

KINGSTON



*CULINARY
TOURISM
STRATEGY*

2025

strategies

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1 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Sum

The Tourism Kingston Culinary Tourism Strategy Update is intended to create a path forward for future culinary tourism development in the City of Kingston and surrounding region. The strategy has been created with a focus on community engagement and collaboration including an operator session, one-on-one interviews with a variety of stakeholders in Kingston, the South Eastern Ontario Region, and provincial and national industry partners.

This strategy identifies key themes for culinary tourism development across three pillars:

MANAGE

LEADERSHIP & RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT

- // Introduce a restaurant association supported and an advisory group to support culinary development
- // Hire a dedicated position who has experience and expertise in hospitality and culinary arts
- // Create a plan to increase restaurant certifications/designations and support further growth for Feast On®
- // Represent Kingston's culinary sector in associations and related networks (restaurant associations, agritourism)
- // Advocate for culinary operators and provide ongoing communication to and from the City of Kingston, South East Health Unit, and other regulatory bodies regarding regulatory challenges
- // Ongoing marketing support and culinary event management/coordination

MARKET

PRODUCT & PARTNERSHIP DEVELOPMENT

- // Advocate for improvement in Kingston Public Market
- // Build new experiences and activations, products, and themed itineraries
- // Enhance narrative around diversity of culinary offerings and ethnic food scene
- // Advocate for regional tourism leadership to support the development of new culinary trails and experiences and provide marketing support to existing ones.
- // Continue development of partnerships with Frontenac County, Prince Edward County ("The County"), Downtown Kingston, local festival organizers, and the City of Kingston
- // Create broader story arc about regional food system

MOBILIZE

SUPPORTING THE LOCAL FOOD SYSTEM

- // Alignment with the City of Kingston Food Framework
- // Assess the need for a culinary workforce development and talent attraction plan
- // Identify what economic development activity could support local food and beverage entrepreneurs
- // Support for local food charities and food security
- // Enhance communication between restaurants, producers, growers, and other stakeholders including the City of Kingston
- // Reveal lesser known food stories to feature producers, farms, and makers

The main factor for the successful delivery of the strategy will be the introduction of a voluntary restaurant association, supported by a restaurant levy. A "restaurant levy" refers to a surcharge or fee specifically applied to the sales of prepared food and beverages by restaurants and similar establishments, where the collected funds are earmarked for culinary tourism promotion and the development of culinary tourism-related infrastructure and experiences. Currently there is no one individual or organization charged with representing the unique needs of the culinary sector across various functions including regulatory issues, advocacy, product development, event management, and marketing. This is also a prime opportunity for Tourism Kingston to become a trailblazer in destination management and culinary tourism, given that a restaurant levy is currently in place in just two other Canadian markets.

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Kingston remains on the ancestral homelands of the Huron-Wendat, Anishinaabe, and Haudenosaunee Confederacy. Tourism Kingston acknowledges the everlasting presence of these Nations and other First Nations, Métis, and Inuit who share this landscape today. We are grateful to reside in and remain visitors to this territory, while acknowledging our responsibility to honour the land, water, and skies with gentle respect and purifying preservation.

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METHODOLOGY

1

Phase 1: Review and analysis

Our review and analysis included:

- // Review the success and outcomes of the 2018 Culinary Strategy
- // Culinary asset review – identifying strengths and opportunities of the City of Kingston
- // Comparative destination review of best practices and trends in culinary tourism development in Canada
- // Examined the use of restaurant levies in destination development in Canada and the U.S.
- // Review of Tourism Kingston visitor data relevant to culinary tourism
- // Existing global culinary travel trends and data reports including the Culinary Tourism Alliance, the World Food Travel Association, and Destination Canada's traveller segmentation

2

Phase 2: Consultations

Our approach was grounded in consultation and engagement with local culinary stakeholders, restaurant owners/operators, and municipal and regional partners. This included 13 one-on-one interviews and a group session held at Tourism Kingston offices in June 2025.

A key findings and implications report was developed to capture our summary of feedback, observations, and implications from research and consultation.

3

Phase 3: Draft strategy development

Our findings, observations, and recommended actions have been incorporated into a Draft Culinary Tourism Strategy with the intent for review and prioritization of recommendations by Tourism Kingston.

4

Phase 4: Final strategy and plan delivery

The final strategy will be developed to incorporate feedback, an ecosystem of partner roles and responsibilities, and an implementation action plan.



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*SITUATIONAL
ANALYSIS*

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2018 STRATEGY ACTION REVIEW



RESULTS

The “Growing Food Tourism in Kingston” project, was a collaborative effort initiated in 2018 by Tourism Kingston, Kingston Accommodation Partners (KAP), and RTO 9 – South Eastern Ontario, created by the Culinary Tourism Alliance.

It highlighted that culinary tourism is an important opportunity for destinations to increase visitor spending, differentiate themselves, and provide memorable experiences. The report concluded with eleven recommendations supported by an action plan, aiming to increase visitation and spending, enhance collaboration, and establish Kingston as a recognized culinary destination.

Review of work to date

Overall, good headway has been made by Tourism Kingston in facilitating partnership and experience development, particularly within the restaurant community, Frontenac County, and the Downtown Kingston BIA. There has been work by the City of Kingston on a food framework, which aims to enhance public markets, outdoor food services, patios, and associated regulations. There has been an ongoing effort in establishing a food and drink narrative through continuous content development and media support by the Tourism Kingston marketing team.

Kingstonlicious, in particular, is noted as a successful established annual event, demonstrating success in creating a new culinary experience. There’s a recognized need for further development and packaging of hero food and drink experiences across all seasons, particularly for untraditional offerings like farm visits, food trucks, market experiences, and Indigenous culinary adventures.

There are areas where progress has been limited or where new obstacles have emerged. A significant setback is the cutting of the St. Lawrence College program, which directly impacts the food workforce pipeline and restaurant recruitment in Kingston, an issue beyond Tourism Kingston’s capacity to address.

Similarly, developing regional food and drink positioning with itineraries and promotion has seen little progress, suggesting a need for RTO 9 to take a leading role. The report underscores an overall need for expanded regional collaboration, increased resources, and strategic leadership to fully realize broader impact, particularly concerning workforce development and the creation of comprehensive regional culinary experiences.

Recommended action	Status	Implications for 2025 strategy
Develop themed itineraries	Have done some of this work – mainly hosting media and taking them through itineraries on Travefy – itinerary builder	Continue development of themed itineraries and trails; make it easy to get around Collaboration needs to be more regional in focus
Activate pedestrian events	Some experience of outdoor food services during Covid pandemic but nothing more permanent	Hampered by City of Kingston food service regulations and resource capacity for planning and executing events. Also limited by Downtown Kingston support for street closures.
Facilitate partnership development Downtown Kingston	Good progress on partnerships within the restaurant community, Frontenac County and Downtown Kingston. The City is working on a food framework that supports policy to enhance public markets, serving open foods, patios, and regulations.	Continue to build existing and bring on board new partners with a regional lens; The County and South Eastern Ontario. Opportunity to build additional partnerships with the agritourism community. The budget is limited in smaller municipalities and organizations.
Create a food workforce pipeline	St Lawrence College program has been cut. This will have an impact on Kingston restaurant recruitment.	No capacity within Tourism Kingston to impact change. Broader discussions within Kingston (Kingston Economic Development) and Ontario (ORHMA and RTO 9) to explore tactics and talent attraction strategy.
Develop regional food and drink itineraries and promotion	No progress on this – RTO 9 should lead	Ripe opportunity for connection between regional food purveyors. A well established culinary product across the globe.

Recommended action	Status	Implications for 2025 strategy
Establish a food and drink narrative	Ongoing content development	Best practices, look at other markets and key messaging – what differentiators are – craft a unique selling proposition
Empower industry to unify with one voice	No progress as no resources	Introduce a restaurant association
Support the development of one or more Ontario Signature Experiences (no longer an active program)	No progress as no resources	Tourism Kingston would support development of new experiences but needs a lead to make it happen
Identify hero food and drink experiences for each season	Kingstonlicious firmly established – need more resources to plan more	Needs further experience development; ; untraditional experiences, farm visits/food trucks/market experiences, Indigenous experiences. More recurring, accessible, and unique food experiences.
Create pathways for visiting the destination (transportation)	Shuttles and transportation have been tried, but with little success	Needs further exploration/development. Should be led by RTO 9.
Capitalize on Ontario and VFR markets during winter and shoulder seasons	In market – happening now	In execution

KINGSTON'S INTEGRATED DESTINATION STRATEGY



Tourism Kingston's third Integrated Destination Strategy (IDS) provides strategic direction to support both a vibrant tourism industry and local life in Kingston – providing a guide to energize Kingston as a city where tourism enhances quality of life and celebrates a unique sense of place.

Kingston's food and beverage sector is noted throughout the IDS in support of launching a restaurant association, a sharper focus on advocacy in support of operators and producers, and the enhancement of local and regional culinary products and experiential packaging. It notes that Kingston could develop a distinct niche in Ontario's growing culinary tourism landscape.

Kingston's creative industries – especially music, arts, film, media, and culinary – are central to Kingston's identity. Supporting these sectors within the tourism strategy will allow Kingston to influence the visitor economy and Canada's cultural narrative.

Summary of IDS recommendations

- // Launch a Kingston restaurant association that gives voice to Kingston's culinary artists and enhances their roles in the tourism industry; the industry lacks formal representation
- // Develop a Kingston Culinary Trail that links restaurants, markets, and producers
- // Tie food tourism more explicitly to key events, festivals, and regional heritage storytelling
- // Support food and beverage operators in bundling offers with accommodations or cultural experiences
- // Develop collaborative itineraries with nearby destinations focused on themes such as wine, heritage, or cycling

- // Advocate for expanded transportation options to Prince Edward County and Gananoque
- // Expand seasonal food festivals, farm-to-table experiences, and tours that showcase the region's agricultural richness
- // Support storytelling and branding efforts that connect Kingston's creative and culinary brands.

Restaurant association recommendations

- // Convene a working group of restaurateurs to co-design the association's structure, purpose, and governance
- // Establish the association under Kingston Accommodation Partners with start-up funding from the Municipal Accommodation Tax (MAT)
- // Identify staff resources to support the long-term sustainability of a Kingston restaurant association (under Kingston Accommodation Partners)
- // Launch a membership campaign and host industry networking events to onboard partners
- // Create shared marketing initiatives (e.g., culinary trails, dining maps, seasonal promotions) in collaboration with Tourism Kingston
- // Develop an advocacy platform to represent restaurant needs in city-wide initiatives, workforce development, and regulatory

CULINARY TRAVEL TRENDS

Our analysis of current culinary trends helps to identify opportunities to grow Kingston's position as a leading culinary destination in Ontario and Canada.

Culinary tourism is no longer a niche market; it can be a powerful motivator for destination selection, experiencing continued upward growth. Travellers are increasingly driven by a desire for authentic, local, and experiential food encounters. This means moving beyond traditional restaurant dining to embrace street food, local markets, farm-to-table experiences, cooking classes, and food tours that offer genuine engagement with a region's culture and heritage.

The global culinary tourism landscape

- // **Authenticity and hyperlocal focus:** Travellers seek genuine connections to a place through its food, valuing evidence of local sourcing and community impact. The overuse of generic "authentic" and "local" claims necessitates the need to demonstrate tangible differences.
- // **Experiential and "high touch" gastronomy:** There's a strong demand for active participation, hands-on learning, and direct interaction with local producers and artisanal makers. Culinary experiences are seen as a human business that cannot be easily replicated.
- // **Sustainability and ethical consumption:** A growing segment of "conscious foodies" prioritizes destinations and experiences that champion locally sourced ingredients, minimize food waste, and support local communities. Climate change impacts on local agritourism are also a consideration.
- // **Health & wellness:** The demand for plant-based, organic, and specialized dietary options continues to grow, influencing culinary choices even during vacations.

- // **Emerging media landscape:** Trust is increasingly built through peer recommendations (friends and family) rather than on paid influencers, emphasizing the importance of community engagement and word-of-mouth.
- // **Strong stakeholder collaboration:** Successful culinary tourism initiatives often involve close partnerships between DMOs, municipalities, local businesses, producers, and community groups.
- // **Storytelling and place-making:** Weaving compelling narratives around local food, heritage, and the people behind the products creates deeper connections for visitors.
- // **Development of food trails and thematic experiences:** Many regions are creating self-guided or curated trails (e.g., wine, cheese, taste trails) that showcase diverse culinary assets.
- // **Indigenous foodways:** There's a growing recognition and development of Indigenous culinary experiences that offer personalized cultural exchange and support food sovereignty.
- // **Local sourcing and certification programs:** Programs like "Feast On®" highlight businesses committed to using local ingredients, building trust, and supporting regional food systems.



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PROVINCIAL AND NATIONAL CULINARY MARKETING



Destination Ontario

Destination Ontario, the province's lead tourism marketing organization, is actively engaged in promotion to support and grow culinary food and beverage tourism across the province through strategic partnerships, targeted marketing campaigns, and support for industry-led programs.

A cornerstone of Destination Ontario's strategy is its strong collaboration with the Culinary Tourism Alliance (CTA), dedicated to developing and promoting food tourism. This partnership includes several key partner initiatives designed to showcase Ontario's diverse and high-quality culinary offerings.

Destination Ontario's content marketing, online presence, and travel resources serve as a vital hub for culinary information. The website features dedicated sections on food and drink, including guides to wineries, breweries, cideries, distilleries, food trails, and foodie destinations. It portrays Kingston as a significant culinary destination in Ontario. The city's historic market, a high density of restaurants, a thriving craft beer scene, and a strong contingent of "Feast On®" certified establishments are all key promotional points. This content provides domestic and international travellers with the necessary tools and inspiration to plan their own culinary journeys throughout the province.

Tourism Kingston has been a long-time supporter of DO's partnership marketing programs that are targeted to various markets and audiences.

Culinary Tourism Alliance (CTA)

The Culinary Tourism Alliance has recently released its National Culinary + Agritourism Action Plan – a strategic roadmap for 2025 – 2028 with the goal of establishing Canada as a top-tier global culinary and agritourism destination by 2030. It focuses on four key pillars: Leadership + Collaboration, Experience + Product Development, Marketing + Visitor Engagement, and Enhancing the Reputation of Canadian Food + Drink. The plan advocates for a unified national strategy, improved cooperation across sectors, and increased support for businesses and communities.

Key actions include measuring the economic impact of culinary and agritourism, developing a long-term national strategy for growth, and ensuring strategic alignment among various levels of government and industry partners. It aims to support educational institutions in meeting workforce needs and to influence policy on issues impacting the sector's growth. This collaborative approach is essential for building capacity and attracting investment.

The strategy also emphasizes product development and marketing – recognizing the need for more market-ready culinary and agritourism experiences. The plan calls for a unified national marketing approach, including a comprehensive PR and media strategy, enhanced storytelling, and greater inclusion of rural and small destinations. To boost Canada's global standing, the plan includes actions to coordinate national awards, create a culinary ambassador program, and showcase Canadian food and drink at international trade events.

Feast On® is a certification program that recognizes businesses committed to sourcing and celebrating Ontario-grown food and drink. To be certified, restaurants and other food service providers must meet specific criteria regarding their procurement of local ingredients. Kingston boasts 10 Feast On® restaurants, a significant number that clearly demonstrates a strong commitment from local restaurant owners to sourcing and promoting local food.

The “Do Something Delicious” campaign is a dynamic cooperative marketing initiative supported by the Culinary Tourism Alliance (CTA) in partnership with Destination Ontario. The campaign is designed to promote Ontario's food and drink stories to inspire travel and drive business to local culinary destinations.

The core of the campaign involves the CTA's storytelling experts creating a series of thematic blog articles that are published on a seasonal basis. These articles highlight various culinary themes and businesses across the province.

Destination Canada

Destination Canada has partnered with globally recognized media brands like the MICHELIN Guide and *Top Chef Canada* to showcase the country's vibrant culinary scene. They have a formal multi-year partnership with the MICHELIN Guide to support the selection of restaurants in Toronto and Vancouver, providing financial and promotional support for the creation of these guides. Destination Canada also leverages the popular television series *Top Chef Canada* to promote culinary tourism – Canadian destinations are featured prominently in the show – delivering millions of viewers and other related digital content, such as “Top Chef” inspired food trails and travel itineraries on its marketing channels.



The organization has partnered with *Food & Wine* magazine to produce in-depth articles and content that tell the stories behind Canada's culinary scene. This is another high-quality channel to reach discerning food-loving travellers.

Destination Canada has recently created a culinary tourism content program that serves as an introduction to the country's food and drink experiences. It reinforces that Canadian cuisine is a direct reflection of its diverse landscapes and the stories of its people and showcases iconic Canadian food experiences, such as Alberta's renowned beef, the unique icewine of the Niagara region, and Quebec's world-famous maple syrup. Stories emphasize the human element of culinary tourism, celebrating

innovative chefs, farmers, and Indigenous culinary leaders who are shaping Canada's food scene. The site encourages active participation for visitors in a variety of experiences, from foraging to farm-to-table dinners and culinary trails. National culinary promotion is driven by storytelling, and it's crucial for destinations to gain visibility through first-person, long-form storytelling, and engaging individual tastemakers and influencers who have highly engaged audiences through platforms like Substacks, newsletters, and podcasts.

To further support national culinary storytelling, a video series called “Nourished Lands,” delves into Indigenous culinary traditions.

In 2025, Destination Canada introduced the Traveller Segmentation Program that defines and classifies travellers from Destination Canada's key target markets – both international and domestic – into seven key segments based on a combination of behavioral values – like trip spend, travel frequency, seasonal preferences, and activities – and psychographic factors such as emotional motivations and core travel values.

Two of the travel segments that are most likely to participate in food and beverage experiences align with Tourism Kingston's target audiences:

- // **Culture seekers:** food is an integral part of their cultural immersion, local cuisine is a key travel activity, they are sociable, and want to make local connections
- // **City trippers:** local food is key part of experience, they are trendy and sociable, and enjoy nightlife, shopping and festivals

COMPARATIVE DESTINATION REVIEW

To effectively position Kingston as a leading Canadian food tourism destination, a comprehensive comparative analysis was undertaken. This reviewed how other Canadian destinations are successfully leveraging and marketing their unique culinary assets. These comparator destinations were selected based on their established reputation in the culinary space, as well as specific mentions and insights gathered throughout the stakeholder consultation process for this project.

This includes Surrey, BC, Richmond, BC, Vancouver, BC, Wolfville, NS, Hamilton, ON, Waterloo ON, and Stockport, UK – offering some valuable insights into various approaches to cultivating a thriving food tourism landscape.

Surrey, BC

Surrey, British Columbia, has strategically developed its culinary tourism by emphasizing diverse, immersive experiences and robust agritourism efforts. Key initiatives include “Surrey’s Signature Experiences,” launched in June 2025, which encompass guided food tours, cooking classes, distillery tours, vineyard tastings, and unique honeybee experiences. The city also promotes the “Surrey Spice Trail,” a self-guided tour featuring over 70 establishments, including retailers, highlighting its vibrant multicultural food scene. Annual events like “Food Truck Wars” (started in 2021), featuring 35 food trucks and competitive titles, further activate the culinary landscape. Surrey’s commitment to supporting Black-owned culinary businesses through “ByBlacks Restaurant Week” demonstrates an inclusive approach. Recognized by *Food & Wine* as one of the “World’s Next Great Food Cities,” Surrey also fosters innovation through a municipally built “Plenty & Grace Food Hub,” a shared-use facility for small and medium-sized food businesses to scale and bring new products to market.

Highlights: Food Tours, Events, Cooking Classes, Cultural Diversity, Farm Experiences, Themed Trails, Supporting Producers and Growers

Richmond, BC

Richmond, British Columbia, distinguishes itself through its authentic Asian culinary experiences and large-scale food markets. The city is famous for its “Dumpling Trail,” a self-guided tour that showcases a wide array of authentic Asian cuisine. A major highlight is the “Richmond Night Market,” North America’s largest, boasting over 70 food stalls and a vast selection of international street food, drawing significant crowds annually. The “Steveston Spot Prawn & Seafood Celebration” further underscores the region’s strong connection to fresh seafood. Additionally, Richmond is actively developing a “Food Hub” to support its agriculture, seafood, manufacturing, and broader culinary scene, aiming to strengthen its local food ecosystem.

Highlights: Food Markets, Themed Trails, Cultural Diversity, Food Events, Supporting Producers and Growers

Vancouver, BC

Vancouver, British Columbia, is home to over 20 MICHELIN Guide restaurants and “Dine Out Vancouver,” Canada’s largest annual food festival. Organized by Destination Vancouver, this extensive festival takes place annually in January/February and has grown significantly since its inception in 2002, now featuring 431 participating restaurants. Beyond fixed-price menus, the festival incorporates a variety of food-focused events, including cooking classes, culinary tours, and tasting events, often organized in collaboration with partners like Vancouver Foodie Tours. Other food-related experiences include sea foraging trips: how to forage for items like sea urchins and oysters, Chinatown dumpling classes, street food app promoting local food trucks, and craft brewery tours.

Highlights: MICHELIN Star restaurants, Established Annual Event, “Hands-on” experiences, Cooking Classes, Food Trucks, Cultural Diversity



Wolfville, NS

Wolfville, Nova Scotia, leverages its unique coastal geography and rich agricultural land to create a compelling “land and sea” culinary tourism offering. A standout event is “Devour! The Food Film Fest,” with its 2025 edition themed “Montreal,” bringing in MICHELIN chefs, filmmakers, and featuring a Montreal night market, “Poutine Smackdown,” and a sugar shack experience. The festival also includes hands-on culinary workshops, tasting and foraging tours, and chef meet & greets. The town benefits from the “Wolfville Farmers Market” and participates in provincially organized initiatives like the “Lobster Trail” and “Chowder Trail,” alongside its own “Farm to Glass” tours and the “Good Cheer Trail” for beverages. The “FoodArtNature” project promotes hands-on experiences and “slow travel,” all supported by the non-profit “Taste of Nova Scotia,” which champions local food.

Highlights: Food Events, Festival, Farmers Market, Themed Trails, Experiences with Producers and Growers, Connection with visual arts

Hamilton, ON

Hamilton, Ontario, is actively enhancing its culinary tourism through a structured “City of Hamilton Food Strategy,” a 10-year plan with culinary tourism enhancement as a key objective. The city offers various food tours, including the “True Brew Path” for craft beer enthusiasts. Its calendar is rich with food festivals and events, such as the “Lucky Lion Night Market,” “Because Beer Craft Beer Festival,” “Hamilton Farmers Market,” “Hamilton Food & Drink Fest,” “Festitalia” (an Italian food festival), “Strawberry Festival,” and “Lakeside a la Carte.” Hamilton’s culinary scene has gained prestigious recognition from the MICHELIN Guide, with Quatrefoil receiving a “Recommended” distinction and Berkeley North earning a “Bib Gourmand.” The city also promotes an “Eat Local” initiative, supported by brand development and a local farm map, fostering connections between consumers and local producers.

Highlights: Food Tours, Night Market, Farmers Market, Food & Drink Festivals, Dining Promotions, Eat Local Program



Waterloo, ON

Waterloo, Ontario, is active in the local food movement, driven by new experience development and well-established markets. Explore Waterloo Region launched the “Fields & Flavours Trail” in June 2025, a curated journey highlighting 18 farms and food experiences. “Foodlink Waterloo Region,” an award-winning non-profit established in 2002, is a pioneer in promoting healthy, local food, adding value to agricultural production, and improving consumer access. They produce the widely used “Buy Local! Buy Fresh!” map and maintain an online directory of local farms and food businesses. The region is also home to renowned farmers’ markets, notably the “St. Jacobs Farmers’ Market,” which serves as a crucial hub for direct sales from local producers to consumers. These efforts collectively position Waterloo as a strong advocate for and facilitator of local food experiences.

Highlights: Themed Trails, Farmers Markets, Local Food Promotion, Supporting Producers and Growers

Stockport, UK

Foodie Friday is a highly popular, award-winning street food event held on the last Friday of every month in the historic Market Place of Stockport, UK. It transforms the old market square into a vibrant hub of culinary activity, featuring a diverse lineup of independent street food vendors, craft beer and cider stalls, and live music. The event creates a lively, communal atmosphere that attracts large crowds of residents and visitors, encouraging people to gather, socialize, and sample a wide variety of cuisines in a unique, open-air setting.

Highlights: Farmers Market, Local Food Promotion, Supporting Producers and Growers



RESTAURANT ASSOCIATIONS & LEVIES



Restaurant associations

While Canada has a well-established system of accommodation-focused associations and fees to support and fund tourism initiatives, a “restaurant levy” for destination development is not a common practice. Only a handful of communities have implemented such charges, often on a voluntary basis for businesses. This is also true in the United States where only a number of cities have implemented direct levies on restaurants to fund destination development and marketing efforts.

Jasper, Alberta, stands out with its Destination Marketing Fee (DMF). This 3% fee is applied by participating businesses, including some restaurants, to a customer’s bill. The program is voluntary, meaning restaurants can choose whether to apply the fee. Approximately 16 restaurants are currently participating in the program through an affiliate membership with Tourism Jasper. As

members, these restaurants receive exclusive marketing support including media and FAM visits and culinary event promotion. The levies collected from customers are directed to a third party trustee (Alberta Hotel Association) that manages the transfer to Tourism Jasper for marketing and promotional activities.

Many cities in Canada have organizations that function as restaurant associations, though they often take different forms than the traditional standalone “association” model. Instead of independent, city-named restaurant associations, local industry representation is primarily handled through three types of organizations: regional chapters of provincial associations, BIAs, and culinary festival organizers.

ORHMA chapters

The Ontario Restaurant Hotel & Motel Association (ORHMA) has dedicated regional boards for regional and urban centres, including Burlington, Hamilton, Kenora, London, Ottawa, Prince Edward County, Simcoe County, Toronto, Waterloo, and Windsor Essex. Each has a local board of directors that include area restaurateurs who help tackle local municipal policies.

For a city or region to establish its own ORHMA chapter, the key requirements are the presence of engaged local leaders and a demonstrated need for a unified voice on municipal issues. Ultimately, the decision to establish a new regional chapter rests with ORHMA’s provincial leadership. The association’s CEO, Tony Elenis, noted that “expanding our regions is an approach that will

bring the industry closer,” indicating that the creation of new chapters is a strategic decision aimed at strengthening the association’s overall influence and member service across Ontario.

ORHMA also expressed support for and interest in collaboration in the development of a Kingston restaurant association aligned with ORHMA membership – including providing “on the ground” support for membership attraction and the exclusive offer of commercial benefits such as savings in insurance fees.

ORHMA is committed to assisting the Kingston culinary strategy in other areas including advocacy, training, and business development.

RESTAURANT CERTIFICATIONS & DESIGNATIONS

For Canadian destinations and restaurant owners, pursuing various certifications and designations is not only about adhering to industry standards; it can be a strategic marketing tool for enhancing credibility, attracting discerning consumers, and significantly contributing to the broader culinary tourism landscape and destination development. These recognitions indicate a commitment to quality, sustainability, local sourcing, and unique culinary experiences.

In the context of culinary tourism, certifications and designations provide:

- // **Consumer trust and guidance:** They act as trusted third-party endorsements, helping tourists identify establishments that align with their values (e.g., supporting local, sustainable practices)
- // **Differentiation and competitive advantage:** Certified restaurants stand out from competitors, signaling a higher standard or a unique focus, which can attract food-motivated travellers seeking authentic and memorable experiences.
- // **Marketing and promotion:** Many certification bodies actively promote their certified members through their own channels, providing valuable exposure to targeted audiences interested in culinary tourism.
- // **Support for local food systems:** Certifications often encourage or mandate local sourcing, thereby strengthening regional agricultural economies and promoting a true “taste of place” for visitors.
- // **Destination branding:** A critical mass of certified restaurants contributes to a destination’s overall culinary brand, helping to establish it as a reputable and desirable food tourism hub. This collective strength can attract more visitors and investment.
- // **Industry standards and best practices:** The certification process itself often encourages restaurants to adopt best practices in areas like food safety, environmental stewardship, and ethical sourcing, elevating the overall quality of the local culinary scene.



The notable restaurant certifications and designations available to Canadian restaurant owners are:



Local sourcing & sustainability focused

Feast On® (Culinary Tourism Alliance):

- // Focus: Recognizes businesses (restaurants, experiences, purveyors) committed to sourcing and celebrating Ontario-grown food and drink. Requires a minimum percentage of annual food and beverage receipts to reflect Ontario purchases (e.g., 25% for restaurants).
- // Importance: Effective for destinations like Kingston and Prince Edward County, as it directly promotes "taste of place" and supports regional agriculture. It's a tool for marketing to visitors seeking authentic local culinary experiences.

Green Restaurant Association (GRA) certification:

- // Focus: Certifies restaurants based on comprehensive environmental criteria, including waste reduction, water efficiency, sustainable furnishings, energy use, and sustainable food.
- // Importance: Attracts eco-conscious tourists and enhances a destination's reputation for sustainability.

LEED (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design) certification (for buildings):

- // Focus: While primarily for buildings, restaurants housed in LEED-certified structures can leverage this for their sustainable practices.
- // Importance: Signals a commitment to environmental responsibility from the ground up, appealing to a broader sustainable tourism market.

Local Food Plus (LFP) certification (historically, now often integrated into other programs or local initiatives):

- // Focus: Historically, connected institutions and consumers to local, sustainable food sources. Its principles are often embedded in current regional food strategies.
- // Importance: Reinforces the commitment to local food systems and community economic development.

Culinary excellence & recognition

MICHELIN Guide Stars

- // Focus: Recognizes culinary excellence based on quality of ingredients, mastery of cooking techniques, harmony of flavours, personality of the cuisine, and consistency.
- // Importance: Globally recognized as the pinnacle of dining excellence. A MICHELIN presence elevates a destination's international culinary reputation, attracting high-spending food tourists and media attention. The most famous designation.
 - ★ One Star: "very good restaurant in its category"
 - ★ Two Stars: "excellent cuisine, worth a detour"
 - ★ Three Stars: "exceptional cuisine, worth a special journey"

Bib Gourmand

- // Focus: Recognizes restaurants that offer "good quality, good value cooking"
- // Importance: Gives recognition to restaurants that provide high-quality meals at more moderate prices making more accessible to more consumers

MICHELIN Recommended

- // Focus: Indicates restaurants that the inspectors recommend for "good cooking" but which do not yet have a Star or Bib Gourmand, a recognition of quality
- // Importance: Positive and valuable recognition for a restaurant, a reliable stamp of approval with assurance of quality dining experience

MICHELIN Green Star

- // Focus: Introduced to highlight restaurants at the forefront of sustainable gastronomy
- // Importance: recognizes establishments that hold themselves accountable for ethical and environmental standards, working with producers and suppliers to avoid waste and reduce environmental footprint

MICHELIN Keys (for hotels)

- // Focus: Recognizes exceptional hotels that elevate the travel experience with categories for One, Two, and Three Keys.
- // Importance: A hotel receiving this designation implies a higher overall quality, which would extend to any dining experiences within that hotel

Canada's 100 Best Restaurants

- // Focus: An annual national ranking of the best restaurants in Canada, compiled by a panel of over 100 anonymous critics, chefs, and food writers.
- // Importance: Provides national recognition, drawing attention to top culinary talent and establishments, and driving domestic culinary tourism.

Air Canada's Best New Restaurants

- // Focus: Produced by Air Canada enRoute magazine, celebrates new culinary talent across Canada, highlighting top restaurants that have opened within a specific year. Highlights world-class cuisine and industry trends.
- // Importance: Longest running Canadian restaurant ranking, it uses a single anonymous reviewer to dine across Canada guided by a panel of experts and a top 10 is ultimately selected.

Local/regional "Best Of" awards (e.g., local media polls, tourism association awards)

- // Focus: Community-based recognition for popular or outstanding restaurants within a specific city or region.
- // Importance: Builds local pride and provides accessible recommendations for visitors seeking popular and well-regarded local dining spots.

Accessibility & dietary needs**Gluten-Free Certification Program (GFCP):**

- // Focus: Certifies products and food service establishments that meet strict gluten-free standards.
- // Importance: Crucial for attracting a growing segment of travellers with dietary restrictions, ensuring a safe and enjoyable dining experience.

Vegan/vegetarian-friendly designations:

- // Focus: Often self-declared or recognized by vegan/vegetarian associations, highlighting establishments with extensive plant-based menus.
- // Importance: Caters to a significant and growing market segment, positioning a destination as inclusive and diverse in its culinary offerings.

Industry awards & training**Restaurants Canada Awards of Excellence**

- // Focus: recognizes outstanding achievements in various categories of foodservice (Leadership, innovation, community involvement, operations)
- // Importance: celebrates the best practices and contributions of restaurants and restaurant owners

Ontario Tourism Awards of Excellence: Culinary Tourism Awards of Excellence

- // Focus: Presented by the Culinary Tourism Alliance honours a business or organization that provides an outstanding authentic consumer experience, event, partnership, and DEI
- // Importance: Shines light on innovation in authentic culinary experiences, promoting food or drink products and contributing to regional culinary tourism

Culinary affiliations/accreditations

- // Focus: Restaurants employing graduates or partnering with accredited culinary schools (e.g., Le Cordon Bleu, Red Seal) signal a commitment to professional training and culinary talent. Red Seal program covers a wide range of culinary trades including chefs and cooks, bakers, pastry chefs, and butchers
- // Importance: Contributes to a destination's reputation for culinary excellence and a highly skilled workforce.

MICHELIN in Canada

The MICHELIN Guide operates by selecting specific cities or regions to review. As of 2025, with the support of Destination Canada and Destination Ontario, the Guide has expanded its Canadian coverage to include Toronto, Vancouver, and the province of Quebec (notably Montreal and Quebec City). Here is a glance at Canada's Michelin-starred cities, based on the most recent 2025 announcements.

Toronto: The city holds the distinction of having Canada's first Two-Star restaurant and more than a dozen One-Star establishments, showcasing a diverse range of cuisines from contemporary Canadian and Italian to Japanese and French.

Vancouver: The city boasts a collection of 11 One-Star restaurants. Establishments like Published on Main and Kissa Tanto highlight the creative, ingredient-driven ethos that defines the city's dining culture, blending local bounty with global influences in intimate and inventive settings.

Quebec City: The provincial capital is home to only the second restaurant in Canada to earn the coveted Two-Star rating and several other restaurants that earned their first MICHELIN star.

Montreal: A curated group of the city's celebrated establishments were awarded One-Star honours, with many more being recognized with Bib Gourmand awards or as recommended restaurants.

With these certifications and designations, Canadian restaurant owners enhance their individual businesses and also collectively elevate their region's profile as a compelling and trustworthy culinary tourism destination.



*KINGSTON'S
CURRENT
CULINARY
TOURISM
LANDSCAPE*

delish

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REGIONAL VISITOR SPENDING DATA

An analysis of recent visitor data underscores the critical role of Kingston's culinary scene as a primary driver of its tourism economy. The food and beverage sector is not just a component of the visitor experience; it is a central pillar, commanding a significant portion of traveller spending and distinguishing the city from its surrounding region.

According to 2022 data from Statistics Canada for the broader RTO 9 region, food and beverage spending consistently ranks as a top expenditure category for all travellers, alongside accommodation and transportation. Across the region, this sector captures 31% of all visitor spending, highlighting the fundamental importance of dining experiences in shaping a travel itinerary.

The food and beverage sector accounted for 31% of total visitor spending.



Tourism Kingston's visitor spending data reveals that 40% of all tourist expenditures within the city are dedicated to food and beverage. This figure is significantly higher than the regional average, indicating in part that Kingston has successfully cultivated a compelling food and beverage scene.

International travellers lead the contribution of per-trip spend on food and beverage, making them an important target market for growing the city's culinary tourism profile and economic impact.

The foundation for this success is partly due to a robust and diverse food and beverage landscape. A 2023 asset count for the RTO 9 region identified 176 Kingston food and beverage establishments with at least 132 of those being restaurants (though other sources suggest this number could be as high as 186, highlighting the dynamic nature of the industry). This concentration of dining options provides the variety and quality necessary to attract and satisfy the discerning palates of modern travellers, solidifying Kingston's position as a leading culinary hub in South Eastern Ontario.

CULINARY PRODUCTS & EXPERIENCES

While larger metropolitan centres in Ontario may have a greater sheer volume of options, Kingston's culinary scene ranks exceptionally high for its quality, cohesion, and community integration. It has successfully leveraged its historic charm, agricultural surroundings, and collaborative community to create a food destination that can continue to evolve as a key driver of tourism to the region.

Events unique to Kingston

- // **Kingstonlicious:** This premier prix fixe event showcases the best of Kingston's restaurants, signature culinary collaborations with guest chefs, hands-on cooking classes, and themed dinners.
- // **YGK Craft Beer Fest** features a wide selection of local and regional craft beers, ciders, and other beverages.
- // **Back to the Farm** hosted by MacKinnon Brothers Brewing Co. at their brewery in Bath, Ontario is a celebration of live music, craft beer, and local food.



- // **Sourfest** hosted by Daft Brewing, featuring a wide variety of sour beers from Daft Brewing and guest breweries and music from local artists and bands.
- // **Open Farms** with Frontenac County, an event designed to connect consumers with local farmers and food producers.
- // **Chef Demos:** Downtown Kingston hosts Saturday morning chef demonstrations in the City Hall amphitheatre, steps away from the Kingston Public Market. Local chefs showcase their skills, create a signature dish for sampling, and provide recipe cards for attendees.
- // **Great Canadian Cheese Festival** (moved from PEC to Fort Henry in 2025) hosting several Canadian dairy producers from coast to coast features cheese-tasting, beverage pairings, cheese-making activities, and live entertainment. If the event remains in Kingston, it could become a signature event.
- // **Judgement of Kingston:** An annual blind-tasting wine event – organized by volunteers – compares PEC wines against other well-regarded wines from different regions around the world. A fundraiser for local charities.
- // **Otter Creek Kitchen Food Truck:** The mobile version of their popular restaurant, offering high-quality burgers and other dishes, often found at local breweries.

Other events

- // **Kingston Ribfest & Craft Beer Show:** celebrates barbequed ribs and chicken from various "ribbers." Travels to communities in and around Eastern Ontario.
- // **Poutine Feast:** part of a touring festival bringing a wide variety of creative poutines from across Canada. Travels to communities in and around Eastern Ontario.

Walking tours

Kingston Food Tours is the primary operator, offering guided walking tours that blend local history and culture with culinary tastings including:

- // **The Classic Kingston Tour:** A two-hour tour that provides an introduction to the city's food scene with stops at several local restaurants and gourmet food shops.
- // **Tapas Tour:** An afternoon tour focused on small plates paired with alcoholic beverages at four unique downtown spots.

Wine & beer tours

Kingston's proximity to Prince Edward County makes it a convenient hub for wine tours. Various operators and promotional programs have been attempted with local operators over the last several years.

- // **Good Time Tour Co.** Based in Kingston, this company offers public and private tours to Prince Edward County's wineries and breweries.
- // **County Sips:** Specializes in guided PEC wine tours, with a limited capacity and schedule
- // **McCoy Bus Service:** Provides transportation for groups of all sizes for wine and beer tasting tours to the county, with options for custom itineraries.

Public markets & farmers markets

There are two primary farmers markets in Kingston; the Kingston Public Market and the Memorial Centre Farmers' Market.

- // **Memorial Centre Farmers' Market:** a non-profit, vendor-led organization operated by the farmers and producers themselves, with a focus on supporting local agriculture and artisans including fresh seasonal produce, pasture-raised meats, local cheeses, baked goods, artisan crafts, and a variety of prepared meals to eat on-site. All vendors come from within approximately 100 kilometres of Kingston, ensuring that everything sold is fresh, seasonal, and directly supports the local economy. It's Kingston's only year-round farmers' market. It runs outdoors at the Memorial Centre grounds from May to October and moves indoors for a winter market from November to April. The

market is more than just a place to shop; it's a community gathering spot. It often features live music, activities for kids, and a welcoming environment, making it a popular Sunday outing for families.

- // **Kingston Public Market (in Springer Market Square):** an iconic open-air market located in the heart of downtown, directly behind City Hall. Its most significant feature is its heritage, as it is recognized as Canada's oldest public market, with a history dating back to 1801. The Kingston Public Market is owned and operated by the City of Kingston. Management falls under the City's Community Development and Wellbeing department, which handles all aspects of the market's operations, including vendor applications, setting market regulations, and managing the day-to-day use of the square. Its central location makes it a hub of activity, especially on market days (Tuesdays, Thursdays, and Saturdays from April to November). The square is surrounded by restaurant patios, and the market is often complemented by other City events.
- // **Fresh Food Market Pop-Ups:** Lionhearts market pop-ups bring fresh, affordable produce and chef-created gourmet options to various sites in Kingston and area including seniors associations, community centres, community halls, and St. Lawrence College.
- // **Regional farmers markets:** There are several seasonal markets close to Kingston in Frontenac and Lennox and Addington including Verona, Sharbot Lake, Westport, Wolfe Island, Amherstview, and Bath.

Sip

VISITOR REVIEWS & INSIGHTS



Tourism Kingston's "Product 360 Review", Rove research

Restaurants

The Rating and Review Product 360 provides details for a restaurant's specific scores across rating types – including cleanliness, ambience, value, service, facilities, food and beverage, location – and overall performance from visitor surveys. The average overall rating for food and beverage experience is high – and a few select restaurants generate above-average ratings. Visitor composition in various restaurants combines different groups including friends, work colleagues, families, couples, and solo travellers. Based on the Rove findings, there is a good cross-section of restaurants appealing to families, couples and friend groups. There was little difference in rating between downtown restaurants and west-end restaurants – indicating an overall high level of satisfaction across the city.

Markets

The Kingston Public Market in Springer Market Square ranks very poorly with visitors, and satisfaction has declined significantly between 2023 and 2024. The Memorial Centre Farmers' Market by comparison was highly ranked across various various performance categories including ambience, food and beverage, and facilities.

Online reviews

Kingston Food Tours

An online summary of reviews for Kingston Food Tours reveals a consistently positive reputation, primarily through detailed blog posts and travel articles rather than large, aggregated review platforms like TripAdvisor or Google. The sentiment is consistently positive, with writers highlighting a premium, well-organized, and enjoyable experience.

Reviewers consistently compliment the excellence and variety of the food and drinks provided. The tours feature a well-curated selection of tasting plates and drink pairings from some of downtown Kingston's most respected restaurants. The portions are noted as being generous and representative of the restaurants' quality.

The tours are praised as a fantastic way for both tourists and locals to experience the city. Visitors appreciate it as an introduction to the culinary landscape, while Kingston residents often report discovering new restaurants and learning new things about their hometown.

Restaurants

Kingston boasts a number of establishments earning high praise from locals and visitors alike. An analysis of Google's user-generated ratings reveals that the city's favourite restaurants span a wide range of cuisines, from contemporary Canadian to classic European and casual comfort food. These rankings are a testament to quality, consistency, and customer experience.

An analysis of user-generated reviews on Yelp.com reveals a dynamic and competitive restaurant scene in Kingston, Ontario. Yelp's ranking algorithm, which prioritizes not only the star rating but also the volume and recency of reviews, highlights establishments that consistently deliver quality experiences to a large number of diners. The list of top-ranked restaurants showcases a diverse mix of cuisines, from gourmet pizza and tapas to classic European and Caribbean fare.

TripAdvisor reviews reveal there is a competitive and diverse collection of top-rated restaurants in the city. The rankings, which are algorithmically determined based on the quality, quantity, and recency of diner reviews (with some restaurants having over 2,000 customer reviews), highlight establishments known for their consistent quality, distinctive cuisines, and excellent service.

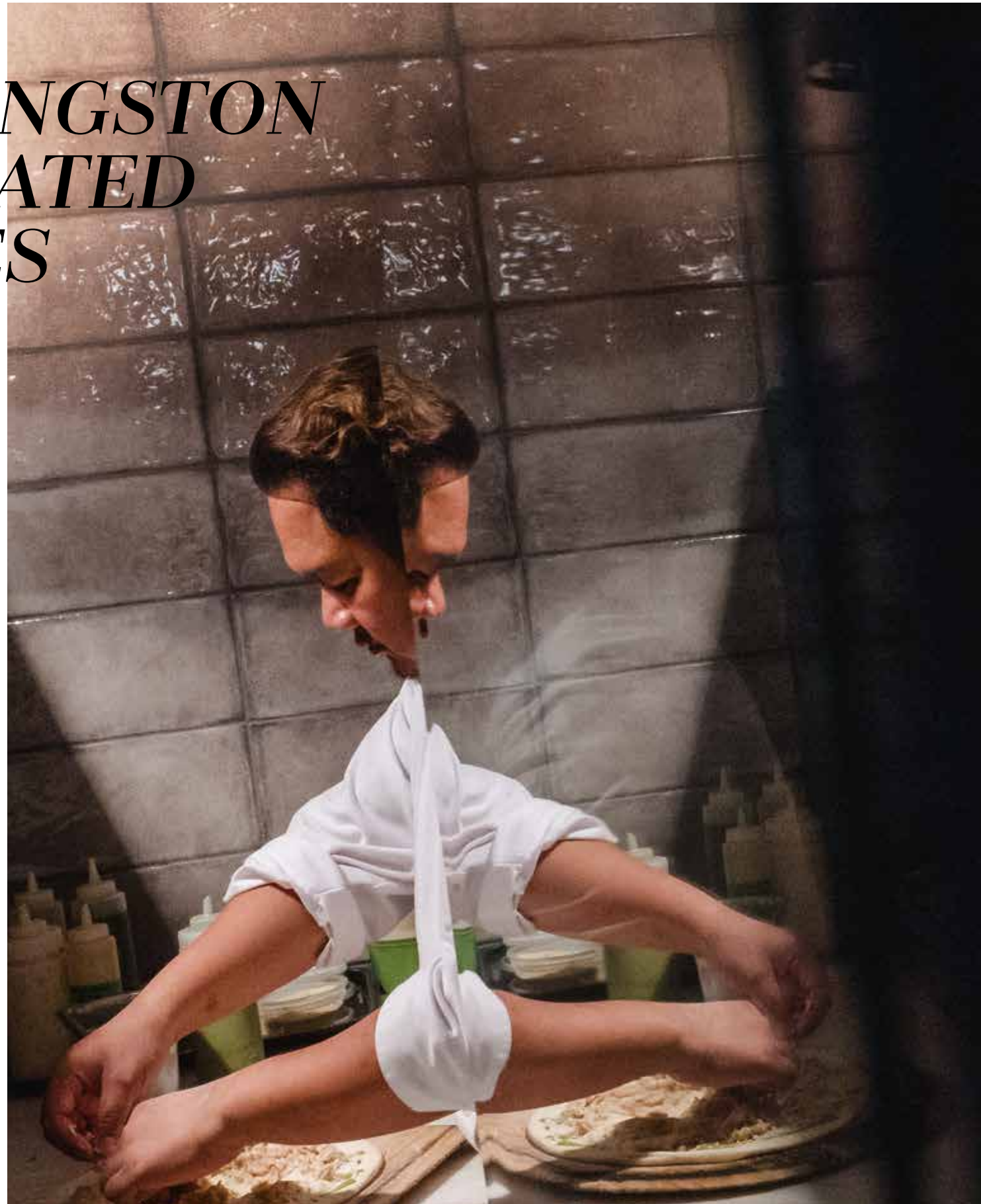
Kingstonlicious

Online reviews and media coverage for Kingstonlicious are positive for the annual culinary event developed and managed by Tourism Kingston. Feedback primarily exists in two forms: content from Tourism Kingston and local media, and specific diner reviews of their experiences at participating restaurants. Key positive feedback includes; culinary diversity highlighting the depth of Kingston's food scene, experiencing high-end restaurants at an accessible price point, and the opportunity to enjoy exclusive, signature events that provide high-end experiences.

CITY OF KINGSTON FOOD-RELATED INITIATIVES

The City of Kingston's Community Development & Wellbeing portfolio includes a collection of departments and services that oversee community needs, interwoven with a core municipal framework known as IIDEA (Indigenization, Inclusion, Diversity, Equity, Accessibility), focused on the social and physical health of its residents. Various City departments are involved with local food security, local food, community programming such as gardens and markets, and climate leadership.

Initiatives driven through the Community Development & Wellbeing office include; food security and the local food system, infrastructure and programs that create vibrant public spaces and promote community connection, such as parks, recreational facilities, community gardens, and markets.



HIGHLIGHTS

City of Kingston Food Framework

A central guiding document for creating a resilient local food system. It includes pillars for Food Production, Infrastructure, and Education, and directly addresses "supporting tourism and economic development opportunities." In 2025, the City dedicated a \$300,000 budget for food programs, with funding streams for small capital projects and innovative pilot initiatives.

Rural agriculture & agri-food economic strategy

This strategy focuses on strengthening the foundational elements of the culinary arts by supporting local farms and food producers. A key outcome is the "Food Production Training Days," an initiative to help new food entrepreneurs learn how to get their products to market.

Community kitchens

The City supports community organizations like the Kingston Community Health Centres which run community kitchen programs. These programs provide shared cooking spaces and educational workshops, fostering culinary skills at a grassroots level.



Local Food in Kingston survey

Conducted in August 2023 and planned as a bi-annual effort, aimed to understand perceptions and purchasing habits related to local food in Kingston. It revealed a strong consumer preference for locally sourced food with a significant majority of respondents reported purchasing local food within the past 12 months. Vegetables, fruit, maple syrup, honey, and meat were the most regular local purchases. The survey also highlighted that while a regional focus is key, there's also a broad appreciation for food grown anywhere in Ontario.

Kingston consumers primarily acquire local food from local grocery stores and farmers' markets, demonstrating the importance of both mainstream retail and direct-to-consumer channels. "Farm or farm gate sales" were also named as a significant source of local food. Some residents agreed it is easy to get locally produced food, while others disagreed.

Perceptions of local food are overwhelmingly positive regarding quality, with a strong belief that buying local food helps maintain vibrancy and supports the local economy. The main barriers to buying local include the amount of time it takes to find local food and the perceived distance to travel. To encourage more local food purchases, respondents highlighted the need for more convenient access to locations that sell local foods, wider availability in big box stores, and more information about the importance of buying local food. Knowing the farmer and the opportunity to visit local farms were also significant motivators.

Kingston Public Market

Based on recent reports and long-standing discussions, the historic Kingston Public Market has been facing several significant challenges related to its management, vendor composition, and overall identity. The key issues include; the tension between genuine local producers and "resellers", vendors reporting a lack of consultation from the City on important decisions, uncertainty about Market schedules with little notice. The Market has struggled to attract and retain the right mix of vendors, which is crucial for its long-term health. The low percentage of actual farmers is a central issue that prevents the market from regaining its official status and fulfilling its traditional role.

Following a comprehensive review and public engagement process, the City has developed an action plan with several key areas of focus for 2025 and beyond:

- // **Increasing vendor diversity:** A primary goal is to attract a wider variety of vendors. This includes recruiting more local farmers and food producers, as well as artisans and prepared food vendors that reflect the diversity of the Kingston community.
- // **Improving site infrastructure:** The plan calls for improvements to the physical layout and infrastructure of the Kingston Public Market. This includes upgrading stalls to make them more functional and aesthetically pleasing, improving signage, and ensuring the space is accessible and welcoming.

// **Enhancing the visitor experience:** The city aims to make the market a more dynamic destination. This involves better integration with other downtown events, potentially incorporating more live music, and creating a more engaging atmosphere that encourages visitors to linger and connect.

// **Operational modernization:** The city is reviewing its operational rules and vendor application processes to make them clearer, more efficient, and more supportive of small businesses and local producers.

The overall vision is to honour the Kingston Public Market's deep historical roots while ensuring it remains a relevant, thriving, and inclusive public space for both residents and tourists.



KINGSTON ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT & FOOD INDUSTRIES



The food sector in Kingston

Kingston's food and beverage sector is a significant and growing industry, benefiting from rich farmland, a skilled workforce, and specialized machine shops. This has attracted over \$400 million in foreign direct investment in the last five years, with major international companies establishing a presence in Kingston. Examples include Frulact's expansion in high-value food processing and Canada Royal Milk, the nation's only producer of infant formula, which plays a crucial role in the country's food security.

The ecosystem supporting Kingston's food industry is comprehensive and includes companies that develop food colours and additives and biotechnology innovators in the custom equipment building and the design and construction of integrated production lines.

The city also excels in research, logistics, and distribution and in collaboration with global partners, the development of technologies to improve crop yields more sustainably. Kingston is home to major distribution centres for Tim Hortons, Coca-Cola, Pepsico, and Findlay Foods, which all contribute to job creation and economic impact in the region.

Commercial food production facilities

Kingston does not have a dedicated commercial food production facility for use by local entrepreneurs, growers, and producers. This is due to the critical mass and financial viability of food hubs, with a previous attempt in Kingston that failed despite attracting large contracts. Kingston producers are travelling to other facilities for production and processing.

The most used facility of its kind is located in Colborne, Ontario – the Ontario Agri-Food Venture Centre (OAFVC). This \$2.5 million facility serves as an incubator for farmers and food entrepreneurs. It provides access to a fully equipped commercial kitchen, processing and packaging services, and business support. This allows small-scale producers to develop new products, scale up their operations, and access larger markets without the prohibitive cost of investing in their own infrastructure.

Small business support

The Kingston Economic Development team provides support for Kingston restaurant owners and food producers through their Small Business Enterprise Centre – offering consultation services, access to grant programs (Starter Company Plus), free educational seminars, and referrals for licensing and inspections. They have noted that the food industry, especially among newcomers to Canada, is growing, and restaurants are diversifying into consumer packaged goods to create new revenue streams and combat rising costs of food production – indicating an evolving need for business support services.

THE REGIONAL CONTEXT: SOUTH EASTERN ONTARIO

Regional agriculture is not merely a component of what makes a culinary tourism destination, it's a foundational characteristic of sense of place. It provides ingredients that are intrinsically linked to the local soil, climate, and traditions including history, culture, and community. Locally sourced food encourages menus and experiences that change with the seasons, providing a dynamic and evolving culinary tourism opportunity. Supporting local agriculture directly benefits farmers and producers, keeping money in the community, and fostering a resilient local food system. This aligns with the meaningful impact that today's visitors are increasingly seeking as part of their desire for sustainable travel.



Some examples of well-known regional food narratives in Canada rooted in geography, history, and culture are; Atlantic Canada with abundant seafood, wild berries, and comfort cooking reflecting a seafaring past, Quebec's French heritage and strong agricultural tradition including artisanal cheeses and maple syrup, the Okanagan Valley's unique microclimate making it famous for abundant fruit production, earning it the moniker of "Canada's Fruit Basket".

Several factors make the South Eastern Ontario food system unique from other parts of Ontario and Canada. The region combines distinct geographical areas, contributing to a diverse range of agricultural and culinary specialties. Kingston, as the larger urban centre and a culinary hub, naturally looks to the surrounding agricultural areas for fresh, high-quality ingredients.

agri-tourism

Prince Edward County

The County offers a “terroir-driven culinary scene,” particularly renowned for its numerous wineries, cideries, microbreweries, and rich farmland that establishes a strong base of local produce and ingredients that have established a farm-to-table dining scene with restaurants and chefs prioritizing local ingredients, ethically raised meats, and artisanal products.

The County’s rise as a renowned culinary destination is not the result of a single factor but rather an evolution driven by its geography, groundbreaking individuals, and a strong community spirit. Many suggest the catalyst for The County was the rise of the wine industry in the late 1990s – early 2000s that saw pioneering winemakers begin to establish vineyards. As these wineries gained recognition they started to attract visitors for wine tastings and tours. Many wineries realized the natural connection between wine and food, leading them to open on-site restaurants, tasting rooms with food services, and hosting culinary events.

As The County’s reputation grew, it began to attract acclaimed chefs and food entrepreneurs from larger urban centres, namely Toronto. These chefs were drawn by the lifestyle – to be closer to the source of their ingredients, engage in true farm-to-table practices, and to leave the stress and competitive nature of urban business behind. Chefs like Jamie Kennedy, Albert Ponzo, Amanda Rady, Stuart Cameron, and Matt deMille brought their expertise, high standards, creative vision, and work ethic to elevate the food scene, and push the boundaries of local cuisine. This influx of talent further enriched the local food scene and accelerated its development.

Jamie Kennedy in particular was a pioneer of the farm-to-table movement in Canada with his “Knives & Forks” alliance. By moving to a 115-acre farm in The County and actively running “Cooking on the Farm” events and his J.K. Fries stood, he didn’t just advocate for farm-to-table; he lived it. This provided a tangible, high-profile example of a chef directly connected to the land and its produce. This garnered significant earned media attention and word of mouth in the culinary scene in Toronto which greatly influenced The County’s culinary standing.

The success of the wineries inspired a new artisanal food and beverage movement that brought craft breweries, cideries, distilleries, artisanal cheesemakers, and other small-batch food producers committed to high-quality and unique culinary products. It also created the space for experiential tourism development centred around food and the local food system.

In 1998, a group of community entrepreneurs identified the need for a collective marketing and economic growth initiative for the region and “Taste the County” was created. In the early 2010’s, the self-guided “Taste Trail” was launched and played a pivotal and transformative role in shaping The County’s identity as a leading culinary tourism destination. The Trail provided a cohesive and recognizable brand that unified disparate offerings, showcasing the collective strength and diversity of local culinary products and experiences. It allowed visitors to travel at their own pace and encouraged them to visit farm stands, farmers markets, wineries, and artisanal producers.

Cynthia Peters’ “From the Farm Cooking School” (opened 2010) had a significant and distinct influence on The County’s reputation as a food destination. While many focused on farm-to-table dining, Cynthia offered a direct, hands-on experience. Her cooking classes, held in her heritage farmhouse kitchen, allowed visitors to actively participate in the culinary process. “Culinary Adventure” classes often included excursions to local farms, cheese factories, vegetable producers, and wineries. Participants would walk the fields, allowing them to pick vegetables and gather ingredients. This created an intimate and educational journey that truly connected visitors to the source of their food and the growers behind it.

The County is home to many restaurants that have gained recognition for their commitment to local ingredients, innovative menus, and exceptional dining experiences. Some establishments consistently appear on “best of” lists, accreditations and are highly regarded including; The Royal Hotel (Picton): recognized with a One MICHELIN Key, co-owned with Edwin County Farms, Flame + Smith (Bloomfield): listed as one of Canada’s Best New Restaurants by EnRoute Magazine, wood fire concept, Drake Devonshire (Wellington): recognized as a MICHELIN Guide Hotel, lively contemporary lakefront and Merrill House (Picton): Wine Spectator Award of Excellence, classic French cuisine.

Events & festivals

- // Countylicious (Spring and Fall) Prix-fixe culinary event at restaurants
- // Maple Madness (March) Celebrating maple syrup harvest with pancake breakfasts, sugar bush tours
- // Elevage: Winter Wine Festival (Family Day Weekend) Wineries offer special tastings, samples and a grand tasting event

Markets

- // Wellington Farmers Market (May – October)
- // Picton Town Hall Farmers Market (May – October)
- // Wellington Community Market (May – October)
- // PEC Fresh Good Food Market (year-round community initiative providing affordable access to fresh produce)

Activities

- // Harvest Season
- // Wine Tastings (multiple locations)
- // Cooking Classes @ The Waring House
- // Cooking workshops @ Littlejohn Farm
- // Farm to Table dinners @ Littlejohn Farm and various County restaurants

Trails & tours

- // Taste Trail
- // Vineyard Tours (multiple locations)

Farm experiences

- // Apple Picking @ Campbell’s Orchards
- // Berry Picking @ Blooms & Berries and The Blueberry Patch
- // Pumpkin picking @ various farms
- // Cut your own flowers @ Blooms & Berries and Fronterra Farm
- // Vicki’s Veggies

Frontenac County

Frontenac County features a rugged landscape and numerous lakes, representing a different part of the regional food system. It leans into smaller-scale farming, featuring many organic farms producing seasonal fruits and vegetables including heritage apples, berries, garlic, and a variety of root and leafy greens. There is a growing community of farms raising free-range or pasture-raised livestock including beer, pork, poultry, and artisan cured meats. Organic dairy products include artisanal cheese using traditional methods and natural sheep's milk. Several producers offer pure maple syrup, local raw unpasteurized honey, organic grains and baked goods, and specialty food products such as sauces, herbs, craft beverages, and coffee roasting.

Seasonal farmers' markets provide connection between producers and consumers including Frontenac Farmers Market, Wolfe Island Commons, and Sharbot Lake Farmers Market. These markets further strengthen the connection between producers and consumers.

The annual Frontenac Open Farms event connects consumers with local agriculture and has evolved through various iterations and programming ideas including farm tour and workshops. It provides opportunities for producers to connect directly with consumers and increase awareness of Kingston restaurants that serve local food. Tourism Kingston has been a committed and collaborative partner with Open Farms for several years, but there is an opportunity to evolve the event further with more robust financial and organizational support from other sources.

FAB Frontenac Food and Beverage is an initiative dedicated to supporting and promoting food and drink entrepreneurs and businesses within Frontenac County. It is an initiative of Frontenac Business Services, which is a federally funded Community Futures Development Corporation (CFDC). CFDCs are non-profit organizations that work to stimulate community and economic development in rural areas. The primary purpose of FAB is to help food and drink entrepreneurs launch, grow, and scale successful businesses in Frontenac County through business consulting, assistance with loan applications and access to funding support, networking opportunities, guidance on navigating regulations, and workshops.

Events & festivals

- // Gather: A Culinary Experience in Frontenac County (September) Food & drink pairings offered as on-farm experience at Bloom Farm
- // Open Farms (September) Farm visits, workshops, culinary experiences in Frontenac County and Kingston
- // Verona Garlic Festival

Markets

- // Frontenac Farmers Market (Verona) (February – December)
- // Sharbot Lake Farmers Market (Sharbot Lake) (July – October)
- // Nearby: Westport Farmers Market (Westport) (May – October)

Activities

- // Maple Season Activities (March) Various sugar bushes and farms offer tours, tastings and maple products
- // Rampant Kitchen: Cooking classes and private chef experiences
- // Farm Sum Cooking Classes & Tours: blend traditional Chinese peasant cuisine with farm-fresh ingredients

Trails & tours

- // Taste Tours: curated itineraries to provide visitors with a roadmap to discover local food and beverage products
- // The Maple Trail: guides to local sugar bushes, farms and producers of maple products
- // The Harvest Route: Pick Your Own berry farms, apple orchards, and farm stands in late summer/fall
- // The Forager's Path: wild edibles and natural bounty; connect with local experts to learn about wild harvesting
- // Frontenac K&P Trail: connects communities offering opportunities to explore local eateries, farms stands

Farm experiences

- // Farm Sum guided farm tours
- // Fruition Berry Farm: Pick Your Own
- // Heritage Orchard: Pick Your Own apples and maple syrup production
- // Nearby: Moon Valley Farms (Elgin) Pick Your Own apples and fresh apple cider
- // Limestone Organic Creamery: Farm Store



Lennox and Addington County

Lennox & Addington (L&A) County offers a distinct culinary identity rooted in its agricultural heritage and charming small towns. While perhaps not as widely publicized as some of its neighbouring regions for high-end gastronomy, L&A prides itself on a genuine farm-to-table approach, artisanal production, and a strong emphasis on locally sourced ingredients. Its culinary appeal lies in its authenticity, accessibility, and the direct connection visitors can make with producers.

L&A boasts a robust network of family-run farms and apiaries, allowing for direct purchase of fresh produce, meats, honey, and maple syrup. This short supply chain ensures freshness and supports local livelihoods.

There are numerous apiaries (The Bee Spot, Hogan's Honey & Maple Products, McTaggart Apiaries, Shane's Apiary) producing local, raw honey; Salmon River Sugar Bush for 100% pure maple products; Thorpe Farms; and Spring Meadow Orchard for ethically raised meats.

The county is also home to the renowned Wilton Cheese Factory, a longstanding institution that has been producing traditional cheddar cheese for decades. This factory is a significant draw for culinary visitors seeking authentic, locally made cheese.

L&A has a burgeoning craft beverage industry, particularly in the realm of breweries and wineries. This adds a sophisticated layer to the local culinary offerings. MacKinnon Brothers Brewing Co. (Bath) is a well-known craft brewery celebrated for its farm-to-glass approach, growing many of their own hops and barley. Their tasting room and music events are popular. Bergeron Estate Winery & Cider Company (Adolphustown) offers wines and ciders in a picturesque waterfront setting on Lake Ontario, often paired with food options like Nonna's Pizza on-site. Longrid Estates Vineyards & Winery (Napanee) is the county's newest winery, joining 22 Vines as a local winery providing tasting experiences.

Events & festivals

- // Salmon River Sugar Bush (Maple Syrup Festival) (March)
- // Back to the Farm MacKinnon Brothers Beer & Music Festival (August)

Markets

- // Beaver Lake Farmers & Artisan Market (Erinsville) (Summer)
- // Amherstview Farmers Market (Saturdays, May – October)
- // Northbrook Farmers Market (Saturdays, summer)
- // Yarker Farmer's Market (Saturday, summer)
- // Lennox & Addington Farmers Market (Napanee)
- // Sunday Market in Bath (Bath) (July – October)
- // Hollow Square Market (Newburgh) (June – October)
- // Babock Mill Makers Market (Odessa) (Sundays, Summer)

Activities

- // The Norman Paul (Napanee River Tours) offers pre-selection of cruise food offerings

Trails & tours

- // Sip & Savour Itinerary: self-guided trail including wineries, breweries, orchards, and restaurants

Farm experiences

- // Wynn Farms
- // Spring Meadow Orchards
- // Paulridge Berry Farm (Napanee) pick your own, wagon rides
- // Berries by the Bay (Conway): Saskatoon and haskap berries





1000 Islands and Rideau Canal Waterways

The 1000 Islands and Rideau Waterways region, encompassing parts of Leeds Grenville, Frontenac and Lanark Counties, is a picturesque area renowned for its natural beauty and diverse agricultural landscape. Field crops and grains, fruits and berries, apples, vegetables, and livestock including grass-fed, organic, and heritage breeds are commonly grown and produced by farmers in this region. Specialty food products include maple syrup and maple products, artisanal cheese, cured meats, baked goods, and cut flowers.

Some of the unique culinary attributes of the area include a rich history in family-based farming operations including a burgeoning number of craft breweries, wineries, and distilleries to produce high-quality beverages such as 1000 Islands Brewing Co (Brockville), Arbru Brewery (Mallorytown), Busl Cider Co (Mallorytown), and Scheuermann Vineyard & Winery (Westport). Maison Maitland Cooking School offers hands-on cooking experiences just outside of Brockville.

Events & festivals

- // Ribfest Brockville, August
- // Prescott Ribfest & Sportsman Show (June)
- // 1000 Islands Family Ribfest & Music Festival (Gananoque) (June)
- // Athens Cornfest
- // Agricultural Fairs: Lansdowne Fair, Delta Fair, Lombardy Fair, Merrickville Fair, Spencerville Fair, Lyndhurst Turkey Fair
- // Delta Harvest Festival (September)
- // 1000 Islands Wine & Food Festival (Brockville) (September)

Markets

- // Gananoque Farmers Market (Thursdays, June – October)
- // Merrickville Farmers Market (Saturdays, June – October)
- // Merrickville Makers Market (spring, fall, and Christmas)
- // Smiths Falls Farmer's Market (Saturdays, May – October)
- // Perth Farmers Market (Saturdays, May – October)
- // Westport Farmers Market (Saturdays, May – October)
- // Crosby Lake Farmers Market (Rideau Lakes) (Saturdays, May – October)
- // Kemptville Farmers Market (North Grenville) (Sundays, May – October)
- // Wendy's Country Market (Lyndhurst)

Activities

- // Maison Maitland Cooking School
- // Sugar Bush Visits (March)
- // Wendy's Country Market (year-round hub for local food and community events)

Trails & tours

- // Foodie Shop Adventure: self-guided tour highlight unique local food shops and specialty stores
- // Fresh Backed Adventure: self-guide tour highlighting bakeries and cafes across the region

Farm experiences

- // Berry Good Farm (Perth) blueberries
- // Hall's Apple Market & Orchard (Brockville)
- // Tincap Farms (Brockville), berry picking
- // Wendy's Country Market (Lyndhurst) pick your own herbs



STRENGTHS, CHALLENGES & OPPORTUNITIES

The following identifies Kingston's strengths that can be leveraged, the challenges to be navigated, and potential opportunities that lie ahead to grow Kingston's culinary tourism sector. This is a consolidation of stakeholder input, industry analysis, and research.

STRENGTHS

Strength	Description	Implication
Connection with local farms and producers	Restaurant owners and growers have built long term relationships and trust	Positive working relationships in place to grow collaboration and support
Diversity of culinary offerings	Kingston's history of "foodways" includes immigration and multi-cultural influence	There are opportunities to celebrate cultures and diversity
Access to local produce	Kingston is located in a rich agricultural region close to farms and producers	Kingston's food scene is seasonal: fresh and local
Elevated local customers; Queen's ecosystem of guests that "care about food"	Local, customer base across all seasons, affluent families visiting students	Creates condition for year-round restaurant success with foundational local support
Unique, historic settings	Only in Kingston settings; stone courtyards, arches, and alleyways	An environment with a unique "vibe" to enjoy food and drink
We've had a strong "foundation" of culinary for decades	Restaurants such as Chez Piggy established a food scene in Kingston decades ago	Established restaurant and hospitality community cares about the long term
"Fun and funky" food scene	Vibrant and energetic restaurant scene	Attracts consumers seeking new and different
Strong brand narrative and storytelling narrative for Kingston	Tourism Kingston has created a strong narrative and support for local chefs, owners, and makers	Kingston's reputation as a food city has continued to evolve and grow

Strength	Description	Implication
Established Kingstonlicious event and Kingston Food Tours	Key “cornerstone” experiences are well established and successful	Variety of visitor experiences is well established
Dynamic downtown area	Blend of old and new, shops, restaurants, and waterfront	Dining is just one component of the downtown experience – lots to do
Relatively affordable place to live to attract new talent	Cost of living in Kingston is lower than major urban centres	Could be an attractor for future culinary talent
10 Feast On® certified restaurants	Based on size of the city, this is a relatively high number	Kingston continues to build credibility and recognition in the local food movement
Partnership with Lionhearts and commitment to sustainability among chef community	Chef community cares about food security and giving back to community	Cultivates an inviting, community-centre atmosphere

CHALLENGES

Challenge	Description	Implication
Operators lack time and resources to build new products and expand existing ones: too busy running their own operations	Most culinary operators – chefs, restaurateurs, farmers, brewers, and small-scale food producers – are consumed by the demands of running their daily business.	Underlines the need to have a dedicated lead/project manager to execute the culinary strategy and directly support operators
Moving people around the area; transportation to connect rural and urban experiences	There is a gap between Kingston's concentrated, walkable downtown culinary scene and the dispersed, rural locations of its key agricultural partners – farms, wineries, breweries, and artisanal producers.	Visitors with their own car can experience non-urban culinary events/attractions. International visitors and those arriving by train can not, limiting access to this lucrative audience.
Sustained marketing and event management support is limited	There is no single person whose primary role is to handle event logistics and specialized culinary-focused marketing.	Underlines the need to have a dedicated lead/project manager to execute the culinary strategy (events, promotion, funding, etc.)
Gap in experiential offerings that connect visitors with local food systems	Lack of hands-on, immersive and educational activities that allow visitors to engage more fully in Kingston's food story.	Opportunity to introduce and grow new visitor experiences and capitalize on potential markets.
Attracting new culinary talent; recruitment of workers, especially with loss of St. Lawrence College programs	A shortage of skilled labour is a threat to the growth and innovation of the food and beverage sector in Kingston including hotels and restaurants.	No longer a stream of trained, entry-level workers, operators must now recruit from a wider area and more competitive markets including Toronto and Ottawa.

Challenge	Description	Implication
City and Southeast Public Health (SEPH) and other regulations and bylaws restricting food service and introduction of more pop-up style events	A barrier for operators and event planners – ideas could be left unrealized/abandoned because the regulatory effort and cost are too high	The growth and creativity of the culinary scene is limited and less dynamic.
Navigating SEPH regulations present on-going challenges to food service operators and event organizers	Compliance for home-based and commercial business limit opportunities for public food service in non-traditional settings (some note KFL&A most strict in the province)	The growth and creativity of the culinary scene is limited and less dynamic.
No centralized advocacy effort/plan to work with the City and others	The culinary sector lacks a single voice to speak on its behalf to government and other key partners	The impact and importance of the culinary sector and culinary tourism is not effectively communicated.
Food service at some major attractions is lacking and does not reflect the place	Food and beverage offerings are “generic” and not memorable – a lost opportunity for enhancing visitor experience	The authenticity and atmosphere of historic places could be strengthened through local food.
Kingston Public Market is not reflective of local producers/not a true representation	There is a noticeable absence of farmers and producers from Kingston and the surrounding area.	The Market does not accurately reflect the agricultural assets of the area and does not reflect the “taste of place”
Little capacity to grow culinary products and experiences; needs a champion/resource	New ideas (festivals, trails, events) can not be developed as there is no coordinator to do the legwork, organize meetings, manage logistics, and build partnerships.	Underlines the need to have a dedicated lead/project manager to execute the culinary strategy and directly support operators
Lacking top-tier recognition (i.e. Michelin-level) establishments found in more prominent culinary destinations	Awards and recognition provide global impact; signalling quality and innovation in culinary experiences – but they are hard to achieve.	In the longer term, it could be an attractor for culinary talent and higher yield traveller segments.

OPPORTUNITIES

Opportunities	Description	Implication
Establishing a dedicated resource to represent and work with the food and drink community	Lead representative for culinary development to plan, execute and manage culinary program and initiatives	Drives strategic action and results
Attraction of high value international visitors; spend more on dining and entertainment	Creating a plan to work with partnerships on international marketing (trade, media, and sales)	Higher yield visitors, greater economic impact
Continue to leverage partnership with Culinary Tourism Alliance	Align activities around the CTA new National Strategy including experience development; incorporating Canadian food and drink into outdoor experiences, integration into national historic sites, local good, and products for sale at Visitor Information Centre)	Growth in new products and experiences to bring to market
Strengthen partnerships with regional operators and producers	Seeking out new regional partners for product development and promotion	Growth in new products and experiences to bring to market
Fill the gap in experiential offerings that connect visitors with local food systems; classes, Indigenous, hands-on, farm visits, etc.	Seeking out new producers, partners and event organizers for product development and promotion	Growth in new products and experiences to bring to market

Opportunities	Description	Implication
Kingston Public Market: focus on and showcase local culture	Work with City and partners in the realization of Public Market enhancements	Improved visitor experiences and economic impact
More integration of food and drink experiences into overnight stays/packages	Connecting producers/restaurants with accommodation and tourism partners to produce visitor packages	Growth in new products and experiences to bring to market
Amplify sustainability and local food practices	Educate consumers (visitors and locals) on the sustainable practices and values of the Kingston food community	Creates an authentic, fact-based narrative for promotion
Leverage historic sites and experiences with potential culinary tie-ins	Support museums and historic sites that have an existing or potential culinary product or experience that can be further developed (e.g old flour mill in Delta, Penitentiary Museum)	Growth in new products and experiences to bring to market
Strengthen collaboration with The County; recognizing the shared challenges of available resources (human and financial) to build and deliver partnership programs and new experiences	Working with the new management team at Visit the County to identify opportunities for collaboration and partnership in funding, product development and promotion	Stronger regional narrative and product offering between Kingston and The County
Achieving designations like en Route, MICHELIN Guide or others would be essential for putting Kingston on the map as a significant culinary destination	Explore what reviews/programs are most suitable for Kingston restaurants; working with chefs and owners to identify what's possible in medium-long term	Builds reputation for Kingston in national and international audiences.

Opportunities	Description	Implication
Influx of new corporate customers with proposed convention centre and new hotels	Additional capacity for corporate visitors is a positive growth opportunity for restaurants including corporate/private events	Growth in corporate clientele and revenue
Integration of food and drink into existing signature events (music, buskers, etc.)	Investigating how a more robust local food product can enhance visitor experiences (influenced by food service policies, street closures, etc.)	Growth in new products and experiences to bring to market
Promoting the diversity of the city's food scene	Highlight and discover authentic food stories; culture and community	Builds reputation for Kingston for product marketing/promotion
Integrated workforce attraction and development; elevate status of culinary careers in Kingston	Identify collaboration between Kingston Economic Development, the City of Kingston and Tourism Kingston, ORHMA, etc. to integrate/introduce culinary workforce attraction strategies	Attracts new talent, better training, and retention opportunities



*KINGSTON'S
CULINARY
STRATEGY*

CULINARY

IN THIS SECTION

- 74** | Strategic pillars & initiatives
- 76** | Manage: Leadership resource and development
- 86** | Market: Product & partnership development
- 96** | Mobilize: Supporting the local food system

STRATEGIC PILLARS & INITIATIVES

These initiatives aim to build Kingston's culinary landscape and strengthen its local food system, positioning the city as a leading gastronomic destination. The initiatives will elevate Kingston's culinary reputation through strategic development, unique food storytelling, and the introduction of a restaurant levy to fuel growth. With dedicated leadership and resources to enhance Kingston's hospitality expertise, support certification, and advocate for the entire food and tourism sector, ultimately creating a more vibrant, sustainable, and welcoming community for both residents and visitors.



This strategy has been broken down into three pillars:

MANAGE

—

**LEADERSHIP RESOURCE
& DEVELOPMENT**

MARKET

—

**PRODUCT & PARTNERSHIP
DEVELOPMENT**

MOBILIZE

—

**SUPPORTING THE LOCAL
FOOD SYSTEM**

Each pillar contains a number of initiatives that should be undertaken over the next five years. Timing has been identified as short-term (0–1 year), medium-term (2–3 years), and long-term (4–5 years) This list should be revisited annually with activities and timing updated as required.

MANAGE:

*LEADERSHIP
RESOURCE &
DEVELOPMENT*

manage

The following actions oversee, support and foster the growth of Kingston's culinary sector through dedicated management. These efforts are designed to provide dedicated leadership, support, and effective representation, ensuring the ongoing development and promotion of local operators and producers while feeding into Tourism Kingston's efforts to strengthen the city's overall reputation as a premier culinary destination.



1

Introduce a restaurant association and an advisory group to support culinary development – as identified in the IDS

Actions

- // Evaluate options for restaurant association structure and funding options including legal structures and governance
- // Convene a working group of restaurateurs to co-design the association’s structure, purpose, and governance
- // Establish the association under Kingston Accommodation Partners with start-up funding from the Municipal Accommodation Tax (MAT)
- // Identify staff resources to support the long-term sustainability of a Kingston restaurant association (under Kingston Accommodation Partners)
- // Launch a membership campaign and host industry networking events to onboard partners
- // Create shared marketing initiatives (e.g., culinary trails, dining maps, seasonal promotions) in collaboration with Tourism Kingston
- // Develop an advocacy platform to represent restaurant needs in city-wide initiatives, workforce development, and regulatory
- // Leverage ORHMA staff, tools, and resources to build membership benefits and align with business owner priorities
- // Work in partnership with Tourism Kingston and community stakeholders

2

Hire a dedicated position who has experience and expertise in hospitality and culinary arts.

Actions

- // Define roles and responsibilities of a dedicated culinary sector development manager
- // Identify required qualifications; education, hospitality experience, and skills needed
- // Detail core responsibilities including:
 - Developing and implementing culinary strategies and action plans
 - Supporting local restaurants, producers, and food businesses – building relationships
 - Managing initiatives (e.g., restaurant levy, certification programs)
 - Event management/coordination (e.g., Kingstonlicious)
 - Advocacy and lobbying for the culinary sector
 - Support Tourism Kingston marketing and promotion of the city’s food scene
 - Relationship building with stakeholders (restaurant owners, chefs, associations, agritourism networks, City departments)
 - Budget management and reporting
- // Establish annual review and performance evaluation process



arts

3

Create a plan to increase restaurant certifications/designations including Feast On® and Rainbow Registered accreditation

Actions

- // Audit the current landscape and identify what opportunities exist for additional certifications. Maintain a database of current and target certifications.
- // Set specific goals (e.g., "Increase Feast On® certified restaurants by X% in 12 months," "Achieve Y new certifications for local food producers within 6 months")
- // Promote and support CTA sessions/webinars, work with CTA to tailor programs to the needs of Kingston restaurants.
- // Promote and support growth of CGLCC's Rainbow Registered accredited restaurants and food service companies
- // Offer direct support or workshops on completing applications for various certifications
- // Explore or advocate for small grants or subsidies from the city or provincial bodies to offset certification application fees or initial compliance costs (e.g., training staff, adapting menus)
- // Skill Development Workshops: source or develop workshops on menu development, sustainable procurement, and innovative culinary techniques that align with certification standards (Kingston Economic Development may be a partner)
- // Based on results and feedback, continuously refine the plan, updating resources, and adapt strategies to maximize certification growth



4

Represent Kingston's culinary sector in associations and related networks (restaurant associations, agritourism)

Actions

- // Identify key associations and networks for membership and participation including ORHMA, agritourism, culinary, economic development, and educational institutions
- // Secure memberships and ensure Kingston holds active memberships in relevant, high-impact associations.
- // Actively participate in discussions, working groups, and committees where Kingston's perspective can be shared and issues relevant to the local culinary sector are addressed.
- // Act as a voice and advocate for Kingston to share local Insights: Present data, success stories, and challenges from Kingston's culinary scene to regional, national, and provincial bodies.
- // Lobby for policies, funding, or programs that would benefit Kingston's restaurants, food producers, and the overall food system (e.g., changes to liquor licensing, grants for local food initiatives, tourism marketing support).
- // Introduce Kingston restaurant owners, chefs, and producers to relevant contacts met through these networks, fostering new business relationships and opportunities – farm-to-table and farm-to-institution opportunities
- // Work with Tourism Kingston to identify partnership opportunities: Seek out potential collaborations with other cities, regions, or organizations on joint marketing campaigns, culinary events, or research projects.
- // Work with Tourism Kingston to promote as an attractive partner for culinary initiatives and investments within these broader networks.
- // Use participation in associations to stay abreast of emerging culinary trends, technological advancements, consumer preferences, and regulatory changes that could impact Kingston's sector.
- // Regularly report back to City leadership, Tourism Kingston, Kingston Economic Development, and the local culinary community on activities, key learnings, and outcomes from participation in these networks.



5

Advocate for culinary operators and provide ongoing communication to and from the City of Kingston, SEPH, and other bodies regarding regulatory challenges

Actions

- // Create a dedicated taskforce to streamline licensing process, reduce unnecessary regulatory burden on food production, and better links to food access
- // Establish communication channels & understanding challenges by conducting regular surveys with Kingston's restaurant owners, chefs, and food businesses to identify their most pressing regulatory challenges (e.g., patio permits, licensing, zoning, health inspections, waste management, single-use plastics, noise bylaws, sign permits, specific food safety rules, etc)
- // Maintain an "issues log": create and maintain a centralized, up-to-date log of all reported regulatory challenges, tracking their nature, frequency, affected businesses, and current status.
- // Identify key City departments & personnel: map out the relevant City departments and their key contacts involved in restaurant and food regulation. Proactively establish strong working relationships with staff and managers in these departments.
- // Align activities with the City of Kingston Food Framework
- // Prepare briefs & recommendations: develop concise, data-driven briefs and recommendations for City Council and relevant committees regarding needed regulatory reforms
- // Actively participate in public input sessions at City Council and relevant committee meetings to voice the concerns and needs of culinary operators.
- // Translate complex municipal bylaws and regulatory changes into easy-to-understand guides and FAQs specifically for culinary operators.
- // Provide clear, timely updates to the culinary community on the status of their submitted challenges, City Council decisions regarding bylaws, and new regulatory guidelines.
- // Partner with City departments to host workshops that help operators understand and comply with regulations.
- // Publicly celebrate instances where regulatory challenges have been successfully resolved or streamlined due to advocacy efforts, demonstrating tangible value to operators.

alliv



6

Ongoing marketing support to Tourism Kingston, and culinary event management/coordination

Actions

- // Work with the Tourism Kingston marketing team as advisor/subject matter expert to help further define and align Kingston's culinary brand with the overall destination brand
- // Consult with stakeholders (restaurants, producers, tourism partners) to articulate a unique selling proposition for Kingston's food scene
- // Support Tourism Kingston's content development through highlighting messaging opportunities about local ingredients, diverse cuisines, chef talent, and unique dining experiences.
- // Ensure marketing team is made aware of engaging content and stories dedicated to the culinary scene, featuring restaurants, producers, food stories, and upcoming events
- // Help coordinate the capture of high-quality culinary photos/videos for use in Tourism Kingston marketing
- // Identify content opportunities that delve into Kingston's food history, highlighting local chefs, profile producers, and share unique food experiences.



- // Work with Tourism Kingston to pitch earned media stories about Kingston's culinary scene to local, provincial, and national food writers, travel journalists, and broadcasters.
- // Assist Tourism Kingston marketing team to identify and collaborate with food bloggers, culinary influencers, and travel writers to showcase Kingston's authentic and unique dining experiences
- // Identify the needs of local restaurants and provide tools/support (e.g., high-res photos of Kingston, Kingston brand guidelines, social media templates, tips for online reviews) to help them market themselves effectively.
- // Assist restaurants in optimizing their online profiles on Google My Business, TripAdvisor, Yelp, and other relevant review and listing platforms.
- // Offer workshops for restaurant owners and staff on social media best practices, food photography, online reputation management, and customer service (work with Kingston Economic Development for delivery through Small Business Centre)
- // Create and maintain a comprehensive, regularly updated calendar of Kingston's culinary events
- // Identify opportunities for new events that align with Kingston's culinary brand and attract target audiences.
- // Identify opportunities for corporate sponsorships or grants to support event development. Work with partners to determine course of action for sponsorship attraction.
- // Conduct a comprehensive review of each event to identify successes, challenges, and lessons learned for future improvement
- // Prepare detailed reports for stakeholders on event outcomes and impact.

MARKET:

*PRODUCT &
PARTNERSHIP
DEVELOPMENT*

This pillar is focused on expanding Kingston's culinary appeal and reach. This includes championing improvements at the Kingston Public Market and curating innovative new culinary experiences, activations, and themed itineraries. It will support and amplify Tourism Kingston's marketing efforts by enhancing the narrative around Kingston's diverse culinary offerings and vibrant ethnic food scene and advocating for regional tourism leadership to support and promote new and existing culinary trails. Central to this approach is the fostering of crucial partnerships to create a broader, compelling story arc about the entire regional food system.

market

1

Build new experiences and activations, products and themed itineraries

Actions

- // Conduct and maintain a detailed inventory & gap analysis of current culinary experiences, tours, classes, events, and unique products available in Kingston
- // Identify opportunities: Research emerging culinary trends (e.g., plant-based, hyper-local, food history, fermentation, foraging, specific ethnic cuisines, cooking classes, farm-to-table dinners, chef's tasting menus, food photography tours)
- // Host brainstorming sessions: Organize a Culinary Kingston workshop involving chefs, restaurateurs, local producers (farmers, cheesemakers, brewers, distillers), tour operators, accommodation providers, and cultural institutions (in cooperation with the Culinary Tourism Alliance). Identify one or two pilot opportunities.
- // Work with regional partners to conceptualize and map out themed culinary itineraries including multiple stops and experiences
- // Broker partnerships: facilitate introductions and discussions between businesses that can collaborate on new products or experiences (e.g., a distillery and a local restaurant for a pairing event, a historical site, and a caterer for a themed event dinner)
- // Identify and assist partners in applying for grants or funding opportunities that support new tourism product development
- // Hospitality training: offer workshops for businesses on creating exceptional visitor experiences related to new products and services.

2

Enhance narrative around diversity of culinary offerings and ethnic food scene

Actions

- // Map Kingston's ethnic food scene: identify all ethnic restaurants, grocery stores, bakeries, food trucks, and specialty food businesses in Kingston. Categorize by cuisine type (e.g., Caribbean, South Asian, East Asian, Middle Eastern, Latin American, African, European regional).
- // Research the cultural background, traditions, and unique stories behind these cuisines and businesses.
- // Conduct one-on-one meetings with owners/chefs of ethnic restaurants and food businesses to understand their stories, challenges, and unique perspectives
- // Support Tourism Kingston in creating compelling culinary narratives: create profiles (written, photo, video) of chefs, owners, and families behind Kingston's ethnic restaurants, sharing their personal journeys, culinary traditions, and signature dishes.
- // "Behind the Dish" features: develop content that explains the history, cultural significance, and preparation methods of specific ethnic dishes, linking them to their origins. Highlight specific ethnic ingredients available at local markets and stores, explaining their use and cultural importance.
- // Explore collaboration with "Kingston Cultural Food Guide" created by Canadian Forces Morale and Welfare Services – a resource designed to help individuals find specific grocery items from around the world that may be difficult to locate in Kingston. It functions as a cultural food map, showcasing locations where specific international food items can be purchased, thus assisting with finding ingredients to replicate familiar dishes.
- // Help Tourism Kingston in development of marketing assets: photography and video to capture the vibrancy of diverse dishes, restaurant atmospheres, and the people behind them.
- // Proactively identify stories about Kingston's diverse food scene
- // Engage with food bloggers and social media influencers who specialize in diverse cuisines or multicultural experiences to create authentic content, especially those in GTA and Montreal.
- // Consider a "Global Flavours" promotion: celebrating the diversity of Kingston's culinary offerings, featuring tastings, cooking demonstrations, and cultural performances.
- // Marketing training: offer workshops for ethnic restaurant owners on digital marketing, social media, and leveraging their unique cultural narrative

fresh



3

Advocate for improvement in Kingston Public Market

Actions

- // Actively participate in public input sessions at City Council and relevant committee meetings to voice the concerns and needs of culinary operators.
- // Compile feedback and proposed improvements suggested by the culinary business community into a clear, concise document
- // Align efforts with the municipality's long-term strategy and support for markets identified in the food framework.
- // Translate desired improvements into concrete, actionable recommendations for the City.
- // Closely monitor City Council decisions, staff reports, and budget allocations related to the Market.
- // Maintain consistent communication with City staff and elected officials to ensure progress on adopted recommendations.
- // Provide regular updates to culinary stakeholders



4

Advocate for regional tourism leadership to develop new culinary trails and experiences and provide marketing support to existing ones

Actions

- // Determine where Kingston's culinary goals align with existing RTO 9 objectives particularly concerning culinary, agritourism, experiential travel, regional branding, and economic impact.
- // Propose specific projects: develop proposals for new culinary trails or experiences that could span Kingston and the surrounding region (e.g., "Kingston & County Cheese Trail," "Frontenac Farm & Feast Route," "1000 Islands Brews & Bites").
- // Clearly define the type of product development and marketing support required for new initiatives including advertising
- // Meet with regional tourism bodies to present the "Regional Culinary Collaboration" pitch and gain support for collaboration
- // Collaborate on applying for provincial or federal grants that support regional tourism development or culinary initiatives
- // Incorporate regional culinary trails into the RTO 9 planning cycle; with request for RTO 9 to lead the product development
- // Maintain consistent, proactive communication with regional tourism leaders, providing updates on Kingston's culinary progress and identifying new opportunities for collaboration



5

Continue development of partnerships with Frontenac County, The County, Downtown Kingston, local festival organizers, and the City of Kingston

Actions

- // Develop individual partner engagement plans: identify key contacts and decision-makers and potential areas of synergy for culinary initiatives.
- // Identify current successful collaborations and areas for expansion.
- // Actively seek updates from partners on their relevant initiatives, strategies, and challenges that could impact or intersect with Kingston's culinary goals.
- // Explore the use of common metrics for measuring the success of collaborative culinary initiatives and share performance reports.
- // Proactively research and identify provincial, federal, or private grants that encourage inter-municipal, regional, or tourism sector partnerships for culinary development.

- // Collaborate on drafting and submitting grant applications with partners to secure funding for shared culinary projects
- // Explore opportunities for co-branded products and experiences from different regions or sectors
- // Explore opportunity for growth of food recovery Lionheart pop-up markets in Kingston and surrounding area
- // Joint advocacy approach: collaborate with partners to advocate to the regional and provincial bodies on issues impacting the broader culinary and agritourism sectors (e.g., liquor licensing, farm-gate sales regulations, marketing support).





6

Create broader story arc about regional food system

Actions

- // Identify key regional food system components:
 - Farmers & Producers
 - Artisanal Processors
 - Distributors & Markets
 - Culinary Operators
 - Indigenous Foodways
- // Unearth compelling stories: capture the stories of farmers, their families, sustainable practices, and unique challenges/triumphs
- // Trace the journey of specific ingredients (e.g., a heritage apple variety, local lamb, specific vegetable) from the farm to a dish on a Kingston restaurant's menu
- // Explore working with Queen's University programs related to Food Sciences to commission/study/provide evidence on the origin of foodways in the Kingston and Eastern Ontario region (e.g., Tuscon, AZ, a UNESCO Gastronomy city, worked with the University of Arizona to carbon date food production in the region dating back over 4,000 years)



- // Research and leverage Kingston's role in Canadian history through a culinary lens (e.g., Canada's first English-language cookbook was printed in Kingston)
- // Highlight stories of innovation in farming, food processing, or distribution, and how the regional system adapts to challenges
- // Document initiatives where the food system supports local communities, food security, or environmental sustainability
- // Emphasize the symbiotic relationship between Kingston as a culinary hub and the agricultural bounty of its surrounding region.
- // Highlight environmentally friendly practices, land preservation, and responsible food production.
- // Underscore the unique flavours and identity derived from the region's specific geography and climate.
- // Communicate the positive economic contributions of supporting the local and regional food system
- // Weave in historical context and cultural traditions related to food and farming in the region
- // Recognize Rainbow Registered food sector businesses and stories of 2SLGBTQI+ operators and owners
- // Feature the regional food system story prominently on Tourism Kingston's website, blog, and social media channels
- // Ongoing production of Tourism Kingston's "Fresh" culinary magazine to amplify stories and themes
- // Pitch stories to regional, provincial, and national food, travel, and lifestyle media, emphasizing the unique regional food system.
- // Collaborate with food and travel influencers who have an interest in local food systems and sustainable practices
- // Training & storytelling workshops: provide resources and training to culinary operators, tour guides, and front-line staff on how to authentically tell the regional food story to visitors

MOBILIZE:

SUPPORTING THE LOCAL FOOD SYSTEM

This pillar of the culinary strategy is dedicated to activating and strengthening the foundational elements of Kingston's local food system. By aligning with the City's broader Food Framework, this initiative will conduct assessment to understand critical needs within the culinary workforce and identify economic development opportunities for food and beverage entrepreneurs. It commits to helping local food charities and enhancing food security, while actively improving communication among all culinary stakeholders.



mobilize



1

Alignment with the City of Kingston Food Framework

Actions

- // Review the official framework document and identify the specific recommendations, key performance indicators (KPIs), and current municipal programs/ actions outlined within each pillar
- // Map culinary strategy initiatives to food framework pillars: For each initiative in the culinary strategy (e.g., supporting local producers, workforce development, marketing, events, food security), identify which Food Framework pillar(s) it directly supports or overlaps with
- // Where possible, align key performance indicators (KPIs) of the culinary strategy with those used in the Food Framework to demonstrate unified progress.
- // Seek representation or active participation in any ongoing working groups or committees established to implement specific pillars or recommendations of the Food Framework and bring the perspective of the culinary sector to these discussions
- // Explore and pursue opportunities for joint grant applications with the City (under the Food Framework's funding streams or other sources) for initiatives that benefit both culinary development and broader food system goals (e.g., supporting food charities, local food procurement, food education).
- // Consider the culinary industry's potential contributions to initiatives related to food security, such as supporting food banks, community gardens, or food rescue programs
- // Work with the City on identifying and advocating for infrastructure improvements that benefit both food production/distribution and culinary businesses (e.g., shared-use kitchens, cold storage facilities, public market upgrades)

2

Assess the need for a culinary workforce development and talent attraction plan

Actions

- // Conduct a comprehensive culinary workforce survey: collect data on current staffing levels, specific roles (e.g., line cooks, pastry chefs, front-of-house, management), full-time vs. part-time ratios, current skill sets, recruitment challenges (e.g., difficulty finding skilled labour, high turnover), average wages, and projected hiring needs for the next 1–3 years
- // Access and analyze relevant labour market information from Statistics Canada, Job Bank, and provincial sources (e.g., Ontario Ministry of Labour, Immigration, Training and Skills Development, Restaurants Canada, ORHMA).
- // Consult reports from Kingston Economic Development and other local economic development bodies regarding general workforce trends and in-migration strategies.
- // Compare average culinary wages in Kingston to provincial and national benchmarks.
- // Engage with colleges and other relevant training providers to understand their current curriculum, enrollment numbers, graduate placement rates, and capacity to address industry needs identified as lacking by local employers.
- // Gap analysis and needs identification: Synthesize feedback on why talent is difficult to attract to or retain in Kingston's culinary sector (e.g., housing affordability, perception of hospitality careers, work-life balance, lack of clear career pathways, competitive compensation)
- // Based on anticipated growth in Kingston's culinary and tourism sectors, project the future demand for various culinary roles over a 3 – 5 year horizon
- // Develop a "Culinary Workforce Needs Assessment Report": compile all findings from the data collection and gap analysis into a comprehensive report.
- // Propose strategic areas that a full "Culinary Workforce Development and Talent Attraction Plan" should address. This might include:
 - Targeted recruitment campaigns (local, national, international).
 - Enhanced training and upskilling programs.
 - Mentorship and apprenticeship initiatives.
 - Career pathway development.
 - Strategies to improve industry perception and work-life balance.
 - Collaboration models with educational institutions and industry associations
- // Convene a Culinary Workforce Advisory Group: bring together a diverse group of stakeholders, including representatives from restaurants, food producers, local HR professionals, Kingston Economic Development, Tourism Kingston, and relevant City departments; Present the assessment findings and preliminary plan for review, feedback, and validation



3

Identify what economic development activity could support local food and beverage entrepreneurs

Actions

- // Document all current programs offered by Kingston Economic Development, Frontenac Business Services, Small Business Enterprise Centre, and other local organizations that directly or indirectly support food and beverage businesses.
- // Research relevant provincial (e.g., Eastern Ontario Development Fund, Agri-Food programs) and federal grants or initiatives (e.g., AgrilInnovate, CanExport SMEs, Canada Small Business Financing Program) applicable to food and beverage entrepreneurs.
- // Support the growth of the Great Lakes Cruise Association Galley Supplies program that promotes the inclusion/purchase of farm-to-table products along the Great Lakes route to localize food service to cruise guests. This further supports community involvement and economic benefits from the Great Lakes cruising/deep water dock in Kingston.
- // Pinpoint where existing support is lacking or insufficient for the specific needs of food and beverage entrepreneurs in Kingston (e.g., specialized mentorship, sector-specific incubation, access to food-grade co-packing facilities).

brew

CULINARY STRATEGY

- // Research how other successful food cities or regions (e.g., Colborne, Surrey with strong food hubs) provide support to their food and beverage entrepreneurs (e.g., food incubators, shared commercial kitchens, specialized business accelerators, direct funding for food startups).
- // Work with Kingston Economic Development to identify gaps in education or business support for local food businesses.
- // Identify available commercial kitchen spaces, co-packing facilities, or underutilized institutional kitchens that could be shared, aligned with food framework recommendation.
- // Work with City and SEPH planning and by-law departments to simplify and clarify regulations for home-based food businesses and small-scale "Made in Kingston" food production.
- // Promote Kingston Economic Development workshops to educate food and beverage entrepreneurs on available grants, loans, and investment opportunities (federal, provincial, local, private).
- // Facilitate direct meetings or "pitch events" where entrepreneurs can connect with local banks, investors, and government funding representatives.
- // Create a roster of experienced food and beverage professionals (retired or current) who can offer mentorship to emerging entrepreneurs.
- // Offer workshops on topics highly relevant to food and beverage, such as supply chain management, ingredient sourcing, recipe costing, branding for food products, wholesale strategies, and export readiness.
- // Develop and promote initiatives that encourage local restaurants, institutions, and consumers to prioritize purchasing from Kingston and regional food and beverage entrepreneurs
- // Designate a point person to act as a concierge to help food entrepreneurs navigate City permits, licenses, and health unit requirements.
- // Work with Kingston Economic Development to develop user-friendly guides and checklists for opening various types of food businesses in Kingston, outlining all necessary steps and contacts.
- // Advocate for municipal policies that encourage food entrepreneurship (e.g., simplified patio permits, food truck zones, support for small-scale urban agriculture linked to businesses).



4

Support for local food charities and food security

Actions

- // Designate the Culinary Development Manager as the primary liaison between Kingston's culinary businesses and local food security organizations
- // Connect restaurants with food rescuers: facilitate direct connections between restaurants, attraction operators (e.g., 1000 Island Cruises) and Lionhearts
- // Facilitate workshops for culinary businesses on strategies to reduce food waste at the source (e.g., inventory management, menu planning, portion control, staff training)
- // Restaurant promotions: Encourage restaurants to feature a specific "Charity Dish" on their menu, with a portion of sales donated to a designated food security initiative for a set period
- // Skill-based volunteering: connect chefs and culinary staff with Lionhearts or other food charities that operate community kitchens or meal programs, where they can volunteer their expertise and further build community
- // Promote volunteer opportunities for entire restaurant teams as a way to give back and build team cohesion
- // Regularly share information with restaurants and culinary businesses about the scope of food insecurity in Kingston and the work of local food charities
- // Highlight successful collaborations between business event organizers/restaurants/event producers and food charities in marketing materials and on social media.

5

Enhance communication between restaurants, producers, growers and other stakeholders including the City of Kingston

Actions

- // Quarterly "Food System Meet-ups": organize regular, facilitated networking events specifically designed to bring together restaurants, producers, and other stakeholders (e.g., food distributors, chefs, food policy council members, City staff). Vary formats (e.g., structured networking, themed discussions, speed-dating for suppliers)
- // Establish smaller, issue-specific working groups (e.g., a "local procurement" working group, a "regulatory clarity" working group) that include representatives from relevant stakeholder groups and City departments.
- // Organize familiarization tours for Kingston chefs and restaurant owners to local farms and production facilities to build relationships and understanding of production processes.
- // Provide concise, tailored briefings from City departments on relevant policies, permits, and initiatives directly impacting food and beverage businesses (e.g., new patio bylaws, waste management changes)



Reveal lesser known food stories to feature producers, farms and makers

Actions

- // Work with Tourism Kingston to provide input and "food story" features in Tourism Kingston channels
- // Actively seek out small-scale farmers, artisanal food processors (e.g., specific jam makers, unique bread bakers, small-batch fermenters), Indigenous food purveyors, and home-based food businesses that have compelling stories but limited public visibility
- // Connect with local historical societies, cultural associations, and community elders who can provide insights into traditional recipes, forgotten agricultural practices, and the history of food in the region.
- // Restaurant & chef nominations: ask Kingston's chefs and restaurateurs to identify their favourite local suppliers
- // Trace the story of specific local ingredients (e.g., a heritage apple variety, local maple syrup, a particular type of local cheese) from its origin to its use in Kingston's restaurants.
- // Share the story of Lionhearts program and mobile markets and the need for further support of the food recovery process
- // Research and collaborate with Indigenous communities to feature their traditional food practices, ingredients, and the cultural significance of their foodways
- // Explore historical culinary practices, recipes, and food-related events in Kingston's past (e.g., early markets, significant food-producing families).
- // Incorporate educational elements about sustainable practices, seasonality, and the importance of local food.
- // Encourage Kingston restaurants to display QR codes at tables linking to stories of their local suppliers, or to feature specific "Producer Spotlight" sections on their menus.

SOURCES

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- // Tourism Kingston Integrated Destination Strategy, August 2025 Tourism Kingston Visitor Survey, 2024
- // Culinary Tourism Market Size, Share & Growth Report, Grandview Research, June 2025
- // Global Culinary Tourism Market Report, The Business Research Company, 2025
- // State of the Industry – Food & Beverage Tourism, World Food Travel Association (WFTA), February 2025
- // [Destination Marketing Fee – Tourism Jasper](#), accessed June 10, 2025
- // Destination Canada Traveller Segmentation Profiles, 2024
- // Culinary Tourism Alliance – National Culinary + Agritourism Action Plan, June 2025
- // [City of Kingston – Food System Framework](#)





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