

Celebrating
Food and Drink Around
Lake Superior's North Shore:
**Food Tourism
Product Development
Strategy**

Acknowledgements

We respectfully acknowledge the land of the northern shores of Gichi-Gaming (Lake Superior), for which this strategy was developed, as the 1850 Robinson-Superior Treaty territory, which spans from Pigeon River to Batchawana Bay. This is the traditional territory of the Anishnaabe, including the Ojibways of Lake Helen First Nation (Red Rock Indian Band), the Ojibways of the Pic River First Nation (Biigtigong Nishnaabeg), and the Ojibways of Pays Plat First Nation (Pawgwasheeng), as well as the Métis, including the inter-connected historic Métis populations at Michipicoten, Pic River, Fort William, Nipigon House, and Long Lake, collectively known as the Historic Northern Lake Superior Métis Community, and Region 2 of the Métis Nation of Ontario.

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 of the land and waters, and to respect the cultures, ceremonies, and traditions of all who call this place home.

Through the combined efforts of several organizations, including the Indigenous Tourism Association of Canada, Indigenous Culinary of Associated Nations, and Indigenous Tourism Ontario, along with Indigenous tourism businesses, Indigenous tourism and food tourism are growing. We look forward to seeing Indigenous food and drink products and experiences elevate the tourism landscape of Northern Ontario, including Lake Superior North Shore, and Canada in the years to come.

This Food Tourism Product Development Strategy would not have been possible without the time and energy of everyone who participated in the “connection to place” assessment, the virtual industry table talk, the guided group survey, and the industry questionnaire. This food tourism product development strategy has been shaped by your input. **Thank you!**

To the project team at Superior Country including Suzanne Kukko and Dan Bevilacqua, thank you for your enthusiasm and dedication throughout this project.





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 Caroline Morrow, James Arteaga, Pat Forrest, Trevor Jonas Benson, Camilo Montoya-Guevara, and Nastasha Alli. It was designed by Agatha Podgorski.

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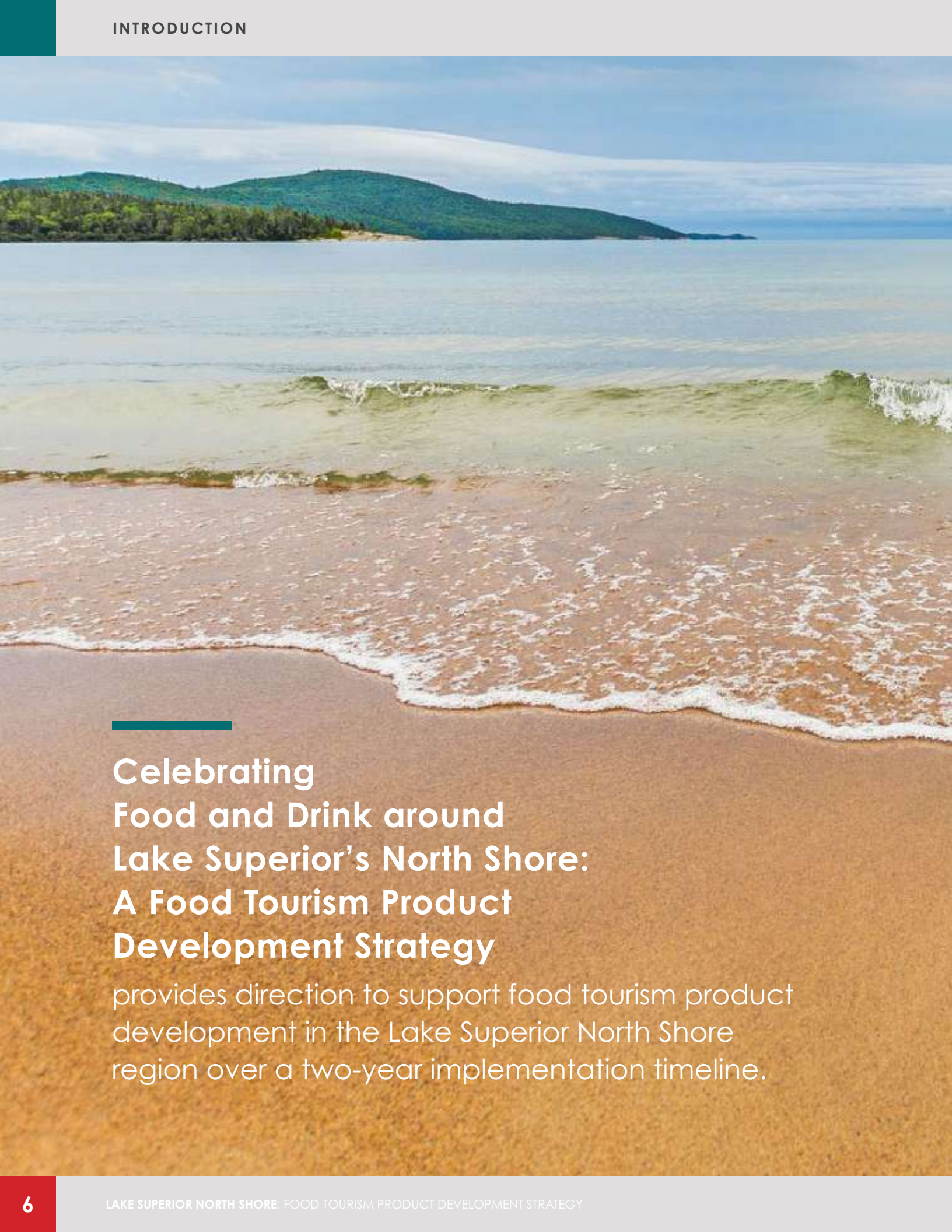
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Celebrating Food and Drink around Lake Superior's North Shore: A Food Tourism Product Development Strategy

provides direction to support food tourism product development in the Lake Superior North Shore region over a two-year implementation timeline.

Context

Superior Country (North of Superior Travel Association) is a destination marketing organization located on the northern shores of Lake Superior in Northern Ontario. The Culinary Tourism Alliance was engaged to develop a strategy to guide food tourism product development and harness the growth potential that food tourism can bring to the region. This project responds to recommendations of the *2018 Lake Superior North Shore Tourism Strategy*.

The project area, the Lake Superior North Shore region, is located east of Thunder Bay on the 1850 Robinson-Superior Treaty territory. The area spans over 300 kilometres from Silver Islet to Manitouwadge, and includes multiple municipalities, First Nations communities, and unincorporated lands, each with its unique cultural heritage and natural features. The communities in the area include Lake Helen First Nation (Red Rock Indian Band), Ojibways of the Pic River First Nation (Biigtigong Nishnaabeg), Pays Plat First Nation (Pawgwasheeng), the Town of Marathon, the Municipality of Shuniah, and the townships of Red Rock, Terrace Bay, Schreiber, Manitouwadge, Nipigon, and Dorion, as well as the villages of Rosspoint, Hurkett, and Pass Lake.

This strategy report guides the direction that Superior Country and the product development task force will need to take to support food tourism product development in partnership with other organizations in the Lake Superior North Shore region and beyond over the next two years. The report highlights unique local assets that differentiate the destination from others, while offering guidance on how to leverage these assets in food tourism product development.

It is divided into three parts:

1 Where Are We Now?

2 Where Are We Going?

3 How Will We Get There?

Methodology

A community-based participatory research approach was used to develop this strategy. This allowed key stakeholders, including a wide range of industry members, and representatives of various levels of government, public sector institutions, industry associations, and non-for-profit organizations to participate in and contribute to the food tourism development process.

A capacity-building approach was integrated into the development process.

This included sharing knowledge, skills, tools, and resources with everyone involved in the food tourism research process to collectively grow food tourism in the Lake Superior North Shore region. Several primary and secondary research methods were used to collect the data that informs this strategy report.

These methods are listed below:

- Background document review
- Culinary tourism landscape review
- "Connection to place" assessment
- Market trends and demands research
- Tools, resources, programs and initiatives research
- Virtual industry table talk
- Guided group survey
- Industry questionnaire



1

What Is Food Tourism?

WHERE ARE WE NOW?

FOOD TOURISM includes any tourism experience where a visitor interacts with food and drink that reflect the history, heritage, culture, and geography of a place, such as an outdoor festival or event with local food and drink, or an outfitter who provides a locally sourced lunch or dinner.

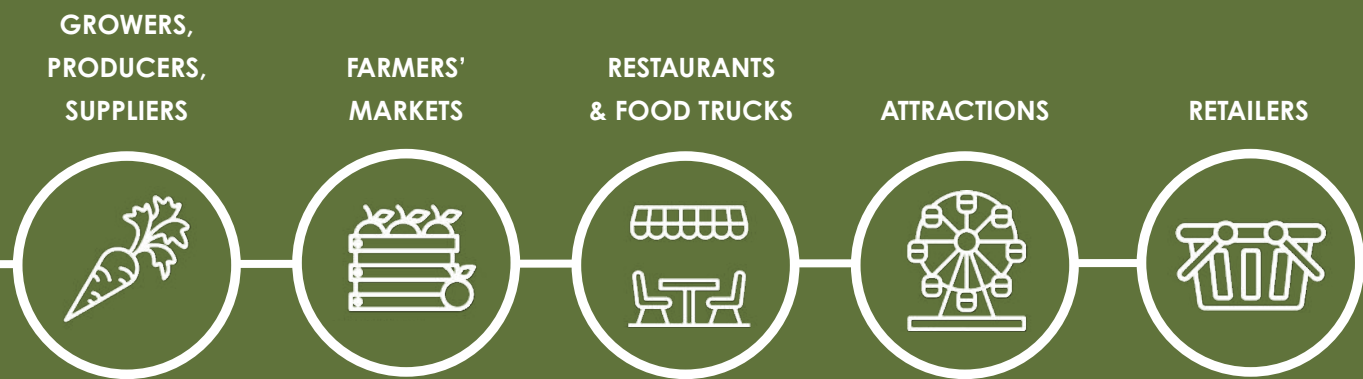


Figure 1.0 THE FOOD TOURISM VALUE CHAIN

© CULINARY TOURISM ALLIANCE

AGRITOURISM, which is considered a subset of food tourism, connects visitors to where their food comes from. In contrast to food tourism, agritourism does not require a taste component. Examples include visiting a cultural centre and learning about fishing or hunting, berry picking at a u-pick farm, or purchasing produce from a farm-gate. Experiences that connect visitors to where their food comes from and offer a taste component can be considered both food tourism and agritourism. Learning about farming and then enjoying a lunch of local produce is one example of this.

Food tourism is well positioned to enhance other forms of tourism, such as outdoor tourism.

Some examples include offering hikers or ATVers a takeaway picnic to enjoy along the many trails of the Lake Superior North Shore region, a local forager providing a lunch from the ingredients foraged or offering a shore lunch after a fishing excursion with locally sourced ingredients. Importantly, a variety of tourism businesses can use food and drink to elevate their visitor experience. In fact, any tourism-related business that includes a taste of place offering is part of the food tourism value chain.





Partnerships are an important component of food tourism success.

Within each business category in the food tourism value chain, there is a vast array of business types that can bring different forms of capital to a partnership. Business-to-business partnerships can foster innovation and creativity, while filling gaps in the visitor offering. Some examples include a grower, producer, or supplier partnering with a bed and breakfast to offer local berries to their guests or a food truck partnering with a local museum or cultural centre to offer a lunch as part of their programming. Notably, partnerships root food tourism experiences to place because the exact same combination of businesses working together is unlikely to exist in any other destination. Additionally, in the Lake Superior North Shore region, there is an opportunity to foster partnerships among businesses working in outdoor tourism and food tourism.

Why Now?

Interest in what food tourism can offer visitors has been increasing dramatically and has continued to grow as a result of the current pandemic climate.

Visitors want to know where their food comes from, as well as partake in unique experiences found nearer-by.

Additionally, there is interest in food tourism amongst partners like Destination Northern Ontario and Indigenous Tourism Ontario, who have both been involved in food tourism strategy development in recent years. There may be opportunities for Superior Country to leverage this interest through creative collaborations with these and other partners.

Domestic searches on the Destination Northern Ontario's travel information portal - northernontario.travel - have risen dramatically since the start of the pandemic. What has risen significantly as well has been interest in outdoors activities and locations. Among the site visitors' top five interests were hiking/walking in nature, natural attractions, nature parks, fall colours, assets that the Lake Superior



North Shore region has in great supply. The fourth out of the five areas of interest was experiencing local food and drink.

These trends have positioned food tourism to become an important sector for the recovery efforts of the tourism industry and local economy. Prior to the pandemic, purposeful travel, exploratory travel, rural tourism, sustainability, and route-based itineraries were key trends in the tourism industry. Throughout the pandemic, these trends have continued, and in the case of rural tourism, interest has grown as people look for local and regional tourism experiences outside urban centres. Canada's federal tourism strategy identified tourism in rural and remote destinations as a primary developmental pillar for 2019 to 2021¹. These key trends are noted below along with comments on relevancy for the Lake Superior North Shore.

PURPOSEFUL TRAVEL provides a transformative aspect for the visitor leading to personal growth. It provides local experiences that visitors could never access on their own. At the business level, it means providing visitors with experiences that foster personal growth. Some examples are learning about the flora and fauna of the Lake Superior North Shore region while foraging with a local guide or learning about the diversity of fish species in Lake Superior as you fish with a local angler.

EXPLORATORY TRAVEL provides a feeling of uncovering something unique that few others have experienced. It offers one-of-a-kind VIP experiences off the beaten path. At the business level, it means thinking about how local assets can help visitors understand that the experience cannot be replicated in any other destination because it is tied to place. An example is offering a takeaway picnic from a restaurant or retailer and recommending a lunch spot with a great view of a waterfall.

SUSTAINABILITY at the destination level can be incorporated in many ways, including through management and marketing efforts. Letting visitors know how current sustainability initiatives at the business or destination level align with their values can play into the decision-making of what to do, where to stay, and what to eat. Some examples include banning single use plastics when planning an outdoor picnic experience, promoting locally owned businesses through cross promotion, or encouraging businesses to source local products.

RURAL TOURISM typically uses the natural environment and natural features as its primary motivation for visitation to emphasize points of differentiation from urban centres. However, cultural tourism is usually tied in as a secondary motivation for visitors to connect with the place. Food and drink can be a key element of cultural tourism, especially by forging clear links to the land. This can be done by using local ingredients or local food and drink traditions, for example. Additionally, travellers interested in reducing overtourism or preferring to be in smaller crowds, may be open to lesser-known destinations if made aware of the positive impacts their visit can have on the destination or the health and safety benefits of visiting a rural community.

ROUTE-BASED ITINERARIES are an increasingly common way to link rural tourism and culinary tourism assets. Food and drink can be incorporated into a route of any theme, such as the Lake Superior Circle Tour Bingo, or existing food and drink routes, like the Lake Superior Java Journey, and the Lake Superior Ale Trail. Offering pre-made itineraries with food and drink experiences makes trip planning easier. Additionally, blogs, articles and other online posts are excellent ways to share trip inspiration and information to prospective visitors. Along with these itineraries, indicating services and facilities that allow for alternative modes of transportation, such as walking, cycling, motorcycling, RVing, ATVing, or boating will increase potential visitor numbers. For example, identifying rest stops for motorcyclists and RVers, docking areas for boaters, trails for walking, cycling and ATVing along with campsites and other accommodations along the route will encourage visitation.

SAFETY-CONSCIOUSNESS is on the rise. The COVID-19 pandemic has made travellers more concerned about their health and aware of how travel can impact this. In the coming months and years, many travellers will want assurances that safety protocols are being adhered to and that businesses offer a high level of hygiene for safer purchasing experiences. From the business perspective this means offering relevant information online to facilitate peace of mind in trip planning and delivering on the safe visitor experience that is promised.



Connection to Place

What we today call the Lake Superior North Shore is located east of Thunder Bay on the northern shores of Gichi-Gaming or Lake Superior.² The area is within the 1850 Robinson-Superior Treaty territory which spans from Pigeon River to Batchawana Bay.

It is the traditional territory of the Anishnaabe and Métis.

Specifically, the land of the Lake Superior North Shore is the traditional territory of the Ojibway of Lake Helen First Nation (Red Rock Indian Band), the Ojibways of the Pic River First Nation (Biigtigong), and the Ojibway of Pays Plat First Nation (Pawgwasheeng).

Additionally, the northern shore of Lake Superior is the home of the interconnected historic Métis populations at Michipicoten, Pic River, Fort William, Nipigon House, and Long Lake, collectively known as to the Historic Northern Lake Superior Métis Community. This area is also located in Region 2 of the Métis Nation of Ontario. In addition to the three First Nation communities and historic Métis community, the area includes the Town of Marathon, the Municipality of

Shuniah and the townships of Red Rock, Terrace Bay, Schreiber, Manitouwadge, Nipigon, Dorion, as well as the villages of Rosspoint, and Hurkett.

As of 2016, the larger Thunder Bay-North Shore federal electoral district recorded an Indigenous population primarily made of First Nations peoples followed by Métis, and Inuit peoples. Most of the population living in the region, however, are of European descent, primarily English, Scottish, French and Irish followed by Finnish, Italian, German, Ukrainian, Polish, Swedish, Dutch, and Norwegian.³ South Asians are the largest visible minority group in the area followed by Black, Chinese, and Arab.⁴ The region produces a variety of produce such as barley for grains, hay, oats, corn for silage, mixed grains, potatoes, raspberries, apples, sweet corn, tomatoes, and green beans, as well as raises beef cows, dairy cows, sheep and lambs, steers, pigs, turkeys, and poultry and eggs.⁵

Over 12,000 km of land and water trails are found in the Lake Superior North Shore region, as well as multiple local, provincial, and national parks, and many natural features. The area tells the story of the presence of the Group of Seven painters, the German prisoner of war camps and a Japanese-Canadian internment camp from World War 2, the construction of the railway, and the vast diversity of land and water flora and fauna.⁶ Additionally, the area forms part of the Lake Superior Circle Tour that goes around the scenic shorelines of Lake Superior and links the Lake Superior North Shore region to other parts of Ontario, Minnesota, Wisconsin and Michigan.⁷ The area is also home to part of two food and drink routes, the Java Journey that focusses on cafes and the Lake Superior Ale Trail that focusses on breweries.⁸

Knowing the breadth and diversity of peoples, places, as well as food and drink found in the Lake Superior North Shore region is key

to understanding and developing unique food tourism products that reflect existing foodways in the area, whether that's Finnish pancakes or East Indian dishes.

Foodways

Foodways are the foundation of food tourism. They are the relationship between peoples, places, and food. Foodways address the who, what, where, when, why, and how food and drink become part of a community; for example, foodways can tell stories of movement and migration.

Foodways can describe the passing down of Indigenous food and drink traditions, how food has been brought to the area by historic settlers and newcomers, including the Finnish, Italian, Portuguese, and South Asian communities, as well as railway workers and miners.

These stories lead back to the people of the place, and how their food and drink cultures have shaped the landscapes, traditions, and livelihoods of the area, including the methods, techniques and technologies used to grow, harvest, trap, fish, preserve and prepare food and drink.

Tastes of place directly connect people to foodways and bring the stories behind food and drink to life, such as tasting a Finnish pancake or eating an East Indian dish made from local ingredients. Tastes of place can also include intangible elements that add to the experience or eating and drinking, such as rural hospitality, community feel, or good

company. A taste of place might be enjoying a homemade berry pie on the shores of Lake Superior and meeting a local resident who shares the story of the area.

Storytelling solidifies the connection among peoples, places, and food.

For this reason, sharing and telling the stories behind the food and drink of a place with visitors is key to the success of food tourism product development in the Lake Superior North Shore region

On the next page are some of the local cuisines, foods, products, and ingredients mentioned by local stakeholders as elements of the Lake Superior North Shore's foodways. Bolded items were also mentioned as must-try food and drink items.

WHAT WE HEARD

Local Foods of the Lake Superior North Shore Region

INGREDIENTS

- Rhubarb
- **Blueberries**
- Raspberries
- Gooseberries
- White fish
- **Lake trout**
- Northern Pike
- Lake herring

FOODS

- **Homemade pies**
(blueberry, apple, rhubarb)
- Finnish meat pies
- Pierogis
- Finnish pancakes
- Bannock
- Karjalan Piirakka (rice pudding pie)
- Pulla (cardamom sweet bread)
- Egg rolls
- Pickerel (grilled)
- **Craft beers**
- Finnish-style smoked fish
- Veal (smoked and jerky)
- Smoked salmon wrap
- Homemade beef on a bun

PRODUCTS

- Maple syrup
- **Blueberry jam**
- Wildflower honey
- Pickled beets
- Garlic scapes
- Wild rice
- Pesto
- Smoked fish spread

CUISINES

- **Finnish**
- Portuguese
- **Italian**
- East Indian
- Indigenous

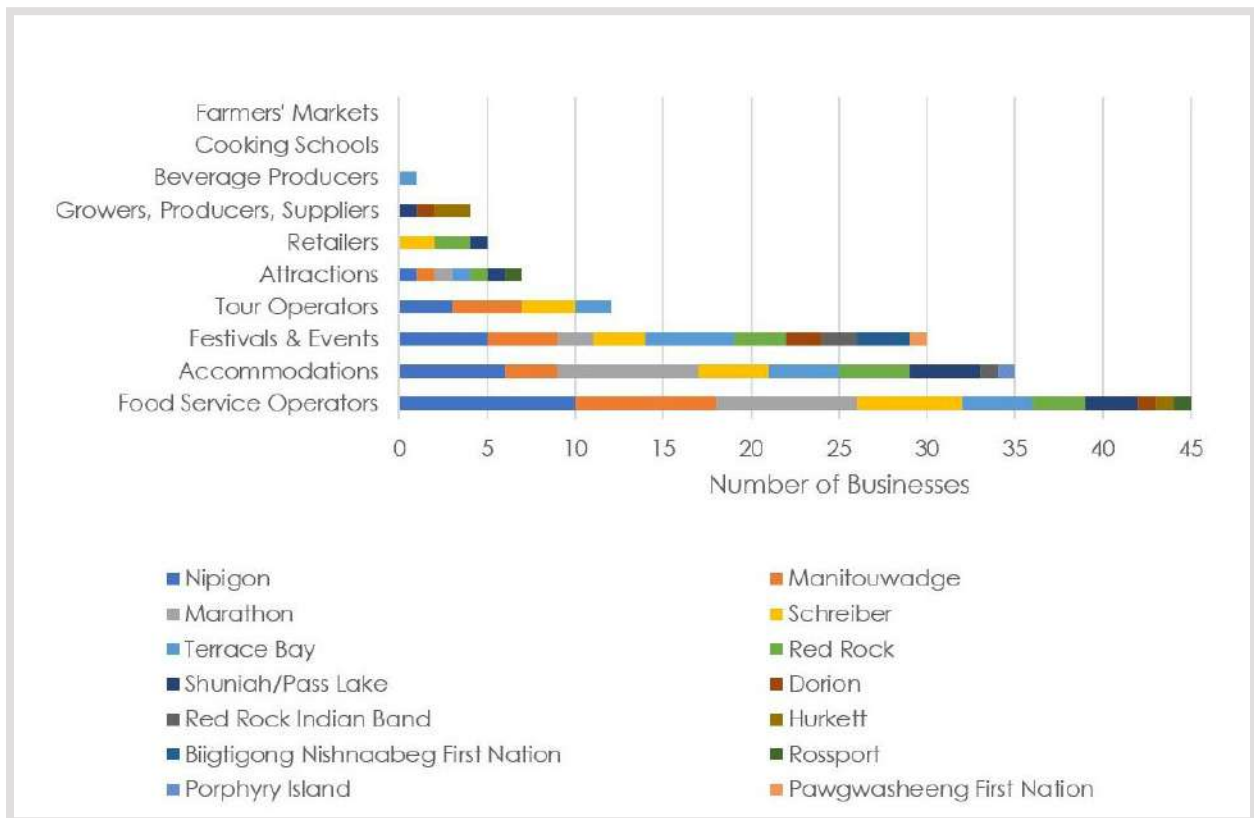


Food Tourism Assets

Within Lake Superior's multiple communities, 142 businesses were identified as being part of the food tourism value chain. These businesses included: food service operators; attractions; accommodations; tour operators; growers, producers, suppliers; retailers; and festivals & events.

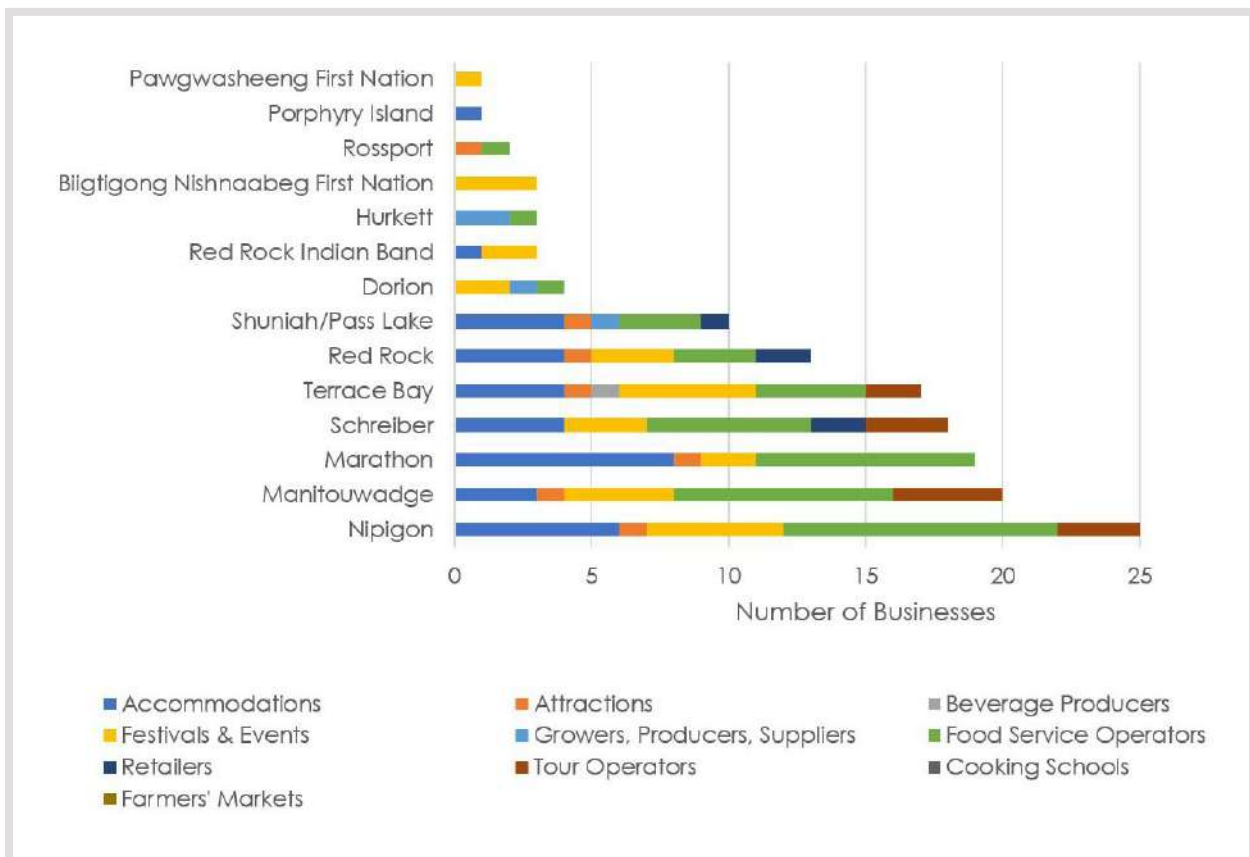
Most food tourism business types identified were food service operators (32%), followed by accommodations (25%), and festivals & events (21%).

FIGURE 2.0 FOOD TOURISM VALUE CHAIN BY BUSINESS TYPE



Nipigon had the largest cluster of food tourism businesses, followed by Manitouwadge, Marathon, Schreiber, Terrace Bay, Red Rock and Shuniah/Pass Lake. Understanding existing food tourism clusters, as well as their makeup is key when planning for the development of food and drink tourism products.

FIGURE 3.0 FOOD TOURISM VALUE CHAIN DISTRIBUTION BY COMMUNITY



Focusing product development on clustered communities will facilitate the development of business-to-business partnerships, which is key to fostering a creative and innovative food tourism climate. Partnership examples include a festival partnering with a local restaurant and brewery to offer a locally relevant taste experience, or a takeaway picnic experience that involves diverse businesses from the food tourism value chain, such as a local producer, restaurant owner, beverage producer, and artisan.

Below are must-try food and drink ingredients, dishes, and experiences that showcase local cultures and landscapes, as mentioned by industry and other stakeholders. Bolded items were mentioned most frequently.

WHAT WE HEARD

Must-try Local Food and Drink

CUISINES

- Finnish cuisine (e.g., pancakes, clabbered milk)
- Italian cuisine
- Indian/Punjabi cuisine

FOODS

- **Bannock**
- **Pies**
- Indian Tacos
- Burgers
- Pizza

PRODUCTS

- Alcoholic beverages (e.g., craft beer)
- Local sauces (e.g., hot sauces)
- Maple syrup
- Local cheese
- Local honey
- Boreal tea blends
- Locally roasted coffee
- Buns

INGREDIENTS

- **Fish:** smoked fish, fish with chips, locally caught fish (trout, walleye/pickrel, salmon)
- Blueberries
- Strawberries
- **Local meats/wild game and fish** (e.g., beef, pork, chicken, moose, deer, goose, partridge, rabbit, pickrel)
- Fiddleheads
- Corn
- Farm vegetables



WHAT WE HEARD

Must-try Experiences

- **Outdoor activities**
(e.g., tours and boat tours including to Rossport Island for sunset, ice climbing, snowmobiling, motorcycling, ATVing, kayaking, geocaching, camping, marina)
- **Hiking Trails**
(e.g., local trail systems, Rossport shoreline hiking trail, Nipigon-Red Rock trail, Casque Isles hiking trail)
- **Outdoor features/locations**
(e.g., river views, Neys Park, Silver Islet)
- **Cultural heritage resources**
(e.g., railway history, historic landmarks)
- **Outdoor businesses/events**
- **Diverse accommodations**
(e.g., bed and breakfasts, yurts)
- **Food and drink experiences**
(e.g., berry picking, fishing)



Connection to Place Assessment

Of the 142 businesses identified as being part of the food tourism value chain in the area, twenty (20) businesses were selected to receive a “connection to place” assessment, which measures the businesses’ connection to place through the following three areas:

INGREDIENTS, which measures a business’s use of food and drink ingredients and products from Northern Ontario specifically, and Ontario more broadly.

RECIPES AND TECHNIQUES, which measures a business’s use of local and/or family food and drink recipes and techniques passed down by Indigenous peoples or brought to the community by historic settlers and newcomers.

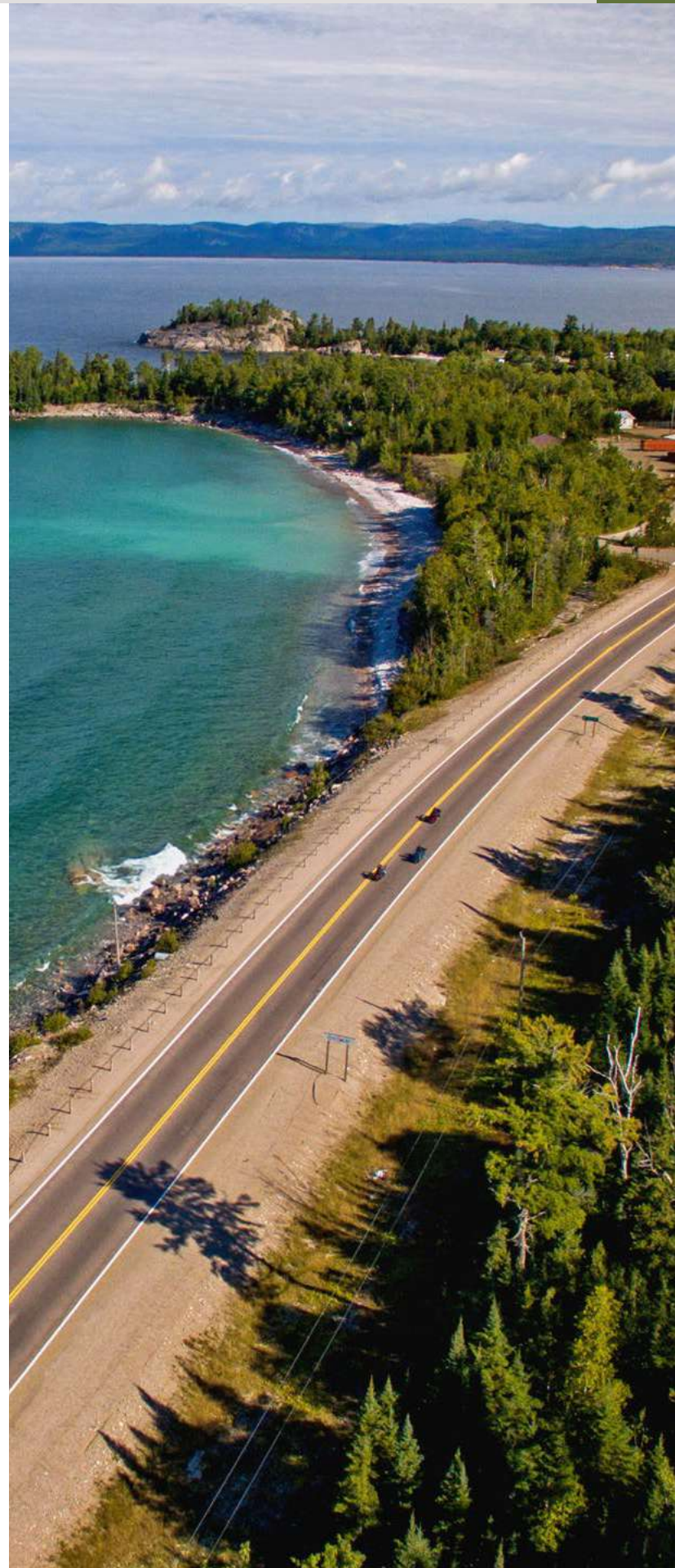
SHARING, which measures a business’s use of regional and/or family stories, customs, traditions, or legends connected to the serving and sharing of food and drink passed down by Indigenous peoples or brought to the community by historic settlers and newcomers.

Overall, businesses primarily rated as having low to medium connection to place.

Most businesses rated the lowest on their connection to place through sharing, and highest through ingredients.

This is important to consider when developing business supports for food tourism product development. Knowing there is a low connection to place through sharing means there is a need for support and capacity building around how to connect food tourism products to regional and/or family stories, customs, traditions or legends in the Lake Superior North Shore region, including through storytelling.

Of the twenty (20) businesses, nine (9) were identified as “potential assets”, seven (7) as “regional assets”, and four (4) as “regional champions.” A potential asset is a business that offers food and/or drink products, but is currently not connected to place through ingredients, recipes and techniques, or sharing. However, the business has the potential to become connected to place through the integration of one or more of these areas into their business. A regional asset is a business that offers food and/or drink products with a medium to high connection to place through ingredients, recipes and techniques, or sharing. However, it has the potential to strengthen its connection to place by focusing on growing one or more of these areas in their business. Finally, a regional champion is a business that offers food and/or drink products with a high or exceptional connection to place through ingredients, recipes and techniques, or sharing. Identifying asset levels of local businesses can help to identify potential food tourism product development partners.



Current State

The Lake Superior North Shore region is well positioned to offer a variety of unique food tourism products that are connected to place.

The area has a variety of outdoor tourism resources, such as land and water trails and landscapes, as well as provincial and national parks. Additionally, it has a variety of cultural heritage resources, such as annual festivals and events, local museums, and historic lighthouses, as well as existing tourism assets, such as the Lake Superior Circle Tour, and businesses offering food and drink connected to place. These resources should be considered when developing food tourism products in the area to offer current visitor markets, such as Thunder Bay residents, Shuniah cottagers, highway drivers, and those travelling across the country or the province by motorcycle, auto or RVs.

However, as food tourism products are developed, considerations should be made for how food tourism can extend the tourism season in the area, strengthen the connection between the communities in the area given the

distance and geography, and combat the impacts of COVID-19 on the tourism industry. Additionally, there is a need to increase the number and diversity of business types offering tastes of place, including tour operators and outfitters.

Also, identifying existing financial and industry capacity resources and identifying alignments with tourism industry partners such as Parks Canada, Destination Northern Ontario, Indigenous Tourism Ontario, DMOs and others will facilitate the development of food tourism products. It is also important to continue to build meaningful relationships between Indigenous and non-Indigenous businesses in the area and support the development of Indigenous food tourism business and experiences in the area.

STRENGTHS

- Proximity to Thunder Bay (and its visitor base)
- Access to cross-country travellers
- Access to land and water trails for walking, hiking, paddling, canoeing, kayaking, boating, snowmobiling, ATVing, (ice) fishing, hunting, etc. to attract outdoor adventurers
- Access to natural landscapes with diverse flora and fauna
- Access to provincial and national parks
- Access to Lake Superior National Marine Conservation Area and growth of tourism products in this area
- Presence of annual festivals and events with food and drink components
- Presence of cultural heritage resources including the railway museum in Schreiber, Porphyry Lighthouse, Silver Islet, etc.
- Presence of cottage population at Shuniah
- Some businesses are connected to place through the food and drink they offer
- Interest by Baby Boomers to travel the Lake Superior Circle Tour by motorcycle, auto and RV
- Popularity of Lake Superior Circle Tour to all kinds of travellers
- Presence of local ingredients, products, and foods
- Parks Canada is highly invested in supporting the growth of food tourism in the Lake Superior North Shore region

WEAKNESSES

- Limited diversity of business types offering food and drink (industry size)
- Limited number of tour operators/ outfitters
- Indigenous and non-Indigenous relations and businesses development (systemic challenges)
- Limited number of Indigenous food tourism experiences available to visitors
- Distance and geography of the area
- Short tourism season
- Limited local food supply
- Issues around selling and serving fish/wild game
- Perceived transportation challenges for visitors around reaching local communities in the area (e.g., limited public transportation)
- Limited access to financial resources for businesses
- Lack of industry awareness around food tourism, and the benefits it can bring
- Perceived need for increased alignment between tourism stakeholders
- Dorion Fish Hatchery, one of the most advanced fish hatcheries in the province, not activated as a tourism asset

2

WHERE ARE WE GOING?

Product Development

A tourism product is a mix of tangible and intangible elements that can include facilities, consumable goods, and/or cultural practices. A product can also include more than one tourism experience packaged with others, such as a boating daytrip to visit a lighthouse, foraging while hiking a trail, or having a lunch at a viewpoint. Importantly, tourism products contribute to a destination's marketing mix and enhance the overall visitor experience, such as a pre-set itinerary with both outdoor and food and drink activities planned.

A tourism experience is a consumable activity offered by a business or operator within a destination that can support visitor learning and enjoyment. A multisensory experience is one that connects with several of the senses.

These are often more immersive, active, meaningful, and engaging for visitors.

Multisensory experiences incorporate activities, products, and stories that are unique to the place, and highlight what



is unique about it and the businesses operating there; but most importantly, these types of experiences stimulate the five senses—sight, sound, touch, smell, and taste—of a visitor to create a greater awareness and memory of the place.

Food tourism is well-positioned to champion multisensory experience development since the act of eating involves the use of smell, sight, touch, and taste; however, there are key elements to consider when developing multisensory experiences for product development. These include the role of partnerships and collaborations in creating unique experiences that connect the visitor to a fuller range of experiences available in the destination by leveraging the diverse assets of a destination.

When considering food tourism product development in the Lake Superior North Shore region, emphasis should be placed on multisensory experience development and the combination of experiences that expose visitors to multiple local experiences offered by diverse businesses. By doing this, visitors will have a higher chance of leaving the area with a meaningful and memorable connection that can then be shared with others through the stories they relate.



Connecting Food Tourism to Outdoor Tourism

As previously mentioned, rural tourism typically uses the natural environment and natural features as primary drivers of visitation, and cultural tourism can be tied to rural tourism as a secondary way for visitors to connect with the place. Notably, food and drink are key elements of cultural tourism because of the clear links they can have to the land. Since the Lake Superior North Shore region holds a multitude of natural assets, including rivers, lakes, waterfalls, trails, landmarks and a diversity of flora and fauna, product development needs to consider how food and drink can be incorporated into visitor experiences of the outdoors; for example, while canoeing, hiking, ATVing, fishing, or hunting.

Partnerships and collaboration are key to food tourism development. When local government, organizations, and industry members work together, it becomes much easier to establish synchronized systems that support food tourism development, such as agricultural policies, health and safety regulations, educational programming, transportation, and/or regional festival scheduling coordination. Some examples of partnerships and collaborations include working with local economic development officers, urban planners, cultural heritage/museum staff, destination marketing organizations, regional tourism organizations, Ontario Parks, and Parks Canada.

Regardless of who leads food tourism product development efforts, small businesses need to be involved because they are the genuine connection to local food and drink and culture. Partners can focus on providing wraparound supports—such as coordinated regional scheduling and destination marketing—that allow industry to focus on running their businesses, while innovating and evolving to and meet visitor demands.

Airbnb Experiences has yet to take off in a meaningful way in rural communities around the world. However, there is an opportunity to support local entrepreneurs through using the platform to pilot food and drink experiences. Additionally, rural communities often face transportation challenges, as public transit is limited, which influences the types of visitors that can enjoy the area. In other words, rural destinations are ideal for independent, mobile travellers with access to a personal vehicle. However, this challenge creates an opportunity for destinations to respond with unique transportation solutions that add value to the tourism experience and increase accessibility to a wider visitor segment, such as cycling, ATVing, canoeing, kayaking, or boating.

Below are some common strategies for rural communities to grow food tourism:

- Introducing food and drink products and experiences into non-food events or festivals
- Offering signature experiences connected to local cultural heritage and landscapes
- Using tour operators to connect products and experiences that incentivize visitors to explore the destination and spend more at local businesses
- Offering changing, impermanent, flexible, and mobile products and experiences that are both unique and multifunctional, such as a picnic program or pop-up dinners
- Focussing on outdoor food and drink products and experiences that connect visitors to the landscapes where ingredients are grown, such as farm-to-fork, foraging, outdoor cooking, or dining, while incorporating local history as an added value

The case studies on the following pages showcase two destinations that integrate outdoor tourism with food tourism through product development and five examples of food tourism products that incorporate outdoor and cultural assets during peak-, off-, and shoulder-seasons.

Östersund & Jamtland-Harjedalen, Sweden

POPULATION: 50,000

Östersund, which is located in the central Jamtland-Harjedalen Region of Sweden, is surrounded by natural landscapes and forms part of Saepmie, the land of the Indigenous Sami people, who have 11 villages present in the region. In 2011, it was recognized by City of Gastronomy, which is part of the UNESCO Creative Cities Network launched in 2004 to promote cooperation amongst cities which recognized creativity as a major factor in their development.⁹

The natural landscape is a key part of the area's value proposition.

It connects visitors to the peoples, places, and processes behind the local food and drink. On the whole, the area is focussed on outdoor food and drink offerings. The urban centre promotes a self-guided tour that includes multiple restaurants with outdoor patio spaces, cafes, and specialty farms. The rural area promotes outdoor foraging and cooking experiences with local chefs, such as cooking classes, tastings, self-guided and

guided fishing and hunting adventures, moose tours, and sporting events, such as Fjallmarathon and Arefjällen. Since many of the culinary tourism experiences are locally sourced, there are seasonal changes in the experiences that businesses can provide particularly during the winter months.

A noteworthy experience offered by the Sami people is a multi-day tour out on the land. As part of the tour, visitors follow the reindeer on snowmobiles or toboggans, before experiencing food and drink prepared the Sami way.

An unrelated but addition relevant example from Sweden is the Edible Country tables experience, developed by the Visit Sweden.¹⁰

[SEE FOOD TOURISM PRODUCTS FOR MORE.](#)

63°10'19.7"N
14°38'28.5"E

Shetland Islands, Scotland

POPULATION: 23,000

The Shetland Islands in Scotland form part of a UNESCO Global Geopark (2015) that sits just 400 miles south of the Arctic Circle.

The islands market a unique geological and morphological experience as a key part of the island's value proposition.

In addition to the natural landscapes and beaches in the area, the islands offer a variety of other tourism draws, including heritage sites, arts and culture, festivals and events, and local culinary specialties.

Taste of Shetland is the main promoter for food tourism and local food & drink on the islands. The organization hosts the Taste of Shetland festival, where foodways and foodstuffs are both celebrated and shared. In addition to this event, the organization has developed the 2020 Shetland Food & Drink Guide, which provides information to visitors about where to access local cuisine. The islands' gastronomy is diverse, offering local fish,

shellfish, lamb, beef, vegetables, herbs, and fruits. The farms on the islands also provide milk, butter cheese, and eggs. Local distilleries and breweries offer craft beers and gins. Shetland lamb is also unique to the islands, and for this the product enjoys the protection of the European Union's Protected Designation of Origin.



60°17'55.3"N
1°15'55.4"W

The Edible Country: DIY Foraging & Outdoor Dining Experience

LOCATION

Across the Swedish countryside (by lakes, rivers, in forested areas and plains)

PRODUCT TYPE

Self-guided foraging and cooking experience (with options to book a local guide and/or chef)

DETAILS

The Edible Country experience allows visitors to book a picnic table in designated locations across rural Sweden. Each booking comes with a suggested menu featuring ingredients that are easily foraged in the local area, and a cooking kit inclusive of the tools needed to prepare the suggested menu. Visitors who feel less comfortable with cooking and foraging can also opt to prebook a personal local guide or chef to prepare the meal for them.

CREATIVE FOOD INTEGRATIONS

The suggested menu for each Edible Country experience is tailored to the local area and features dishes that highlight a strong connection to the land and seasons. In the recipe cards that are included with each cooking kit, there's an "About the ingredients" section that provides a visual description of the ingredients—such as berries, plants, mushrooms—that visitors will need to prepare their meal, which is a helpful tool for novice foragers.

58°57'41.5"N
15°38'53.7"E

Bikes And Brunch Tour: Winter Cycling Food Tour

LOCATION

Winnipeg, MB

PRODUCT TYPE

Guided group tour on a winterized fat bike

DETAILS

Visit some of downtown Winnipeg's best brunch spots on a 4-5 hour cycling tour, using winterized "fat" bikes perfect for a leisurely winter ride. Previous tourism stops have involved visits to Winnipeg's first wood-fired pizza truck and seasonal treats from Capital Grill on Broadway.

CREATIVE FOOD INTEGRATIONS

In 2020, tour itineraries integrated a visit to Winnipeg's famous warming huts, which resulted from a competition to build well-designed, artful warming shelters along The Forks River Skating Trail.

49°53'48.7"N
97°09'18.0"W

Gourmet Ski: Cross-Country Skiing Experience With Food Tastings

LOCATION

Wells, BC

PRODUCT TYPE

Self-guided skiing tour with food tastings

DETAILS

Gourmet Ski is an annual fundraising event hosted by the Wells and Area Trails Society (WATS). Registered participants cross-country ski around the Wells meadow and the rolling hills of the Cornish Mountain trail network, all while enjoying international cuisine that is prepared by members and volunteers and served at various check-in stops along the way. To encourage zero-waste activities, participants are provided with wooden plates and cutlery, and advised to bring their own water bottles.

CREATIVE FOOD INTEGRATIONS

WATS, which has hosted Gourmet Ski for over 10 years, encourages participants to experience “the best of Wells” all in one afternoon, through splendid skiing, great company, the beautiful landscapes of the BC interior, and delicious food prepared by local community members.

53°06'08.7"N
121°34'11.4"W

Heritage Meals at The Old Stone House: Heritage Dinners And Culinary Experiences

LOCATION

Sault Ste. Marie, ON

PRODUCT TYPE

Dinner theatre; Locally sourced breakfast, lunch, high tea or dinner experiences at a historic site

DETAILS

"The Old Stone House" is part of the Ermatinger-Clergue National Historic Site in downtown Sault Ste. Marie. Two popular tourist offerings include the Group of Seven Dinner Theatre, produced in partnership with a local theatre company, and pre-bookable Heritage Culinary Experiences developed by Chef Alma Kasch.

CREATIVE FOOD INTEGRATIONS

The Group of Seven dinner is boxcar themed, with foods such as fried onions, stew and dumplings, and pastries on a painter's palate enjoyed by diners next to the hearth. During the meal, interpreters in period clothing share stories about the Group of Seven and their time painting in the region. Chef Kasch's Heritage Culinary Experiences include set menus that feature seasonal produce sourced from Algoma Country. From the gardens and apple orchard on-site, fresh herbs and vegetables, preserves, and apple products are also produced for use in The Old Stone House kitchen.

46°31'08.8"N
84°21'58.2"W

Escape the City Canoe Paddle & Dining Adventure: A Canadian Signature Experience

LOCATION

Toronto, ON

PRODUCT TYPE

Guided paddle and picnic featuring Ontario specialties

DETAILS

Participants board a heritage Voyageur Canoe (a replica of those used by early settlers) and paddle out of the harbour towards the Toronto Islands, passing sailboats that frame the city's iconic skyline. Along the way, they learn about Toronto's geography and history. At the Islands, participants enjoy a picnic spread with local specialties from across the province before paddling back in time to watch the sunset over Lake Ontario.

CREATIVE FOOD INTEGRATIONS

Foods prepared for the picnic include wild-foraged ingredients, local meats, fish, and salads, paired with Ontario artisan cheeses, handmade charcuterie and breads.

43°37'46.2"N
79°22'36.2"W



Food Tourists

It is important to consider who food tourists are when developing food tourism products in the Lake Superior North Shore region. Food tourists can be considered anyone who partially or totally plans their trip to taste the cuisine of a place.¹¹ Some of their trips are planned around food and drink, which they consider to be something worth investing in, and see it as more than just daily sustenance. According to the United Nations World Tourism Organization, food tourists are demanding, spend more than average, but are also appreciative.¹² Overall, food tourists are motivated by experiential travel and include visitors looking to try local food at, for example, a restaurant patio, an outdoor picnic experience, or an outdoor cooking class.

When food tourists travel for other reasons, such as outdoor tourism, they look for ways to incorporate local tastes into their trip.

For instance, a food tourist travelling to see the Lake Superior National Marine Conservation Area may stop at a local restaurant to pick up a takeaway meal, and a food tourist visiting family might incorporate a fishing trip into their itinerary.

Overall, food tourists want to connect meaningfully with the places they visit. These motivations and behaviours are important to keep in mind when planning for food tourism development in the Lake Superior North Shore region.

There are different types of food tourists.

Foodies are motivated by the food itself or by experiences surrounding the food. Food-connected consumers make informed choices about their food and drink consumption, including the production processes behind it, but do not necessarily plan all trips around food and drink. Agritourists seek experiential, life-enriching experiences that integrate culture, nature, the outdoors, and learning.

Most importantly, all tourists eat, and there is an opportunity to encourage localized spending through food and drink and enhance diverse experiences, such as hiking, climbing, fishing, boating, visiting cultural heritage sites or purchasing a picnic lunch basket to enjoy along the shores of Lake Superior.

Market Segmentation

In addition to understanding who food tourists are, it is important to consider the types of visitors who want to experience food tourism products in the Lake Superior North Shore region. Destination Canada (formerly the Canadian Tourism Commission) uses social values-based market research to develop customer archetypes that are packaged into Explorer Quotient (EQ) profiles. Destinations and businesses can use these EQ profiles to enhance target customers, develop new product, and fine-tune marketing efforts. The three EQ profiles that Canada is focussing on attracting globally are: **FREE SPIRITS**, **CULTURAL EXPLORERS**, and **AUTHENTIC EXPERIENCERS**.¹³ From within Canada, four additional EQ profiles have been identified: **PERSONAL HISTORY EXPLORERS**, **NO HASSLE TRAVELLERS**, **REJUVENATORS**, and **GENTLE EXPLORERS**.

There is a wide range of activities that visitors fitting Canada's EQ profiles find attractive, and rural destinations like the Lake Superior North Shore need to explore how integrating food and drink into such activities can help these customers choose the destination over others. Since visitors will be coming from closer to home during and post pandemic, it is as important to look at the EQ profiles specific to the Canadian market and their interests in food- and drink-related activities.

For more information, please access the Explorer Quotient Toolkit directly; noting that the data is from 2012 and as such preferences may have shifted.



Target Markets

It is important to consider where different types of visitors can be found and whom to target.

The Ontario Tourism Marketing Partnership Corporation (OTMPC), the OTMPC Northern Tourism Marketing Committee, and Northern Regional Tourism Organizations (RTO 13, 12), outline marketing priorities for Northern Ontario in Northern Ontario Strategic Direction for Marketing Tourism in 2017-2020. Nurturing current visitor segments is listed as a priority markets for 2017-2020, including the **GREAT LAKES/ NEAR BORDER U.S. STATES, SOUTHERN ONTARIO, THE UNITED KINGDOM** and **GERMAN MARKETS**.

The plan also identifies niche travellers as a key market for Northern Ontario that includes those with “a passion for and commitment to a specific Northern Ontario or outdoor adventure activity and who travel specifically to engage in that activity.” For example, anglers, hunters, paddlers, hikers, RVers or motorcyclists are niche travellers that Northern Ontario can target. The report lists six priority product and experience areas for Northern Ontario: **FISHING, CULTURE AND HERITAGE** (including food tourism), **TOURING, NATURE AND ADVENTURE, GATEWAY AND URBAN COMMUNITIES**, and **HUNTING**.¹⁴

In alignment with Destination Canada's EQ profiles, Destination Northern Ontario identifies three target EQ profiles: Free Spirits, Cultural Explorers, and Authentic Experiencers, whereas OTMPC identifies the priority consumer segments as including Connected Explorers, Knowledge Seekers, Up & Coming Explorers, and Nature Lovers. Regardless of the visitor personas used, a key priority of the Northern Ontario Strategic Direction for Marketing Tourism in 2017-2020 is to “grow Northern Ontario's consumer base”.¹⁵ Since all visitors must eat and recognizing that food and drink can be leveraged to elevate a wide range of other visitor experiences, including outdoor experiences from paddling trips to picnic outings, food tourism has a major role to play in this effort.

Finding the Visitor

Understanding how food tourism can support the growth of new visitor markets and improve the experiences offered to existing markets in the area can inform future food tourism product development and marketing efforts. Food tourism can be an attractor on its own, as well as elevate other visitor experiences. For destinations such as the Lake Superior North Shore region, it is strategic to use food tourism to elevate the visitor experience and develop points of differentiation from competitor destinations. This means incorporating high-quality food and drink experiences into the region's current attractors, such as outdoor adventure. The 2018 Lake Superior North Shore Tourism Strategy lists three key market segments for the region: Outdoor Adventure, Drive-by, and Thunder Bay.

Below are the three market segments with a description of the role that food tourism can play in elevating the visitor experience.



Outdoor Adventure

Elevating outdoor adventure tourism through food and drink

As mentioned earlier, natural landscapes and outdoor experiences are often important attractors for rural destinations. For example, outfitters, accommodations, and attractions can all layer food and drink into their offering to take it to the next level.

SEE CASE STUDIES FOR EXAMPLES

Drive-by

Improving purposeful niche travel and chance visits through food and drink

There are many reasons drivers may stop in the Lake Superior North Shore region. Niche markets like RV tourists and motorcyclists might be participating in the Lake Superior Circle Tour or another driving route. The region's strategic location along the Trans-Canada highway means that others might be stopping in for a meal or to rest before continuing their journey. Regardless of the purpose, all visitors must eat, and quality food and drink can make a visit to the region more memorable, which in turn promotes repeat visitation.

Thunder Bay

Inspiring daytrips through food and drink

In the wake of COVID-19, people are increasingly looking to travel closer to home. Food and drink can be a key motivator for day trips whether it's an agritourism experience, a cooking workshop, a brewery tour, or enjoying the contents of a curated picnic basket post-hike. Visitors from Thunder Bay represent an important visitor market for the Lake Superior North Shore region. When residents of Thunder Bay are aware of day trip activities in proximity to home, they are also more likely to bring visiting friends and relatives along. At the same time, by staying longer and spending more, overnight visitors have a greater economic impact on communities than day-trippers. Converting day-trippers to being overnight guests can dramatically increase visitor spend, such as encouraging an overnight stay for visitors on a road trip.

Similarly, when visitors are looking to add a day or two of travel after attending a conference or business event in Thunder Bay, the Lake Superior North Shore region can use food tourism to position itself as a worthwhile extension. Making trip add-ons easy to organize is essential to capitalizing on these markets. With limited time, these visitors will be more discerning with the experiences that they add to their itinerary. Offering unique, one-of-a-kind experiences tied to place will be key to attracting them.

Looking Ahead

The Lake Superior North Shore region is well positioned to develop food tourism products that will attract a variety of visitors through multisensory experiences connected to place. Specifically, the area can differentiate itself from larger urban centres and other rural communities by highlighting its foodways, which connect to both the outdoors and Lake Superior.

There is a real opportunity to both elevate and diversify existing food tourism products that target key visitor segments.

Specifically outdoor adventurers, drive-byers, and Thunder Bay residents. There are also opportunities to strengthen the region as a food tourism destination by identifying ways to increase access to local food and drink, increase buy-in from local industry, providing awareness and capacity building for industry members, and increasing collaboration among the different communities and industry members. Challenges also need to be acknowledged in pursuing these opportunities. Below are the various opportunities and challenges identified through research.

OPPORTUNITIES

- Leverage natural food tourism clusters (Nipigon, Hurkett, etc.)
- Highlighting local foodways (shore lunches, lake trout, locally made pies, berry foraging, Java Journey, Ale Trail)
- Diversifying food and drink experiences (work with outfitters, local cooking experiences, diverse price points, Silver Islet experience)
- Identify partnerships with Parks Canada to develop food and drink experiences within the Lake Superior National Marine Conservation Area
- Attract a broader market (takeaway picnics for hikers, ATV/bike routes with lunch stops, picnic experiences for watersport enthusiasts and boaters)
- Indigenous experiences (serve local fish and game)
- Place-based experiences (pop-up dinners in different natural locations)
- Partnering/collaborating (strengthen local supply chains, grow community network, grow B2B partnerships, collaborate with ITO)
- Marketing and branding (online marketing training, wayfinding signage)
- Operator training/support (training on integrating food and drink to outdoor tourism, attract new businesses and entrepreneurs, foster interest among businesses)
- Focus on local food (build awareness of producers and suppliers)
- Leverage existing infrastructure and community projects (visitor centres, Manitouswage multi-use trails plan and downtown revitalization project, Terrace Bay waterfront development projects, etc.)
- Leverage post-pandemic interest in local and regional travel
- Introducing food and drink to local cultural heritage and environmental resources (e.g., community museums, historic sites and landmarks, educational centres, waterfalls, trails, rivers)
- Introducing food and drink to existing tourism initiatives (e.g., Shuniah's Tourism Strategy, Red Rock's two-day self-guided itineraries, Porphyry Lighthouse strategic plan)
- Grow the number of outdoor adventurers, drive-by visitors, and visitors from Thunder Bay to the area (e.g., visiting festivals and powwows, anglers, hikers, paddlers, motorcyclists, etc.)
- Leverage existing tools and resources available to develop food and drink experiences (e.g., TEN culinary tools, TripAdvisor, Airbnb Experiences)
- Grow agritourism experiences (e.g., aquacultural activities, fishing, hunting, trapping, and foraging)
- Grow Indigenous food and drink experiences (e.g., powwows, hunting and fishing camps)
- Leverage the array of transportation methods as part of food and drink offerings (e.g., hiking, walking, canoeing, kayaking, boating, snowmobiling, ATVing, motorcycling)
- Grow focus on outdoor food and drink products and experiences that connect visitors to the landscapes where the ingredients were grown, such as farm-to-fork, foraging, outdoor cooking or dining, while incorporating local history as an added value
- Grow the number of Ontario and Canadian Signature Experiences through food and drink
- Grow the number of FeastON-designated businesses
- Leveraging the new Lake Superior Circle Tour website

CHALLENGES

- Limited access to local food and drink (e.g., locally grown produce, local beverage producers - breweries)
- Limited buy-in from local industry
- Labour (shortage, capacity building, business hours)
- Limited business development and support (creativity, innovation, knowledge of culinary tourism)
- Limited industry capacity for online marketing
- Limited awareness about the power of sharing and telling stories in food and drink offerings (e.g., online and in-person)
- Limited business-to-business and community-to-community collaborations
- Perceived limited human resources for existing festivals
- Perceived limited collaboration among communities on scheduling festivals and events throughout the year to amplify number of visitors and to leverage abundance of ingredients
- Impacts of COVID-19



3

HOW WILL WE GET THERE?

Strategy Framework

Three areas of opportunity emerged through the strategy development process:

1. **BUILD CAPACITY**
2. **DEVELOP A DESTINATION NARRATIVE**
3. **PREPARE FOR PRODUCT DEVELOPMENT**

Each of these areas of opportunity is associated with specific strategies to support their development. To ensure strategic use of resources and capacity, implementation of this product development strategy will require collaboration with partner organizations and industry. The strategies associated with this report are associated with a two-year implementation timeline; however, it should be noted that food tourism development generally and product development specifically are continuous processes. Plans should be made to continue food tourism development work well beyond the two-year implementation timeline.

BUILDING CAPACITY means, growing awareness around food and drink experiences in tourism, supporting the integration of food and drink into visitor experiences, and creating ongoing



opportunities for industry to connect and share food tourism information. Not all food and drink businesses see themselves as part of the tourism industry. At the same time, not all tourism businesses use the full potential of their food service offering.

To grow food tourism in the Lake Superior North Shore region, a key step is ensuring that industry and potential partners understand the opportunities related to food tourism.

Similarly, not all business owners know how to integrate locally relevant food and drink experiences into their visitor offerings, and different business types along the food tourism value chain may need specific supports to capitalize on the opportunities brought by food tourism, such as an outfitter offering a local dinner, a restaurant providing a takeout picnic, or an accommodation featuring a locally sourced breakfast.

Industry connection is another essential aspect of building capacity to create a thriving food tourism landscape. Partnerships are the foundation of food tourism development. A connected industry can provide unique offerings to visitors that cannot be replicated elsewhere, such as a restaurant,



beverage producer, craftsperson, and the municipality to offer a takeout picnic experience along the Lake Superior shoreline. Additionally, when businesses know what other businesses in their community are doing, improvement can be made to local sourcing, increased ambassadorship and supporting meaningful recommendations of other local businesses to visitors.

DEVELOPING A DESTINATION NARRATIVE

means co-creating a regional narrative connecting the outdoors with food and drink, as well as sharing food and drink stories and information with visitors.

From locally harvested lake fish to berry pies, the foodways of Lake Superior North Shore are intertwined with the outdoors. Not surprisingly, many of the target markets for the region are interested in outdoor activities such as hiking, ATViing, fishing, hunting or paddling. However, it is not obvious from a visitor (and a prospective visitor) perspective how food tourism and outdoor tourism complement each other.

By co-creating a regional narrative that combines the outdoors with food and drink, the Lake Superior North Shore region can offer unique experiences to visitors and inspire product development that reflects the place.

At the same time, a clear regional narrative makes it easier for business owners to share related stories to support the region as a food and drink destination. Once a narrative is established and businesses are equipped to reinforce this narrative with the unique stories they share, the narrative and supporting stories become an important tool for attracting new visitors and encouraging repeat visitation.

PREPARING FOR PRODUCT DEVELOPMENT

means establishing a product development task force, developing food-focused itineraries for visitors, exploring partnerships and collaborations with relevant organizations, and piloting one or two new food and drink products aimed at target markets.

Food tourism development at the regional level cannot be driven by one organization or individual alone.

Superior Country will need to work in partnership with others to grow food tourism in the Lake Superior North Shore region. A task force with a clear mandate, made up of diverse representatives, including First Nations communities, government, non-for-profit, economic development corporations, industry members, and tourism associations will be essential to consolidating the resources

needed for implementation of this strategy. Product development can include regional-level initiatives, as well as industry support to develop their own products.

In terms of product development, food-focussed itineraries are an effective way to show off local assets, while making it easier for visitors to incorporate locally relevant food and drink into their visits. This is especially important in a destination like the Lake Superior North Shore region with longer driving distances. Piloting these and other food and drink products is a flexible way to test their success with visitors. Learnings from these processes can be applied to future iterations of the same product, as well as inspire the development of new product in the future.

AREA OF OPPORTUNITY	STRATEGY
BUILD CAPACITY	1. Build awareness around food and drink experiences in tourism
	2. Support the integration of food and drink into visitor experiences
	3. Create ongoing opportunities for industry to connect and share food tourism information
DEVELOP A DESTINATION NARRATIVE	4. Co-create a regional narrative connecting the outdoors with food and drink
	5. Share food and drink stories and information with visitors
PREPARE FOR PRODUCT DEVELOPMENT	6. Establish a product development task force
	7. Develop food-focussed itineraries for visitors
	8. Explore partnerships and collaborations with relevant organizations in Lake Superior North Shore and around Lake Superior
	9. Pilot one or two new food and drink products aimed at target markets

Moving Forward

The Lake Superior North Shore region is well positioned to benefit from food tourism product development.

The destination has a unique combination of natural and cultural assets, including waterfalls, rivers and lakes, as well as a diversity of land and water flora and fauna, and a rich history from the Group of Seven, First Nations, Métis, World War II and railroad construction as well as the Big Lake itself.

These diverse, yet intertwined natural and cultural assets, can be tied to local foodways through storytelling to become food and drink experiences that reflects the unique local context of the area. In addition, Lake Superior North Shore's strategic location along a major transportation corridor, as well as its proximity to Thunder Bay, facilitates the accessibility of these experiences to a diversity of visitor segments.

The Lake Superior North Shore region can celebrate its unique foodways as points of differentiation that meet the demands

of today's travellers by working to build food tourism capacity amongst industry and partners, developing a regional narrative connecting food and drink with the outdoors, and preparing new product development and experiences that connect to this narrative.

Long term success in product development will require collaborative work beyond the two-year implementation timeline of this strategy.

Superior Country will need the collaboration and support of diverse partners to harness the growth potential of food tourism in the area including industry members, local economic development offices and corporations, chambers of commerce and destination marketing organizations, as well as Destination Northern Ontario, Indigenous Tourism Ontario, Parks Canada, and many others.

Building flexibility and adaptability into implementation plans will be key for the success of the strategy. There is always uncertainty, and the current tourism climate is in a particularly uncertain state. However, visitors have shown great interest



finding experiences close to home, as well as learning about local food, how it's grown and made, as well as immersing themselves in outdoor natural spaces. The Lake Superior North Shore region can offer food and drink experiences that integrate these visitor interests, while celebrating its unique foodways. Additionally, it is important to consider future events and trends, such as changing tourism demands, lifting pandemic restrictions, reopening international borders, or the construction of deep-water ports, as these changes could provide unique unforeseen opportunities that will inform future food tourism product development in the Lake Superior North Shore region.

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