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SUMMER 2019

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of Palisade
Peach season

Dairy Good

The new Dairy Block
unveils great
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Just Peachy

Time to enjoy Palisade's pitted prizes

by Eric Elkins

ate summer in Colorado is a wonder of possibility. The gorgeous, cloudless mornings and cooling monsoon afternoons. The patios and rooftops full of revelers. The outdoor music and warm evening rambles from bar to restaurant to bar to bar and the gentle breeze that accompanies your happy stumble to bed.

But most of all, it's the Palisade peach harvest that makes summer really feel like summer.

Palisade is located on the Western Slope of Colorado, and it's the perfect microclimate for fruit farmers — a lush valley fed by the Colorado River, the area is prized for its rich bounty of orchards.

And all across the state, chefs, brewers, and bartenders keep a lookout for those first crates of fuzzy, sweet goodness, an inspiring and delicious ingredient to infuse into their late summer menus. We asked several what they had in mind for the coming season, and though things can change quickly when you source locally, here's an idea of what they're planning.

Chef Andrea Frizzi at Il Posto in the RiNo Art District is adding a sweet and savory Palisade peach risotto with la tur cheese and tarragon to the menu. The dish will pair well with their simple and elegant "secondi," like the duck breast or rack of lamb. But be sure to order the house beef tallow candle with ciabatta to start things off — it's every bit as indulgent as it sounds.

Over in the Congress Park neighborhood of Denver, local legend Chef Jeff Osaka will feature peaches prominently at 12@Madison, the flagship of his restaurant group.



Peach cocktail from Bin 707 Foodbar

Mister Tuna's King Crab



Hearth & Dram

“Most people lean to a sweet dish or dessert when using peaches,” he says. “But I like a savory application with pork chops and peaches. The typical combination with pork chops is apples or applesauce, but when Palisade peaches are in season it’s hard to resist.” Chef Osaka deglazes the skillet he uses for the pork chops with chicken stock, then adds in sliced peaches, butter, and soy sauce.

Up in the hills above Boulder is one of the most beautiful restaurants in the state. The Flagstaff House, with its awe-inducing views of the city below, will be all about Palisade peaches when they make their way to the Front Range.

Executive Chef and owner Chris Royster will feature the fruit across several dishes, from a smoked Palisade peach, cucumber, and pretzel panzanella to a chilled peach soup with black pepper ham, grilled peaches, and thyme. He’ll also pair peaches with duck breast and an earl grey risotto. The Flagstaff House’s desserts are a highlight of any meal, and their lavender poached Palisade peaches with candied ginger streusel, vanilla yogurt, and brown butter pound cake will wrap up the evening perfectly.

Hearth & Dram near Union Station takes the novel approach of adding Palisades to their in-house pickling program, and then integrating them into their seasonal menu. In the works this summer is a pickled peach panzanella salad with nardello peppers and cornbread croutons. Don’t be surprised if you find something equally inventive on the cocktail menu, too.

Of course, if you really want to celebrate the season, then heading over the mountains to Riverbend Park in the Town of Palisade is the only way to go. The three-day Palisade Peach Festival is August 15-18, and it’s truly the best way to eat all the peaches, in every form imaginable. From fresh off the tree to pie to pickles, this extravaganza is definitely not the pits. Sign up for a “Feast in the Fields,” where tables are set up in the orchards themselves; get messy at the BBQ throwdown; learn from local chefs as they demonstrate techniques; or test your mettle during the peach-eating contest.

And while you’re on the Western Slope, do not miss a chance to eat at Bin 707 Foodbar in Grand Junction, one of the top restaurants in Colorado. My pal, award-winning chef Josh Niernberg is all about peaches year-round (they sell the heck out of their bourbon peach cobbler every day), but especially when the season hits at the end of July. Bin 707 sources their peaches exclusively from High Country Orchards nearby, and they always roll out something special in season. This year, they’re planning on Palisade heirlooms and peaches, with stracciatella, lovage, lemon balm, Koji Vin, and wild-caught Gulf shrimp “aguachile.”

They’ll use house-made peach jam for their extensive charcuterie and cheese program, but be sure to order the Palisade Peach Pow cocktail to start your meal.

Chef Niernberg’s sister restaurant Taco Party (also in Grand Junction) will highlight the local wonders as well. “We will use the peaches with Big B’s Apple Cider Vinegar and fresh locally grown jalapeños to make a gastrique to use throughout the menu in place of citrus,” he says. “For instance, our guacamole will have fresh peaches and the peach jalapeño gastrique, rather than lime juice. It’s one of our many tricks to use and source local and help define ‘Colorado cuisine’ through the lens of Southwestern food.”

Back in Denver, Chef Troy Guard, overlord of many popular local restaurants, will modify his Mister Tuna’s King Crab, which is a signature dish at the restaurant. Made with Rebel Farms arugula, brown butter, and black lava salt, the indulgent entrée incorporates seasonal fruit to bring in a balanced sweetness. It’s especially popular when the local peaches are in season.

Taco Party



“Welcome Home Oscar” from Ste. Ellie

One of my favorite summer delights is Chef Carrie Baird’s Palisade peach pizza. Lovingly wood-fired, and with a garlic oil base, it’s topped with roasted peaches, prosciutto, capicola, aged mozzarella, balsamic reduction and arugula (I eat it without the pork, and it’s still spectacular).

Last year, restaurant empire builder Chef Frank Bonanno launched “BOCO Peach Week,” celebrating the fuzzy wonders in all of his restaurants around Denver. This year, each Bonanno Concept restaurant will feature Palisades in their cocktails, desserts and special menu items throughout the week. They’re also planning a peach dinner at Osteria Marco in Larimer Square.

Colorado’s bar magicians will be incorporating Palisades into their concoctions as well.

You can experience the joy of the season right this moment in Infinite Monkey Theorem’s canned Peach Bellini. Whether you visit the local winery at their RiNo tasting room and pair your balanced bubbly beverage (made with sparkling Riesling and Palisade peach juice) with food truck fare, or ask for it in just about any local bar or restaurant, or just pick up a four-pack at a local grocery store and take it with you, you’ll rejoice in the fizzy fun that opening a can unleashes. They ship, too!

Eli Kerlin at The Way Back in the Highlands has his own plan for the summer bounty, with an as-yet unnamed cocktail comprised of vodka, fresh peach juice, Creme de Violette from the local Golden Moon Distillery, and sparkling wine. It’ll be that perfect balance of rich, acidic, and bubbly.

Over at Ace Eat Serve, their Peach Slushy is made with white wine and lemon and served with a peach slice — drink this Slurpee for grownups on their excellent patio.

Dion Griego, bar manager at the Ste. Ellie on Platte St., is mixing up a refreshing summer cocktail he calls “Welcome Home Oscar,” which is a fun and frisky mix of Fidencio Mezcal, Amaro Nonino, fresh Palisade peach syrup, pineapple juice, and lime juice.

Up over the Highland Bridge at Mizu, the award-winning rockstar TJ Vong has his own fancy confection in the works for peach season, called “Expect the Unexpected.” The bourbon cocktail, with help from nigori sake, brûléed peach thyme syrup, and lemon, is served over pebble ice for a cold and warm sensation all at once.

And what would peach season be without all of the desserts?

Smōk in The Source Hotel is known for their kick-ass meats, but that’s not keeping Bill Espiricueta, executive chef and owner of the joint, from using his considerable chops to bring something special to the season. His peach hand pies, all sweet and flaky goodness, will have just a touch of the savory — an essential element from the beacon of barbecue.

At Steuben’s (Uptown and in Arvada), one of my all-time favorite pastry chefs, the indomitable Nadine Donovan, will serve up her Fried Palisade Peach Pie, along with a range of house-made ice creams (no doubt you’ll find endless additional treats highlighting the fuzzy fruit).

If you’re looking for healthy and casual fare, Olive & Finch won’t disappoint. This summer, Chef Mary Nguyen is planning a Palisade peach honey mousse cake, with panna cotta and white chocolate.

With a snowy mountain winter and a mild, rainy spring on the Western Slope, this year’s peach harvest is expected to be particularly bountiful. That’s good news for locals and visitors, because it means the bumper crop of peaches (and apricots, too!) will be making their way to our plates and glasses in late summer.

Shop, Sip, Sup

Denver's Dairy Block is
an all-day experience



By Eric Elkins

If you're not looking for it, you might miss it.

You could walk right by the alleyway between Wazee and Blake, bisecting 18th and 19th Streets in downtown Denver, as you're wandering the usual bar crawling routes along LoDo's nightlife district. And if you're walking by during the day, you'll see the cornhole boards down the alley and a glimpse of the public art, but unless you turn and make your way in, you might not realize you're standing near the first fully activated pedestrian alley in Denver.

But whether you're there day or night, the alley and the buildings around it make up the Dairy Block, which is a little haven of fun and food.

Once home to the historic Windsor Dairy, the block hosts restaurants, bars, shops, and even a coworking space. It's anchored by the design-forward Maven Hotel and the 16-venue Milk Market — a vision of local restaurant empire builder, Chef Frank Bonanno.



“Milk Market is a gateway to Denver,” says Bonanno. “Straight from the airport, it’s where out-of-town guests come first to get settled and learn about our incredible city. From the initial conception of the space, we strove to be so much more than just a food hall. Working with our local institutions like the Denver Zoo, the Denver Museum of Nature and Science, and local vendors big and small throughout the city, Milk Market is constantly activated and a community platform promoting unity in downtown Denver.”

Take a lap through Milk Market, and you’ll find bars, sit-down restaurants, quick-service food counters, and a New York-style pizza slice concept called Engine Room out on the alley. What makes the market especially unique is the way it was all created, curated, and cultivated by Chef Bonanno and his team. It’s a one-stop way to experience the many facets of the elevated cuisine Bonanno brings to Denver.

But the Dairy Block is more than the Milk Market, with several additional Denver legends contributing to the “micro-district” as well.

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Chef Kelly Whitaker, known for his Italian-inspired-with-a-twist cuisine, has two concepts inside Free Market, which spans a quarter of the block on the alley. Chef Whitaker is a champion of house-milled grains, and restaurants Brutø and BØH are no exception. Brutø's flatbreads and other grain-based delights are roasted in a Stefano Ferrara pizza oven imported from Naples, and the raw bar is a perfect spot for oysters and bubbly. Meanwhile, the coffee counter BØH serves up fresh pastries and breads, along with other grain goodness (like porridge and polenta).

Over in the Maven Hotel, stop in at Kachina Southwestern Grill for Frito pie (served properly, with the bag), Navajo tacos, and a Colorado bison empanada.

The bar scene in the Dairy Block is compelling enough to keep a proper cocktail lover set for a full evening (see sidebar). From the whimsical stylings of Devin Chapnick at Poka Lola, to the Derby-themed Run for the Roses speakeasy (where local fave Steven Waters employs some of the most beloved bartenders in the city), to the whiskey-flavored Seven Grand, not to mention Blanchard Family Wines for the oenophile in your crew, the drinks are a good reason to stick around.

"You could visit daily and experience something new each time," says Bonanno. "Every day, every hour is truly different." The morning coffee rush transitions to the business lunch; indulgent afternoons become happy hour reunions. The dinner and nightlife crowds turn up just as the alley's festive lights and public art come alive for the evening.

Albina Fish Tacos



Ruth's Reuben



© Ryan Dearth 2018



And it's not just the food and cocktails that maintain the energy of the Dairy Block. No trip would be complete without a stroll through the retail spaces.

The 3,000-square-foot Fetch Shop is the first-ever brick-and-mortar from Denver's roving quarterly market producers formerly known as Denver Flea. And true to their legacy, Fetch is a dynamic, ever-changing experience that highlights local products. The founders think of it as a "retail test kitchen," where local retailers can set up shop for whatever amount of time that makes sense — pop-up or long term — getting immediate feedback about their products.



TIME: 2:30PM – 7:00PM

WHERE: CHERRY CREEK SHOPPING CENTER
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WHEN: FRIDAY, AUGUST 2ND, 2019

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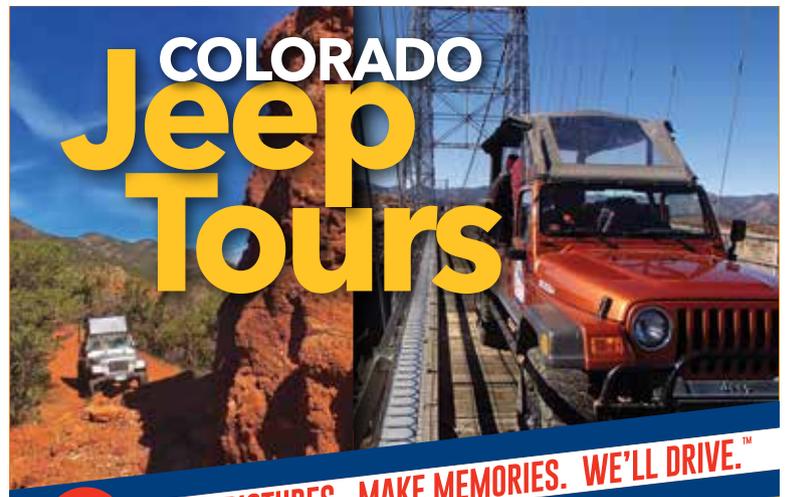
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