

A Summer "Bucket" List

By Laura Stewart

I love the idea of trying new things, experiencing new places, the excitement and anticipation of exploring the unknown. In our heads we have all put together a bucket list at some point, places to visit or things we want to do before we die. But I am more of an instant gratification kind of gal and I thought it would be fun to put together a summer bucket list or alternatively, put some suggestions together for you, of some of my favorite things to do around town related to food and wine. So here is your bucket list, have fun!

Summer Concerts at Piatti's

The Piatti's at the Pavillons hosts a free jazz concert series every Friday night from 3-6pm in their courtyard starting May 29th through September 25th. Another reason to check Piatti's out again is they have just brought on a new executive chef. Ryan O'Malley, previously from the well rated Grange downtown and Hawks in Roseville, is launching a new menu to kick off the spring and summer seasons and they are very excited about what he will bring to the table, no pun intended.

Happy Hour at Morton's Steakhouse – Ever since I moved from San Diego eight years ago, I have gotten out of the Happy Hour rhythm. I pledge to get back into it this year, why don't you join me? Especially to save money, happy hour is always a great alternative to eating dinner out and well no need to lie...it is fun to be able to have a glass of wine earlier in the day when the sun is still out. Typically Morton's is not on my radar, but for Happy Hour it really is a good deal. Bar Bites (aka appetizers) for only \$5 and drinks starting at \$4. I recommend their jumbo lump crab cakes, probably one of the best I've ever had. And if

you haven't heard, they recently moved to a site on Capitol Mall that is definitely more bright and vibrant than the previous location.

Saturday wine tasting & dinner date – One of my favorite ways to spend a Saturday starts with heading to Roseville and going to Capitol Cellars for their weekly wine tasting from 3-6pm. Owner Marcus Graziano has one of the best wine Selections in town and always is featuring highly acclaimed and interesting wines, sometimes even the winemaker will be there. After the tasting we walk next door to one of my absolute favorite restaurants, La Provance. For small plates, you have to try the Gnocchi Maison with truffles, every time I have them I think about it for days. And for dinner the Australian rack of lamb is by far the best lamb I have ever had in a restaurant. The Diver scallops with risotto are wonderful too. Great wines, romantic ambience and incredible food make this a perfect way to spend a Saturday with your favorite person.

Inn at Spanish Bay Happy Hour – Inevitably the day will come that we are back in 100 degree plus weather and miserable. Escape the blistering heat and take a weekend trip to Carmel where it will likely be thirty degrees cooler and a great place for dining and wine tasting. One of my favorite places in the world is the outside patio at the Inn at Spanish Bay. Surrounded by fire pits, an ocean view, and a bag piper playing through sunset, happy hour here is truly happy. Enjoy a glass of wine or cocktail and peruse the appetizer menu. My recommendation is the Lakanilau Roll, a sushi roll wrapped in seared Kobe beef that melts in your mouth. If you head into Carmel Valley for wine tasting, make sure to visit the Parsonage winery located in an area art gallery, where they feature full bodied red wines at great prices.

Far Niente wine tasting & tour – Many years ago I had

an enlightening experience that changed my life forever while wine tasting. I know it seems shallow that it was at a winery, but for an aspiring chef and foodie, the wine tour at Far Niente in Oakville was a truly unique and palate opening experience. After the scenic cave tour, we were taken into an intimate room with a long old world style dark wood dining room table. At each place setting lied five different wines poured in five different style wine glasses and five unique cheeses to be paired with the corresponding varietal. I had no idea before then just how versatile and sophisticated cheese and wine pairings could be and how your taste buds could be so magically awakened! Two years later I purchased a table very similar to that one for my wine room, and when I had my launch party for my new business, I also conducted a food and wine pairing similar to Far Niente for my guests and prospective new clients. And hopefully they were

inspired as well to think outside the box when it comes to wine and cheese pairings.

If all else fails and these ideas don't appeal to you, then make your bucket list very simple. Go get your favorite bottle of chardonnay, wine glasses, some ice and of course and ice bucket.... and VOILÀ! That's a bucket list anyone can complete.

Cheers!

Laura Stewart owns the personal chef business INDULGE Gourmet that operates in the greater Sacramento area. She provides many services including cooking classes, weekly meals, dinner parties with cooking demonstrations, wine pairings and catering special events. Born and raised in Northern California, she spends a lot of time in the Napa Valley and other wine regions throughout California and enjoys sharing her passion and knowledge of wine with her clients. To contact Laura, email chef@indulge-gourmet.com or call 916.288.5761.

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