

## Guilty Pleasures...

Gobbling handfuls of *U-Pick berries* before the weigh-in

*Hiding inside the pyramid* at Summerhill Winery in Kelowna

Savory *foie gras flan* at Hurley's in Portland

Picking up a Dick's Deluxe burger with fries from *Dick's Drive-In* in Seattle

Seasonal *caramel apple cider* from Starbucks

*Salt water taffy* from just about any coastal candy shop

*Squeaky cheese curds* from the Tillamook Cheese Factory

*Candied salmon* from Portuguese Joe's on Vancouver Island

Wolfing down a seventh-inning *hot dog* at Safeco Field in Seattle

Seattle's *Cinnabon cinnamon rolls*, in malls everywhere



## Quintessential Experiences

**Packing It In** One hour by snowmobile, one-and-a-half hours by snow coach (a vehicle specially outfitted with all-terrain rubber tracks), or 12 to 15 minutes by helicopter. That's the trek guests take past old-growth forests on the way to the remote Callaghan Country lodge. The eight-bedroom, 5,000-square-foot lodge is tucked into the mountains outside of Whistler, B.C. Making the jaunt, one ponders: how does the resident chef, Andres Zubacs, get the goods to the top of the mountain?

The logistics of packing food in is decidedly daunting. Food and supplies come to the lodge the way guests do—the real skill comes in packing groceries so that they arrive safely. According to Zubacs, bananas, eggs, and beer pose the most intimidating challenges. The perishables have to be double-wrapped. Aluminum cans must be kept separate so that containers are not punctured. “Needing to have things arrive in one piece adds a certain dimension in menu planning,” he says. No kidding. —Mina Williams



**Tulip Festival** In April, I drive up to Skagit Valley for the Tulip Festival, where nothing beats the childish pleasure of slipping on rubber boots to muck about in the muddy fields of bright colored daffodils and stripes of pink, yellow, and red tulips. On a clear day, nearby Mount Baker makes a perfect backdrop for the riot of tulip petals at farms like Roozengaarde and Tulip Town.

On the way into Skagit Valley, I stop at Snowgoose Produce Stand on Fir Island for ice cream, fruit, cheese, bulbs, fresh flowers, and gardening goods. After I'm worn out, I check out nearby La Conner for dinner—either microbrews and pizza at cheerful La Conner Brewing Company or,

for something more upscale, dinner at Kerstins for specials like halibut in a Provençal mélange of tomatoes, fennel, olives, onions, white wine and herbs. Kerstins' salads come with a roasted-shallot dressing that I am always trying (and failing) to duplicate at home.

—Jeannine Hall Gailey



**Blasted Church Midnight Service** Risk-taking with irreverence by Blasted Church Vineyards has exploded into the most talked-about event of the Okanagan Fall Wine Festival.

Blasted Church's inaugural Midnight Service was a tough sell because it seemed a bit far out for Okanagan. But the following year, after the 150 who attended in 2004 spread the word, the winery had to cut off ticket sales (at \$70 each, including a bus ride to and from Penticton). Ultimately 350 tested the capacity of the candle-lit wine cellar.

Marketing guru Bernie Hadley-Beauregard, who came up with the winery's name, also thought up Midnight Service. The event lasts from 10 pm to 1 am, more

or less, and features Vancouver's boisterously joyful Gospel Experience Choir belting out traditional gospel hymns as diners dig into Deep South cuisine from Vancouver's Memphis Blues Barbecue House, lubricated generously with Blasted Church wine. The wines have become famous for their lively caricature labels, such as Hatfield's Fuse (a white wine), named for the man whose dynamite charge loosened the timbers when an old church was moved to nearby Okanagan Falls in 1929. The original blasted church remains in use but is nowhere near big enough to accommodate the Midnight Service.

For 2006, the winery is shopping for a big tent. —John Schreiner

**Bainbridge Island** Everyone knows the best pictures of the Seattle skyline are taken from the Bainbridge Island Ferry—and nothing beats standing in the bow of the boat with the wind in your hair on a sunny day. Besides, there's always the chance you might see a pod of orcas during the ride.

The picturesque small town of Bainbridge Island is an ideal day trip from Seattle. Stroll Winslow Way, visiting art galleries and shops for art-glass earrings or unique sculptures (all locally made), or take in a reading at Eagle Harbor Books, a welcoming independent bookstore.

Stop by the Blackbird Bakery for a hot ginger-cranberry “elixir” and a heavenly piece of cherry pie (the thick crust has the perfect balance of sweetness for the tart cherries) or a latte and cup of

soup, always served with a generous portion of fresh bakery bread. If you're in the mood for a sit-down meal, Café Nola's lunch menu serves up some of the best fish and chips in town—juicy, hot halibut in a light, crispy coating, served with thick-cut fries. If you can, schedule a visit to the lush Bloedel Reserve gardens. —Jeannine Hall Gailey



**Southlands Berry Picking** It's a drowsy August afternoon, the only sounds Tennyson's “murmur of innumerable bees,” and a horse's distant clip-clop. My face is sun-flushed, my hands scratched and stained purple. Nowhere is berry-picking more perfect than here in Southlands. Bounded by the Fraser River, this little chunk of rural life 20 minutes from downtown Vancouver, B.C. is an area of stables, garden centers, and magnificent fecund bramble bushes.



Ambling along a narrow trail, bucket in hand, I hook down a prickly tendril and through the gap in the vines I see a chunky tug towing a log boom as a plane prepares to land. I idle along, nudging only the biggest, darkest, juiciest blackberries so they drop into my cupped palm. Nine, ten, a dozen, and into the pail, their fragrance the essence of summer. No right-minded picker reveals exact sources but heading south on Blenheim Street towards the river, then turning east, puts you close.

—Angela Murrills

**Biking the Southern Oregon Lava Fields** At the base of Oregon's Mount McLaughlin, halfway between Medford and Klamath Falls, at 5,000 feet elevation, are two large alpine lakes, Lake of the Woods and Fish Lake. Between them are huge Hawaii-like lava fields, which spread over several square miles, and right in the middle of the lava there is a well-maintained bicycle trail, running the entire eight miles between the two lakes.

The U.S. Forest Service, Southern Oregon's largest landowner, has posted several interpretive panels along the route, explaining how and why the lava looks the way it does. Parking is available at either end of the trail, and a rustic restaurant and lounge in the Lodge at the Lake of the Woods is outfitted to meet most of the imbibing and gastronomic needs of tired cyclists. The trail is used by cross-country skiers in winter.

—Conde Thompson Cox