

THE **BEST SANGRÍA** RECIPE EVER PAGE 116

seattle

25
BEST
WASHINGTON
STATE
WINES
PAGE 81

SMART. SAVVY. ESSENTIAL.

AUGUST 2016

Gourmet Getaways

Countryside Wine Tasting, Escape to Island Dining,
and Foodie Hot Spots in Vancouver B.C., and Portland



SEATTLEMAG.COM

\$4.99



8 88526 34272 5

**JUST SAY OM: BEST
PLACES TO MEDITATE**
PAGE 52

**GOING FOR GOLD: MEET SEATTLE'S
OLYMPIC HOPEFUL**
PAGE 40

**SHOP TALK: NORDSTROM'S FLAGSHIP
RENOVATION REVEALED**
PAGE 76

OKANAGAN VALLEY

Napa of the North

6.25 HOURS TO OLIVER,
NORTHEAST OF SEATTLE BY CAR
(WITH A BORDER CROSSING)

Just north of the Washington-Canada border lies British Columbia's Okanagan Valley, a region that is, geologically speaking, part of the Sonoran Desert that winds its way up the continent from Mexico. In Washington and British Columbia alike, the glacially formed region gets very little rainfall. On the U.S. side, that means fruit and rodeo country, come summer. Cross the border, however, and you'll find a bustling Napa of the north, known internationally for siphoning all that sunshine into a vast array of really good wine—and, increasingly, of interesting food.

► Last June, we planned a multiday food and wine tasting trip to explore this region, which is about a five-hour drive northeast of Seattle. Since the Okanagan is also known for road biking, we aimed for a net-zero culinary vacation that would allow us to eat our way across the valley while expending plenty of energy pumping up and down its rolling hills.

I'd learned on previous visits that the region's wine is unfailingly interesting—often mineral forward, usually unlike whatever I've grown to expect from a given varietal and almost always inexpensive. What I'd missed was the smattering of destination winery restaurants with stunning views.

The first night, we landed for dinner at **Miradoro**, a gorgeous cantilevered box of a restaurant perched next to **Tinhorn Creek Vineyards**, where we swooned over cucumber gazpacho with mint and pickled spot prawns,

and then corn-crust fried chicken (entrées average about \$35). Looking out over Lake Osoyoos after a summer thunderstorm, listening to the various accents at the tables around us, we sighed into our espresso, congratulating ourselves on finding what felt like a shortcut to a European vacation before winding our way down to **Watermark Beach Resort** for the night.

Because the Okanagan is a valley, getting to any winery usually means a climb—not an issue with a car, but something to think about on a bike. By 10 a.m. the next morning, we'd already biked 8 miles, earning our right to sip a refreshing Bordeaux-style Sauvignon Blanc and Semillon blend called **Alibi** at **Black Hills Estate Winery's** tasting room. Two miles later, as we eyed the huge oak aging barrels at the new **Bartier Bros.** tasting room, which winemaker Michael Bartier uses to impart just a hint of oak to his bright, crisp Char-



ABOVE: A high-style dessert from *The Terrace*: strawberries with rhubarb syrup, cardamon oil, meringue, vanilla ice cream on chilled marble served with honeycomb crumbs

donnays, I was beginning to wonder whether I'd survive our 25-mile route that day.

Over the next 3 miles, we stopped at a few more wineries on impulse, then huffed up to the impressive tasting castle at **Road 13 Vineyards**, whose tagline, "It's all about the dirt," expresses the region's general obsession with its terroir and its pride in how even the most predictable varietals turn out differently from vines grown in Okanagan earth.

After a few more wineries and a solid nap on the hotel's beach, we drove an hour and a half north to eat and drink at **Mission Hill Family Estate**, generally credited for bringing Canadian wine onto the world stage. Perched atop a hill on Okanagan Lake's west bank, the winery embodies both the grandiose style of a religious mecca and the kind of collegiate campus feeling one gets at large, well-respected wineries like Napa's Mondavi. But it also has **The**

Terrace, a restaurant with a menu created to complement its most famous bottles. After a tour of the winery's cleverly designed underground aging caves, we dug into a short-rib dish at **The Terrace**—steak rubbed with toasted cardamom and coriander, braised, and finished with a blueberry, cherry, and mustard jus—that perfectly affirmed our deci-

{ WHERE TO STAY }

WATERMARK BEACH RESORT

Osoyoos, 15 Park Place;
250.495.5500;

watermarkbeachresort.com

A family-friendly lakeside resort with easy beach access. The condos (\$152-\$282) have modern kitchens and porches overlooking the lake.

TIP: Find the wellness coordinator for standup paddleboard yoga on the lake, or sign up for stargazing atop Mount Kobau.



CLOCKWISE FROM ABOVE: The restaurant at Liquidity Wines, near Okanagan Falls, is modern but the view is classic; a charcuterie plate at Miradoro near the town of Oliver; and the tasting room at Black Hills Estate Winery, also near Oliver

sion to splurge on a bottle of its Oculus red wine, which has developed a cultish following.

The next morning at brunch, we shared the famous potato cakes (\$12) and a salmon Benedict (\$18) at **Poplar Grove Winery's** popular **Vanilla Pod** restaurant. Then it was back on the bikes for a ride along Okanagan Lake, about 75 miles north of the border. On

Naramata Road, we cycled up and down rolling hills, tasting 50 shades of bubbly at the **Bella Wines** sparkling-wine house, ogling the wine labels at **Laughing Stock Vineyards**, gazing at the lake from **Bench 1775**, and finally stopping for Portuguese tapas—including crispy fried smelts (\$7) and lamb albondigas (\$8)—at **The Kitchen at Misconduct Wine Co.**

We began meandering

home by car, making our last stop in Okanagan Falls at the uber-modern **Liquidity Wines** tasting room, where you can browse the rotating art gallery, much of it outdoors, while sipping a 100 percent Dornfelder grape rosé. As we tucked into arctic char (\$31) with smoky puttanesca butter at **Liquidity Bistro**, we marveled at how a single valley—one of which we'd seen less than half—could

seem to combine the enological diversity of Washington, California, Europe and Australia in one small spot, without being beholden to the winemaking habits of any one of those places. And that even though we rarely see Okanagan wines on our shelves in Seattle, the Okanagan itself is very much right next door, just awaiting our exploration.

JESS THOMSON 6

{ FIND IT }

Miradoro Restaurant at Tinhorn Creek: Oliver, 537 Tinhorn Creek Road; 250.498.3742; tinhorn.com
TIP: Call ahead and asked to be seated against the glass, as long as you're not afraid of heights.

The Terrace at Mission Hill Family Estate: West Kelowna, 1730 Mission Hill Road; 250.768.6467 (restaurant); missionhillwinery.com/restaurant
TIP: Order the short rib.

Vanilla Pod: North Penticton, 425 Middle Bench Road; 250.493.9463; thevanillapod.ca
TIP: Order the crispy potato cakes—think latkes with a Mexican accent.

The Kitchen at Misconduct Wine Co.: Penticton, 375 Upper Bench

Road N; 236.422.4929; misconductwineco.com
TIP: Ask the server to tell you the wine label's story.

Liquidity Bistro: Okanagan Falls, 4720 Allendale Road; 778.515.5500; liquiditywines.com
TIP: Try the rosé. It's a great deal.

Black Hills Estate Winery: Oliver, 4190 Black Sage Road; 250.498.0666; blackhillswinery.com
TIP: The Vignier is a great deal.

Bartier Bros.: Oliver, 4821 Ryegrass Road; 250.809.5806; bartierbros.com
TIP: We loved the fresh, mineral-forward Cabernet Franc.

Road 13 Vineyards: Oliver, 759

Ponderosa Road; 250.498.8330; road13vineyards.com
TIP: Look for sesame oil and smoke in the 2012 Syrah; it's quite unusual.

Mission Hill Family Estate: West Kelowna, 1730 Mission Hill Road; 250.768.7611; missionhillwinery.com
TIP: Splurge on a bottle of Oculus to save for a special occasion, or sign up for a tasting of the "Legacy Collection."

And don't miss the art.

Bella Wines: Naramata, 4320 Gulch Road; 778.996.1829; bellawines.ca
TIP: Ask if they have any wild-fermented bubbly available.

Laughing Stock Vineyards: Penticton, 1548 Naramata Road;

250.493.8466; laughingstock.ca
TIP: Each bottle is labeled with the closing stock ticker tape published on the day the wine was bottled—a reflection of the owners' previous lives in the financial industry.

Bench 1775: Penticton, 1775 Naramata Road; 250.490.4965; bench1775.com
TIP: Take home the 2015 Sauvignon Blanc and drink it with fresh oysters.

Misconduct Wine Co.: Penticton; 375 Upper Bench Road N; 800.851.0903; misconductwineco.com
TIP: Ask the tasting room to tell you the wine label's story. (Spoiler: It might have to do with incarceration.)

Liquidity Wines: Okanagan Falls, 4720 Allendale Road; 778.515.5500; liquiditywines.com