

## CULINARY TOURISM

**Culinary tourism is a relatively new industry but its potential holds no bounds.**

The International Culinary Tourism Association (ICTA) based in the United Kingdom states culinary tourism as the fastest growing segment of the travel industry. That in the United States (US) alone, culinary tourism is worth over 52 billion dollars a year.

- Culinary tourism focuses specifically on the search for, and enjoyment of, prepared food and drink whilst travelling and at home.
- Culinary tourism promotes all distinctive and impressive gastronomic experiences.
- Culinary tourism fosters economic and community development and new intercultural insights.
- Culinary tourism can be found in rural or urban areas and need to be made available to visit all year 'round.
- Culinary tourism is about all things food related, not just eating in a restaurant.

It's an emerging niche that ***combines agriculture, specialty food and tourism***. Yet it's not just for tourists. From global travelers to local school children, culinary experiences play a major role in helping us share and learn about unique customs.

Experiencing culture through food (and we're talking anything food related here - from where it originates - to eating it), is the crux of culinary tourism, and communities throughout the US are discovering and *re-discovering* their heritage with the focus on food and drink.

Farms, restaurants, and other small businesses around the country can benefit greatly from this growing niche. To foster culinary tourism, ***your food or beverage experience must be unique to that area*** – not a restaurant chain found just anywhere in the world.

**Why Culinary Tourism is Important:**

- Nearly 100% of tourists dine out when traveling  

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- Dining is consistently one of the top 3 favorite tourist activities  

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- The higher the total bill, the more likely the patrons are tourists  

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- There is a high correlation between tourists who are interested in wine and cuisine as well as museums, shows, shopping, music and festivals  

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- Culinary tourists are highly likely to participate in outdoor recreation  

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- The interest in culinary tourism spans to all age groups  

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- Culinary tourists are explorers  

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- Culinary attractions can be available year-round  

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- Culinary Tourism has the potential to be the #1 motivating factor in choosing a travel destination  

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### **Examples of Culinary Tourism:**

- Cooking classes or workshops with product from farms/establishments, either in an urban or rural setting
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- An interesting tasting room at a winery, such as an old cave or dungeon – make the experience unique
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- A restaurant in the countryside that makes the best pancakes in the state — eg: people drive from 3 surrounding states to get them
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- Beer that is so unique and so good, people make a pilgrimage to the brewery
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- A unique product made from produce from your orchard, farm or ranch, such as a secret recipe
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- A restaurant or eatery connected with your orchard, farm, or ranch that has a unique ambiance or unique produce or a product
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- Any eatery whether it's a bakery or a restaurant that specializes in using local ingredients.
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**We can't talk about culinary tourism without talking about agritourism, or agtourism as it is also known. What is agritourism?**

Rural America is a popular tourist destination - approximately 90 million adults have visited farms in the last 3 years. In the US alone leisure travelers spend more than 341 billion dollars and support 5.85 million jobs. Leisure travelers basically anyone not travelling for business purposes.

Right now, culinary tourism and agritourism are defined as two separate entities by the ICTA but they are both so inextricably linked.

**Culinary tourism speaks to the cuisine and any food related experience of an area** – *it may be a visit to restaurant or a sensational pastry shop, a great diner, enjoying a tasting at a local winery or taking in a cooking class. Wine and beer tourism are subsets of culinary tourism.*

**Agritourism is defined as rural tourism** – *the act of visiting a working farm or any agricultural, horticultural or agribusiness operations for the purpose of education, enjoyment or involvement in the activities on the farm.*

Some examples of agritourism:

A visit to a farm to pick your own berries

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An educational tour of a farm

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A bed and breakfast

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Farm vacations

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Guest/dude ranches

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Agricultural tours

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Barn dances

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Concert and music events on your farm

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Farm demonstrations

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Historical recreations

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Petting zoos

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School tours

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Cooking classes

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Winery/distillery tours

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Special event hosting

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Horseback riding

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Picnic grounds

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Hunting/fishing lodges

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- People can diversify their farms and add value to products already produced on the farm.
- This can involve the whole family and may require some outlay of money to set-up or make adjustments to the farm to accommodate tourists and locals.
- Today there is much hype about our food industry. People are curious. More people are becoming informed about where their

food and beverage of choice comes from and what practices are taken to get it to the table.

### **MARKETING AND PROMOTION**

The target market really depends on what is on offer. A bed and breakfast will most likely attract tourists. And such things as apple pickings and pumpkin patches might tend to attract more locals.

*Therefore marketing strategies should be directed toward the appropriate audience.*

**Local authenticity is really the key here.**

When thinking of Nebraska, I'm sure many people think of cornfields and prairies. Not necessarily tourism. Yet *tourism is the third largest industry and revenue source in the state.*

While tourism is a relatively new focus for the state, Nebraska's unique geological and natural areas, along with its rich cultural heritage offer many opportunities for growth.

*Tourism is the largest industry in the world and the largest industry in many U.S. states. So why not capture part of this huge market?*

The hospitality and tourism industries are important to Nebraska. The industries are multifaceted and there is much that goes into creating a successful hospitality or tourism business.

Small business owners here often have to wear many hats and develop many business skills. For example, a successful agritourism business will need to successfully market and promote the business, including writing press releases and brochures. It will need to educate visitors and create a memorable experience that leads to word-of-mouth advertising and return business. To help grow and expand, businesses may or will need help.

*Local businesses need support. And **economic, travel and tourism departments need to consider this.***

Local businesses willing to participate in programs to support culinary and agritourism need the correct marketing tools and resources to help bring people to their doors.

**Set up educational resources for these businesses such as classes and workshops for businesses willing to participate in culinary tourism and agritourism so they know how to get started.**

Help set up and promote incentive schemes for businesses to participate in.

**Getting it out there**

You can have the best product in the world but people need to know about it. Businesses that offer an authentic, local experience need to be made known when promoting the state as a travel destination. Promoting Nebraska through culinary tourism can be done in a number of ways:

**The Internet:**

Hands down the most popular source of research for people when planning a travel destination.

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**Applications:**

A downloadable application of a culinary tourism/agritourism booklet. Video applications. Applications can be free or a nominal fee.

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**Culinary Tourism Book:**

This could be in soft cover or downloadable.

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**Incentive Programs:**

Offer discounts off food/wine/classes etc.

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**Joint Business Involvement:**

Have businesses work together to help promote.

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**Dine Nebraska Program:**

This is especially good for the locals and in low tourist season.

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**Food and Wine Festivals:**

Florida wasn't also such a popular tourist Mecca for food and wine – the South Beach Wine and Food festival held each year attracts celebrity chefs and with costs over thousands of dollars. Food and Wine Magazine's big festival in the summer in Aspen is another sell-out experience. Culinary tourism has helped make these kinds of festivals huge tourist destinations.

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**MEDIA**

**Radio:**

Advertise on radio in surrounding states. People are still vacationing during recession times but are often traveling closer to home.

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**Television:**

Probably the most expensive means to advertise but also the most successful. A show traveling to different culinary and farming/ranching parts of Nebraska would definitely spark interest.

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**Magazines:**

Advertising in food and wine magazines.

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People are curious and they're more prone to choosing locations that will cater to their thirst and hunger as well as wanting to take in the local attractions.

Because of this, there is a market for not only enticing people to your area with the wonderful eating establishments or wineries but also to your ranches and farms.

**Points to consider**

- Tourism is the third largest industry and revenue source bringing in over 3.3 billion annually to Nebraska.
- International tourists spend over 90 billion in this country each year – as stated, over half of this is spent on culinary tourism experiences.
- Americans spend about 1.5 billion a day in this country.
- Tourism employs over 18 million Americans either directly or indirectly.
- Locality has to be embraced and maintained.