

Travelers can devour museums as well as cuisine

by Saimi Rote Bergmann

Step aside, stegosaurus. Move over, Monet. We want museums that feature food.

For foodies, the best part of travel is discovering the area's cuisine, from downtown diner to uptown bistro. You can add even more culinary interest to your vacation by picking a destination with a food museum.

CRANBERRY CRATES - Before modern technology, cranberries were harvested by hand and put in these wooden drying crates, now on display at the Cranberry Discovery Center in Warren, Wis. In back is the cabin of Albert Cook, who made cranberry rakes used in the harvest. CNS Photo courtesy of the Cranberry Discovery Center.

MUSTARD MUSEUM - The Mustard Museum in Mount Horeb, Wis., stocks more than 4,700 jars, bottles and tubes of mustards from all 50 states and 60 countries. CNS Photo courtesy of The Mustard Museum.

POPCORN MUSEUM - The Wyandot Popcorn Museum in Marion, Ohio, features restored antique popcorn machines, from wagon-mounted to stand-alone. Marion is the site of annual popcorn festival in early September. CNS Photo courtesy of The Popcorn Museum.

SPAM MUSEUM - The Spam Museum in Austin, Minn., is a 16,500-square-foot museum, which opened in 2001. To enter it, you walk beneath a towering wall of 3,390 cans of SPAM. CNS Photo The Spam Museum.

A surprising number of museums celebrate a single food item, from mustard (Wisconsin) to apples (Pennsylvania). Others trace the origin of a particular product, such as the SPAM Museum (Minnesota) and the Jell-O Museum (New York).

We did not include in our list the myriad virtual food museums on the Web, but for chuckles, check out the Museum of Food Anomalies (www.hanttula.com/exhibits/freakyfood). You'll find photos of a happy face inside a green pepper, a lemon shaped like a mouth with teeth, and a carrot shaped like a foot.

Of course our list isn't all-inclusive. And remember to call or visit the Web site for up-to-date information on when a museum is open.

- Mustard Museum

109 East Main St., Mount Horeb, Wis.

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800-GET-MUST

www.mustardmuseum.com

This museum contains more than 4,700 jars, bottles and tubes of mustards from all 50 states and 60 countries. Also mustard pots, tins, vintage mustard ads, plus a store selling about 500 kinds of mustard (yes, they offer samples). Curator Barry Levenson says, tongue firmly in cheek, they have a mustard college, called Poupon U. (Say it out loud - you'll get it.) No admission charge, but Levenson says, "We do charge people to get out!"

- Wyandot Popcorn Museum

169 E. Church St., Marion, Ohio

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740-387-4255

www.wyandotpopcornmus.com

Located inside Heritage Hall with the Marion County Historical Society, this museum features restored antique popcorn machines, from wagon-mounted to stand-alone. Try to finagle a guided tour with the often hilarious, always outspoken curator and owner, George Brown. Visitors are given a bag of freshly popped popcorn as they leave. Adults \$3 donation. Marion is site of annual popcorn festival in early September.

- National Apple Museum

154 W. Hanover St., Biglerville, Pa.

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717-677-4556

www.nationalapplemuseum.com

Housed in a pre-Civil War bank barn, visitors to this museum are served apple juice and cookies. Exhibits include apple peelers, cider presses, a re-created 1880s farm kitchen, collection of apple-related post cards and the Apple Core Band. Admission \$2 for adults.

- Cranberry Discovery Center

204 Main St., Warrens, Wis.

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204 Main St., Warrens, Wis.

608-378-4878

www.discovercranberries.com

Wisconsin is the leading producer of cranberries. Who knew? This museum is housed in the restored Union Cranberry Co. warehouse built in 1900 with local sandstone. It includes an exhibit hall, ice cream parlor with seven flavors of cranberry ice cream, on-site bakery and resource library. In the gift shop you'll find cranberry wines, cranberry sausage, cranberry doggie treats, even cranberry dental floss. Admission \$4 adults, \$3 students.

- The Jell-O Museum

23 E. Main St., Le Roy, N.Y.

585-768-7433

www.jellomuseum.com

Jell-O was invented and manufactured in this small town from 1897 to 1964. Museum director Lynne Belluscio says their century-old stone building houses Jell-O molds, cookbooks, toys, Jell-O still lifes, Bill Cosby videos, and a "Jell-O-meter" used in the factory test kitchen to make sure it had the right jiggliness.

There's also a gallery of original oil paintings used as illustrations for magazine ads. The gift shop sells antique and new molds, Jell-O-imprinted boxer shorts, T-shirts, aprons and more. Admission \$3 adults, \$1.50 children.

- Ice Cream Museum at Ye Olde Mill

11324 Mount Vernon Rd., Utica, N.Y.

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800-589-5000

www.velveticecream.com

Housed in an 1817 grist mill with a water wheel set on 20 rolling acres, the museum includes an 1817 ice cream parlor, scoops and other ice-cream-making supplies. Next door, tour the Velvet Ice Cream factory.

- Spam Museum

1937 Spam Blvd., Austin, Minn.

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1937 Spam Blvd., Austin, Minn.

800-LUV-SPAM

www.spam.com

Admission is free to this 16,500-square-foot museum, which opened in 2001. As visitors enter the museum lobby, they walk directly beneath a towering wall of 3,390 cans of SPAM.

- The Johnny Appleseed Educational Center and Museum

Bailey Hall, Urbana University

579 College Way, Urbana, Ohio

579 College Way, Urbana, Ohio

579 College Way, Urbana, Ohio

717-677-4556

www.urbana.edu/appleseed/museum.htm

This is the largest collection of memorabilia about John "Appleseed" Chapman, a missionary who planted

apple seeds as he traveled. In 1999, seedlings from the last known surviving apple tree planted by Chapman were transplanted in the museum courtyard.

- Hershey Museum

170 W. Hersheypark Dr., Hershey, Pa.

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717-534-3439

www.hersheymuseum.org

This museum's exhibits include story of Milton S. Hershey's life; Kisstory, the history of the Hershey Kiss; an old-time candy kitchen; and a chocolate-factory machine from the 1930s. Classes and tours. It is adjacent to the Hersheypark amusement park. Admission \$7 adults, \$3.50 youths.

- The American Institute of Baking

Emerson Library of the American Institute of Baking

Kansas State University, Manhattan, Kan.

785-537-4750

Artifacts related to commercial baking, 3,800-year-old samples of Egyptian breads, and the "world's largest collection of baker statuettes and figurines.

- COPIA, The American Center for Wine and Food of the Arts

500 First St., Napa, Calif.

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888-512-6742

www.copia.org

Adult admission \$5, includes wine tastings, an exhibit called "Forks in the Road," and sensory stations offering mini tastings. It has an on-site restaurant called Julia's Kitchen.

- World of Coca-Cola Museum

55 Martin Luther King Jr. Dr., Atlanta, Ga.

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404-676-5151 or 800-676-COKE

www.woccatlanta.com

Includes a 1930s Barnes Soda Fountain, where a soda jerk demonstrates how early Coca-Cola was prepared and served. Hear early songs, ads and radio programs sponsored by Coke. The International Lounge offers a sampler of 20 exotic beverages Coca-Cola makes that aren't available in the U.S. Also, see the White Castle exhibit. Adults \$9, children \$5.

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