing the fruit and its juices to caramelize as it bakes. Get to Isabella's early (they often sell out) and enjoy yours with a hot gourmet coffee.

For ooey gooey pumpkin spice butter tarts, head to Kitchen's Buttertarts in Bracebridge

You can't get much more Canadian than a flaky, gooey, deliciously sweet butter tart. A staple in Canadian pioneer cooking, the first published recipe dates back to 1900 in Barrie, Ont., but is believed to originate much further back, with some sources claiming this quintessentially Canadian treat was being enjoyed as early as late 1600s. Kitchen's Buttertarts has its own sweet history – the two founders met in George Brown's culinary program, married and started a family, and are now making jumbo sweet and savory butter tarts in the heart of Muskoka. Try their Canadian classic infused with the modern-day flavour twist of pumpkin spice, topped off with a dollop of whipped cream.



For sweet and sophisticated maple-bacon cheesecake sandwiches, head to Sweet C's Cookie Creations in Chatham

Nothing says fall quite like maple and bacon, two ingredients in one of Sweet C's Cookie Creations' most popular seasonal treats. Reminiscent of a whoopie pie, the shop's maple-bacon cheesecake sandwiches feature two from-scratch graham cracker cookies held together with their signature cheesecake filling for the perfect soft and chewy bite every time. If you really love cheesecake, you'll want to try out their other fall offerings before you leave; we're partial to their pumpkin pie cheesecake bars, pumpkin cheesecake cinnamon fritters and pumpkin cheesecake cookies (see a pattern?).

For the ultimate caramel apple fritter, head to Crave Doughnuts in Whitby

When you bite into a dense, luscious apple fritter, you're biting into a slice of medieval history. The first iteration of the fried doughnut dates back as far as medieval England, but they were staples at Christmas markets from Italy to Germany. It starts with a cored and sliced apple that's battered, fried and sprinkled with powdered or cinnamon sugar. Crave Doughnuts dials this traditional sweet treat up to 11 with its caramel apple fritter, a brioche fritter filled with local apples dipped in a light vanilla glaze and drizzled with caramel.

For a Polish Szarlotka, head to London's Unique Food Attitudes

Love apple pie but looking for a new way to enjoy the traditional treat? Try Unique Food Attitudes' hugely popular Szarlotka, a Polish dessert consisting of sweet, spiced stewed apples inside a buttery pastry and often topped with crumble. Back in the Middle Ages, when it was first made, the dessert would contain an abundance of fruit, from figs to pears, alongside the apples. Today, the apple is a core (pun intended) component of Polish cuisine and the Szarlotka, just one of Unique Food Attitudes' owner Barbara Czyz's delicacies, is a must-try.

For a classic pumpkin pie, head to Dooher's Bakery in Campbellford

Close your eyes and picture a classic pumpkin pie. You probably envision a buttery, flaky crust filled with rich pumpkin pie filling and topped (or not) with a swirl of frothy whipped cream. Would you believe us if we told you the first-ever pumpkin pie was a topless pumpkin, seeds removed, filled with milk, spices and honey? While fancy, inventive desserts are always fun to try, there's something to be said for a simple classic – like Dooher's Bakery's pumpkin pie, one of 13 pies they have on the extensive roster of desserts they've been whipping up since 1949.

Five outdoor adventures to help work up an appetite this fall

Whether you're looking to go hiking, camping, bird-watching or horseback riding, there's an outdoorsy adventure on offer somewhere in Ontario

Autumn is a great time to explore Ontario. There are so many options for day trips and weekend getaways, whether you're looking for a hike among gorgeous fall foliage, a place to learn about nature and local culture, or an unforgettable camping experience. Plan your best fall yet with these five fun options.

Gamiing Nature Centre, Kawartha Lakes

Spend a day immersed in nature while learning about environmental issues at Gamiing. The natural heritage conservation education centre, located on Pigeon Lake in the territory of the Michi Saagiig Nishnaabeg, is home to more than 180 species of flora and fauna along seven kilometres of recreational trails. Take a stroll or sign up for a guided workshop where you can learn skills like bird calling, seed collecting and mushroom foraging. Then, after you've worked up an appetite, take a 15-minute drive to Kawartha Dairy in Bobcaygeon for a refreshing post-walk ice cream cone. Try a classic option like Moose Tracks, or go for newer flavour, like Campfire S'mores.

Devil's Rock Trail Head, Temiskaming

This two-kilometre hike is easy to follow and leads to a lookout from Devil's Rock, a 2.2-billion-year-old fault cliff that rises 300 feet above water level. The stunning 180-degree view from the top is worth the hike. Picture yellow, orange and red leaves dotting the landscape, sparkling Lake Temiskaming below, and Quebec in the distance. At dinner time, head to family-friendly restaurant 28 on

the Lake. Order up some deep-fried cheese curds or a margherita pizza to share, or go for the pan-fried pickerel. There's also a kids' menu with crowd-pleasing options like pasta and grilled cheese.

Sleeping Giant Provincial Park, Thunder Bay

Spend a weekend hiking with friends at Sleeping Giant. Reserve a cabin through Ontario Parks that can accommodate six people and is equipped with electric heat, a kitchen, bathroom and more. With over 100 kilometres of trails, there's lots to explore. Check out the rugged Lake Superior shoreline and scenic landscapes bursting with autumn colours, and spot wildlife like deer, wolves and foxes. Take a break from your outdoor adventures with a visit to Sleeping Giant Brewing Company's Tap Room where you can enjoy a pint of the Northern Logger, a light and easy to drink golden ale that's lightly hopped for a hint of bitterness, and tasty snacks like burgers, pizza and hand pies. Visit during the evening when you can often catch live music.

Rondeau Provincial Park, Chatham-Kent

More than 330 species of birds have been recorded at this park, known worldwide for its amazing birdwatching. Even better, fall is one of the best times to see migrating birds, such as warblers, flycatchers and other song birds. You'll also see thousands of ducks and Tundra swans in Rondeau Bay. When it's time for a break, check out the Chatham-Kent Bakery Trail, a sweet adventure featuring 19 bakeries and

Top: The lookout at Devil's Rock Trail Head in Temiskaming offers stunning views of the changing leaves and Lake Temiskaming. Middle: Sunset at Rondeau Provincial Park makes for a perfect photo opportunity. Bottom: There's no better way to spend a fall weekend than hiking in Thunder Bay's Sleeping Giant Provincial Park.

cafes in the area. Download the Chatham-Kent passport for a list of mouthwatering stops. (Or take our suggestions: We love the pecan pie from Big Ricky's Little Bake Shoppe, French macarons from Homebaked Kitchen Company, and blueberry white chocolate scones from Park's Blueberries & Country Store.)

Texas Longhorn Ranch, Middlesex Sarnia Lambton

Whether you've never been on a horse or you're a seasoned rider, you can book an unforgettable one-hour horseback ride at this family-owned ranch in Strathroy, which is open until the end of November. You and up to five pals can ride together along the scenic Sydenham River, up hills, across creeks and through the cattle, depending on which trail you take. You might even see deer and other wildlife along the way. Celebrate afterwards with a glass of wine or cider in the tasting room at Shale Ridge Estate Winery & Cidery in nearby Thedford. Try the Pear Apple Hard Cider and a gourmet pizza topped with smoked prosciutto, Grana Padano and balsamic reduction.



Plenty of perfect fall moments in these three food-loving regions

Brampton, Whitby and Perth County have outdoorsy adventures, arts and culture and – of course – lots of delicious eats on offer

With colourful foliage to admire, crisp fall air to invigorate your senses and the season's harvest adding fresh flavours to restaurant menus, there's no better time than autumn to get out of town for a mini-break. Whether you're looking to explore a nearby place you've never visited before or to see a new side of a familiar favourite, Brampton, Whitby and Perth County have got you covered with engaging activities, delicious culinary experiences and top-notch accommodations that will turn your weekend getaway into a true adventure. Get started planning your escape with these ideas for how to spend an action-packed 48 hours in these local destinations. (And be sure to download Great Taste of Ontario passports for each region and check in along the way!)

BRAMPTON

Once a greenhouse hub known for exporting flowers around the world, Brampton continues to bring visitors closer to nature through its many gardens and conservation areas. The city rewards foodies as much as outdoor enthusiasts, with its multicultural population helping to shape a diverse dining scene.

Fuel up for exploring the city with a cup of joe from Segovia. Run by a husband-and-wife team from Nicaragua, this coffee shop imports and roasts ethical, single origin green beans. Pick up an espresso-based beverage to warm both your soul and your stomach and choose from a variety of Latin American-style bites like fresh empanadas.

Other spots to add to your Brampton food bucket list include Food Fight Barbecue Bar, where barbecue classics like pulled pork and beef brisket get a local spin that includes slow smoking over Ontario wood. If you're craving globally-influenced cuisine, fill up on a savoury kebab platter at Royal Kabob Afghan Cuisine or tuck in to Sri Lankan and South Indian vegetarian fare at Vinayagar Vilas.

Have a sweet tooth? Don't miss Holy Shakes. This Brampton-born restaurant offers more than 100 different milkshakes piled high with sweet toppings, along with other indulgent treats.

What to do

Take in a breath of fresh air at Gage Park, a beloved municipal park where you'll find gardens and shady trails. Heart Lake Conservation Park is another beautiful place to get outside and get moving, with picturesque hiking trails, glacial lakes and a daring treetop zipline course. If you're more of a culture vulture, don't miss the Peel Art Gallery Museum and Archives, which features wide-ranging exhibitions dedicated to the region's art and heritage.

Where to stay

Located a short drive from downtown Brampton, Newton Villa feels secluded from the hustle and bustle. Homey rooms come with mini-fridges and Smart TVs, plus rates include a continental breakfast.

WHITBY

Whitby blends the appeal of a small town with the urban conveniences of a larger city. A sweeping waterfront, two historic downtown areas and a budding restaurant scene further enhance the allure of this under-the-radar spot.

For a taste of Whitby's homegrown cuisine, book a table at Bistro '67, a unique student training restaurant at Durham College. Dine while overlooking the lush grounds, where much of the produce used in the kitchen is harvested. The Springwood, a brand-new addition to Whitby's dining scene, is another superb option for visitors in search of farm-to-table fare, with hyper-seasonal dishes joining a Canadian wine and beer list in a stylishly cozy space. Bonus: both restaurants are Feast On® certified!

Beer lovers will want to stop by Brock Street Brewing to sample locally-produced brews, seltzers, spirits and hard ice teas. Sign up for a brewery tour for an insider perspective on how Brock Street's drinks are made, or turn your visit into an evening and stick around to enjoy crowd-pleasing gastropub fare at the on-site restaurant, izwelve Bistro and Tapwerks.

Homestyle-cuisine meets cultural space at the Food & Art Café, which is known by a tongue-in-cheek acronym (the 'Fart' café). View works by co-owner and resident artist Alison Galvan and other Whitby-based creators while munching on a hearty sandwich or scone.

Carve out some time to swing by One More Cocoa for chocolate bars and bonbons with flavour inspirations spanning from nostalgic treats to the owner's Jamaican heritage. Exotic Knacks is another worthwhile destination for snacks you can take home or nibble on during your stay. This quirky shop carries an array of delicious and hard-to-find sweet and savoury goodies.



Top: Brampton's Heart Lake is a pretty place for a hike. Clockwise from above left: Enjoy a pint at Brock Street Brewing in Whitby; The Springwood is a new addition to Whitby's dining scene; One More Cocoa features sweet treats inspired by the owner's Jamaican heritage; at Höm in Perth County, local ingredients are the stars of the menu; the famous "broasted" chicken at Anna Mae's Bakery & Restaurant



What to do

Pop by the Whitby Farmers' Market, which runs until October, to browse items ranging from farm-fresh produce and unpasteurized honey to cold-pressed juice and upcycled crafts. Unwind at Thermæa Spa, a Nordic-style day spa where you can take a dip in baths with varying temperatures, relax in peaceful rest areas as well as enjoy massages and body care treatments.

Where to stay

Whitby is home to many tried-and-true hotels, including Holiday Inn Express Whitby Oshawa, which includes a pool, fitness centre and free breakfast. If you're looking for a home-away-from-home for a longer stay, some rooms include full kitchens with stovetops and fridges.

PERTH COUNTY

Charming small towns and dreamy rural scenery make Perth County a delightful destination for an autumn getaway. Visitors are spoiled for choice when it comes to places to shop for the best of Perth County's culinary bounty.

In Perth East, Wild Hog Country Market brings a farm-to-table approach to groceries, sourcing its produce and meats locally – including pork supplied by the family-owned market's own farm and meat business. Or, head to Appleflats in Wellesley, where guests can take a guided, 45-minute tour of North America's "only explorable orchard" to learn what owners Glen and Alex Smyth say will help you learn "more about apples (and crab apples) than you ever imagined." Afterwards, guests can sample some of the farm's products, such as their signature crabapple jelly.

Call ahead to reserve the coveted "buggy booth" at Anna Mae's Bakery and Restaurant in Millbank. Known for its Mennonite cooking and baking, this popular spot

churns out dozens of different pies, pastries and doughnuts each day, many of which incorporate ingredients from nearby farms and suppliers. If you stop by for lunch, their "broasted" chicken, which is seasoned in a secret spice mixture before being both broiled and roasted, is a must-try. And don't leave without indulging in one of their Sweet Janes, delicious doughnuts that come with a creamy filling.

Local ingredients also take centre stage at Höm restaurant in Listowel. Chef/owner Chris Campbell taps into French and other international culinary influences to create aesthetically-plated seasonal dishes. The five-course tasting menu, which is available on Thursdays, is worth planning your visit around.

What to do

Take a stroll through any of Perth County's cute small towns, which look especially beguiling against a backdrop of fall foliage. Admire St. Marys historic limestone buildings or head to Shakespeare to shop for vintage treasures at Glen Manor Galleries or Land & Ross Antiques. For a more active afternoon, hop on your bike and discover the Perth County section of the Guelph to Goderich Rail Trail, a multi-use trail that runs along former CPR railway land.

Where to stay

Golf and nature enthusiasts alike will appreciate The Guest House at River Valley Golf & Country Club, which is set in the scenic River Valley, surrounded by pine trees. River Valley's excellent 18-hole course is located less than 30 metres away. Or, book a restful retreat at Wild Rose Sanctuary, where you can glamp in a luxe yurt, or relax in a cozy cabin.



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Bench Brewing offers breweries a blueprint for going green

The Niagara Benchlands brewery has prioritized sustainability from the very beginning. Here's how

His kids are going to laugh at him for saying this, but nothing gives Matt Giffen a thrill quite like irrigation. Specifically, the drip system that waters the three acres of hops and 12 acres of apples that grow in the fields around Bench Brewing, the independent brewery he founded in 2018. What makes it so exciting? All that water – eight to 10 million litres per year – is re-purposed wastewater from the brewing process that's been purified. The organic matter that's removed as part of that process, mostly hops and malt, also gets a second life as fertilizer. "Beer is water-intensive," explains Giffen. "And to repurpose that in agriculture, as an example, is just a great way of closing that circle."

When Giffen was planning to open Bench Brewing, he began with a reverence for place. The facility is

located in Lincoln. Situated right in the heart of the lush Niagara Benchlands, the town is home to picturesque villages and verdant vineyards and orchards. "We have neighbours on either side of us who have been here for 225 years," says Giffen, who had previously grown grapes in the area. "Generations of their families have depended on this land to continue to thrive through sustainable practices. Talk about quintessential mentors for being stewards of the land."

Sustainability was a core Bench value from the very beginning, built into the foundations of the operation. Literally: Its tap and tasting room is in the converted Maple Grove Public School, a heritage building that held tremendous sentimental value to the community around it.

They've since converted an old stone church, also located on the property, into an event space. As Giffen says, "The most sustainable building you can build is the one that's already built."

The Bench team's commitment to sustainability was so innate, in fact, that they didn't shout their sustainability credentials from the rooftop

until one of their lenders not-so-gently nudged Giffen. "One of our finance partners said, 'You're doing all this stuff – you're B Corp certified, you have a zero-waste water footprint and you're carbon neutral and you're not telling anyone? What are you, an idiot?'" says Giffen.

These days, he's more than happy to show off the daily sustainability work they're doing at Bench Brewery: the spent grain that goes to feed livestock, the tanker that goes straight from their facility to apply fertilizer, the retention pond that stores purified water when it's not needed for irrigation, fed by a pipe that goes under a neighbour's

property. On the carbon neutrality front, which became a real focus as they worked to become a certified B Corporation in 2020, this work encompasses everything from encouraging people to carpool to work to buying carbon offset credits to insulating pipes, putting motion sensors on their lights and fixing a leak in one of their cold storage units. (Not-so-fun fact: Refrigerants are one of the worst greenhouse gas emissions.) "We cut our emissions by 60 per cent from year one to year two, and then we brought it down another five per cent in 2021, and that's with increasing volumes," says Giffen,

who's eyeing EVs for the sales team, and would use solar panels if the building's roof supported them. Bench also does what is called "farmhouse style brewing," which is inspired by the way that ye olde Belgian brewers would get the majority of their supplies – water, barrels, fruit, malt – from within five kilometers of their brewery. "I love that style of brewing," says Giffen, who fell in love with Belgian beer when he lived overseas. "And I just really thought there's not a better place in Niagara than the town of Lincoln to create that farm-style aspect."

All their barrels are from neighbouring wineries, and they use a coolship – essentially a shallow open vat for fermentation – which requires you to open the windows at night to bring in airborne yeast. "It really is a terroir of beer, because that yeast would be different than what's outside of your window right now," says Giffen, noting that the cherries, peaches, plums and other fruit they use are also from producers located within five kilometres of their brewery. It is, Giffen emphasizes, a team effort, and one that requires authentic commitment, and not just lip service. "It is a journey that happens day by day," he says. "All of our decisions are made with the environment in mind."



Three Ontario chefs on their favourite fall ingredients

Need some fall flavour inspiration? Here's how to make the most of cranberries, squash and artichokes

Now that cooler weather is on the horizon, it's time to start cooking with the vibrant flavours of fall. We asked three bakers and chefs around Ontario to share how they prepare their favourite autumnal ingredients.

CRANBERRIES

Warren Dix, founder of Big River Baking Co. in Bracebridge, says the business's signature loaf, a cranberry brie sourdough, is a hit with his customers throughout the year, not just in the fall – that said, it makes a pretty good addition to any Thanksgiving table.

Dix opened Big River Baking Co. to fill a needed gap in the town's baking space – there hadn't been a fully-operational bakery there since 1988. With a variety of different loaves (including a delectable-sounding honey walnut), it's the cranberry brie that customers salivate for. Why is that? Dix says, "in conversation with our customers, it seems the mild flavour of this sourdough with the creaminess of the brie cheese against the tartness of the cranberries when you bite into it just works."

Cranberry season runs from late August to the end of October in Ontario, and those tart, ruby-hued

berries often make it to the table in the form of a side or a sauce – something to cut through yummy butter and starch on a bright Thanksgiving table. But Big River Baking Co.'s cranberry brie sourdough loaf can be the star of any meal. Dix suggests using this loaf for breakfast, lunch, or dinner, as toast with something slathered on top or for "a next-level grilled cheese!"

SQUASH

Squash is the quintessential fall ingredient. There are many different types of winter squash including butternut, acorn, buttercup, delicata, spaghetti, pumpkin; but John Black, chef de cuisine at the Feast On-certified Mijjidaa in Guelph, says delicata is his favourite. "It has such nutty and sweet flavours that pair so well with those classic fall flavours. When roasted, its characteristics are enhanced and it lends itself to so many flavour profiles," Black says.

Mijjidaa, from the Ojibway language meaning "let's eat," focuses on where Canadian food began – with First Nations, Black says – followed by European influences. Squash is vital to that approach, and Mijjidaa sources it at the Guelph Farmers' Market from "local purveyors that grow all the varieties we come to love and look forward to within the fall season," he says.



"Ontario

squash is an integral menu item that is a staple for Mijjidaa every fall season – we look forward to building menu items around. Similar to a protein, it can be the star of a dish and what we build our flavour profiles around for appetizers, salads, and vegetarian main course menu items."

The restaurant's 3 Sisters Salad is a perfect example of how squash can shine in a dish; made with roasted butternut squash, marinated chickpeas and corn, it's served with roasted pumpkin seeds, puffed wild rice and a maple mustard vinaigrette. Butternut squash also adds a hint of sweetness to the restaurant's soppressata pizza, which is topped with caramelized onions, mozzarella, chili flakes, rosemary honey and arugula.

Black says the best way to use squash to its fullest flavour this season is by roasting it with its skin on. Another way is to "shave [the squash] paper thin and drop it into a pickling liquid surrounded with fall spice flavours such as nutmeg, cinnamon, allspice and clove." At home, Black likes to make butternut squash soup for his children, where he sometimes sneaks in other autumn faves like apple and pear.

ARTICHOKES

There's just something about artichokes. Pickled, fried, poached, this nutty-tasting vegetable is delicious no matter how it's prepared. Yet, big artichokes are intimidating, and a dreaded prep job, says Matthew Simpson, executive chef of The Springwood in Whitby. You have to pull the leaves off through a process called turning, then get them to water before they oxidize. So, Smith suggests cooking small artichokes, especially if you're a first-timer with this ingredient.

It's worth the learning curve, though. Artichokes are one of those great foods for seasonal transition. "All of those things that are kind of quintessentially fall aren't quite there as the summer's dwindling down – so it's kind of exciting to get something that is at its prime in this kind of grey area window between summer and fall," says Simpson.

The Springwood, which opened in May 2023, is intensely focused on using seasonal produce, sourcing nearly everything from the local farms and producers

in the province, getting spirits and chocolate, and a few other ingredients, from around the country. Artichokes hit their stride from August through October, with September as a good sweet spot to grill a few with salt, pepper, and oil before packing up the barbecue for winter.

But, Simpson says, you really can't go wrong with a fried artichoke, either.



SEEING RED

This fall, cranberry is all over cocktail menus. Here are three seasonal sips that make good use of this tart ingredient

Wellington Brewery in Guelph

The brewery's Good Odds cranberry and orange sour is flavoured with cranberries, keeping it seasonal, while a splash of citrus makes for what the brewery calls a bright, playful drink.

Muskoka Brewery in Bracebridge

Muskoka Brewery's Winter Stout is a perfect cool-weather brew. Featuring cranberry and chocolate flavours with subtle notes of roasted coffee, this seasonal stout is rich and full-bodied.

The Black Horse Pub in Peterborough

Mojitos are typically summertime drinks, but the Black Horse Pub brings this tippie into the fall by adding cranberry and soda.





Say cheese!

Here are some can't-miss Ontario destinations for those who believe it's always a gouda time to eat cheese

If you don't have to fly all the way to France or Italy to get your fill of amazing artisanal cheeses. From a full-on, day-long cheese trail in Oxford County to a historic cheddar factory and even a plant-based cheesemaker, here are the six best destinations in Ontario to visit if you're a fan of cheese (though, let's face it, who isn't?)

St-Albert Cheese Co-operative, St. Albert, on the Route Champlain
This fromagerie in the town of St-Albert is one of the oldest co-operatives in Canada. Founded in 1894, the village of St-Albert had been home to Franco-Ontarian cheesemakers since the early 19th century. At the time, the village was already home to a high-quality namesake cheddar. The St-Albert. As the years wore on, other local cheese factories shuttered, but St-Albert Cheese remained in business, churning out high-quality cheddar. Now, nearly 130 years since opening, St-Albert is a must-visit for gastronomic history buffs and fans of squeaky cheese curds and cheddar alike – and a must-visit stop on the Route Champlain, which is based on Samuel de Champlain's 1615 to 1616 expedition and highlights Francophone culture through food, historical attractions and outdoorsy activities.

Oxford County Cheese Trail
Located a 90-minute drive west of Toronto, the Oxford County Cheese Trail is a self-guided tour with more than 30 stops, all featuring cheese and dairy. With picturesque towns like Ingersoll, Woodstock and Tillsonburg in the county, this cheese adventure will have you driving (or cycling) through gorgeous pastoral landscapes to visit local dairy farms and cheese shops where you can stock up on deliciously fresh products for your next wine and cheese night. Stop by sustainable beef and dairy farm/shop Greener Pastures in Woodstock, gouda specialists Mountainoak Cheese in New Hamburg, Swiss-inspired cheesemakers at Gunn's Hill just outside of Woodstock, Red Dragon Dairy, which makes sheep milk cheeses in a shop with Welsh influences, and Bright Cheese and Butter, one of the country's first cheddar factories. Of course, it's not all cheese; get in some R&R at Elm Hurst Inn & Spa, and pick up a souvenir or two at Patina's Gifts of Art and Craft, which prides itself on sourcing unusual and eye-catching handicrafts from Canadian and international artisans. Artsy types will love Offercreek Woodworks' award-winning Tree to Table experience, where guests can work with woodworker David Schonberger to create their own live-edge charcuterie board. And get the inside scoop (pun very much intended) on farm life thanks to Udderly Ridiculous' Taste of Farm Life experience. The business, which is known for its delicious (and Feast On-certified) ice cream made from goat milk sourced from the company's goat and alpaca farm and local ingredients from nearby producers, also offers an entertaining – and honest – introduction to life on a farm, with plenty of chances to interact with the animals, and enjoy a snack or two. And don't leave without having a meal at the Feast On-certified SixThirtyNine, a modern fine-dining restaurant where the local-focused menu includes delicious eats, including apple-smoked duck breast, dry-aged beef tartare and an indulgent milk chocolate tart.

Stonetown Artisan Cheese, St. Marys, Perth County
Specializing in handcrafted alpine-style cheese, Stonetown Artisan Cheese is a must-visit for Swiss cheese lovers. The cheese farm and plant use unpasteurized milk with no additives (from their own herd of cows!) to create a final product that's similar to the cheeses that have been made for centuries in the Swiss Alps. Stop by for award-winning cheeses like their Grand Trunk, which is a firm Farmstead Gruyere, and Amazing Grey, an aged and sweet goat's milk parmesan.

Thornloe Cheese, Thornloe
Located in the northern part of the

province, Thornloe Cheese is a farmer-run cheese plant specializing in heritage-style cheddars and pure cow and goat milk products, and a must-visit stop on the Great Taste of Ontario Temiskaming Shores passport. Founded in 1940, Thornloe sells a wide variety of cheeses, curds and ice cream, making it a perfect stop for generalists looking for high-quality cheeses to add to their board. Some standout cheeses to try include their Devil's Rock Creamy Blue, a milder blue cheese ideal for salads, sauce and pastas that was named after Devil's Rock Trail Head, grass-fed mozzarella and balsamic with caramelized onion-flavoured block.

Green Goddess Fromagerie, Guelph
Green Goddess is an artisan vegan fromagerie in Guelph that makes all its cheeses with cashew. Using traditional cheese-making techniques (like rack aging and natural



Top and above left: Visitors can enjoy ample Alpine-style cheese at Stonetown Artisan Cheese. Above right: Stock up on all the local cheese your heart desires at Woodstock's Greener Pastures, a stop on the Oxford County Cheese Trail.



culturing), Green Goddess creates soy-free, dairy-free and plant-based cheeses that are perfect for vegans or lactose intolerant folks – or even traditionalists who are looking to try a thoroughly untraditional cheese. Try the plant-based cheddars, which

are just as creamy as dairy cheddar, and their vegan halloumi, which can be pan-fried or seared and used as the finishing touch to any sandwich or salad.

Empire Cheese Co-operative, Campbellford, Northumberland County
Empire Cheese is a manufacturing plant owned by local dairy farmers. The co-op, which began operations in the 1870s, uses traditional cheese-making methods, including open-style vats that give the cheese and curd a better flavour. The plant also uses no additives and preservatives. Now around 150 years old, Empire Cheese is a must-visit for cheese lovers who are into flavoured cheeses, cheddar, mozzarella and Havarti, all of which is made on-site. Empire also produces fresh flavoured cheese curds that are the perfect poutine toppers.

Wine time!

Wine and cheese are the most natural of pairings; here's where to go for top-tier wine tastings in Ontario's wine regions

Prince Edward County
On the shores of Lake Ontario, Prince Edward County's warm lakeside climate is home to almost 40 wineries. Lighthall Vineyards is one of the only vineyards in Canada that also crafts its own cheese, which is made from local ewe's milk sourced from a single farmer. Whether you opt for farmhouse-style hard, alpine-style, creamy rind, feta, blue or cream cheese, each type is crafted to pair with a Lighthall wine. Hinterland Wine Company in Hillier is well-known for its delicious sparkling wines that are made using ancestral methods. Meanwhile, Traynor Family Vineyard is a certified vegan and organic winery that specializes in handmade wines like pét-nat, orange wine, vermouth and piquette. And, if you're more of a cocktail drinker, Traynor also offers fun recipes for using its wines to create mixed drink concoctions.

Niagara Benchlands
This area, located in the Niagara region, is home to a number of terroir-driven vineyards producing unique and delicious wines. Malivoire Wine Company is certified under Ontario's Sustainable Winemaking Program. Its wines aren't just created with eco-friendly farming practices in mind – they also use traditional methods like skin contact to create complex bottles of vino. Or, head to the Feast On-certified Vineland Estate Winery. Not only does Vineland produce a number of award-winning wines, like its Cabernet Franc, it's also home to one of the best restaurants in the region. Diners eat inside the 1845 farmhouse, take in the views of the rolling vineyards and eat meals made by the internationally trained chefs.

North Shore of Lake Erie
Located at the southern tip of the country, the wineries in this part of Ontario are located at the same latitude as Tuscany, Napa Valley and France's Bordeaux, making this region's wine output impressive. Oxley Estate Winery makes award-winning, small-batch, fruit-forward wines that are as unique as the region itself. Spend the day at this picturesque winery for a day of tastings, a game of cornhole and beautiful views. And Colio Estate Wines is one of Canada's oldest wineries. Founded by Italian bricklayers who sought advice from wine experts, the beautiful brick winery still uses some of the original techniques taught to them.



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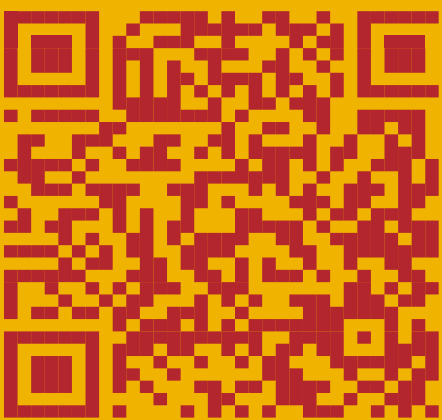
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