

# Foodies' Delight in Wisconsin | JustSayGo, LLC

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When it comes to innovative restaurants led by entrepreneurial chefs who have a passion for the best of locally produced foods, as well as top-flight resorts, Wisconsin typically isn't the first place that leaps to mind.

But to write off places like Elkhart Lake, Kohler and Sheboygan would be to make a grand mistake: Not only do they have great restaurants, but also wonderful opportunities for vacationing. From Milwaukee, Elkhart Lake is a little over an hour's drive away. This little-known—at least in this part of the country—village has three distinct resorts: the Osthoff Resort, Siebkens Resort and Victorian Village Resort with plenty of opportunities for golfing, spa services, water sports and other activities.

The Osthoff—a AAA four-diamond enterprise—offers one, two and three bedroom suites with kitchen and dining area. But for those who wish to hang up their aprons, there are plenty of places to be culinarily pampered. Lola's on the Lake offers a dinner menu that includes starters, such as pan-seared quail or tamarind glazed pork belly, and entrees of grilled wild-caught Alaskan sockeye salmon and Golden Bear Farms grass-fed Berkshire pork, among other options.

For many, breakfast is a catch-as-one-can affair, only to be actually enjoyed and savored once in a blue moon. But Osthoff's Otto's Restaurant offers just such an opportunity to relax and put the cares of the world behind while contemplating how to spend the day. The bowls of oatmeal here are huge, the potato pancakes divine and the Hollandaise sauce that accompanies the eggs Benedict is made on site.



Those who are seeking to upgrade their cooking skills will enjoy Osthoff's L'ecole de la Maison, a French culinary school led by Culinary Institute of America-Trained Chef Scott Baker. Guests may opt for a two- to three-hour workshops that focus on crepes, tarts and classic French desserts, or one- or two-day courses that center around everything from French Christmas fare, classic French cuisine or artisan breads and hand-dipped chocolates.

An easy drive from Elkhart Lake is Kohler—a town built around the company that is known for its high-end bath and kitchen fixtures.

Kohler was founded by Walter J. Kohler back in 1873, and what today is its American Club Resort originally opened in 1918 to house the immigrant company workers. Distinguished visitors have included John Phillip Sousa, Ernest Hemingway, Lou Gehrig and Mary Pickford.

No longer dormitories for employees, the American Club is the only AAA five-diamond resort in the Midwest. And it has managed to hang on to that status for 25 years.

As with the Osthoff, Kohler's cooking classes are led by the resort's culinary arts director Ulrich Koberstein and chef Ryan Anderson. But it also has guest professors that include legendary names such as Jacques Pepin and the Travel Channel's Andrew Zimmern. Koberstein and Anderson put on quite an entertaining show—and the good news is that the food they prepare in their classes is carefully paired with various wines for all to enjoy.

Guests to the American Club have 10-plus restaurants and cafes from which to choose. For those in the mood for classic Italian there is the Cucina Italian Restaurant. And come hungry—portions here tend to be hefty. Start with an antipasti of ravioli di Formaggio—toasted three cheese ravioli in a house-made marinara sauce or portabella mushrooms stuffed with crispy pancetta, herb cream cheese and red peppers in a red wine reduction before moving on to linguini with lemon extra virgin olive oil topped with fresh shaved SarVecchio parmesan cheese.

While Cucina has an ample dessert menu, just a couple of doors away is the Craverie Chocolatier

Café, the home of the Kohler Original Recipe Chocolates. Kohler chocolatiers have come up with ganache recipes that include flavors such as Asian spice, passion fruit, Earl Grey, pear and crème fraiche. Other options—and perfect gifts—are boxes of botanical truffles that really look like works of art more than bonbons. Anyone having a guilty conscience about calories will be thrilled to learn that Kohler's facets—black current, Mirabelle plum, Mandarin ginger and others—ring in at 35 calories each, but with the taste of something far more decadent.



Plan for another pleasant surprise. Sheboygan is home to Margaux Bistro and Wine Bar and to Chef Stefano Viglietti's Field to Fork

Café and Grocery, Trattoria Stefano and Il Ritrovo.

Margaux is well known for Jaclyn Stuart, an award-winning, under 30 certified sommelier, who is on a mission to educate consumers about what to look for in a wine and how to pair it with food. (Tip: Match the aromas in wine with the flavors in the food.) Margaux's Owner and Executive Chef Rob Hurrie is dedicated to seasonal menus that might include caramelized sea scallops with roasted fennel and potato pave, creamed leeks, lemon carrot coulis and an arugula fennel salad or a Maple Leaf Farms duck breast with potato confit, sautéed pea shoots and a roasted grape and cherry jus. In addition to hosting wine and food tastings, Stuart is on hand to offer advice to restaurant patrons as to which wine would work best with their dishes.

Once a year, Stefano Viglietti heads to Italy for three weeks, often taking members of his staff along, to bone up on everyone's cooking skills. He's been known to walk into a restaurant in Positano or Venice and ask to be allowed to spend the day learning and cooking alongside the local chefs, who typically are very accommodating.

It was one of these visits that he learned how to make authentic hand-crafted pizza, which led to him becoming the fifth restaurant in the United States to receive the VPN—or Vera Pizza Napoletana—designation from the Associazione Verace Pizza Napoletana. One won't find pizza with pineapple here, but there will be Margherita with tomato, buffalo mozzarella and basil or a Boscaiola with mixed mushrooms, rosemary, truffle cheese, smoked mozzarella and pancetta, all baked in the traditional wood-fired oven.

Immediately adjacent to the dining room is Viglietti's Field to Ford Café and Grocery, which is stocked with locally grown fruits and vegetables, imported Italian cheeses and meats, authentic balsamic vinegars, fresh deli salads, such as poached calamari with olive oil, red onions, parsley, carrots and olive oil. In addition to the eats, there are gorgeous ceramics and glassware, and other additions for one's home and kitchen.

Sidebar: Olivu 426

While not a restaurant or food outfit, Olivu 426's proprietor Caitlin Brotz has a bath and beauty products store that is dedicated to using fresh, additive-free natural ingredients to produce high quality soaps, lip balms, body scrubs and another 100 or so products.



After a friend was badly burned in an accident, nurses at the hospital gave Brotz—a 2005 business graduate of Lakeland College—a recipe for a lip balm and lotion that did not contain alcohol. Brotz whipped up a batch and found herself with so much additional product that she began handing it out to friends and family. And, from that, Olivu (sort of rhymes with "I Love You") 426 was born.

Since 2006, Olivu has had its own shop in downtown Sheboygan. And, while a customer may come

in and pick up a ready-made soap, such as the popular oatmeal milk and honey glycerin bars, she can also choose from dozens of different scents and herbal additives, in effect customizing the product for an individual's taste.

Other popular products are an organic sugar and olive oil scrub, anti-aging face serum—which, Brotz swears, receives raves from folks all over the country—a lavender milk facial as well as the original lip balm.