

Promoting Culinary Tourism

Date:	August 8, 2014
To:	Economic Development Committee
From:	General Manager, Economic Development and Culture
Wards:	All
Reference Number:	

SUMMARY

This report responds to City Council's direction for the General Manager, Economic Development and Culture to report back on the establishment of a Culinary Tourism Working Group to promote a Culinary Trail.

As Canada's leading tourist destination with annual visitation of 9.9 million overnight visitors (*Source: Tourism Toronto*) the projected impact that Culinary Tourism can have on improving and enhancing the variety, scope and depth of epicurean offerings cannot be overestimated. Toronto is in the heart of a vibrant and robust agricultural region with close proximity to rich, fertile farmland. The rise of urban agriculture as seen through rooftop gardening and neighbourhood and community gardens can be harnessed to increase the availability of a whole range of produce and culinary offerings.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The General Manager of Economic Development and Culture recommends that:

1. The Economic Development Committee endorse and support the work of the Culinary Tourism Working Group going forward;
2. The Economic Development Committee acknowledge the impact that Culinary Tourism has and can have in Toronto and to encourage its growth;

3. The Economic Development Committee request the Culinary Tourism Working Group continue to engage with a number of culinary-related groups and organizations to identify, enhance and promote the culinary offerings available in Toronto; and
4. The Economic Development Committee request the General Manager, Economic Development and Culture report back by mid 2015 with an implementation plan.

Financial Impact

There are no financial impacts as a result of the adoption of this report. A future report may make financial recommendations to support the future recommendations of the Culinary Tourism Working Group (CTWG).

DECISION HISTORY

At its meeting of May 6, 2014 City Council requested the General Manger, Economic Development and Culture to establish a establish a Culinary Tourism Working Group (CTWG) composed of representatives from the restaurant sector, farmer's markets, specialty food stores, Business Improvement Areas and Tourism Toronto to develop a strategy to promote a Toronto Culinary Tourism trail that can be marketed to visitors and locals alike, and requested the General Manager of Economic Development and Culture to report to the Economic Development Committee in August 2014 on the recommended strategy including any funding requirements.

<http://app.toronto.ca/tmmis/viewAgendaItemHistory.do?item=2014.MM51.13>

COMMENTS

The first meeting of the Culinary Tourism Working Group (CTWG) was held on July 21, 2014 at City Hall. The CTWG is comprised of representatives from the following organizations: Ontario Culinary Tourism Alliance (OCTA), Toronto Culinary Adventure Company, Economic Development and Culture Division of the City of Toronto, Centennial College, Ontario Restaurant Hotel and Motel Association (ORHMA), Distillery District Restaurants, Ontario Craft Brewers, Tourism Toronto, University of Toronto Scarborough – Food Studies and the Toronto Association of Business Improvement Areas (TABIA).

The mission and mandate of the CTWG needs more time to be fully developed and for a strategy and action plans to be formed. In essence, the Working Group is tasked to identify the culinary events and happenings that are currently taking place in Toronto and to ensure that these events and activities as well as future events are designed supported and fully promoted to visitors and residents alike.

A number of culinary events such as Taste of the Danforth, the Thrill of the Grill, Winterlicious and Summerlicious were identified as being successful and attracting thousands of people. Most recently, IMG known for its world-renowned Taste Festivals chose Toronto to launch its North American debut. There are 20 IMG Taste Festivals around the world.

It was also discussed that in recent years a number of media articles including the *New York Times*, *Boston Globe* and international journals such as *National Geographic* have identified Toronto as having a wide variety of alluring and successful culinary experiences and Farmer's Markets. *National Geographic* in particular cited the St. Lawrence Market as being the best Farmers Market in the world.

One of the major considerations in developing a Culinary Trail is to try to be as inclusive as possible to ensure that as many of the city's BIA's and restaurants are included in the process. There are about 9,000 restaurants in Toronto. The group felt strongly that restaurants outside of the central core ought to be considered and acknowledged in some way.

Additional research will need to be conducted to identify initiatives and events that will form the basis of one or more Culinary Trails.

Councillor Fragedakis who is also the City's representative on the Golden Horseshoe Food and Farming Alliance (GHFFA) emphasized that there is a lot in common between the work of the GHFFA and the Culinary Tourism Working Group.

It was also felt that the 2015 Pan Am/ParaPan Games present a tremendous opportunity to take advantage of showcasing Latin American and many other world cuisines.

The work of the Ontario Culinary Tourism Alliance (OCTA), including a seminal report on *Ontario's Four-Year Culinary Tourism Strategy and Action Plan 2011-2015* will be reviewed for additional reference and insight.

http://www.mtc.gov.on.ca/en/publications/Culinary_web.pdf.

Conclusion

Toronto is Canada's leading tourist destination. To take better advantage of this opportunity the Culinary Tourism Working Group will continue to meet to capture the culinary attributes the city has to offer and to make recommendations on actions to

expand businesses and employment growth in the full production and restaurant service industries going forward.

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