

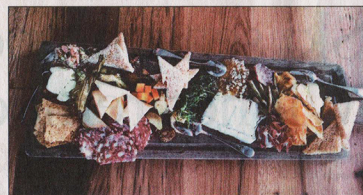
# FORK IN THE ROAD



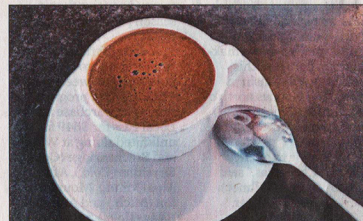
The Orange Bubble Express lift chairs at Canyons Village at Park City feature heated seats and a bubblelike enclosure. **VAIL RESORTS**



**VAIL RESORTS**  
 Vail Resorts' massive Park City property is a 7,300-acre arena for skiers and snowboarders



**PEGGY WOLFF/FOR THE CHICAGO TRIBUNE**  
 The butcher's board at High West Distillery in Wanhsip, Utah, is stocked with pickled, smoked, aged, cured and crisped meats alongside award-winning Utah cheeses.



**PEGGY WOLFF/FOR THE CHICAGO TRIBUNE**  
 Drinking chocolate is a treat at Ritual Chocolate factory and cafe, which also features locally roasted coffees.

## Park City elevates food scene

Thriving mix of artisans, hyperinnovative chefs keeping Utah ski town well fed

By PEGGY WOLFF  
 Chicago Tribune

**PARK CITY, Utah** — This mountain town about 30 miles east of Salt Lake City lays claim to two prestigious winter playgrounds: Deer Valley and Park City. The latter recently became the country's largest ski resort when its owner, Vail Resorts, combined Park City Mountain and neighboring Canyons resorts into one giant, 7,300-acre arena for skiers and snowboarders.

The region clearly has a stellar reputation when it comes to snow. But with few exceptions, this outdoorsy Western ski town hasn't exactly been known for its inspiring food scene. That is changing, thanks to a thriving artisanal food culture of butchers, brewers, bakers, cheese-makers and hyperinnovative chefs, many of them with European roots, who are keeping the town well fed with never-before-seen choices.

Gourmet Tours is a good way to get a feel for what's happening on Park City's food front. Owner Chris McLaws, a cheery and thoroughly knowledgeable guide, meets you inside the Park City Museum, where she'll share stories of silver mining, saloons and the colorful cast of characters seduced by dreams of instant wealth; [www.gourmandtours.com](http://www.gourmandtours.com).

Our guided tour continued with stops at several restaurants, such as Bistro 412 ([www.bistro412.com](http://www.bistro412.com)), where the chef prepared a duck breast sous vide with wild foraged mushrooms. At Riverhorse on Main ([www.riverhorseparkcity.com](http://www.riverhorseparkcity.com)), bites of New York strip steak were rubbed in a blend of locally roasted coffee and dressed with grilled ramps. Handle ([www.handleparkcity.com](http://www.handleparkcity.com)), a newcomer making huge strides in ingenuity, offered a deconstructed cauliflower reconstructed into a buffalo hot wing with blue cheese mousse.

Need to kick off your morning with great coffee? Drop by the slightly off-grid Ritual Chocolate ([www.ritualchocolate.com](http://www.ritualchocolate.com)). This small-batch,



**VAIL RESORTS**  
 Grilled Utah trout on a baguette and Pig in a Parka (American wagyu beef on a pretzel roll) are standouts at Cloud Dine.



**DEER VALLEY ARTISAN CHEESE**  
 Deer Valley's Moon Shadow is an ash-ripened goat cheese.

bean-to-bar factory and cafe serves locally roasted coffees, but it's the aroma of craft chocolate that hits you at the front door. Vintage machines husk, grind and package small batches of cacao beans. Come back another time for the chocolate factory tour and a most generous tasting of chocolate bars.

When morning skiing leaves you famished, head to Park City Mountain's Cloud Dine ([www.parkcitymountain.com](http://www.parkcitymountain.com)), a new restaurant at 9,270-feet. Its lunch menu takes things to new heights. When did skiers and boarders ever spot grilled Utah trout on a baguette or Pig in a Parka, American wagyu beef on a pretzel roll with cheddar dipping sauce?

Lower down Park City Mountain is Red Pine Lodge, once a low-frills cafeteria skilled at separating you from every last dollar in your wallet. This is one of the buildings that Vail repurposed, expanded or in this case, renovated into a two-story lodge, then followed that up by hiring a chef, Alex Malmborg, with a diverse palate. Think Cuban sandwiches and sweet chili pork banh mi. Vegetarians have plenty of choices, as do kids. Take your lunch tray upstairs for the 180-degree killer view of the Wasatch Range. It's one glorious line of snow-covered peaks, scary and thrilling and vertical.

If a horse-drawn sleigh ride before dinner appeals, pack your group into an



**ZOE GUTTERMAN/FOR THE CHICAGO TRIBUNE**  
 On the lunch menu at Red Pine Lodge, Thai chicken coconut soup complements sweet chili pork banh mi.

Amish-built carriage ([www.bouldermountainranch.com/deervalley](http://www.bouldermountainranch.com/deervalley)) for a short ride through the wintry woods before heading indoors to Deer Valley's Empire Lodge. Dinner at Fireside Dining is cooked over open fire pits, reminiscent of the Swiss Alpine tradition; [www.deervalley.com](http://www.deervalley.com). Graze on warm Swiss raclette cheese, fire-roasted leg of lamb and veal steaks. Don't pass up the Instagrammable dessert fondues. The tiramisu with Kahlua hot fudge is mighty indulgent, but you can work off the extra calories the next day on the groomed trails, alpine coasters, glade skiing off-piste or a guided snowmobile tour through acres of privately owned Utah

backcountry ([www.redpinetours.com](http://www.redpinetours.com)).

Park City has attracted a mix of kitchen talent from Austria, England and Germany. Last year, Deer Valley added Corinne Cornet-Coniglio, a Belgian cheese-maker who produces European-style bries and blues. This winter, Deer Valley Artisan Cheese will offer group tours with complimentary cheese tastings. A local Mormon dairy supplies all the milk, but the molds are imported from Europe, the saffron from Spain and the vegetable ash from the burning of grape leaves in France.

At The Mariposa restaurant above Coniglio's cheese-making studio, chef Clark Norris is folding the triple creme with black

truffle cheese into foie gras and letting all of that goodness melt on a bison tenderloin.

Now, onto the hard stuff: whiskey.

High West Distillery has run a Park Avenue saloon since 2009 ([www.highwest.com](http://www.highwest.com)). Last year, it turned a 1900s-style bungalow — a former candy store — into an intimate event space, Nelson Cottage, to host communal, six-course prix-fixe dinners with whiskey pairings. After three hours of whiskey imbibing and dining, you'll no doubt have some new friends at your table. You'll also leave with some insight as to why High West's 14-year light whiskey is a condiment for pan-roasted pigeon, and why its sweet Yippee Ki-Yay whiskey pairs perfectly with date caramel cake.

The place where whiskey culture, the American West and a cowboy vibe really come together is High West's new distillery in Wanhsip, about 20 minutes out of town. It's billed as the world's first distillery on a dude ranch. A free shuttle from town can take you to this state-of-the-art distillery, where a tour guide will explain how this amber liquid is produced, while you get a closer look at the mash of grains, the fermenter and the Scottish still that pulls off chemicals.

Afterward, stop at the refectory for a whiskey tasting and charcuterie board, whose popularity in ski country has never dimmed. Here, it's a butcher's board of pickled, cured, aged, smoked and crisped meats, most of them the creation of Kristiano Cremellini, a fourth-generation Italian salumier maker who opened salumeria in Salt Lake.

Cremellini's high standards for the slow, controlled drying of salami fit in with the growing artisanal movement and restaurant renaissance in Park City.

Brimming with culinary firepower, the food scene is right up there with the greatest snow on earth.

Peggy Wolff is a freelance writer.