

Ottawa chefs, tourists off to impress in Toronto

By [roneade](#) 02-26-2009 [COMMENTS\(2\)](#) [Omnivore's Ottawa: Ron Eade's serving of Food, Drink and Dining in the Capital](#)

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FEB 27 09 - 6:55 AM -- I'm inclined to tip my hat these days to the superlative efforts being made by tourism folks, talented chefs, and other culinary boosters who are determined to tell the world about exciting things that are happening in fields, pastures and kitchens around Ottawa.



I mean, it was only a decade or so ago that gastronomes who wanted good dining-out fare (or a facsimilie) had to join a private club to satisfy their cravings -- and even then, some stodgy clubs failed to deliver.

But these days, so many new cutting-edge restaurants have come along, often staffed by chefs who are also owners, that going elsewhere for satisfying meals is no longer necessary.

Small surprise, then, that most of yesteryear's private clubs have fallen by the wayside, as potential patrons have ample new and great places to dine -- from restaurants that specialize in cutting-edge charcuterie, to molecular gastronomy, clever interpretations of interesting cuisine usually found offshore, supremely satisfying comfort food, seasonal produce, organic, vegetarian, you name it ...



(Photo, left: Celebrating the best organics from Bryson Farms in nearby Shawville, Que.)

It's not my intent, here, to run through a long and growing list of local farmers and chefs who deserve our applause.

My point is simply this: More than ever, today's new chefs are deliberately forging exciting partnerships with local producers who are anxious to showcase foodstuffs that take a back seat to no one. Even chefs at some major hotels are working with local growers to raise, deliver and serve truly interesting local food for discriminating palates.

In that vein, organizations like [Savour Ottawa](#), a joint effort of [Ottawa Tourism](#), the City of Ottawa and [Just Food](#), are making calculated inroads to promote home-grown goodness to consumers. Watch for the distinctive Savour Ottawa logo where you shop and dine, for your assurance that what ends up on the plate really comes from your neighbours and not from, say, Peru.



The latest exciting promotion comes next Tuesday, when a group of Ottawa chefs, restaurateurs and tourism representatives plan to showcase the capital's best culinary talent at a one-day symposium at the University of Toronto.

(Photo right: Carley and Oliver Schelck of the Urban Element, Ottawa)

Organizers say the third annual [Terroir Hospitality Industry Symposium](#) offers an “unprecedented” opportunity to promote this city before 250 Toronto-area food and tourism representatives and media.

“From a tourism perspective, it’s important for key opinion makers in Toronto to discover the great culinary happenings in Ottawa,” says Heather Hossie, the co-ordinator for Savour Ottawa, who will attend the event.

“In the past five years Ottawa food producers and chefs have really come into their own, and we want to get the word out at forums like Terroir with influential travel and food writers.”

Among key participants will be the [Urban Element](#), which offers cooking classes, workshops and team-building programs from its quarters on Parkdale Avenue. It will sponsor a reception featuring Ottawa-area chefs, restaurateurs and food products at the Toronto symposium.

“Where Ottawa in previous years has played a supporting role by attending (the symposium), this year we’re going to showcase Ottawa food and wine, and show them what our culinary experience is about,” says Carley Schelck, one of the owners of Urban Element.



Also attending from Ottawa will be representatives from [Beau's All-Natural Brewing Co.](#) of Vankleek Hill, [Domaine Perrault Winery](#) in Navan, [Back Forty](#) cheese in Lanark, and [Bridgehead coffee](#) houses.

(Photo left, chef/owner Matthew Brearley and Jennifer Ross of Castlegarth Restaurant)

Area chefs who will attend include Michael Blackie, newly appointed executive chef at the [National Arts Centre](#), and Clifford Lyness, recently appointed executive chef at [Brookstreet](#) hotel. (Last year, Michael did a cooking demonstration at the annual forum.)

Chef Matthew Brearley of [Castlegarth Restaurant](#) in White Lake will serve potato-wrapped lamb confit, tomato-braised pork belly with smashed beans on crostini, and Castlegarth beef short ribs. Urban Element sous-chef Jenna Durling will serve beer-braised [Mariposa](#) duck from Plantagenet on a savoury tartlet with Benedictine blue cheese, [Bryson Farms](#) fingerling potato with brined and smoked local trout, celeriac and slaw, and [Proulx Farm](#) maple syrup tarts with meringue and maple taffy shards.



(Photo, left: Ian Walker and friend at Mariposa Farm, Plantagenet)

“This is an unprecedented opportunity for us to represent Ottawa and show our best,” Carley says.

“I feel Torontonians tend to think about Montreal when it comes to a culinary experience, so we want to show them this year we are second to none.

“Even in recent years, the culinary scene in Ottawa has exploded with creativity and innovation. We have some great talent and expertise to show off.”

Castlegarth Restaurant also plans to offer the same dishes presented at Terroir in a special menu at the restaurant in White Lake on March 27. Cost is \$115 plus tax and tip, call 613-623-3472 or see www.castlegarth.ca for more information.

Go show 'em what we're made doing, Ottawa.

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