

ALBERTA

Seeing beyond the beef in Calgary

City's unique eateries serve up innovative creations that are pleasing to the palate

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SPECIAL TO THE SUN

Canada's wild west is well known for its beef, annual stampede and warm hospitality. While Calgary's mentioned mainstays remain strong, the city is quickly gaining notoriety in the culinary world. My husband and I have visited Calgary on a few occasions and always opted for steak houses and burger joints to capitalize on Alberta's famous beef. Our recent trip, however, held a different challenge: to seek out Calgary's atypical, unique eateries and order anything but beef.

Breakfast: Jelly

Homer Simpson, and police forces throughout the country, could very well lose their minds in Jelly modern doughnuts — a chic little artisan doughnut shop that pays homage to one of Canada's favourite morning treats. Using organic and local ingredients whenever possible, executive pastry chef Grayson Sherman pulls from four generations of family recipes to create his ever-changing menu. The brown-maple glaze on the Maple Bacon doughnut and the marshmallow on the S'more doughnut are from Grayson's mom's recipe vault, and the jam used in the hand-filled jelly doughnuts are care of Grandma. The shop is adorable with its gleaming white tables, hot pink lanterns and large bamboo and glass pastry case filled with brightly coloured doughy delicacies. Our favourites: Salted Carmel, Maple Bacon and the Classic Jam (thanks Grandma).

Lunch: Home Tasting Lounge

Located in a historic hardware building on 10th Avenue in downtown Calgary, Home draws a lively lunch crowd from the surrounding business district. Headed by executive chef James Waters, the tapas-style restaurant easily encourages a liquid lunch with its wine-centric menu and accompanying cellar that features more than 50 types of wine at any given time. Home was named as one of Calgary's Top 10 Restaurants for 2013 by Avenue Magazine, and honours the prestigious title in taste, ambience and service.



The stylish Gravity Espresso & Wine Bar in eclectic Inglewood.

Although Home offers a time-sensitive lunch for the office crowd, the food is best enjoyed paired with wine (2.5 or 5 oz. pours), shared among friends and savoured slowly. Our favourites: Grilled Belgium Endive Salad, Berkshire Bacon, Nutmeg Cream and Honeycomb; Seared Scallops with Braised Savoy Cabbage and Maple Bacon Red Pepper Puree; Mac & Cheese with Alberta Duck, Shallot Cream, Aged Gruyere and Red Beet Dijon.

Coffee: Gravity Espresso & Wine Bar

Established in 1875, Inglewood is Calgary's oldest and arguably most eclectic neighbourhood. With more than 100 shops, boutiques, galleries and restaurants Inglewood is a popular hangout for locals and a large attraction for visitors. Throughout the year, the arts-loving community hosts a variety of live concerts and local and international exhibits including the Calgary Fringe Festival. Gravity Espresso & Wine Bar, in Inglewood's Atlantic Avenue Art Block, uses Calgary's legendary Phil & Sebastian coffee beans in all of its espresso creations. We took our coffees to go and strolled down 9th Avenue window-shopping until we stumbled upon



MODEL MILK

The food at Model Milk was exceptional.

Choklat, Alberta's only chocolate maker. Here, all confectionaries are made-to order by artisan chocolatiers, using chocolate from cacao beans that have been roasted in small batches on-site. Hand-rolled Truffles are Choklat's specialty, and the boutique shop boasts having more than 1,000 combinations. Although tempting, we did decline the "Pop Rock" truffle coating. Our favourites: Handmade Marshmallow, dipped in milk chocolate, rolled in shaved chocolate; Key Lime, dipped in dark chocolate and rolled in coconut.

Happy hour: Catch & The Oyster Bar

There is nothing quite like shucked oysters at happy hour, and to our pleasant surprise we found them in landlocked Calgary. Everyday Catch & The Oyster Bar, located in the Hyatt Hotel, brings in freshly caught fish,

lobster, scallops and oysters from the coast. The San Francisco style Oyster Bar, on the main floor of the fine-dining Catch Restaurant is where we slurped back shellfish and thick-creamy Clam Chowder. Midweek The Oyster Bar offers a daily special (1 to 5 p.m.), which includes a half-dozen oysters for \$13 on Wednesday, \$14 Moules Frites on Thursdays and \$6 Clam Chowder on Fridays. In addition to food specials there is a featured bubbles, red and white wine, beer and Caesar offered for \$5 per glass. Our favourites: Shucked oysters with white balsamic mignonette, house-made hot sauce and fresh horseradish; Thai Curry Mussels done in a cast iron steam croquette; House-made Crab Cakes.

Dinner: Model Milk

Our expectations were high for Model Milk, as we had heard nothing

but rave reviews. Housed in what had been the milking room of an old dairy on 17th Avenue, Model Milk makes a formidable impression from the start. The 20-plus feet high interior walls have been stripped back to restore as much of the old dairy as possible. A mix of warm woods, reclaimed brick, polished concrete and wrought iron create the dramatic space with open concept kitchen. Model Milk's cocktail list is long — mixing the classics with new and innovative, such as Beet Lemonade (Beets, Gin, Honey, Lemon & Water). The food menu, which changes as the chefs see fit, is pure innovation. Fresh and local is the cornerstone of the kitchen's creations and each month Model Milk designs a Sunday Supper menu, served family style for \$35 per person. Our favourites: Rabbit Bologna with Mortadella, Beer Cheese, Donuts and Crispy Artichoke; Shrimp and Grits with Pepper Vinegar, Ham Hock and a Fried Egg; Driview Farms Lamb with Goat Curd, Merguez Sausage and Garbanzo Beans.

Stay: Sheraton Suites Eau Claire

Given the amount of food we planned on eating during our stay in Calgary, we wanted a hotel close to the pedestrian paths that flank the Bow River. The Sheraton Suites Eau Claire is a short walk from the expansive Prince's Island Park and bustling Eau Claire Market, both of which border the Bow River. The property's location was perfect for exploring Calgary's many exceptional restaurants, and counterbalancing the effects of overeating with long walks along the river. Our Favourite: Ben, the chocolate brown labrador, otherwise known as the hotel's Canine Concierge.

For more information on this destination visit www.arrivalstravel.com.

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