

GO EXPLORE

Email: features@timescolonist.com

Kickoff gala offers sneak preview of Dine Around offerings

With the second highest number of restaurants per capita in North America, Victoria foodies can be spoiled for choice.

That's particularly true during Dine Around and Stay in Town, a two-week food festival during which more than 60 restaurants offer three-course menus at a discounted price.

If you're overwhelmed by all the options, the Dine Around Gala Kick-off event on Jan. 24 provides the perfect opportunity to taste participating restaurants' offer-

ings while washing it all down with wine from 20 VQA wineries and B.C. craft breweries.

From canapés to mini meals and desserts, Victoria's chefs will offer a preview of what their restaurants will have on the menu during Dine Around, which runs from Jan. 25 to Feb. 10.

During that period, participating restaurants will offer three-course menus for \$20, \$30, \$40 or \$50 per person, while about a dozen hotels will offer rooms for \$79, \$99, \$129 or \$149.

This is the 16th year for the festival, which grew out of a partnership between Tourism Victoria and the Victoria branch of the B.C. Restaurant and Food Services Association and provides the hospitality industry with a bump during the shoulder season.

Dine Around gives locals a chance to try new restaurants while giving chefs the opportunity to take some risks with their menus, said Tourism Victoria chief executive Paul Nursesey.

"We are definitely a foodie des-

ination and a foodie town, so [there's] many great culinary creations of all types," Nursesey said. "What I've really enjoyed about Dine Around over the last couple of years [is that] it's really allowed chefs and kitchens to experiment with locals before they get ready for the high season."

Nursesey said restaurateurs have told him that with the busy tourists season followed by brisk business at Christmas, early January is a time to recharge and offer a "fresh start to the new year."

More than 400 tickets have been sold for the launch, Nursesey said, and 700 people are expected to roam the Victoria Conference Centre looking for the best bites and tasty tipples.

The launch gala runs from 5 p.m. to 7:30 p.m. at the Victoria Conference Centre. Tickets are \$65 each and can be purchased through Ticket Rocket.

Check out participating hotels and restaurants and sample menus at tourismvictoria.com/eat-drink/dine-around.



Ken Winchester, right, master distiller for deVine Wines and Spirits, pours a glass for whisky expert Davin de Kergommeaux.

DARREN STONE, TIMES COLONIST



COMMUNITY

Chat & Chew luncheon an opportunity to socialize

If you like to talk while you eat, this is the event for you.

St. Matthias Anglican Church is planning the latest in a community luncheon series it calls Chat & Chew.

The fifth edition of the series is set for Jan. 23 from 11:30 a.m. to 2:30 p.m. at St. Matthias Church Hall, located at 1680 Richardson Rd.

Entry is by donation, with \$5 the suggested amount.

The church promises good food, entertainment and an opportunity to meet people.

"Our target will be to invite seniors, those living in social housing and anyone who needs a friend or some company," the church says on its website.

The October event attracted 35 guests, who enjoyed butternut squash soup, bangers and mash and pumpkin pie. Food is nutritious and made with local ingredients whenever possible, the church said.

Previous entertainment has included singalongs and a performance by Target Theatre — a seniors' theatre group that put on a show about older drivers called Age on Wheels. Target Theatre is expected to return in February. Other offerings could include talks about health issues and history, and cooking demonstrations.

Organizers said the monthly gathering is growing in popularity. Volunteers are always needed for such duties as food preparation, hosting and cleanup. Call the church office to find out more at 250-598-2833.

The next session is set for Feb. 27.

Get into spirit of whisky fest



FESTIVALS

Those lucky enough to have tickets for the Victoria Whisky Festi-

val will taste peat, earth, heath, heather, moor, fen, cedar and silage at the Hotel Grand Pacific.

The festival, which opens today and runs until Sunday, features tastings of Ardbeg, Glenfiddich, Macallan and Glenmorangie single malts, Buffalo Trace Kentucky Straight Bourbon Whiskey and Canadian Club.

It also offers master classes from Victoria's own Caledonian distillery, Scottish distilleries including Glenallachie, Bowmore, Bunnahabhain and Glenmorangie, and Japan's Nikka distillery.

There are also master classes on Irish whiskey, classic malts and whisky and chocolate.

The most popular event at the festival is the consumer tasting in the Vancouver Island and Pender Island ballrooms Saturday from 7 p.m. to 10 p.m.

Appropriately, the event website has advice on how to survive the festival — don't overindulge and go for quality over quantity.

"You can help yourself by drinking lots of water during the tasting and having a solid meal before the event."

It's also a good idea to avoid strong foods, as they affect the ability to smell and to taste. The sense of smell can also be temporarily affected by strong alcohol aromas. To "reset" your nose, you're advised to sniff a glass of still water for a few moments.

At tonight's Canadian Whisky Awards dinner, which is expected to be sold out by today, hosts Davin de Kergommeaux and Heather Leary will be joined by members of the judging panel to reveal the best Canadian whiskies of 2018.

One-stop shopping for brides-to-be



CHECK IT OUT

Vancouver Island's Dream Wedding Show offers a one-stop shop for anyone thinking about tying the knot.

The show, one of the longest running on the Island, has evolved from the Bridal Exhibition, and has space for more than 80 vendors at Pearkes Recreation Centre. It features everything from over-the-top design down to the smallest detail.

The show, which organizers promise will be brimming with inspiration, will have wedding planners and professionals of all stripes to help anyone make their trip down the aisle memorable.

Some of the vendors who will be there this weekend include:

Beauty Bride, Capital City Tuxedo, LA Limousines, The Bride's Closet, The Wedding Experts and a cast of wedding DJs, planners, stylists and photographers.

The show runs Jan. 20 from 10 a.m.-4 p.m. at Pearkes, 3100 Tillicum Rd. Advance tickets are available online (dreamwedding-show.ca) for \$13 and \$15 at the door.

There are two other Island dates for the spring show — Feb. 10 in Nanaimo and Feb. 24 in Courtenay.

Bang on your drum at the Royal



FAMILY

Big Bongo is ready to take children on a loud and fun-filled journey this Sunday at the Royal Theatre. It's one of the Victoria Symphony Concerts For Kids —

and this one has an instrument petting zoo beginning at 1:30 p.m. in the lobby.

Percussionists will bring out their big timpani and kettle drums to demonstrate how they can create all kinds of weird and wacky noises in music.

During the concert, you can tap your toes to the music of the Can-Can, ride along with the *William Tell Overture* and feel the power of thunder and lightning.

The concert begins at 2:30 p.m. For tickets, go to rmts.bc.ca or 250-386-6121.

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