

V629



Shoppers with food-fashion focus bustle all day long in the Kitsilano neighborhood.

## A taste of Canada

From the Vancouver to Victoria, you can find a wide variety of regional cuisines, from farm-to-table to seafood, and more. See page 274 for more on the Canadian culinary scene.

BY SARAH MUELLER

If you're aching for some outstanding regional cuisine beyond the Bay Area but can't commit to a couple weeks of tastings and farm tours in Provence or Tuscany, take a two-hour flight north to Vancouver. The Canadian brand of culinary tourism (not to mention the irresistible shopping, expert spas, and tony hotels) will make you ponder dual citizenship. SEE RESOURCE GUIDE ON PAGE 274

**Day 1:** You'll want to plant yourself in Vancouver's **Yaletown**, which has rapidly transformed from a warehouse district into a slightly seedy up-and-comer and finally into a dazzlingly clean neighborhood that bustles from sunup until 4 a.m., thanks in part to the **Opus Hotel**. With cushy rooms in five decor schemes, an outstanding French bistro (**Elixir**), and a bar that's become a weekend staple, Opus has been a magnet for visiting celebs and travelers since it opened in 2002.

Exploring the area, you'll pass by **Skoah**, a serious spa with a "facials only" policy. After a rehydrating post-flight Facialicious treatment, stop in for dinner at the **Blue Water Cafe**, a bustling seafood restaurant, where the raw bar chef and the executive chef battle for the favor of your taste buds. After you call it a draw, you can brave the line outside hot spot **George**, where head bartender Nick Devine's concoctions are worth the wait. If velvet ropes aren't your thing, a few blocks up Davie Street lies **Bin 941**, a narrow, laid-back tapas bar, where you can sip some B.C. Pinot Gris, people-watch, and tap your toes to Sly and the Family Stone.

There are 15 flights daily from SFO to Vancouver on Air Canada; 5 daily on United; 3 daily on Alaska Airlines.

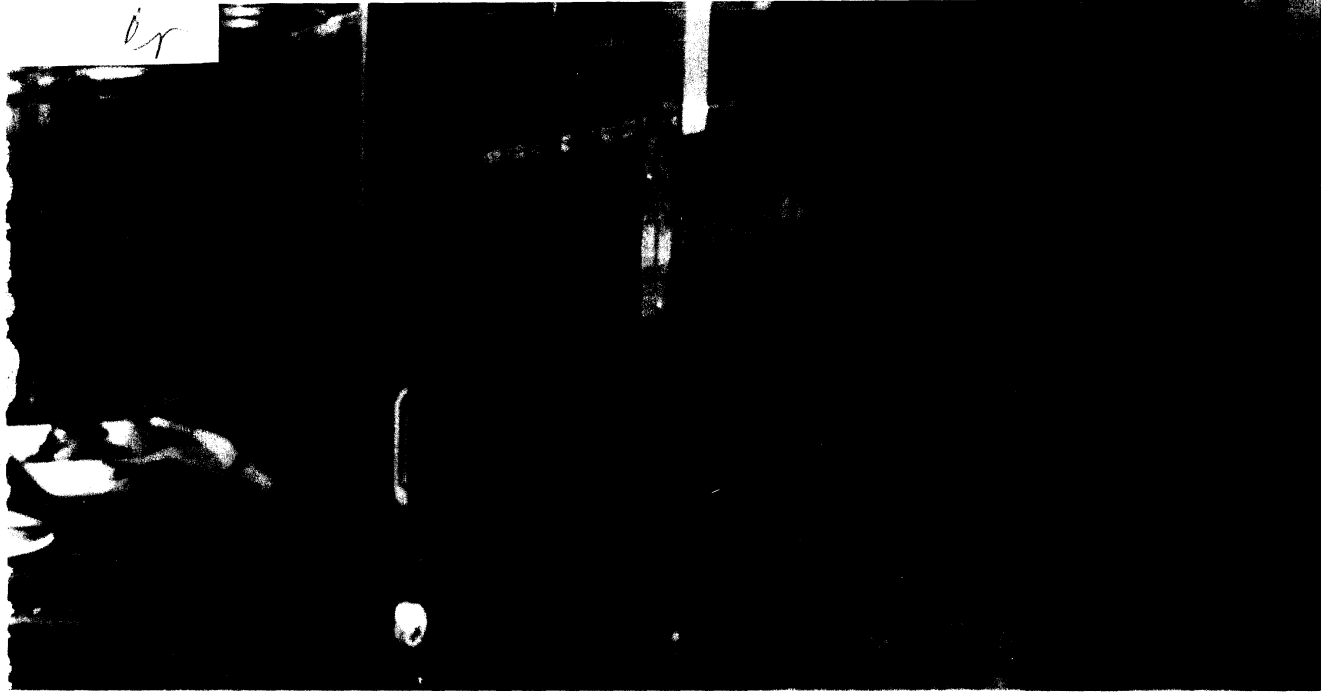
**Day 2:** Even though you've got everything you need in Yaletown, you really should see the rest of Vancouver, particularly if you're a shopper. Whether your tastes run more Union Street or Valencia Street, **Donita Dyer's Shopabout Tours** can customize an afternoon of retail therapy. Head to former hippie hood **Kitsilano** to check out Canadian designers at **Spank**, or peruse the obscure and divine cosmetic imports at **Beauty Bar**. Dyer might point you in the direction of the more upscale **South Granville**, where interiors freaks get their fix of streamlined home accessories at **Caban** and **Peridot**.

**Granville Island** Hop a water taxi to Vancouver's Granville Island, where farmers and vendors from all over the area set up booths brimming with fresh fruits and veggies, right-outta-the-ocean seafood, and salmon treats. Chew on some "Indian candy," a sweetly smoked jerky, as you wander.



Brentwood Bay Lodge and Resort

TOP: LAWRENCE WOODS/STERN; BOTTOM: LEFT: COURTESY OF THE BRENTWOOD BAY LODGE AND RESORT



**Days 3 and 4:** Take one of **West Coast Air's** hourly floatplane flights from downtown Vancouver right into **Victoria** on Vancouver Island. If you've got a car already in Vancouver, you'll want to take a ferry, but if not, you can pick up a rental in Victoria.

At the north end of the **Saanich Peninsula** (about a 20 minute drive from Victoria) lies the town of Sidney, and perched on its Van Isle Marina is **Dock 503**, an unassuming gem of a restaurant. There, wunderkind Simon Manvell practices what he and the rest of the Island Chef's Collaborative preach, creating inspired cuisine with regional produce, meat, and seafood.

After lunch, link up with **Kathy McAree's Travel With Taste** culinary tours, and she'll take you straight to the source of those buttery greens you munched at Dock 503. McAree organizes trips to many of the Saanich Peninsula's farms and wineries, including **Saanich Organics**, **Barking Dog Vineyards** (producers of Winchester wines), and **Marley Farms Winery**, where Beverly and Mike (second cousin to Bob) Marley produce their Pinots and fruit wines. The kiwi wine's a match for spicy Jamaican food, naturally.

Opened in May 2004, **Brentwood Bay Lodge and Resort's** 33 warmly elegant ocean suites have floor-to-ceiling windows and private patios fac-

ing a fjord. Rain showers and jetted tubs big enough for two (along with a silky faux-fur throw to wrap around your shoulders while you curl up in front of your fireplace) might entice you to hole up for the evening.

**Day 4:** If you can't drag yourself away from your room for an hour or so, spend it at **Arbutus** restaurant downstairs, with Kumamotos, Sumac Ridge Blanc de Noirs, and a view of the bay below, cradled by the surrounding evergreens.

**Day 5:** You're going to need something to look forward to in order to get you off the island, on the float plane, and back to the hustle and bustle of Rain City, so save your prime dining reservation for your last night up in Canada.

Of the multitude of world-renowned restaurants in Vancouver (**Lumiere** for French, **Vij's** for Indian, **Sun Sui Wah** for Chinese), few have attained the cult status of seafood house **C**. From its False Creek location under the



Vancouver's Charleson Park

Granville Bridge to its industrial felt-covered chairs, each of C's unique parts sing in perfection, but the show-stopping aria is the food. The staff at C wants you to know where everything on your plate came from, how it was caught, and that they're doing their best to keep seafood consumption sustainable, with exquisite results. If you can't snag a reservation at C, a few feet away lies its latest venture, **Nu**, where chef Robert Belcham has devised an even more avant-garde menu in the small-plates vein. Ask sommelier Tom Doughty for guidance in selecting top-tier B.C. wines, and as you nurse your last glass and watch

the moon rise over Granville Island from your window-side table, you'll be plotting your return trip.

**Day 6:** Our unscientific experiment suggested that you might not want to ask a local for the time. That is, unless you want to miss your dinner reservation, or your flight home.

RIGHT: SARAH MUELLER

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