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Indulge in Culinary Tales in Carson Valley, Nevada

Carson Valley Food & Drink Loci Offer Memorable Destinations for Hungry Visitors

CARSON VALLEY, Nev. (April 18, 2024) – One-of-a-kind dining destinations, farm-to-table offerings, al fresco scenic settings — these are just a few of the hallmarks of Carson Valley, Nevada’s, robust epicurean scene. Yet this only scratches the surface of the burgeoning local gastronomic environment there. Just as a good menu tells a story from one course to the next, the dining locales in Carson Valley each contribute a unique perspective to this diverse dining landscape.

Among the restaurant offerings, diners in Carson Valley will find historic locations that nod to nostalgia, inspiration from French chefs with Michelin stars, seasonal menus with ingredients farmed fresh from local lands, and so much more. When a conversation is struck with the frequently on-site owners or a long-time employee, insights into each location’s unique flavor can be discovered.

Visitors who are ready to feed their appetite for both adventure and a variety of fare that pays tribute to local heritage should take a tour of the range of offerings that characterize Carson Valley — which sits at the crossroads of the Sierra Nevada and the Great Basin, the West Coast and the Wild West. Here, find a sampling of the local cuisine — and an introduction to just a few fascinating backstories — to whet the palette of the most discriminating connoisseur.

‘Basque’ in Gardnerville’s Historic Glory at the J.T.

Etienne Lekumberry reflects the immense generational pride one would expect as a descendent of the storied Gardnerville mainstay [J.T. Basque Bar & Dining Room](#).

“I’m the grandson of Jean Lekumberry, who purchased the J.T. along with his brother Pete Lekumberry and my grandmother Shirley on April 1, 1960,” he notes, adding that he was essentially raised at the J.T. — which was one of more than a half dozen Basque inns and boardinghouses all located near where the J.T. still resides. More than 60 years after his family’s purchase, Lekumberry is now the bar manager, and his family restaurant is the only remaining memory of these boardinghouses that date back to the 1800s.

In honor of this rich heritage, they continue to serve a traditional five-course, family-style meal on inviting, long tables. But today’s visitors are less shepherders maintaining flocks on sagebrush-studded hillsides, and more visitors or locals who come to hear stories of days gone by. Diners partake in a

delightful throwback to Basque-American family-style meals while reveling in the tales of these live-in hotels where shepherders of the Eastern Sierra joined together in a common language, a sense of community, and a hearty meal.

“We are honored and blessed to be a part of and serve such a wonderful and vibrant community,” Lekumberry said. “Our deepest gratitude is to all who make the J.T. such a welcoming destination, both our employees and customers alike...It is our commitment to the historic building, our business, our community, and our staff which continue to make us who we are. “

Summer adds a patio with serene outdoor dining as an added benefit, and the J.T.’s enduring traditional Basque cocktail menu offers ideal refreshments to beat the heat, including sangria, kalimotxo (a red-wine-plus-cola drink), Licor 43, and — Lekumberry added — “...of course the always-delicious and ever-notorious Picon Punch.” Called the unofficial state drink of Nevada, the famous Picon Punch is just another nod to the rich Basque heritage reflected in the region and the restaurant.

“As often as we can we offer local grass-fed beef from our family’s ranch in Genoa, as well as delicious Borda Ranch lamb from one of the last Basque sheep companies still operating in Nevada,” Lekumberry said.

The J.T.’s Basque-American family-style menu includes soup, salad, stew, beans, French fries, a bottle of red table wine, coffee, and ice cream along with the selected main course dish; review their [lunch and dinner menus](#) for more insight into this unique dining experience.

Partake in Breakfast or Monthly Bistro Nights at Woodett’s Diner in Gardnerville

Remon and Christelle Zamalis are the husband and wife team and third owners of the popular breakfast destination [Woodett’s Diner](#), after relocating to the Carson Valley in 2021. The operation is a true family affair, with Remon running the back of the house, Christelle in charge of the front, and even their son Dimitri training in the kitchen. Their daughter Carla — known locally as Dr. Z — is a veterinarian in Minden, just down the road from the family restaurant.

Remon was trained as a French chef by Christelle’s father, a Michelin star chef. The [breakfast menu](#) mirrors the rich ethnic heritage inspired by the Zamalis family, with French, Greek, Lebanese, American, and Mexican offerings. You’ll find gyros, falafel, crepes, huevos rancheros, and classic French omelets all contributing to the mosaic of this multicultural menu.

“The Carson Valley offers beautiful scenery, beautiful people, amazing weather, and plenty of things to do,” Remon Zamalis said. “Our goal was to keep Woodett’s quality and popularity and introduce more diversity and improved hospitality. We want visitors to have a nice breakfast experience with a warm and welcoming atmosphere and ambiance.”

Remon was eager to give Carson Valley insight into his French training, thus creating the Bistro — a now once-a-month dining experience at Woodett’s that features a multi-course, gourmet French menu. Reservations fill up several months out due to the Bistro’s immense popularity.

Simultaneously, Remon and Christelle are embarking on a partnership with a nearby farm in Genoa, creating a 2,500-square-foot catering kitchen located on the farm called La Mer Lutz — which translates to “The Mother Lutz” in honor of Christelle’s grandmother.

“This will be a true farm-to-table experience,” Remon said, adding that they plan to host cooking classes with visitors, locals and children from surrounding schools once the kitchen is complete. “We’d love to teach kids how to set a table, how to eat, how to enjoy — the real joy and pleasure of cooking and eating with friends and family.”

Learn more about bistro nights, their new catering kitchen, and more by following Woodett’s on [Facebook](#) and [Instagram](#).

Farmhouse Charm Meets Fine Dining at Daniel’s in Genoa

It’s not often that “farmhouse” and “upscale” participate in the same sentiment, but [Daniel’s](#) is an ode to dichotomy. French classics with a contemporary flare adorn the menu, and even the setting pays homage to the blending of old and new: The site was originally a farmhouse constructed in 1914 as a residence for Lillian Virgin Finnegan, founder of Genoa’s famous fall festival, the Candy Dance. After a few iterations, the building stood vacant before being purchased by Lois Wray along with her husband, who unexpectedly passed away after the purchase. It was reimaged and opened in the fall of 2021, a new building that retained its characteristic old Nevada farmhouse charm — and a name that pays tribute to Lois’ beloved husband.

Adjacent to Daniel’s is a standalone bar called [The Ice House](#), a nod to the original building that stored ice in the days before refrigeration.

“The stone on the Ice House is original to the property,” Wray said, adding that the boulders now comprise the bar. “Although both buildings were in disrepair and were leveled, we set aside the stone and repurposed it to its original state.”

Wray believes in being a strong steward of the community, which is why she prefers her Old Fashioned made with local Frey Ranch bourbon and all artwork showcased on the property to be produced by local artisans. “We like to have a [seasonal menu](#) so we can make the most of what is fresh, and when we can, we love to take advantage of all things local,” she said. “For example, our microgreens are delivered from Hyde’s Microgreens in Dayton, Nevada.”

Summer is welcomed at Daniel’s with the addition of charming courtyard seating, as well as their popular wine tastings that are held the second and fourth Thursday of every month. [Reservations for dining or wine tastings can be made on their website.](#)

Imbibe in Battle Born Wine

Troy Phillips was only 23 when he opened [Battle Born Wine and Whiskey](#) in 2007. But his youth then and now serves as a stark contrast against the historic site of his business, originally built in 1880 as the home of John and Mary Gardner — namesakes of the town of Gardnerville.

The certified Sommelier (for more than a decade now) chose the charming downtown corridor location for its history. “There’s undeniable beauty here combined with small-town charm, plus proximity to Lake Tahoe — making it a choice location,” he said.

The establishment is part retail wine boutique, part event destination: There, visitors can participate in [Snobs Education Classes](#) (which regularly feature over \$1,000 worth of insanely rare products, such as Pappy Van Winkle Bourbon or Buffalo Trace Antique Collection) as well as wine and whiskey tastings that celebrate the unique heritage of Gardnerville and beyond. Lining the shop walls and accessible via a 14-foot rolling library ladder, more than 3,000 selections reflect unique grape and grain offerings.

“We have hand-selected over 13 entire single barrels of whiskey, and we have five more landing in the coming month,” Phillips said. “We have three to four educational whiskey classes monthly as well as wine tastings.”

To browse events, find out about limited-release barrels, and reserve a seat for an upcoming tasting, [visit their website](#) or [send an email](#).

Delicious bites, authentic culture and compelling stories combine in the Carson Valley, and summer is the perfect time to explore this uniquely flavorful food landscape. Learn more about Genoa, Minden, Gardnerville, and Topaz Lake [here](#), or call the Carson Valley Visitors Authority at (775) 782-8145.

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Straddling the California-Nevada state line 1.5 hours south of the Reno-Tahoe International Airport, discover the four communities — Genoa, Minden, Gardnerville and Topaz Lake — that comprise spectacular Carson Valley. Beholding some of Nevada’s first and oldest establishments, visiting Carson Valley means authentically interacting with Nevada’s many histories while experiencing world-renowned outdoor recreation Nevada, and the American West is known for. From legendary forefathers who paved the way to Nevada statehood, to wild horse bands, eagles, and other wildlife, to premiere air sports, American Indian, Basque, and Western Ranching histories and cultures, and distinctive dining experiences that all exist here and only here, Carson Valley offers an adventure for everyone. For more information about lodging, special events, and more trip planning tools, go to [VisitCarsonValley.org](#) or dial (775) 782-2555. The Visitor Information Center is located within the Carson Valley Museum and Cultural Center at 1477 U.S. Highway 395 N, Gardnerville, NV.