

Food Tourism

What the heck is that, anyway?

What the professionals say and do

- “Food tourism is traveling to get a taste of place in order to get a sense of place” - Erik Wold, Executive Director, World Food Travel Association
 - Education
 - Local culinary cultures and customs
 - Adventure
 - Let's find new food in new neighborhoods!
 - Curiosity
 - New flavors, textures, cultures and heritage
 - <https://worldfoodtravel.org/what-is-food-tourism/>

When did it come about? How did it start?

- Truly began as its own distinct type of tourism in 2001
 - Food ranks alongside climate, accommodation and scenery in importance to tourists
- Western Europe
 - Barcelona
 - Naples
 - London
- Eastern Europe
 - Prague
 - Istanbul
 - Athens
- North America
 - New York
 - Los Angeles
 - Toronto

How does it work?

- Similar to progressive dinner parties
- 12-16 people gather at one meeting location
 - Walk around
 - Talk about stuff
 - Eat
 - Repeat until end.
- Yeah. There's a fair bit of stuff in between.

Why do it?

- Gives tourists something to do
 - Gets them away from their hotels, or the hottest neighborhoods on whatever travel blogs they encounter
 - Meet the chefs and the locals
- Exposure to new or established restaurants
 - Best kind of marketing
 - People in seats and food in faces is more effective than print ads, billboards or social media blasts
- Try new things
 - Guests as well as guides get to experience new or regional foods, as well as unfamiliar types of restaurants and concepts
 - Denver's Food Halls
 - Austin's BBQ
 - NYC's pizza

Who am I?

- Operations Manager for Taste of Denver Food Tours
- On-board since February 2018
 - Personnel (hiring, training, reverse hiring etc)
 - Partners (onboarding, planning, relations etc)
 - Logistics (scheduling, menus, routes etc)
- Guide for Denver Microbrew Tour
- On-board since Septemeber 2010
 - Used to do some of the stuff listed above but no longer
- Worked in restaurants, bars and breweries on-and-off from September 2001 until February 2018

Why that's important

- Food tour companies must understand how restaurants work
 - Busy vs off hours
 - What the words mean
 - Where to not be in the way
- Taste of Denver aims to be the easiest money the restaurants and servers make all week
 - Communication
 - Emails with partners about cover counts, food orders and timing
 - Communication with guests about what to expect tour-wise
 - Conduct
 - Don't tell restaurants how to do it - tell them you need it done, and let them handle it
 - Stay out of the way
 - The Silver Rule

How to start

- Build a website
 - Probably best if you farm this out - WordPress is “easy”, not easy
- Find a ticketing agent
 - Watch those fees!
- Figure out marketing and advertising strategy
 - Google SEO
 - Probably best to farm this one out, too
 - I have no idea how this works
 - Social media
 - Instagram
 - TikTok is coming!
 - Word of mouth
 - Corporate and private events

How to choose partners

- What is your model? On-foot or in-bus?
 - Location is more important for walking tours
- What makes the restaurant special?
 - What's the menu like? The food is good, yeah?
 - What makes it Colorado?
 - Is it the menu? (Wynkoop Brewing)
 - Is it the culture? (Buckhorn Exchange)
 - Is it the ownership? (Vesta, Blue Agave Grill)
- Find the uniqueness!
 - Is the atmosphere special?
 - Is the dining room and/or the kitchen beautiful?
 - Is the waitstaff outstanding?

Day-to-Day

- How it runs
 - We make the guide schedule
 - We make tickets available
 - People buy tickets
 - We tell them when and where to meet their guide
 - We email partners to tell them how many people, when, and what the food order is
 - We meet and greet our guests
 - We call our first partner and let them know to get food going
 - We show up 10 minutes later
 - Guests eat
 - We repeat that 4-5 more times
 - Guests go quietly slip into a food coma somewhere

Meet some of our partners!

The following are just a small example of the partners we work with in Denver, and this number will only grow.

- Blue Agave Grill
- Wynkoop Brewing Company
- Vesta
- Mercantile Dining & Provision
- Denver Milk Market

Blue Agave Grill

- True Colorado original
- Founded in Fort Collins in 2014 by Richard & Brenda Lucio
 - Former high school sweethearts, now husband and wife
- Embrace regionality
 - Take inspiration from Southwest US and northern Mexico
 - Use local ingredients when possible
- More of a concept than a restaurant
 - Still, though, home-grown
 - Similar to Chipotle and Snooze

Vesta

- Mainstay in LoDo Historic District food scene
- Opened in 1997 - still going strong
- Local- and organic-sourcing whenever possible
- Staffed by career-oriented service professionals
- Beautiful experience all-around

Vesta interior - example of a great atmosphere



Questions?

- Thanks for listening, y'all! Cheers!
- Find us at denverfoodtours.com
- Instagram: [@tasteofdenverfoodtours](https://www.instagram.com/tasteofdenverfoodtours)
- Facebook: Taste of Denver Food Tours