



Wisconsin

WHERE ON EARTH

# What's New in Door County

by ELYSE GLICKMAN

PHOTOS THIS SPREAD FROM LEFT  
Door County sunset;  
Wilson's sundae;  
Kara and Cole at DC  
Chocolate Design..



Why do we love Door County, Wisconsin? Because it serves up many flavours of nostalgia, from timeless natural beauty to preserved 19<sup>th</sup>-century historic sites to restaurants and waterfront inns established during different decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century — some still operated by the families who founded them. Roadside farms, artist-operated galleries, and fish boils rooted in the traditions of original Scandinavian settlers also bring a uniquely Door County meaning to time travel.

ROWLEYS BAY RESORT IS STILL OPERATED by the family which took ownership in 1970, with Grandma's Swedish Bakery baking up the founding matriarch's epic pecan and cinnamon rolls. Rooftop-grazing goats make Al Johnson's Restaurant in Sister Bay an "International" house of pancakes, with its following of visitors coming from around the world to see them in action and savour lingonberry crepes, Swedish meatballs, and house-made aquavit spirit. One can travel back to Mid-Century America at one of the many old school "supper clubs" dotting the main roads, or at Wilson's Restaurant & Ice Cream Parlor in Ephraim, famous for its mountainous ice cream creations. And, of course, what would a Wisconsin vacation be without fried or chilled cheese curds or a grilled cheese sandwich from Renard's Cheese "Melt" cafe?

Who doesn't love all of this honest, homespun fare? That said, a new generation of artisan food producers, restaurateurs and wineries have made their mark on the peninsula during the first decades of this century. One reliable person who's got the scoop on what's happening in Door County's food universe is Janice Thomas. The owner of The Savory Spoon cooking



## *... A new generation of artisan food producers, restaurateurs and wineries have made their mark on the peninsula...*

school, who relocated from her residence to a new location inside a converted historic school house in Ellison Bay, whips up the perfect environment for home cooks to express their own inner Door County food artisan. The souvenirs from The Savory Spoon, her hands-on direction and the accompanying recipes to create the dishes at home, can't be beat.

While entrepreneurs like Thomas are bringing new excitement to long-standing institutions, others are opening up restaurants and shops fueled by creative new uses for locally cultivated, sourced and crafted foodstuffs. Others are setting up shop selling a variety of specialties and adding richness to the food landscape. At the many farmer's markets, storefronts and outdoor mini malls around the peninsula, well established growers and producers mingle with emerging coffee roasters, condiment producers, bakers, chocolatiers and cheesemakers expanding upon what makes Wisconsin "America's Dairyland."

A new generation of vacationers is also credited for prompting those changes. According to Destination Door County, overall tourism numbers went down only 8% during the

height of the Pandemic. However, the necessity to bring dining outdoors and plan driving distance vacations drove up younger travellers from Illinois, Wisconsin, Minnesota and other midwestern locales as tourism rebounded. Thanks to all of this activity, Door County is now a "discovery" destination with travellers across the board realizing it's not just their grandparents' weekend hangout.

"There's always going to be a new trend coming up at any restaurant at any given time, but we're not about trends," says Jesse Bartnik, director of operations for Mezzanine in Egg Harbor (opened earlier this year). "People started Googling, 'things to do in my state' and all of a sudden, Door County began moving to the top of everyone's list," observes Bartnik. "It's absolutely crazy how much things are changing in this area and throughout Door County and we are happy to become a part of that."

On the night of the 2022 Summer Solstice, every single seat and table at Mezzanine Rooftop overflowed with enthusiastic guests. Smiling servers brought generous, artistically arrayed



PHOTOS THIS SPREAD  
CLOCKWISE FROM LEFT  
Harbor Fish Market & Grille; Mezzanine  
Rooftop Restaurant; Kick Kick Ash interior.



USA

## SERVES 1 Cherry Mule

THIS DOOR County cocktail comes from Mezzanine in Egg Harbor. If you don't feel like making the ginger syrup, feel free to enjoy with standard ginger beer!

**Vodka**  $\frac{1}{2}$  oz

**Ginger Syrup**  $\frac{3}{4}$  oz (recipe below)

**Door County Cherry Juice**  $\frac{1}{2}$  oz

**Lime Juice**

**Club Soda**

**1** COMBINE ingredients in a shaker with ice, shake, and pour into a tub glass.

**2** TOP with club soda.

## MAKES ABOUT 2 CUPS Ginger Syrup

**Purified Water**  
2 cups

**Cane Sugar**  
 $1\frac{3}{4}$  cups

**Fresh Ginger**  
cubed, 2 cups

**1** COMBINE ingredients in a saucepan and bring to a boil.

**2** REDUCE to simmer and let steep for 20 minutes.

**3** STRAIN and cool.

cheese and charcuterie platters, fried cheese curds, smoked whitefish dip, whitefish cakes, whitefish chowder, and whitefish main courses paired with condiments crafted with local cherries, lavender and mustard. Beers and craft cocktails walked the line between fresh-and-modern and home-spun. The only time the action slowed was when the sun finally set.

Although the Harbor Fish Market and Grille in Bailey's Harbor has been in business for a quarter century, it's very much in tune with the tastes of well travelled visitors. While its regular fish boil is not



SERVES 5-6

## Sweet Pea Guacamole

A RECIPE from Janice Thomas at Savory Spoon Cooking School in Ellison Bay. This guacamole can be served with crostini, tortilla chips or pita chips.

**Fresh or Frozen Baby Peas** 4 cups  
**Olive Oil** 2½ Tbs  
**Fresh Lime Juice** 2½ Tbs  
**Fresh Cilantro** finely chopped, 3 Tbs  
**Jalapeno Chile** 1, chopped  
**Ground Cumin** ¼ tsp  
**Fresh Italian Parsley** chopped, 3 Tbs  
**Salt** ½ tsp  
**Ground Coriander** ½ tsp

- COOK** the peas in boiling salted water for 3 to 4 minutes. Place the peas in an ice bath to refresh, drain and rest on a towel.
- PLACE** the lime juice, cilantro, chile and olive oil in a food processor and pulse a few times.
- ADD** the peas, cumin, parsley and ground coriander and blend until almost smooth.
- ADD** salt and seasoning to taste, and garnish with a sprig of cilantro.

«going anywhere, there's a Cape Cod-meets-Midwestern aesthetic sensibility in the restored vintage building that follows through to the cocktail and food menus. “Cherry bounce,” a concoction dating back to America’s founding fathers, is made with Door County cherry juice and available on the rocks or mixed into a Door County Old Fashioned, margarita, mule or mimosa. Many appetizers (including the best-selling domestic calamari with pepperoncini and garlic, king crab rangoon and burrata salad) are remarkably spicy and flavourful. The main courses show just how harmonious New England maritime techniques and Wisconsin field-to-fork flair work together.

The weekend lobster boil, like its midwestern fish boil counterpart, is cooked in a wood-fired pot located at the water’s edge. It headlines a three-course extravaganza that opens with exceptional Maine lobster bisque (also available on the à la carte

menu). This is followed by a two-pound live Maine lobster boiled with New Zealand mussels, steamed clams, baby red potatoes and fresh corn on the cob. A generous portion of home-baked Door County Cherry Bread Pudding ends the meal with a bang. Other signatures that necessitate advanced reservations include the surf-and-turf, Chilean Sea Bass (when available), Friday Night Whitefish Fry, and divine key lime tiramisu (should you want a break from cherries).

Coffee bar/bakery/gift shop hybrids are as plentiful on the peninsula as the cherries harvested at the end of their growing season. However, one place that’s become sacred grounds for coffee lovers is Kick Ash Coffee and Bakery in Ellison Bay, which opened in its new space in 2019. Founders Carol and Christian Ash not only resurrected the church-turned-art gallery, but also put a smile on the faces of visitors with ingeniously named drinks such as “The Communion” (hot chocolate or coffee with a small cookie), “The Trinity” (hot chocolate, coffee and whipped cream), and “Pastor Froster” iced coffee, along with trendy accessories and homewares. It is also home to the kitchen that produces Door County Love Granola, which is paleo, gluten free and available in numerous flavours, including the best-selling cherry almond granola (of course!) and decadent dark chocolate sea salt.

Sara Santaga launched Sara’s Artisanal Gelato out of Green Bay and watched it evolve beyond a cottage industry. While her training at Carpigiani Gelato University in Bologna paid off, the recent opening of a second scoop shop in Fish Creek gives her the perfect stage to tell the story behind her approach to creating gelato that’s true to Italian traditions and techniques but as American and Midwestern as her upbringing, down to the Wisconsin milk and cream. Flavours include signature Birthday Cake, Fruity Pebbles, Snickers Candy Bar and Chocolate Mint as well as silky vegan flavours like Mango and better-than-basic chocolate and vanilla.

Door County Candy in Sturgeon Bay is under new ownership, but continues to delight kids of all ages with its salt water taffy, house-made fudge, truffles and wrapped confections people of a certain age will remember from childhood. DC Chocolate Design, on the other hand, represents the future of high-end specialty chocolate in the region. Kara VanderLeest, who graduated from the University of Illinois with a bachelor’s degree in Food Science, knew her future was paved with chocolate after her internship with a leading chocolate and cocoa processing company.

After spending their early careers in Chicago, Kara and husband Cole (a Door County native) opened a stand-alone store in 2018 in the Top of the Hill Shops. In addition to chocolate aromas wafting from melting machines made in Italy, the shop is awash with colourful chocolate truffles, chocolate bars, molded theme chocolates, and freshly brewed coffee. The shop has an open concept, meaning if you show up at the right time, you may see Kara at work creating her edible art.



PHOTOS FROM TOP  
One Barrel Brewing  
interior; Sara Santaga;  
Door County Candy.



Farmer's markets in Door County have been part of the area's way of life decades before they became trendy tourist mainstays in practically every major city here and overseas. If your time here is limited, the Farmer's Market at the Settlement Shops just outside of Fish Creek is a compact but excellent place to sample foods specific to Door County.

While the Henriksen's Fish House sells its 'special spice' Whitefish Spread (made fresh at its main shop in Ellison Bay) from its booth at the Wednesday morning market, it's interesting



MAKES 8 CUPS

## Roasted Pepper & Tomato Soup

*YOU CAN roast your own peppers or use the kind in a jar for this tasty soup from Al Johnson's Swedish Restaurant.*

**Olive Oil**  $\frac{1}{4}$  cup

**Onion** 1 medium, chopped

**Tomato Sauce**  $1\frac{1}{2}$  cups

**Canned Tomatoes** diced,  $1\frac{1}{2}$  cups

**Water** 3 cups

**Flour**  $\frac{1}{2}$  cup, mixed with 1 cup

**Cold Water**

**Garlic** chopped, 1 Tbs

**Brown Sugar**  $\frac{1}{4}$  cup

**Vegetable Stock**  $\frac{1}{4}$  cup

**Roasted Red Peppers** 3 large

**Heavy Cream**  $\frac{1}{2}$  cup

**Liquid Smoke** 2 Tbs

**Freshly Ground Black Pepper** to taste

**Tabasco Sauce** to taste

**1 SAUTÉ** the onion and garlic in olive oil over medium heat.

**2 ADD** the tomato sauce, diced tomatoes and water. Add the red peppers, liquid smoke, brown sugar and vegetable stock.

**3 POUR** into a food processor or use an immersion blender and mix until smooth.

**4 SIMMER** for 5 minutes and add heavy cream.

**5 ADD** pepper and tabasco to taste, add the flour-and-water mix, then simmer another 5 minutes.

to note it was originally devised as a plant-based only market. Since then, it has expanded to include fresh-baked goods, freshly roasted coffee, and a large spread of condiments as well as a revolving cast of crafted goods, vintage clothing, ethnic food vendors and live music. An outer ring of shops open most of the year has an outpost of local favourite bakery Sweetie Pies, boutique picnic and wine shop The Ginger House (because one can never run out of perfect picnic spots in Door County), and more gift and home decor shops.»



SHARISCHEN

MAKES 2 LOAVES

## Swedish Cardamom Coffee Cake

**JEWEL PETERSON** Ouradnik at Grandma's Swedish Bakery makes this cardamom coffee cake from her mother's original recipe.

**Milk** 2 cups

**Butter**  $\frac{1}{2}$  cup

**Salt** 2 tsp

**Sugar**  $\frac{1}{2}$  cup

**Active Dry Yeast**  
1 Tbs

**Eggs** 2 large

**Flour** 5 cups<sup>1</sup>

**Oil** to coat dough

**Ground Cardamom**  
1  $\frac{1}{2}$  Tbs

**Heavy Cream or Half & Half** 3 Tbs

**Cardamom Sugar**

**Sugar**  $\frac{1}{4}$  cup

**Ground Cardamom**  
 $\frac{1}{2}$  tsp

<sup>1</sup> You may need up to 1 cup more, added during the kneading stage if the dough is too sticky.

**1 WARM** the milk and butter together in saucepan until butter is softened and not too hot. In a mixing bowl combine milk/butter mixture, salt, sugar and yeast. Set aside until yeast is dissolved.

**2 ADD** the eggs and half the flour and beat well. Gradually add the remaining flour and continue mixing for at least 10 minutes in a mixer or until the dough is sticky and pulls away from side of the bowl.

**3 KNEAD** the dough on a floured surface until smooth and not sticky. Place into an oiled bowl and oil the top of the dough so it doesn't dry out. Cover with a towel and put in warm place until dough doubles in size.

**4 TURN** the dough onto lightly floured board and press into a square shape. Sprinkle with ground cardamom and fold top half over bottom half so that cardamom is between the dough layers.

**5 ROLL** the dough back to a square. Cut in two; then cut each section vertically into 3 even strands but keep joined at the very top, start point of the braid. Gently stretch each strand and braid the dough into an even braid. Scrunch to 10 inches on a greased cookie sheet. Allow to rise until double in size.

**6 BASTE** with cream and with sprinkle cardamom sugar. Bake at 350°F for 35–45 minutes until golden brown and a light touch in the centre leaves no indentation.

**NOTE:** The coffee cake freeze well. Defrost, slice, wrap in foil and put in oven at 250°F for 15 minutes; serve warm. It's as yummy as the day you made it!

«Door 44 Winery is named for its six-acre vineyard situated on latitude 44° North. As numerous wineries in many countries notch this line wrapping around the world, it was perhaps just a matter of time before Door 44 wines such as Frozen Tundra Red and Red Door (a Burgundy-style red) started winning major competitions and giving Napa and Sonoma producers serious competition. In similar fashion, Fizz 44, Bubbler and Sparkler are sophisticated, nuanced and hold up beautifully next to counterparts from California and Europe. The flavours and complexities are all the more impressive when owner Steve Johnson goes into detail about what inspired the wines' names, how the climate benefits different grape varietals, and the significance of the 44°N parallel running through southern Door County as well as Bordeaux and the Rhone Valley in France and Piemonte and Tuscany in Italy.

Back in Ellison Bay, Island Orchard Cider is just as much of a fixture as is Door 44 and sister winery Parallel 44, especially as its popularity and distribution has expanded into other states. While it is tough to resist the always popular hard apple and cherry ciders made with home-grown Door County fruit, owner Bob Purman explains that making the ciders in the "Normandy Tradition" and using apples from orchards planted in Washington Island's rocky limestone soils (similar to those in Normandy) yields beverages that are dry, sophisticated and complex. Brews generating excitement in recent months include Apple Ginger Cider, Oak Aged Apple Reserve, the 2022 edition Wild Cherry and Brut Apple Cider.

At The Cherry Hut, what's old is actually what's new. Opened in May 2021 by new owners Jason and Laura Estes, the former Ray's Cherry Hut 1950s roadside attraction has been transformed into a tasty modern hybrid of indoor/outdoor sports bar (Bridge Up North Taproom) with local beers on tap (Escarment, Harbors & Bays, Knee High and more), cider and wine tasting areas, and a food truck-inspired kitchen whipping up deli-style craft hot dogs and street tacos. The landmark is now wrapped up with a gallery retail area brimming with cherry-centric fancy foods, gifts and fashion items. For Jason Estes, COVID not only presented the opportunity to create a business he could shape to his tastes and those of residents and customers, but also to help other small food producers and businesses get their wares and word out to the public.



**Rowleys Bay Resort**  
[www.rowleysbayresort.com](http://www.rowleysbayresort.com)

**Al Johnson's Swedish Restaurant**  
[www.aljohnsons.com](http://www.aljohnsons.com)

**Wilson's Restaurant & Ice Cream Parlor**  
[www.wilsonsicecream.com](http://www.wilsonsicecream.com)

**Renard's Cheese Store**  
[www.renardscheese.com](http://www.renardscheese.com)

**The Savory Spoon Cooking School**  
[www.savoryspoon.com](http://www.savoryspoon.com)

**Mezzanine**  
[www.mezzaninerooftop.com](http://www.mezzaninerooftop.com)

**Harbor Fish Market & Grille**  
[www.harborfishmarket-grille.com](http://www.harborfishmarket-grille.com)

**Kick Ash Coffee and Bakery**  
[www.kickashproducts.com](http://www.kickashproducts.com)

**Sara's Artisanal Gelato**  
[www.sarasartisangelato.com](http://www.sarasartisangelato.com)

**Door County Candy**  
[www.doorcountycandy.com](http://www.doorcountycandy.com)

**DC Chocolate Design**  
[www.dcchocolatedesign.com](http://www.dcchocolatedesign.com)

**Fish Creek Farmers' Market | The Settlement Shops**  
[www.settlementshops.com](http://www.settlementshops.com)

**Henriksen Fisheries**  
[www.henriksenfisheries.com](http://www.henriksenfisheries.com)

**Sweetie Pies**  
[www.sweetiepiesdoorcounty.com](http://www.sweetiepiesdoorcounty.com)

**The Ginger House**  
[www.thegingerhousedcw.com](http://www.thegingerhousedcw.com)

**Door 44 | Parallel 44**  
**Island Orchard Cider**  
[www.islandorchardcider.com](http://www.islandorchardcider.com)

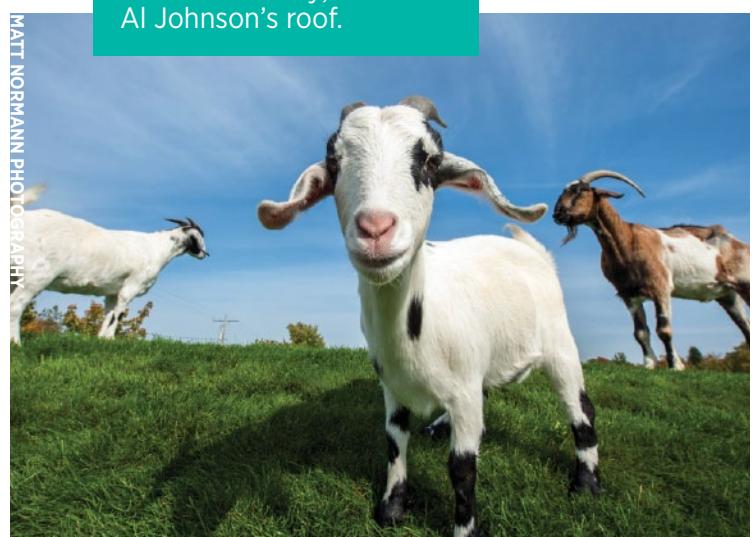
**The Cherry Hut**  
[www.doorcountycherryhut.com](http://www.doorcountycherryhut.com)

**One Barrel Brewing & Pizza Bros.**  
[www.onebarrelbrewing.com/locations/door-county-taproom](http://www.onebarrelbrewing.com/locations/door-county-taproom)

**ELYSE GLICKMAN** is a freelance writer based in Los Angeles.



PHOTOS THIS PAGE FROM TOP  
 Door 44 Winery; Goats on  
 Al Johnson's roof.



Madison-based nanobrewery One Barrel Brewing Company owner Peter Gentry not only wanted to tap into the bustling seasonal Door County market but also establish a permanent presence in Egg Harbor. As the mix of boutiques, galleries and nightlife is attracting younger visitors who have made Door County their own since travel began making a comeback, its a successful addition to the craft brewing scene. The new location (a repurposed and landscaped former strip mall) is not only its first venture as a full-blown indoor and outdoor beer garden, but also a meeting place (with family-friendly street cred) in partnership with Pizza Bros' Sam Lindsley, Luke Boss and Vince Gerogiev baking up fresh pizzas with a miraculous thin crust that can stand up to mountains of Wisconsin cheese and fresh produce.

Even if Wisconsin's status as "America's Dairyland" is undisputed, Door County's impressive and ever-expanding output of small-batch foods and focused restaurants prove the distance between old traditions and innovation is getting smaller and that Door County's unique appeal is reaching beyond the Midwest. 