



---

## ON RESTAURANTS

Ohio touts its culinary hotspots

Local, regional cuisine seen as tourism draw

Tuesday, August 5, 2008 3:02 AM

By [Bill Chronister](#)

### THE COLUMBUS DISPATCH

You might think that Ohio, which brings in about \$38 billion annually in tourism revenue, has no need to look for ways to market the state as a destination. But following a growing trend, the state is tapping into culinary tourism.

"More and more, with the empty-nesters and the young transitionals, they're looking for that uniquely local, identifiable, regional cuisine," said Amir Eylon, director of the Ohio Division of Travel and Tourism. " 'I want to go where the locals go,' they say. They're looking for local treasures, intent on unearthing that culinary gem.

"People are traveling experientially."

Think Rachael Ray's Food Network show *\$40 a Day*, and Anthony Bourdain's Travel Channel show *No Reservations*.

Experience Columbus tourism director Kari Kauffman has uncovered a number of ways to get to know this area through food.

"We've worked up several culinary experiences -- Woodhaven Farm in Licking County ... Brownie Points and the Popcorn Gallery near Gahanna, Camelot Wineries in the Short North, and the North Market.

"We're also working on creating an experience involving Old Town Worthington that ties together visits to the new Caffe Daniela, House Wine and the Candle Lab."

Kauffman sits on a statewide panel led by Julie Fox, a direct-marketing and tourism specialist with Ohio State University Extension, that is identifying ways to create packages of experiences.

Also in that group are Mark Glasper, communication director of the Ohio Restaurant Association, and Gail Baker, executive director of the Central Ohio Restaurant Association.

All three touted the Division of Tourism's booklet, *Culinary Retreats*, available at DiscoverOhio.com. Area attractions include the "urban bistros" of Barcelona Restaurant and Bar in German Village and the Burgundy Room in the Short North, as well as the star power of Chef Richard Rosendale of Rosendales in the Short North.

Rosendale, by the way, recently was named to compete for a chance to lead the U.S. team in the annual Bocuse d'Or World Cuisine Contest, and also is U.S. team captain for the 2008 culinary Olympics -- all of which can be used to draw tourists to Columbus.

But the tourism officials want to go beyond name-dropping -- although there's plenty of that in

locally produced videos on YouTube, including one called *The Word on Columbus*.

They're looking to connect experiences and eating, which can include visits to farms or farmers' markets, cooking schools, vineyards and much more.

(If you'd like to propose an experience -- something that goes beyond promoting your favorite restaurant or place to visit -- send a short description via e-mail to [onrestaurants@dispatch.com](mailto:onrestaurants@dispatch.com). We'll present them in a column in September.)

## Shacking up on Long

The Cook Shack Bar BQ, a new fast-casual concept that opened in Hilliard in the winter, is headed Downtown to the Atlas Building at the northeast corner of N. High and Long streets.

"It should open two months from now -- the first of October is a good guess," co-owner Matt Marshall said. Hours are likely to be 11 a.m. to 6 p.m. Monday through Friday.

The new location has a somewhat limited kitchen, so although the salad bar will be the same size as the one in Hilliard, the po' boys and a few other items will be trimmed off the menu at first.

"We'll be cooking all our meats at our Hilliard location and driving them down every day," Marshall said.

In the meantime, Marshall and partners Walter McNabb and Tom Donaldson are serving a limited menu at the Pearl Alley Farmers' Market.

## Giveaway at Panera

Panera Bread is unveiling a grilled breakfast sandwich. To promote it, all stores in central Ohio will give you one free if you stop by a store before 10:30 a.m. between Friday and Aug. 17 and bring along at least one nonperishable breakfast item to donate.

A kickoff event is scheduled from 7:30 to 9:30 a.m. Friday at the store at 1307 Grandview Ave. in Grandview Heights, during which Panera executives and representatives of the Mid-Ohio Foodbank will hand out the sandwiches and accept the donations.

The sandwich features an egg, white cheddar cheese and bacon or sausage grilled between slices of ciabatta bread.

## Del Mar's, Take 2

The second area Del Mar's Baja Mexican restaurant has opened at 5505 New Albany Rd. W. The stores feature mondo burritos and fish tacos. The first store opened in May in Canal Winchester. The chain plans locations in Zanesville and near the Ohio State campus before the year is out.

On Restaurants is a weekly column about the restaurant industry. Send tips, information and news releases to [onrestaurants@dispatch.com](mailto:onrestaurants@dispatch.com)

[bchronister@dispatch.com](mailto:bchronister@dispatch.com)