



Savor the Sierra: A Tasting Tour Through Carson Valley

*Discover the dishes, drinks, and down-to-earth experiences
making Carson Valley a hidden gem for culinary travelers*

CARSON VALLEY, Nev. (July 25, 2025) – In a world hungry for authenticity, Carson Valley serves up the goods. Framed by snow-capped Sierra peaks and steeped in agricultural tradition, this high-desert haven is quickly becoming a go-to destination for foodies seeking flavors rooted in the land — with a generous side of local pride.

And culinary tourism is a movement tempting palates globally, with [summer 2025 trend data from Chase Travel](#) revealing that 77% of travelers plan trips around food and restaurant experiences, while 70% are willing to travel over 30 minutes for a meal.

Across the Carson Valley, chefs and restaurateurs are embracing old-world techniques and new-world innovations to offer thoughtfully sourced dishes rich in heritage. Sun-drenched farms, century-old ranches, and local masters of cuisine work together to delight food lovers seeking stories on a plate. Carson Valley’s food scene tells a delicious story, and here’s a sampling to tantalize the taste buds.



Nevada’s State Drink, the Picon Punch, pictured at JT Basque Bar & Dining Room

Great Basin Brewing Co. & Overland Restaurant & Pub: Craft to Cattle to Cuisine

An innovative partnership connecting [Great Basin Brewing Co.](#), [Overland Restaurant & Pub](#), and [Park Ranch Meats](#) in Carson Valley celebrates the circle of life — related to food, that is. Spent grain from Great Basin’s beer brewing process is trucked south to a Topaz Lake ranch, where it feeds local cattle. That beef then circles back to the kitchen, landing on plates at Great Basin’s four locations and Overland’s historic Gardnerville eatery.

The result? A hyper-local culinary cycle they call a Closed Loop Food System where nothing goes to waste — and every dish is delightful.

“We are serving grass-fed and grain-finished beef, and the flavor is — bar none — the best,” said celebrity chef Mark Estee, owner of Great Basin Brewing Co., in the [program’s feature video](#).

Jacobs Berry Farm: Berries with a Backstory

Nestled on the Lampe Homestead, a restored historic property that dates back to 1887 in the heart of Carson Valley, [Jacobs Berry Farm](#) grows succulent blackberries and raspberries — available fresh on site or featured in regional restaurant desserts and cocktails. The Jacobs family is proud to continue the agricultural heritage of this land and share its history through tours and events that capture the spirit of the Old West.

And recently, the farm welcomed a whopping 30,000 new buzzing members to the family: honey bees who are adding an extra dash of sweetness to the farm’s vibrant ecosystem. Berry harvest season usually takes place August through September, during which visitors can explore the grounds, soak in the historic setting, and experience firsthand what it means to eat locally from the land.

Sierra Chef: A Taste of Italy in Genoa

At [Sierra Chef](#), food fuels both body and soul. Chef Cynthia Ferris-Bennett, a sixth-generation Nevadan, blends culinary expertise with deep local roots. In fact, she is the great-great-grand-niece of [George Washington Gale Ferris, Jr.](#) — inventor of the Ferris wheel and member of one of the Carson Valley’s most influential families.

Sierra Chef’s calendar is always chock full of hands-on lessons, kids’ camps, summer patio dinners, and other special events.

This historic Genoa shop and kitchen is home to cooking classes, Italian baked goods, gourmet imports, and an on-site market teeming with cheeses, oils, and house-made pastas. And the pièce de résistance? Cannoli that is hand-rolled daily using a recipe handed down by Ferris-Bennett’s Sicilian mother-in-law. Its filling is made with ricotta, love, and local legacy!

JT Basque Bar & Dining Room: Heritage on the Menu

When Picon Punch became [Nevada’s official state drink](#) during the 2025 legislative session, it directed a meaningful spotlight on the legacy of the Basque culture in Northern Nevada. And no other regional restaurant honors this community’s pivotal role quite like [JT Basque Bar & Dining Room](#).

Travelers hungry for a taste of history will find it in this beloved landmark along Hwy 395 in downtown Gardnerville. Housed in a building that's stood for more than 125 years, the JT began as a boardinghouse for Basque shepherders — families who spent long, solitary seasons in the Great Basin mountains and came here to rest, refuel, and reconnect.

Today, the JT continues to honor its roots, especially when it comes to its food and drink offerings:

- They serve locally raised beef from Ranch No. 1 in Genoa, and their lamb is straight from Borda Land and Sheep, one of the only large sheep ranches still operating in Nevada today. Led by the Borda family — shepherders in the area since 1912 — the sheep graze from Carson Valley through Smith Valley to Topaz Lake.
- And then there's the Picon Punch, an iconic cocktail brought over by Basque immigrants generations ago. It's a bold blend of Amer liqueur and brandy, finished with a twist of lemon and often a splash of soda or grenadine, depending on the bartender's touch. Order it "Gardnerville-style," and it arrives in a short highball glass instead of the traditional tulip. Why the switch? Locals insist the shape changes the sip — smoother, stronger, and undeniably JT.

La Mère Lutz & Bistro Nights at Woodett's Diner: French Soul, Local Soil

[Woodett's Diner](#) may be known for its vibrant, multicultural breakfast menu, but once a month, the humble Gardnerville staple transforms. This buzzworthy event is known as Bistro Night, a reservation-only, multi-course French dinner dreamed up by chef Remon Zamalis — who was trained by his father-in-law, a Michelin-starred chef — and hosted with warmth by his wife, Christelle.

The menu is inspired by seasonal, locally sourced ingredients, each plate reflecting the Zamalis family's culinary pedigree. But diners need to plan for this experience, as reservations fill months in advance.

The local love affair with fine food continues with [La Mère Lutz](#), the family's new farm-based catering kitchen in nearby Genoa. Named in honor of Christelle's grandmother, the space hosts farm-to-table dinners and cooking classes for guests of all ages, with produce procured from local gardens, greenhouses, and fields.

Minden Mill Distilling: Where Spirits Meet High-Altitude Beans

The espresso martini renaissance has found a spirited new home in Carson Valley. Enter [Evil Bean](#), a cold brew coffee liqueur born from a local collaboration between [Minden Mill Distilling](#) and [Alpen Sierra Coffee Roasting Company](#). Crafted by Master Distiller Joe O'Sullivan and Master Roaster Christian Waskiewicz, Evil Bean is a smooth, bold liqueur made on site at Minden Mill Distilling with estate-distilled spirits and slow-roasted, high-altitude beans grown and roasted in Carson Valley.

Already the winner of “Best Liqueur” and “Best of Class” at the 2024 Craft Distillers Spirits Competition, Evil Bean packs complex notes of dark chocolate, cherry cordial, and caramel — perfect for sipping or crafting the ultimate espresso martini.

“With the versatility of coffee in mixology, espresso martinis are going beyond traditional settings and mixers,” said Foley Family Wine & Spirits Chief Marketing Officer Jason Daniel. “Evil Bean elevates coffee mixology and espresso martini occasions, backed by meticulous ingredient selection, master craftsmanship and a shot of mischief.”

Minden Mill Distilling is also home to a Single Estate Whiskey made entirely on its 1,200-acre estate, cultivating the distinctive terroir of Nevada’s high-desert region. [Tour guests](#) can learn more about the estate’s unique history and sample spirits, including bourbon, rye, and white spirits.

Savor the Story

Carson Valley invites visitors to browse the complete menu of local offerings. This is a destination where travelers can slow down, connect, and create lasting memories in Northern Nevada’s own heartland. Learn more about Genoa, Minden, Gardnerville and Topaz Lake at the [Visit Carson Valley website](#), 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 premier 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](#).

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