

Top Reasons for Food and Farm Lovers to Visit the San Juan Islands

The Gourmet Archipelago is a defining destination for people who love fresh food.



You can't get any fresher than shucking an oyster on the beach, or cracking a steamed Dungeness crab just pulled from a cold bay. Food is where you'll discover the Islands' soul. A growing number of [island restaurants](#) live by the "cook local" code. Farmers and chefs share ideas and the freshest ingredients, creating a cuisine defined by what is grown or raised in the islands. Many restaurants source from their own on-premise gardens and fields, or forage from nearby forests and shores.

1. SAMPLE SHELLFISH BY THE SEASHORE

Three sea farms grow oysters, clams, and mussels. Some also sell Dungeness crab and local finned fish. Sit, shuck and sip at [Buck Bay Shellfish Farm's Shuck Shack](#) on Orcas Island or choose fresh seafood for a barbeque at Sweetwater Shellfish Farm on Lopez Island or [Westcott Bay Shellfish Farm](#) on San Juan Island. Several island restaurants feature these succulent gems on their menus.

[San Juan Sea Salt](#) uses the power of the sun to harvest salt from the Salish Sea.

2. GET THE ISLAND SPIRIT (AND WINE, AND BEER)

At [Lopez Island Vineyards & Winery](#), taste estate-grown Siegerrebe and Madeline Angevine (great with oysters); on Orcas, visit [Island Hoppin' Brewery](#), [Doe Bay Wine Company](#), or [Orcas Island Winery](#); on San Juan Island, the tasting room at [Westcott Bay Cider and San Juan Island Distillery](#) offers ciders and gins infused with local botanicals and [San Juan Island Brewing Company](#) emphasizes

Washington-grown hops. Taste wines from estate-grown grapes in a historic schoolhouse at [San Juan Vineyard](#).

3. DISCOVER ROADSIDE TREASURES

Driving around the islands, you will come across farm stands selling eggs, dairy products, meats, vegetables, jams, fruit and more. Watch for signs, and leave your money in the box. Consult the Food & Farms Itineraries for [Lopez Island](#), [Orcas Island](#), and [San Juan Island](#) to learn about each community's unique food culture, and have something tasty to try along the way.

4. FIND FLOWERS GALORE

You'll feel like you're in the South of France at [Pelindaba Lavender Farm](#) on San Juan Island, where you can stroll the fields, harvest your own lavender; learn about the distilling process and choose from over 200 locally made culinary, body-care and household products, even lavender ice cream! Look for colorful bouquets of flowers available at roadside stands throughout the Islands.

Photos from left: Ursa Minor Restaurant / San Juan Island Distillery / Farmers Market / Pelindaba Lavender Farm / Bottom: Sweetwater Shellfish Farm





5. SEE ENDEARING ALPACAS AND MORE

Don't miss the farms that breed what are possibly the cutest animals in the world: alpacas. You can visit them and buy their ethereal wool at Orcas Moon Alpaca Farm and [Once in a Blue Moon Farm](#) on Orcas, and [Krystal Acres Alpaca Farm](#) on San Juan Island. You'll also encounter the odd llama, curious goats, fluffy lambs and contented cows.

6. FORAGE AND SLUMBER ON A FARM

On Orcas Island, chickens cluck hello at [Once in a Blue Moon Farm](#), and at Buckhorn Farm Bungalow you can pick berries and commune with deer. Pebble Cove Farm centers on an organic garden: pick your own veggies, sit on a sweet beach or launch your kayak. On Lopez Island, Midnight's Farm's is steps away from an onsite yoga studio where you can take a class.

7. MEET YOUR MAKER

Saturdays, lively farmers markets on [Lopez Island](#), [Orcas Island](#) and [San Juan Island](#) artfully display fresh fruits and vegetables, flowers, cheeses, breads, meats, island-made soaps, lotions, jewelry, art, clothing and more. From flaky pastries to pork tacos and freshly baked pizza, make a meal of it. The [Orcas Food Co-op](#) offers island-grown foods, a deli, and classes, and the [San Juan Island Food Co-op](#) is a great stop for frozen meats, cheeses, and more. On Lopez, [Blossom Grocery](#) health food market has expanded into a big red barn filled with crafts and island-grown foods.

8. SAMPLE FRUITS OF THEIR LABOR

For over 100 years, orchards have been a big part of island life. One particular fruit, the Orcas Pear (*Pyrus communis*) is listed as an American Heirloom Pear in Slow Food USA's "Ark of Taste." It and other local fruits are used by Kathryn Taylor Chocolates and [Girl Meets Dirt Archipelago Preserves](#). Both [Westcott Bay Cider](#) and [San Juan Island Distillery](#) and the new Orcas Island Distillery use heritage apples in their cider, spirits and apple brandy.

9. SAVOR THE SAN JUANS – A Medley of Food, Farms & Film.

Autumn is a perfect time to experience the "Gourmet Archipelago," with signature wine, beer, harvest dinners, and events. Tour the back roads and meet the cast of characters responsible for the burgeoning farm-to-fork movement during "Savor" farm tours and an "Eat Island Grown" tasting event at Friday Harbor's historic Brickworks.

10. TAKE A FOOD TOUR & DINE AL FRESCO

Eat, Drink, Explore. From learning how to shuck oysters to sampling local wines and small-batch local food products, a drive around the Islands offers a window into the local food and liquid arts scene and the fascinating characters behind it.

Summer's dry, sunny days and lingering sunsets mean many restaurants and cafes offer outdoor or waterfront dining. Or, take a picnic to one of our many parks.

Photos from left: Island Hoppin' Brewery / Jones Family Farms / Friday Harbor House / Kathryn Taylor Chocolates / San Juan Vineyards / Bottom: Rosario Resort



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