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Wisconsin Restaurants Worth the Trip

Off the beaten path culinary choices offer unique and flavorful “foodie” experiences

(April 27, 2010) — The “Foodies” are coming! Whole families are shopping farmers’ markets weekly. Husbands are perfecting Julia Child’s Bouef Bourguignon recipe. Culinary shows on television are enjoying a renaissance. With their unique, lifestyle-altering culture, “foodie” vacationers are also on the rise. Wisconsin, with its vibrant summer harvests and multitude of food-conscious restaurants, tops many lists. While vacations are rarely built around a single meal, here are a few that might just be worth the trip.

Boulder Junction classics — Headwaters and The Outdoorsman



Known for snowmobiling, camping, and its well-earned moniker, “Musky Capital of the World®,” [Boulder Junction](#) is also among the best places to sample the taste of the Northwoods.

Opened in the 1930s, Headwaters Restaurant has been serving up traditional American fare with a twist for decades. Headwaters gets high marks for consistently tasty, well-priced dishes and a friendly atmosphere. Locals rave about the nightly Fish Fry, where the chefs long ago discovered the perfect balance of golden crispy batter and flaky fish. The Baked Haddock is also a favorite. Take in the sights and sounds of the woods while enjoying your meal on the wraparound deck or warm your feet next to one of Headwaters’ fireplaces.

The Outdoorsman’s chefs/owners Amy and Steve Wheeler bring more than 30 years of combined hospitality experience to your table. Regulars agree that the Outdoorsman’s steaks and burgers are among the best they’ve ever had. Be sure to start off your meal with the invigorating summer Butternut Squash Soup—local food aficionados have been after the recipe for years! The chefs procure many of their ingredients locally.

The Outdoorsman also specializes in breakfast. Texas French Toast and Fluffy Buttermilk Pancakes highlight a morning menu that samples the best of American fare.

Prescott’s southern cooking at The Boxcar

Just 25 miles south of the Twin Cities, Prescott, WI is home to one of the more unique dining experiences along the [Wisconsin Great River Road](#). Although it’s thousands of miles from the Deep South, The Boxcar Restaurant serves up some of the best Southern cooking anywhere. The Pulled Pork sandwich is so authentic it might make you wonder if The Boxcar wasn’t rafted *up* the Mississippi! The Boxcar’s barbecue

dishes, topped with the restaurant's own special sauce, come highly recommended. The delicate Pecan Pie with just-melted ice cream tops off the perfect meal.

Despite its reputation for consistently great home cooking, The Boxcar's menu is ever changing. This March visitors will enjoy a new patio and taste the fruits of nearby farms, as the owners begin to source much of their menu from nearby growers. The Boxcar also plans to smoke and cure its own meats.

Situated at the confluence of the Mississippi River and the St. Croix Riverway, Prescott is the oldest community in Wisconsin. Before you eat, enjoy a stroll through the historic downtown, dating to 1839. Visitors can also take in the majestic views from the 400 ft. high bluffs along the waterfront.

Middleton's best little Italian Ristorante — Vin Santo

[Middleton's](#) fine dining scene is one of its major draws, helping the "Good Neighbor City" retain its high marks year after year on the list of *Money Magazine's* "Best Places to Live." While Middleton stalwarts Fitzgerald's and Louisianne's ETC continue to draw much of the "foodie" crowd, Vin Santo's owners Gregg and Clarissa Edwardsen have been delivering arguably the best Italian in the area since 1998.

Vin Santo is nestled in the heart of downtown Middleton. Named after "The Wine of the Saints," Vin Santo's cozy, comfortable atmosphere makes for the perfect romantic night out. But it's the food that sets Vin Santo a cut above the rest. Knowledgeable staff, led by its local owners, selects ingredients from area producers and offers five specials a night.

Fresh bread, a dish of seasoned olive oil, and glasses of hearty, flavorful Tuscan red wines will start off your perfect dinner. The secret, as in all Italian cooking, is in the sauces, which Vin Santo's chefs prepare each morning. The Conchiglia al Diavolillo, with its blend of gulf shrimp, chicken breast and hearty Italian sausage simmered in a garlic-butter sauce, remains a perennial favorite.

For more information on Headwaters, The Outdoorsman, and Boulder Junction, visit: www.boulderjct.org.

Find more restaurants along the Wisconsin Great River Road at www.wigreatriverroad.org.

Get more information about Vin Santo and other Middleton restaurants, go to www.visitmiddleton.com.

For more great Wisconsin dining destinations, contact Susanne Thiede-Barnet at 608-242-8895 or Susanne@pilchbarnet.com.