Yakima, Washington: Finding surprisingly delicious locally sourced dining

by Tracy Ellen Beard | Sep 10, 2019



Creamy Burrata at Wine o'Clock. Photo by Tracy Ellen Beard

YAKIMA, WA: Yakima, Washington, proclaims itself the "fruit bowl of the country." The agricultural mecca grows 75% of the nation's hops and is known for exceptional wine. Yakima is also a destination for locally sourced dining. Three places not to miss are COWICHE CANYON KITCHEN + ICEHOUSE, Crafted, and Wine o'Clock.

Each venue presents thoughtfully crafted dishes in well-appointed settings, and the growing farmers' market makes sourcing local ingredients easier for restaurateurs.

Dynamic Downtown Dining at COWICHE CANYON KITCHEN

Before 2013, Yakima did not have much in the way of fine dining eateries. Owners Graham Snyder, a visionary, and his business partner and operations manager, Mark DiPietro, have put their hearts into COWICHE CANYON KITCHEN + ICEHOUSE.

Start dinner with the COWICHE breadboard: a housemade baguette with Tieton Creamery goat cheese and brown honey, herbed olive oil, and butter with sea salt. For a light but tasty entrée, try the delicious prawn and avocado salad, or indulge in one of the restaurant's decadent burgers.

Mark DiPietro says, "The building is a combination of Frank Lloyd Wright meets a fruit warehouse."

The idea was that Mr. Wright's prairie-style architecture, with low-pitched roofs, overhanging eaves, and an open floor plan, fit perfectly with the bustling atmosphere of a fruit warehouse.



COWICHE Breadboard. Photo by Tracy Ellen Beard

The restaurant features a central bar and seating that runs along the walls, allowing maximum privacy for diners. The original greenhouse, with large opening garage doors, is adjacent to the building and serves as an event space. ICEHOUSE is located against the backside of the building.

The restaurant provides incredible American classics with locally sourced ingredients. The menu changes seasonally, about every three months.

Gourmet Tastings at Crafted

Dan and Mollie Koommoo, the owners of Crafted, believe food should come from as close to the source as possible. The couple is all about community and family. The Koommoos want guests and staff to feel welcome in their restaurant, as if they were in their home.

After working together in the food and beverage industry on Orcas Island, they moved to Yakima, where they started a catering business. This endeavor eventually led to the opening of Crafted, where the seasonal à la carte menu is meant to be shared.

Diners can also opt for the chef's menu, a multi-course experience for everyone at the table. The menu frequently changes, sometimes more than once a day.



Crafted's Ahi Tuna Tartar. Photo by Tracy Ellen Beard

Crafted is open five days a week, Wednesday through Sunday.

Dan meets the farmers each day and brings in the best products he can find. He then opens the discussion with his cooks, and each one takes on about 20% of the menu.

Dan says, “At Crafted, we are about helping chefs and cooks do what they need to do to get to the next level. If they don’t know how to do something, we all work together to figure it out. We give our cooks the ability to influence the menu truly. They are free to try new things but must make the dish and get the team’s approval by 4:00 p.m. for their dish to be added to that night’s menu.”

Cocktails and desserts are also uniquely designed at Crafted.

The Soggy Dollar, made with aged rum, fresh pineapple, orange juices, coconut cream, and topped with nutmeg, is like a vacation in the tropics. The ahi tuna tartar with wasabi vin, pickled daikon and carrot, citrus and jalapeno wasabi cream is visually stunning with a clean, fresh taste.

Sun-dried beef with sticky rice, toasted rice powder and nam jaew is one of the most popular dishes and often shows up on the menu. It boasts flavors similar to Korean bulgogi but with more texture.

Each dessert on the menu is spectacular, but the chef’s version of a s’more is outstanding.

Housemade, flame-torched marshmallows are served with graham cracker ice cream, graham cracker crumbs, and shaved chocolate, all under a glass dome filled with smoke.

Chefs at Crafted take the s’more to a new level.



S’more dessert at Crafted. Photo by Tracy Ellen Beard.

Local Sourcing

The Downtown Yakima Farmers' Market features local fruits and vegetables, flowers, arts and crafts booths, food vendors, and lots of entertainment. Run by Marketing Manager Yvette Lippert, the market serves as a meeting place for the community and has been influential in revitalizing the downtown area.

The director of Downtown Yakima, Andrew Holt, says, "There are many new independent investors. Over the last year, 18 new businesses have opened in the downtown area, mostly eateries and drinking establishments along with some retail shops."

The Downtown Association of Yakima opened in 2015, and it has provided some continuity for the area. Andrew joined as the full-time director in 2017. The Association is responsible for several major festivals: Roots and Vines, Craft Beverage, and Downtown Summer Nights. These events, along with many others, bring people into the downtown area to enjoy live bands and local food and drink, and they also bring business to downtown shops and eateries.

Wine Time

The Bunnell family opened Wine o'Clock, a winery and restaurant in Prosser, Washington. Susan Bunnell says,

"We created the restaurant because we wanted people to slow down and spend some time with our wine. These are not the kind of wines you do a quick tasting of. If you are going to drop $45 to $50 on a bottle of wine, I want you to know that you are going to like it when you get home."

Susan shared that the easiest way to get people to slow down is to put some food in front of them. They offer several wine flights because people are much more comfortable talking about and tasting wines that they can compare.

"With the wine flights, they can see how the wine changes the food and how the food changes the wine. People don't get to experience these changes in a typical tasting room with a cracker. Our experiences are very educational. Wines are served by the bottle, glass, flight, and two-ounce pour," says Bunnell.

Luscious, creamy burrata cheese served in a martini glass with macerated fruit, herbs and a toasted baguette is a fantastic way to start dinner. Make an effort to sample several of their award-winning wines, including the Cottontop 2015 Aligoté from Snipes Mountain and the Vestige 2011 red blend.

Susan does an incredible job pairing food with their wines.

The delicious bay shrimp and scallop cannelloni with spring vegetables and ginger cream sauce match perfectly with either their 2013 Lia or 2015 Sangiovese. All of the pizzas are cooked in the wood-fired oven. The savory-and-sweet pizza with pear, bacon, and chives, topped with olive oil and aged white cheddar, is rich and flavorful.

Everything at Wine o'Clock was well-plated and tasty.



Pear and Bacon Pizza at Wine o'Clock. Photo by Tracy Ellen Beard

Restaurateurs and winemakers are taking full advantage of the resources available to them in this fertile valley. Plan a weekend to indulge in great food and wine in the Yakima Valley.

For more information, visit www.visityakima.com.