



**Saskatoon Region  
Culinary Tourism Strategy  
2021-2023**



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Cover photo: Roasting bannock in Wanuskewin's tipi village





# Acknowledgements

We respectfully acknowledge the land for which this strategy was developed is on Treaty 6 territory and homeland of the Métis. We recognize the land is on the traditional territory of the Nehiyaw and Nehithaw/Cree, Nahkawe/Saulteaux, Stoney, Nakota, and Dakota peoples.

We recognize all Indigenous peoples who were here before us, as well as those who live with us now, and the seven generations to come. As Indigenous peoples have done since time immemorial, we strive to be responsible stewards and caretakers of these lands and waters and to respect the cultures, ceremonies, and traditions of all who call it home. We pay respect to the First Nations and Métis ancestors of this place and reaffirm our relationship with one another.

Through the combined efforts of several organizations, including the Indigenous Tourism Association of Canada, Indigenous Culinary of Associated Nations, along with Wanuskewin Heritage Park, and other Indigenous tourism businesses, we are seeing Indigenous tourism and culinary tourism flourish. We look forward to seeing Indigenous culinary products and experiences elevate the tourism landscape of Saskatchewan, including Saskatoon, and Canada overall, in the years to come.

The Saskatoon Region Culinary Tourism Strategy would not have come to fruition without the time, energy, and effort provided by Stephanie Clovechok, Jeff Fehr, and the rest of the project team at Tourism Saskatoon.

We would also like to thank everyone who shared their insights, input, and feedback through questionnaires, interviews, and meetings across the strategy development process. A special thank you goes to Gord Enns from the Saskatoon Food Council, for his enthusiastic and dedicated support throughout.

Finally, none of this would have been possible without the support of the Tourism Industry Association of Canada, through its Elevating Canadian Experiences, a program delivered through the Canadian Experiences Fund in partnership with the Government of Canada. Thank you!



The Culinary Tourism Alliance is a not-for-profit industry organization dedicated to bridging the gap between the food & drink and tourism industries. This report was prepared by Trevor Jonas Benson, Martin Lacelle, James Arteaga, and Camilo Montoya-Guevara.



# Executive Summary



The below report outlines Tourism Saskatoon's strategy for leading the growth of culinary tourism in Saskatoon Region, which includes the City of Saskatoon and its surrounding area. The Saskatoon Region Culinary Tourism Strategy is the outcome of Tourism Saskatoon's participation in a Tourism Industry Association of Canada project to pilot four culinary tourism strategy development processes across Canada. The project is part of the Elevating Canadian Experiences program, delivered through the Canadian Experiences Fund in partnership with the Government of Canada. The Culinary Tourism Alliance facilitated the research and development of this strategy from May to December 2020.

This strategy report presents the direction and actions that Tourism Saskatoon will take to develop culinary tourism in the destination over a three-year period from 2021-2023. At the start of strategy development process, the following goals were set:

- 1/** To build culinary tourism awareness amongst stakeholders in Saskatoon Region
- 2/** To plan culinary tourism development in an inclusive and sustainable manner
- 3/** To mobilize culinary tourism stakeholders around the actions needed to grow the industry
- 4/** To align the culinary tourism strategy with other tourism work

Across the project, several community-based participatory research methods were to complement was being explored through secondary research, including key informant interviews, a resident survey, and a key stakeholder meeting. The research methods were key to understanding the current context, points of differentiation, strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and challenges illustrated in this report.



# Culinary Tourism in Saskatoon Region

A diversity of tourism businesses can use food and drink products to elevate the visitor experience. In fact, any tourism-related business that includes a taste of place or culinary experience as part of its offering is part of the culinary tourism value chain. It includes a number of visitor-facing businesses, including:

- Accommodations
- Attractions
- Beverage producers
- Cooking schools
- Farmers' and public markets
- Festivals and events
- Foodservice operators
- Growers and producers
- Retailers
- Tour operators



Saskatoon's food identity has been influenced by its Indigenous and non-Indigenous cultural heritage, and it continues to evolve to this day. Immigration, traditional and innovative farming practices, and avant-garde chefs have made the Saskatoon Region a culinary mosaic. From bison and chokecherries to shashlik and perogies – Saskatoon Region has a number of key ingredients that reflect its landscape and cultures. Although, these products and recipes are commonly known and consumed locally, they are often unknown to people who have never been to the area. In addition to existing culinary assets, Saskatoon Region has a number of points of differentiation that will position the destination to grow through culinary tourism:

### **Points of Differentiation**

- Indigenous Cultures in Saskatoon Region
- Importance of Local
- Food and Innovation
- Urban and Rural Connections

Although visitors to Saskatoon Region are not currently motivated to travel by the food and drink offers across the destination, the area's strong Visiting Friends and Relatives (VFR) market create an opportunity to build up local ambassadors in residents to showcase Saskatoon Region food and drink. Additionally, the range of food related businesses and experiences across Saskatoon Region's urban and rural contexts, from breweries, farms, and restaurants are well positioned to capitalize on the rise of culinary as part of experiential tourism.





# Areas of Opportunity

Towards realizing its vision for Saskatoon Region to be renowned worldwide as a place to be inspired, Tourism Saskatoon is concentrating its destination development efforts on developing a sustainable industry, enhancing and evolving the visitor experience, operating a culturally sound and performance-based organization, and living and leading with a strong brand. <sup>1</sup> As such, the areas of opportunity presented to develop culinary tourism as a driver of visitation to, and a means through which to experience Saskatoon Region, support the vision for the destination and align with its strategic development pillars.

## **Cultivating Pride in Place**

Raising awareness of Saskatoon's unique ingredients while empowering residents to embrace the region's uniqueness with a culture of humility, is essential to the development of the destination. Cultivating pride in place also helps to strengthen ties between food producing spaces, places, and peoples.



### **Product Development and Diversification**

Strong culinary tourism destinations have a breadth and diversity of quality tourism products that connect the food and drink visitors enjoy to the peoples and places that make up the destination. This underlines the need to highlight the vibrancy of food histories, heritages, cultures, and seasons that define Saskatoon Region.

### **Co-planning and Monitoring**

To enable and foster the continued growth of culinary tourism in Saskatoon Region, relevant baseline data needs to be collected before a collaborative effort is put in toward monitoring and measuring success.

### **Brand Development and Positioning**

To develop into a destination where culinary is a part of every visitor experience regardless of the season, any and all tastes that are unique to Saskatoon Region need to be celebrated.





# Introduction

# Background

## May 2019

Tourism Saskatoon identifies the opportunity and need for culinary tourism development during a partnership meeting with the Saskatoon Food Council. Through the meeting we realized that numerous people in Saskatoon were taking actions in connection to agriculture and culinary initiatives.

## Summer 2019

Tourism Saskatoon engages the Culinary Tourism Alliance to support the design and development of a tourism stakeholder session to explore the destination's food positioning and points of differentiation.

## September 2019

Tourism Saskatoon and Saskatoon Food Council host a food tourism development session facilitated by the Culinary Tourism Alliance.

## February 2020

The Saskatoon Region, including the City of Saskatoon and the surrounding area, is selected by the Tourism Industry Association of Canada as one of four destinations across Canada to participate in the Elevating Canadian Experiences strategy development pilot facilitated by the Culinary Tourism Alliance.

## May 2020

Tourism Saskatoon initiates its culinary tourism development strategy process, which takes place across the next six (6) months.

## December 2020

Drafting of the Saskatoon Region Culinary Tourism Strategy report is complete.





# Context

This strategy report presents the direction and actions that Tourism Saskatoon will take to develop culinary tourism in the destination over the next three years (2021-2023). At the start of strategy development process, the following goals were set:

- 1/** To build culinary tourism awareness amongst stakeholders in Saskatoon Region
- 2/** To plan culinary tourism development in an inclusive and sustainable manner
- 3/** To mobilize culinary tourism stakeholders around the actions needed to grow the industry
- 4/** To align the culinary tourism strategy with other tourism work

Parallel to this project, Tourism Saskatoon worked on an experience development project that identified six (6) businesses for one-on-one business support to develop new culinary tourism experiences. Additionally, Tourism Saskatoon supported, and continued to support, the Saskatoon Food Council on the feasibility assessment and business planning for the development of a food tour social enterprise. A number of engagements and knowledge gained from both of these projects helped to inform the development of this culinary tourism strategy.



# Approach

The development of the strategy leveraged community-based participatory research as well as several desk-research methods, including:

**Background document review:** a number of background documents including plans, strategies, research reports, and news articles, among other relevant documents to the City of Saskatoon, neighbouring municipalities, and the province of Saskatchewan were reviewed to inform the context and alignments of this strategy.

**Secondary research:** secondary research was conducted into Saskatoon Region's current social, cultural, and environmental context to identify unique opportunities to leverage in the development of a culinary tourism strategy, including identifying unique selling points (USPs), food-based cultural heritage, and communities connected to the area.

**Stakeholder identification & database development:** a database was developed with 189 businesses/organizations in Saskatoon Region that were identified as being part of the culinary tourism value chain.

**Key informant interviews:** between September 1st and 17th, fifteen (n=15) key informants were interviewed in 45-minute one-on-one conversations around their connection to culinary tourism, visiting Saskatoon Region, and developing culinary tourism in the area. Between September 1st to 9th, an additional ten (10) businesses were interviewed in 60-minute one-on-one conversations around culinary tourism in the Saskatoon Region.

**Resident survey:** between September 21st and October 1st, a survey to residents was distributed through various channels by Tourism Saskatoon. The survey aimed to gather resident sentiment towards local food and drink, and perceptions of Saskatoon Region being a culinary tourism destination. In total 207 residents responded to the survey, which saw a 100% completion rate. Respondents were widely distributed across Northern Saskatchewan, with an overall concentration living within Saskatoon, and aligning with the population distribution in Saskatoon Region.

**Key Stakeholder Meeting:** on November 17th, a culinary tourism key stakeholder meeting was held online where ten (10) key stakeholders participated. Through the meeting, key stakeholders shared input and feedback on culinary tourism development in alignment with the areas of opportunity identified in this strategy.



# Culinary Tourism in Saskatoon Region





# Culinary Tourism and Foodways

Culinary tourism includes any tourism experience where a visitor interacts with food and drink that reflects the history, heritage, culture, and geography of a place. As such, agritourism is a subset of culinary tourism since it focusses on the production-side of food and drink, and helps visitors connect to where their food comes from. Many experiences can simultaneously be categorized as both a culinary tourism and agritourism.





“Foodways” address the who, what, where, when, why, and how food becomes part of a community. All of these aspects lead back to the people of the place, and how their food cultures have shaped their landscapes, traditions, and livelihoods. In Saskatoon Region, this could include the First Nations, Métis, Inuit peoples historically connected to the area, as well as Doukhobor, Mennonites, Ukrainians and Hutterite communities and the growing number of cultures and ethnicities that call the Saskatoon Region home.

A diversity of tourism businesses can use food and drink products to elevate the visitor experience. In fact, any tourism-related business that includes a taste of place or culinary experience as part of its offering is part of the culinary tourism value chain. The image on the left depicts the culinary tourism value chain, which includes a number of visitor-facing businesses, ranging from retailers, to festivals, to accommodations.

From bison and choke cherries to shashlik and perogies, Saskatoon’s food diversity has been influenced by its Indigenous and non-Indigenous cultural heritage and continues to evolve to this day. Immigration, traditional and innovative farming practices, and avant-garde chefs have made the Saskatoon Region a culinary mosaic. But while these products and recipes are commonly known and consumed locally, they are often unknown to people who have never been to the area. These unique culinary cultural heritage products and recipes are filled with stories related to traditional processes, name origins, and stories of resilience and adaptation.







# Culinary Tourism Value Chain

© Culinary Tourism Alliance

Visitor-facing businesses all have the potential to contribute to and benefit from the development of food tourism. Value chains are designed to increase the competitive advantage of a group of businesses through working in collaboration to deliver a combined value to the customer that is beyond their individual capacity to do so. This interdependence allows for operators to focus on what they do best while benefiting from the increased efficiency and effectiveness of working as a collective.





# Points of Differentiation

## **Indigenous Peoples in Saskatoon Region**

Saskatoon Region is located on Treaty Six Territory and the traditional homeland of the Métis Nation. According to Statistics Canada (2016), Saskatoon is the youngest and the second fastest-growing city in Canada. The City of Saskatoon has built partnerships with Indigenous communities and residents and has identified the need to work collaboratively in order to “promote reconciliation throughout Saskatoon by recognizing and including Indigenous cultures in the life of the city.”<sup>2</sup>

Wanuskewin, a National Historic Site and on the Tentative List of UNESCO’s World Heritage Sites, is of important historical and archeological significance to the Northern Plains First Nations. Throughout our research process, Wanuskewin was mentioned as being key to the conservation of Indigenous ways of living and cultural revitalization. It was also identified as a key attraction, along with Chief Poundmaker Historical Centre, to be developed and promoted for Northern Saskatchewan.



## Importance of Local

Over the course of the project research, stakeholders shared that over the past few years there has been a gradual increase in the quantity and quality of restaurants and experiences that are tied to local foods in the Saskatoon Region. This is in part due to the local culture's strong connections to agriculture, including the quality of ingredients grown a few minutes outside of the city of Saskatoon. Additionally, the cultural elements revolving around agriculture are reinforced by the prairie region's nickname as Canada's "breadbasket".

Much of the Saskatoon Region's cultural heritage, including the stories, customs, and traditions brought by the different Indigenous and non-Indigenous communities, as well historic buildings and built heritage revolve around agriculture and food production. The culinary tourism landscape is impacted by the strong connections to agriculture and a growing awareness and importance of local foods seen in Saskatoon Region. The growing awareness and importance of local foods in the culinary landscape has in turn impacted the culinary tourism landscape.

This trend towards buying and encouraging local has, in some cases, been somewhat positively affected by the COVID-19 pandemic. Many farms and producers have adapted to the changing production and consumption environment dictated by CV-19 restrictions. People and communities are eager to learn more about the who produces their food, what local products are available, and where their food comes from. This trend is seen across Canada and it may impact future visitor attitudes toward food and drink in a destination.



## Food and Innovation

The Saskatoon Region is also at the Canadian forefront of agricultural development and innovation supported by institutions such as the University of Saskatchewan and the range of farms and food producers that have contributed to the region’s recognition as Canada’s “breadbasket.” Additionally, the tastes of the region over the past few centuries have evolved and reflect the migration of settlers arriving from different cultural communities. For example, with a large Ukrainian community, many dishes were brought to the area and adapted to the region, such as sausages, cabbage rolls, and pierogis. Today, these foods are mentioned as integral to the “taste” of Saskatoon.

There are adaptations of traditional ingredients and foods tied to the land into new and exciting “tastes” from other cultural communities arriving in the area. Innovations around food production and preparation, and the cultures that have influenced them is connected to cultural organizations and assets in the area, including the Ukrainian Museum of Canada, Great Western Brewing Company, Viterra Grain Elevator, Wanuskewin Heritage Park, Hepburn Museum of Wheat, Doukhobor Dugout House National Historic Site, Mennonite Heritage Village.



## Urban and Rural Connections

Saskatoon Region is home to many attractive culinary tourism businesses and attractions that are outside of the downtown core. Avenue H, Broadway Avenue, Valley Road, and Meewasin Valley were all highlighted across the research as “hidden gems” or “still undiscovered” but worth the trip.<sup>3</sup> Additionally, there are many small restaurants and food producers, such as ice cream shops and cafés located in neighbourhoods outside of the downtown core or in the surrounding rural communities. There is an opportunity to get creative and include the range of “hidden gems” spread out across the Saskatoon Region’s urban and rural landscapes as part of tourism itineraries and experiences. This includes a need to address challenges around transportation and distance when getting around our region’s many culinary tourism offers.





# Visitor Market

The growing importance of local food and drink, innovation in food and agriculture, and strong urban and rural connections position Saskatoon Region to continue growing as a unique destination through culinary tourism. Equally important to the growth of Saskatoon Region is the need to understand and plan to address the needs and motivations of culinary tourists, a varied segment of travellers ranging from foodies to food-connected consumers.

Food-connected consumers are a growing market segment, not just in culinary tourism but in tourism more broadly. They extend far beyond the classic “foodie” and present an opportunity for food tourism to capitalize on an increasing prospective visitor base. They are not necessarily from any single age group, region or segment, food-connected consumers are identified as having a passion for food, including interests in food related issues, and being involved in “food purchasing, and cooking for dining decisions.”<sup>4</sup> Conscientious and self-aware, they tend to feel connected to the products they choose, and consume through thoughtful decision-making. As such, they are often interested in learning about where their food comes from.

Millennials and Gen Z-ers are particularly passionate about food, according to F&Co they are twice as likely to plan travel based on food and restaurants. Planning travel based on food and restaurants is increasing, deliberate culinary tourists are those that plan their trips to include interesting and unique food and drink experiences.<sup>6</sup> Meanwhile, the interest in local food and drink options is also prevalent among incidental culinary tourists. These are travellers who travel primarily for other reasons such as visiting friends and relatives or attending conferences but strongly appreciate food and drink and add related experiences to their itineraries when possible.



The 2019 Skift Research paper *The New Era of Food Tourism* states that casual dining options are trending, which reflects the broadening of food-related interests amongst potential visitors and the growing visitor base that can come with culinary tourism development. “Markets, festivals, and specialty grocers” along with “gastropubs, burgers and beer” were more popular amongst travellers than those considered “gourmet, upscale, classic”.<sup>7</sup> Importantly, the range of food related businesses and experiences across Saskatoon Region’s urban and rural contexts, from breweries, farms, and restaurants can capitalize on the growing interest in casual and quality dining and food-based experiences.

An important observation made in the research and corroborated by the residents’ survey, was that people currently do not travel to Saskatoon “out of the blue” but travel to visit family or friends.<sup>8</sup> This is important to note as it may influence how visitors and residents engage with local food and drink businesses/attractions. Visitors may be more inclined to plan their trip by following the advice of a personal contact in Saskatoon, which may influence the visitor’s experiences and perceptions of the city and the food and drink sector more specifically.

Although, local food and drink is recognized by locals as special and unique, it is not generally regarded as an attractor for visitors coming to Saskatoon Region. There is a need to build up local pride and empower Saskatoon Region residents to celebrate food and drink from the area as a deliberate asset that they share with visitors. Additionally, Saskatoon Region can stand to expand understandings around the variety of products, processes, traditions, and stories tied to food and drink grown and produced in Saskatoon Region. By doing so, Tourism Saskatoon, residents, organizations, and other local stakeholders can collaborate toward positioning Saskatoon Region as a tourism destination with a range of culinary assets worth experiencing.



# Strengths, Weaknesses, Challenges, and Opportunities

The strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and challenges presented on the following pages are focussed on culinary tourism development in Saskatoon Region.

## Strengths

- Saskatoon Region has major food "assets" that are unique and recognized (e.g. traditional recipes, local ingredients)
- The food and drink industries in Saskatoon Region are well established, with key beverage producers, signature restaurants and chefs leading the way
- Rising reputation of the DMO, and the food service industry, through chefs and restaurants, as "innovative"
- Well recognized points of differentiation in relation to food (especially by locals and stakeholders)
- Locally produced and sourced quality ingredients
- Creativity and vibrancy of chefs buying local ingredients for their meals
- A strong community of independent restaurants and chefs
- Fusion of cultures and local ingredients through food within the restaurant industry
- Proximity of downtown to rural spaces of agriculture
- Strong collaboration and partnership mentality within the DMO



## Weaknesses

- Local food suppliers' capacity to meet volume demands
- Lack of iconic infrastructure and unique tourism experiences
- Collaboration between local suppliers is difficult
- Lack of awareness of opportunities in tourism development (i.e. Connections between tourism and other industries such as agriculture)
- Limited availability of local products for purchase across retail locations in the city
- Traditional recipes, or "hidden gems", are known by a vast part of the community, however, they are not celebrated enough to be part of the destination's key attractions
- Lack of pride and awareness of local products and businesses among larger resident base





## Opportunities

- Working with growers, producers, and suppliers to increase the availability of local food products across the marketplace
- Developing the overall awareness of opportunities among tourism stakeholders
- Reaching millennials and newcomers (seeking new opportunities and things to eat, see, and do)
- Being more inclusive through culinary tourism development
- Showcasing “hidden gem” experiences and neighbourhoods offering quality local food experiences (e.g. Riverside, Broadway)
- Growing the existing support for local food and food producers
- Leveraging seasons and unique assets for tourism development
- Partnering with strong research and development programs in agriculture (e.g. University of Saskatchewan)
- Existing room and capacity for additional tourism experiences to boost visitor economy (i.e. Saskatoon Region is not considered “over-booked”)
- Increasing public infrastructure and access (e.g. public Wi-Fi, transportation)



## Challenges

- Long and harsh winters limit tourism season
- Lack of awareness by outside markets as tourism destination
- Infrequent direct flights to international destinations
- Public transportation and accessibility out of the downtown core
- No connecting engine to create partnerships and collaboration products for tourism
- The current pandemic has deeply affected the industry, especially accommodations (source of income for the DMO) and the restaurant sectors, which in turn affects the DMO's capacity to promote and develop the region.





Tour and tastings at Black Fox Farm and Distillery — Pictured: Owner John Cote



# Areas of Opportunity & Actions





# Alignment

Towards realizing its vision for Saskatoon Region to be renowned worldwide as a place to be inspired, Tourism Saskatoon is concentrating its destination development efforts on developing a sustainable industry, enhancing and evolving the visitor experience, operating a culturally sound and performance-based organization, and living and leading with a strong brand.<sup>9</sup> Connecting all of these pillars of growth is community wellbeing and the need to pursue the sustainable development of tourism with a shared understanding that community is the heartbeat of the destination.

The areas of opportunity to develop culinary tourism as a driver of visitation to, and a means through which to experience Saskatoon Region, support the vision for the destination and align with its strategic development pillars. These alignments are highlighted at the beginning of each area of opportunity, and the eleven (11) specific actions within each area all support Tourism Saskatoon's community-first approach to sharing place with others while practicing destination stewardship.

# Cultivating Pride in Place

## **Develop a Sustainable Industry**

Cultivating pride in place supports more equitable economic development for underrepresented members in the culinary tourism industry and helps to strengthen the quality of life and place for the Saskatoon community through the promotion of local food and drink.

→ Raising awareness of Saskatoon's unique ingredients while empowering residents to embrace the region's uniqueness with a culture of humility, is essential to the development of the destination. Cultivating pride in place also helps to strengthen ties between food producing spaces, places, and peoples.





Tourism Saskatoon is going to create a pilot project that encourages the use of local ingredients, recipes, and products. Champions will be celebrated by Tourism Saskatoon through a consistent sub-brand of the destination that can be activated across the region, including in businesses across the culinary tourism value chain. By celebrating local foods and ingredients grown in Saskatoon through this pilot project, awareness amongst residents will increase, and this will empower them to take pride in their place. An increased awareness among visitors of local foods will encourage visitors to return to experience the diversity of culinary tourism offerings in Saskatoon Region.

Towards identifying easily consumable food products and experiences for visitors, along with geographic areas where these are clustered, a complementary food and drink experiences map will be designed and developed. This resource will assist Tourism Saskatoon and partners with developing new tourism product, steering visitors towards clusters of food & drink and related experiences, and overcoming challenges related to accessing these. The map can include details on available modes of transportation as well as opportunities to overcome transportation challenges through partnership. Additionally, it can act as a visual inventory of tangible and intangible culinary heritage products, places, and stories. The map will also be used to narrow gaps between the urban and rural food & drink industry by identifying and connecting clusters and promoting Saskatoon Region as being “a city within a farm”.

Last, Tourism Saskatoon will develop and implement a resident-focussed marketing campaign to increase awareness of Saskatoon regional foods and foodways. This campaign will be focussed on celebrating the unique histories, heritages, and cultures surrounding food in Saskatoon Region, and special attention will be paid to the connection that a majority of residents have to food production.



Odd Couple Restaurant in Riversdale, Saskatoon



# Product Development and Diversification

## Enhance & Evolve the Visitor Experience

Product development and diversification focusses on the enhancement of innovative and interactive visitor experiences, as well as sharing the unique cultural heritage of community members.

→ Strong culinary tourism destinations have a breadth and diversity of quality tourism products that connect the food and drink visitors enjoy to the peoples and places that make up the destination. This underlines the need to highlight the vibrancy of food histories, heritages, cultures, and seasons that define Saskatoon Region.



Tourism Saskatoon is going to encourage visitors to connect with the cultural groups that make up the destination by encouraging product development and diversification that highlights the unique peoples, places, and processes behind the food and food experiences of Saskatoon Region. This includes facilitating connections with Indigenous communities, historic settler communities, and newcomer communities to leverage and showcase the unique ingredients, processes, recipes, and stories connected to Saskatoon’s array of diverse peoples.

At the same time, Tourism Saskatoon will support industry with building tastes of place into their existing experiences by creating and sharing tools to showcase local ingredients, culinary traditions, and unique spaces. Tools and resources could be a guide for activating outdoor setting and public spaces with food and drink, or toolkits for creating experiences across the four seasons. This will ensure visitor access throughout the year to regionally inspired products and taste experiences that use ingredients grown in Saskatoon Region. It will also facilitate the connection to local cultures.

Saskatoon Region is a powerhouse of agriculture, and this can be celebrated with visitors through compelling storytelling and diverse multisensory experiences. Tourism Saskatoon will foster new experience development by providing dedicated support to industry members that are interested and willing to make Saskatoon regional foodways a key part of their tourism offer. This support will provide businesses with the opportunity to share with visitors the value of food and food production to their destination.

Last, an inventory will be developed of Saskatoon Region’s tangible and intangible cultural food heritage, including unique food and drink stories and culturally unique products and places, and this information will be packaged so as to be accessible to all visitor-facing businesses.



# Co-planning and Monitoring

## **Operate a Culturally Sound & Performance-Based Organization**

Co-planning and monitoring are key to ensuring that Tourism Saskatoon is responsive to industry needs as it supports the successful growth of culinary tourism in the destination.

→ To enable and foster the continued growth of culinary tourism in Saskatoon Region, relevant baseline data needs to be collected before a collaborative effort is put in toward monitoring and measuring success.

Tourism Saskatoon will conduct research into the food and drink demands of current and future visitor markets. Insights will be packaged and shared with industry. An important part of this research is empowering partners to contribute. This could be done through the creation and dissemination of standardized data collection tools or system that would facilitate local businesses and partners to contribute to the research.

Assessing the strength of connection between food tourism businesses located in rural and urban areas on a continuous basis is an important action to be taken by Tourism Saskatoon. Part of this work started in 2019 and needs to continue, perhaps through ongoing liaison and by hosting networking event. Knowledge around connectivity of the culinary tourism value chain in Saskatoon Region will inform decision-making around strategies and supports to increase collaboration.





Chef Dale MacKay serves steak tartare to diners at Ayden Kitchen and Bar



# Brand Development and Positioning

## **Live & Lead with Our Brand**

Brand development and positioning is essential to making food and drink a key driver of demand for Saskatoon experiences, and ways through which culinary tourism stakeholders can communicate their value.

→ To develop into a destination where culinary is a part of every visitor experience regardless of the season, any and all tastes that are unique to Saskatoon Region need to be celebrated.

An important part of positioning Saskatoon Region as a destination with quality culinary tourism offers is equipping and empowering our visitor facing staff as ambassadors for the destination. Tourism Saskatoon will foster industry support through the design and delivery of tourism capacity-building workshops aimed at establishing a base of local knowledge and sharing capacity of culinary tourism offers and opportunities. These capacity-building efforts will also include dedicated information on winter and shoulder season culinary tourism experiences, as well as opportunities for development. Forming ambassadors for culinary tourism not only empowers visitor-facing staff but has added benefits of reaching Saskatoon Region locals who interact with staff as well.

Strengthening Saskatoon Region’s brand through culinary tourism and positioning the area as an emerging destination means that we need to reach those near and far. To do this Tourism Saskatoon will develop food-forward marketing materials aimed at outside of province visitors. These materials will highlight our local produce, food products, chefs, diversity of cultural culinary traditions, recipes, and food spaces to show the world that Saskatoon Region has so much to offer.

Tourism Saskatoon’s work to position Saskatoon Region as an emerging leader in culinary tourism does not end with this strategy. We will continue to explore and seize opportunities to position Saskatoon Region as a leader in culinary tourism development. From exploring opportunities to become a City of Gastronomy under the UNESCO Creative Cities Network, to celebrating the success of our Indigenous culinary innovators or our agricultural richness and culinary diversity at regional, national, and international events.







Farm One Forty tour includes a visit to the farm animals



# Strategy Overview

AREA OF OPPORTUNITY	ACTIONS
<b>Cultivating Pride in Place</b>	<b>1 - Create a pilot project that encourages the use of local ingredients, recipes, and products</b>
	<b>2 - Design and develop a complementary food and drink experiences map</b>
	<b>3 - Develop and implement a marketing campaign to increase resident awareness of Saskatoon regional foods and foodways</b>
<b>Product Development and Diversification</b>	<b>4 - Support product development and diversification that celebrates the unique peoples, places, and processes behind the food and drink experiences of Saskatoon Region</b>
	<b>5 - Create and share tools to showcase local ingredients, culinary traditions, and unique spaces</b>
	<b>6 - Provide dedicated support to industry members that are interested and willing to make Saskatoon regional foodways a key part of their tourism offer</b>
<b>Co-planning and Monitoring</b>	<b>7 - Conduct research into the food and drink demands of current and future visitor markets</b>
	<b>8 - Assess the strength of connection between businesses in urban and rural areas through ongoing liaison and networking sessions</b>
	<b>9 - Design and deliver tourism capacity-building workshops aimed at establishing a base of local knowledge of culinary tourism offers and opportunities</b>
	<b>10 - Develop food-forward marketing materials aimed at outside of province visitors</b>
	<b>11 - Explore and seize opportunities to position Saskatoon Region as a leader in culinary tourism development</b>



# Growing Culinary Tourism



Shift at Remai Modern, on the banks of the South Saskatchewan River



Saskatoon Region is well positioned to become a recognized culinary tourism destination. There is much opportunity to leverage the many strong culinary tourism assets available in the region, including the urban area's close proximity to a robust food industry with many local farmers producing high-quality products. There is also much opportunity to build upon the long and rich food heritage that is brought to life by the communities that make up the destination, from Indigenous traditions since time immemorial to historic settler communities such as the Doukhobors, Mennonites and Ukrainians, to more recent arrivals from all parts of the globe.

Although there are challenges to growing culinary tourism in Saskatoon Region, including the destination's transport connectivity, harsh seasons, and limited local awareness of local food products and experiences, these challenges all present opportunities to move forward. Tourism Saskatoon seeks to celebrate its climate, geography, local products, and food producing people and places as the cornerstones of what makes the destination's food and drink offer so vibrant and unique! Integrating local food and drink into current tourism offerings has the potential to enhance and offer visitors a more place-based experience that not only shares the foodways of the area, but also its rich food stories, traditions, peoples, and processes.

By working to create meaningful and lasting change in four areas of opportunity—cultivating pride in place, product development and diversification, co-planning and monitoring, and brand development and positioning—Tourism Saskatoon will strengthen ties, highlight the vibrancy of histories, peoples, places, tastes, and seasons, establish baseline data and collaborate around measurements, and assert and celebrate the meaning of diversity in Saskatoon Region through local flavours, products, traditions, and innovations.





Dining at the popular Asian fusion restaurant in Riversdale, Odd Couple

# Notes

- <sup>1</sup> Tourism Saskatoon, 2020–2022 Destination Strategy, 2020, pg. 2.
- <sup>2</sup> City of Saskatoon, “Culture Plan: Implementation Refresh 2018–2022”, 2018.
- <sup>3</sup> Saskatoon & Area Diagnostic Report, Nov. 2020.
- <sup>4</sup> F&Co, “Food Connected Consumers”, Nov. 2019.
- <sup>5</sup> F&Co, “Food Connected Consumers”, Nov. 2019.
- <sup>6</sup> The New Era of Food Tourism: Trends and Best Practices for Stakeholders. Skift, 2019.
- <sup>7</sup> The New Era of Food Tourism: Trends and Best Practices for Stakeholders. Skift, 2019.
- <sup>8</sup> Saskatoon & Area resident survey, Sept.20th – Oct. 1st 2020.
- <sup>9</sup> Tourism Saskatoon, 2020–2022 Destination Strategy, 2020, pg. 2.

