

Capturing the Foodie – A Recipe for Success

A Santa Barbara Culinary Tourism Campaign Case Study

Why Culinary Tourism - Food for thought

A quick review of the characteristics of the culinary tourism niche market reveals how well this segment is matched to Santa Barbara's culinary attractions.

Culinary tourism – travel to enjoy food and drink - is a newly discovered marketing niche for the travel industry. Travelers knowledgeable about and willing to travel for a memorable gastronomic experience are known as “foodies”.

Culinary attractions include a broad range of activities and retail services: food festivals and events, cooking schools, farmers and fishermen's markets, specialty food shops, as well as dining in restaurants and tastings in breweries and wineries.

The numbers of culinary tourists are growing impressively as travelers increasingly explore cultures and cuisines around the world. A travel attitudes and motivational study by Lang Research found that culinary tourists were most likely to be affluent, mature couples or affluent, young singles. Segments most likely to be interested in culinary tourism represent 27.3% of the adult population in the United States.

Over the years Santa Barbara County has had a quiet but steady growth in its standing as a wine and food destination: known for its growing number of boutique wineries, known for Santa Maria-style barbecue, known as the place where Julia Child made her part-time home; and known for providing diverse agricultural products, many of them organic.

Then in the fall of 2004 the Santa Barbara area hit the jackpot with the award winning movie, *Sideways*. *Sideways* highlighted the Santa Barbara region as a culinary destination, focusing on local wines and wineries. The popularity of this movie suddenly put Santa Barbara's wine region in the forefront, communicating to millions worldwide that Santa Barbara is a hot spot for wine touring. Because the movie led to significant increases in visitation to the area, it made marketing to and extending the offerings available to a growing culinary niche a “must do” for the Santa Barbara Conference & Visitors Bureau & Film Commission (SBCVB&FC)

Gathering the Ingredients

Focusing on locally grown products, restaurants that specialized in regional products, unique culinary attractions and tours with interactive experiences, Bureau staff started gathering the ingredients for a “Get Fresh” culinary tourism campaign. They began by taking measure of the county’s culinary resources and cultivating partnerships with local food and wine businesses.

In January 2005 Bureau staff organized Santa Barbara County’s first ever **Culinary Tourism Summit**, a popular event that brought Erik Wolf of the International Culinary Tourism Association, Cynthia Miranda of the locally acclaimed, Mondial Restaurant, known also for catering and special events and Bion Rice of Sunstone Winery to the podium. Patrick Davis, director of the Santa Barbara County Arts Commission, the area’s cultural development agency, and Kathy Janega-Dykes, Bureau CEO introduced the benefits of targeting culinary travelers, and the Bureau’s new “Get Fresh” culinary tourism campaign to a packed house, including members of food and wine businesses as well as the hospitality industry.

Simultaneously, Bureau staff worked with Custom Media Group to produce the county’s first-ever **culinary travel planner**, the main fulfillment piece for the campaign. Titled *Get Fresh on the American Riviera® Savor the Flavors of Santa Barbara County*, the 30-page digest lists more than 200 regional culinary attractions and tours, ranging from the oldest organic farm in Southern California to working dairy, lavender, and strawberry farms. The guide features locally produced specialty foods, regional seafood, gourmet shops, farmers markets, cooking classes, events, wineries, and maps.

To date 8,000 copies of the culinary guide have been distributed to consumers (70%) and members of the travel trade. Its contents are regularly viewed on the Bureau web site.) Reprints are in the offering.

Wisk Together, Bake...

A special santabarbarafresh.com culinary tourism web section has been developed offering the complete culinary planner online, culinary lodging packages, monthly culinary itineraries which focus on food events and festivals in that time frame, as well as restaurants and food markets. This dedicated URL allows staff to monitor response to the advertising and public relations efforts promoting the culinary tourism campaign.

A flyer offering a personality quiz connecting personality types to local wines, foods, attractions and lodging was developed. This clever conversation piece titled ***Santa Barbara Uncorked: Sideways on the Upside***, introduced Santa Barbara’s culinary campaign at meetings and tradeshow and created quite a stir.

A baker's dozen of culinary hotel and tour package themes were offered to the local hospitality industry, which in turn produced **22 culinary packages** promoted on the Bureau's web site using the titles: Ambrosia in Paradise; Backwoods Barbecue; Bed, Barbecue and Bikes; Bed, Book and Banquet; Chef for a Day; It's a Natural; Oceanside Sampler; Parsley, Sage, Rosemary and You; Riviera Refresher; Seaside Soother; Suite Times; Vintage Santa Barbara; and What's Brewing in Paradise.

Vibrant **bookmarks** promoting the new culinary vacation packages and directing traffic to the culinary web pages have been distributed as a leisure response piece and to media, travel trade, and meeting and incentive planners.

And Serve

Culinary tourism messages have been incorporated in all Bureau's sales, media relations, and advertising efforts.

-Get Fresh Culinary Tourism **Public Relations**

The Bureau's culinary guide debuted at the **International Culinary Tourism Association Annual Conference** in May 2005 where several hundred leaders from the world's food, beverage and travel industries attend a three day conference. Among the conference speakers, Bureau director Kathy Janega-Dykes, Santa Barbara restaurateur Mitchell Sjervern and Frank Ostini, owner of the Hitching Post Restaurant, the site for key scenes in the movie *Sideways*. The topic of their seminar - how the Santa Barbara Bureau capitalized on the popularity of this hit movie to generate interest in culinary tourist attractions.

A celebration of Santa Barbara's culinary bounty, of the new partnerships, and of the potential culinary tourism brings to the local tourism industry, will be the focal point at the SBCVB&FC **annual meeting** in May. Leading food, wine and travel expert, Anthony Dias Blue will speak at the luncheon. Known as a consumer-oriented food and wine critic, Blue's commentaries reach more than 50,000,000 consumers each month over the radio and in newspapers and magazines. Special foods, wines, and prizes will highlight the festivities where the highlights of this year's campaign will be on display. Invited guests will include not only members of the hospitality industry but also public officials from throughout the county. More than 200 are expected to attend.

To launch the **culinary media campaign**, 20 top food and wine writers received the culinary guide as part of a "special delivery" wine crate from the Bureau that included a selection of regional food and wine products featured in the guide.

Approximately 800 media outlets received a press release announcing the new and free publication and introducing the “Get Fresh” campaign.

In September 2005, over 600 national media received a press release promoting the offerings in the new culinary packages.

-Get Fresh Culinary Tourism **Sales**

Staff pitched the appeal and potential of culinary touring in Santa Barbara from a Café Santa Barbara booth to operators and media at **Pow Wow International**, and meeting planners at: **Affordable Meetings West**, **Meeting Professionals International World Education Congress**, **Incentive Travel & Meeting Executives Show**, **The California Society of Association Executives Spring Showcase**.

Currently staff is working with United Kingdom tour operators to develop a **Santa Barbara culinary tour series**.

In December the Bureau organized its first **Fresh From Santa Barbara Culinary Academy** bringing three Santa Barbara chefs and three local winemakers to a targeted group of incentive and meeting planners and key media in San Francisco. Planners were offered “fresh” group activities and venue options, media were offered “fresh” story ideas.

As part of the evening the three chefs prepared their featured course for the guests, highlighting unique characteristics of Santa Barbara County cuisine and encouraging questions. With each course the wine makers introduced one specially paired wine and provided information on the wine and their winery.

Each guest was given a “goodie bag” of Santa Barbara food products, bottles of the featured wines, recipes, relevant collateral materials, and an invitation to a Santa Barbara County culinary familiarization tour.

-Get Fresh Culinary Tourism **Promotion**

A “Win a Taste of Santa Barbara Getaway” **sweepstakes** prize package including accommodations, wine tasting tours, dinners at top area restaurants and air transportation was promoted in cooperation with the California Wine Institute. Newspaper advertising for the five day getaway reached an audience of **800,000 + Canadians**.

A “Taste of Santa Barbara Getaway” was an **auction item** at Wally’s Wine Central Coast Wine & Food Event in Los Angeles, organized by Wally’s Wine Shop, “the number one wine shop in Los Angeles”, according to a Zagat survey. The fundraising event was attended by a dedicated guest list of **600 wine and food aficionados** in Santa Barbara’s feeder market.

A 5-day 4-night **holiday** offered at the 20th Annual Ottawa Wine and Food Show included wine tasting, gourmet dining and as well as kayaking and whale watching. This Canadian event regularly attracts more than **25,000 consumers and trade attendees**.

-Get Fresh Culinary Tourism **Advertising**

33% of the Bureau's 05/06 fiscal year advertising has a culinary tourism theme, a call to action to view culinary packages on the website and to request a culinary guide. Ads in *Lifescapes* Magazine, Los Angeles Newspaper Group newspapers and *SkyWest* magazine reached **of over 1.6 million**. Is there more or is that the 33%?

E-mail campaigns promoting culinary tourism, including a Recipe of the Month series, are being sent regularly to a **targeted audience of 50,000**.

The Sweet Smell of Success

Results:

- Culinary guides distributed to date: 12,000
- Culinary packages created: 22
- PR efforts generated 95 editorial placements reaching an estimated readership of 350 million at an advertising equivalency of \$2.98 million
- Total meeting planner contacts: 690
- Total travel industry/tour operator contacts: 262
- Total group sales leads: 78
- E-mail broadcast audience reached: 50,000
- Promotional audience reached: 1.4 million
- Advertising audience reached: 6+ million
- "Get Fresh" advertising response: 2,000+ leads, including 800+ "santabarbarafresh.com" url key-ins
- Unique visits on culinary website pages: 10,000
- Recipe downloads: 1,415
- New culinary services developed: Savor Santa Barbara Jeep Tour
- New Bureau partnerships: Santa Barbara County Vintners' Association, Santa Barbara County Certified Farmers' Market, Mission Huerta Restoration Project, Santa Barbara Harbor & Seafood Festival, key chefs and winemakers
- New Bureau members: 2 converted, 3 pending