Great Lakes Cuisine – Culture Thriving In The Vast Inland Seas

Disclaimer

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The Great Lakes - A Freshwater Seas Primer

Every school child in North America has at one time or another learned a simple trick to help remember the names of the five Great Lakes:

HOMES

Huron, Ontario, Michigan, Erie, and Superior.

That's a great little trick. But, aside from their names, what else do you know about the Great Lakes? This body of water, the Freshwater Seas, contain six quadrillion gallons of water, about one fifth of the earth's fresh surface water supply. This collection of lakes and waterways played an important part in the exploration and settlement of much of North America, and still plays a very large part in commerce and recreation today.

Let's take a look at a few facts so we can get to know the Great Lakes better.

Lake Huron

This lake is the fourth largest lake in the world and is the second largest of the Great Lakes. You'll find about 3 million people living along its shores, half in America and half in Canada. With about 23,000 squares miles of water surface and almost 4,000 miles of shoreline, there's plenty of opportunity for exploring this large lake. A popular

destination on this lake is Mackinac Island, Michigan, well known for the historic Grand Hotel.

Lake Ontario

This lake ranks seventeenth largest lake in the world and is the fifth largest of the Great lakes. There are almost 6 million people living along this lake, evenly split between Americans and Canadians. This lake has 7,000 miles of water surface and only about 700 miles of shoreline, but you'll find many beautiful cities around this small lake, including Toronto and Hamilton, Ontario, as well as Rochester, New York.

Lake Michigan

This is probably one of the better known Great Lakes simply because its shores play host to two large cities; Chicago and Milwaukee. You'll also find Green Bay, Wisconsin, home of the Green Bay Packers, another well known attraction. This lake is the fifth largest lake in the world and the third largest of the Great Lakes. You'll find lots to explore on over 1,600 of shoreline and over 22,000 miles of water surface. All 12 million plus of this lake's inhabitants live in America.

Lake Erie

This lake is the thirteenth largest lake in the world and fourth largest of the Great Lakes. It is not a very deep lake, or wide lake, and only has a little over 800 miles of shoreline and 9,000 square miles of surface water. But, this lake shares borders with four states and Canada, too, and you'll find several larger cities including Cleveland, Toledo, and Erie. This little lake has about 10 million Americans and 2 million Canadians sharing its shore and surrounding region.

Lake Superior

Last, but far from least, is the largest of the Great Lakes and the second largest lake in the world. It is also the deepest of the Great Lakes, with a maximum depth of over 1,300 feet, which also makes this lake the coldest of the five. With a water surface of over 31,000 square miles and a shoreline of over 2,700 miles, you will never run out of places to explore. The population of this lake and region, for as large as it is, is relatively sparse, due to much of the area being wilderness. The total population is under 700,000, with two thirds American and one third Canadian. Thunder Bay, Ontario, and Duluth, Minnesota are probably the better known cities on this lake, while Superior and Bayfield, Wisconsin, and Marquette, Michigan, are also popular, but definitely not large cities.

They say if you were standing on the moon, you would be able to spot the Great Lakes and pick out their distinctive shapes. That's how large and unique the Great Lakes are. I don't know about standing on the moon, but I could definitely see taking time to explore all the Great Lakes have to offer right here from earth!

Discovering The Great Lakes - The Mysterious Inland Seas

Imagine being an explorer and hearing stories of vast seas of fresh water in the middle of a continent. This is exactly what happened to the French explorers of North America. While traveling the St. Lawrence River, the explorers were told stories by the natives of fresh water seas further inland.

To say this concept was puzzling to early European explorers would be an understatement. These explorers had never encountered vast bodies of fresh water, inland seas, on any other continent. There just is not another body of water like the Great Lakes, so the idea of this huge inland fresh water sea was inconceivable.

Thus, even though earlier attempts were made to travel and map the Great Lakes Basin, it was not a task that could be completed in any one person's lifetime. That is why so many of the early maps of the region are inaccurate. One explorer, or one team of explorers, could not possibly explore the region in its entirety and map it. Without some sort of sponsor or organization, explorers came, explorers died, more explorers came, and each journey was begun anew, often open to individual interpretation that was misleading.

It wasn't until the French government built a colony on the shores of the St. Lawrence River that any organized exploration of the region and waterways was begun in earnest by the French. Led by Samuel de Champlain, teams of explorers set out to learn the truth about these 'inland seas' the natives talked about.

Even though Champlain himself could not complete his exploration due to an injury, he remained in charge of many teams and gathered all the information they reported back to him. It's interesting that although Champlain's own exploration started in 1615, the largest of the Great Lakes, Lake Superior, wasn't included on any map until 1632. This just shows how long and arduous these journeys, and the mapping and reporting, could be.

Jean Nicolet, another of the Champlain team of explorers, traveled with the Huron tribe and discovered the shores of Lake Michigan, finally making the map in 1634. Champlain actually died before the last of the Great Lakes, Lake Erie, was added to the map by Jesuit missionaries in 1639.

It's not just the map that changes through the years; it's also the names of the lakes and waterways that change. Most of the early maps show names that are clearly referring to a tribe inhabiting the shores. But even these names were reinterpreted as other explorers visited. Later explorers would attempt to rename lakes to honor French noblemen, for instance. Maps during the late 1600s may still show some of these French names, but later map makers returned to the names given by the official French explorers; the Champlain team.

A century later, the landscape, and the map, would change again as the British flag is

raised over the vast northern wilderness. But, even with this change, the French explorers' knowledge of the wilderness and her indigenous people would prove invaluable, keeping trade open and keeping the Great Lakes alive and well. A truce of sorts was drawn, and rule was established. From that point on, the Great Lakes region was destined to grow, making these 'inland seas' important to the entire world.

The Industrious Great Lakes - A Look Into The Past With A Glimpse To The Future

Before the Great Lakes were settled by Europeans, stories of 'freshwater inland seas' were told by natives to the amazement of French explorers in the camps of the St. Lawrence River. The thought that there could be great bodies of water, the size of seas, in the middle of this wilderness was almost unbelievable.

But, this only piqued the explorers' curiosity, causing them to do what explorers do: explore. In time, these fresh water seas were discovered by the French explorers, mapped, and is now known as the Great Lakes Region.

Exploration continued and struggles over domination of this region raged on. Borders were drawn and in the late 1700s, the new American government legislated the formation of this giant wilderness into states and territories, taking control of the region's land sale and development.

Both Americans and British claimed victory after the War of 1812, but the real victors went beyond borders or imperial rule. Those who wanted to settle and develop the region had their glory. The pristine wilderness would not be left to the natives. For the next 100 plus years, the machinery of progress changed the landscape drastically.

The century of battling for territory gave way to building and expanding a nation. The future for the region was squarely focused on creating cities and industrializing the land and waterways. Explorers became entrepreneurs, tradesmen, farmers, mill workers, and industrialists.

The 'inland freshwater seas' and their tributaries, lakes, rivers, and streams turned into highways for trade. Natural resources such as fish, timber, iron, coal, copper, wheat, corn, and man-made products from those resources, shipped on these waters making for a very busy thoroughfare for progress.

Of course, some didn't see this as progress worth celebrating. Over-fishing, over-trapping, and over-harvesting was quickly depleting these natural, and necessary, resources. Whole forests were chopped down just to make room for other agricultural purposes, roadways, and cities. Whole fish populations were depleted simply for profit, with no plans for restocking.

During these boom years of growth, a steady influx of people coming from Europe and across America westward would begin to settle in the region and bring their own

heritage and way of living. Dairy farms and meat production would begin to take hold in this area which was once supported mainly from the resources that could be pulled from the land and water. Crops were planted, meat was raised, and cows were milked to feed the local population. There was a new focus away from shipping out to the world and toward taking care of the growing population around the Great Lakes region.

Now that logging became even more important to build larger cities and make way for crops, cows, and cattle, it was realized that the timber from the clearing was a valuable commodity. This timber, now logged commercially, was sent along its way to other growing areas of the nation by way of the Great Lakes 'highway' system, making the cutting and transporting of timber an industry itself. Early in this new industry, the logs were floated to the lumber mills. This was dangerous, indeed. Later on, logs were loaded onto ships specifically made for transporting timber, making the process much more reliable, safer, and more profitable.

Along with lumber mills, paper mills were springing up along the waterways of the Great Lakes region. As industry developed along the northern borders, more industrious ways for moving the products north, south, east, and west became necessary. Engineers got busy developing canals and locks to navigate to-and-from areas previously inaccessible.

These modern modes of transportation were not developed without conflict. Desire to improve routes for commerce would pit neighbor against neighbor. But, through all the conflict, a system of waterways was developed like no other in the world. Linking the Great Lakes together with the St. Lawrence, Mississippi, and Ohio Rivers, as well as all the rivers, lakes, and tributaries in between, was an incredible feat. The Great Lakes region was ready and able to ship worldwide.

Freighters are still a common sight in this region, but railroads and trucking began to replace canal shipping sometime during the mid 1900s. As the economy changes, there will continue to be changes in how shipping in and through the Great Lakes region is done. Today, iron ore, coal, and grain are still transported on the Great Lakes, although the shipping fleet has diminished due to the reduction of steel mills outside of the region.

The good news is, a resurgence in supporting the Great Lakes area natural resources is taking a solid hold. Re-forestation and sustainable fishing is the focus of much of the new industry of the region. Tourism and recreation are also much desired industries throughout the area. Other dwindling industries may have put a dent in the area's prosperity, but as we can see from history, the Great Lakes region is nothing if not resilient, welcoming change and growth in the past, present, and future.

Cooking Cultures - The People Who Feed The Great Lakes

When you think about what constitutes 'Great Lakes Cuisine,' it can seem the extremely large area couldn't possibly share any common foods. But, this vast area that stretches from New York to Northern Minnesota, and Ontario to Ohio, has a similar history of indigenous people, as well as people immigrating to the region to explore and settle this expansive wilderness.

The Great Lakes themselves begged to be explored! These 'inland seas' were a mystery to Europeans when they started exploring, beginning with the French explorers from the St. Lawrence River and continuing from other parts of Europe.

As these explorers encountered the natives, they were taught how to take what the land and waters had to offer to survive. Wild rice, mushrooms, whitefish, lake trout, berries, and maple sap were harvested and turned into nourishing meals. The natives taught the explorers how to plant corn, squash, and beans (the three sisters) and use them in ways that would yield many meals through the long winters. Hunting, fishing, and trapping all had to be learned if the explorers were to survive, and these lessons came from those who survived for centuries - the native tribes.

Wars for control of the borders were inevitable. American, British, and Canadian borders were drawn and rule was established. For its part, the American government found it advantageous to encourage settlers from the eastern states of America, and Europe, to move into the region. Land grants were a very popular notion for many immigrants of various nationalities to come to America, then to continue moving westward to claim their stake in the fertile Great Lakes region.

Dairy farmers from Holland came to areas that closely resembled their own homeland. The Dutch also excelled in seafaring, so the combination of farmland and the 'inland seas' of the Great Lakes region was appealing. The Germans and Poles found the forests and rolling hills to be a welcoming reminder of their own land. People from the Scandinavian region found a very similar climate and lots of fishing, gardening, and plenty of snow to their liking. Since Italy was in political turmoil and England's economy was faltering during this same time, the influx of immigrants from these areas to the bustling mining regions of the Upper Peninsula was inevitable.

Although these nationalities share many similar traditions and culture, there are a few distinct cuisines which you can see in parts of the Great Lakes region that are attributed to a specific people.

Where German immigrants settled in larger numbers, you'll find beer flowing like water. You'll also be treated to plenty of sausages, bratwursts, sauerkraut, vinegar dressed potato salads, mustard, and pretzels.

You'll know the Dutch people settled in a region when you find plenty of milk, cheese, and fried batters like pancakes and waffles. Find pierogies and kielbasa on the menu and you know people from Poland settled there.

You can't miss a Scandinavian's table when it has little portions of food lined up for the taking - smorgasbord style - since the Swedish word translates to 'sandwich table.' Also, any church dinner featuring lutefisk will be hosted by Scandinavians.

An interesting culture collision of sorts occurs in the Upper Peninsula region. The mining regions attracted people from many cultures during the boom years. The influx of immigrants included Italians, English, and Scandinavians. Today, if you attend a wedding or other event in the region, you'll find plenty of pasta with red sauce, or the Italians would call it 'gravy,' pasties from the Cornish people, and lutefisk or kringle from the Scandinavians.

Once the Great Lakes region was 'discovered' by European explorers, the area grew fast. The natural resources were a welcome sight to immigrants struggling to build a new life in America's wilderness. Each people brought their own history, culture, and recipes. When they found the area provided them with the resources they needed, they started creating their own special foods, but always adapting and sharing. Even though each group borrowed from the others a bit, they also held onto their heritage the best they could, which usually meant at the family table.

The Great Lakes Fish Boil - Where Flame And Flavor Mingle

When is it acceptable to gather folks around a large fire pit, get them all comfortable, then throw kerosene onto the open fire to create a massive explosion causing a cauldron of boiling water to blow its top? When you're at a Great Lakes fish boil, that's when!

What is this crazy tradition of boiling fish, when did it start, and why boil it over?

It is believed by many that the 'fish boil,' popular along the northern Great Lakes region, began with Scandinavian settlers more than 100 years ago. With plentiful whitefish and lake trout available, and a history of preserving and boiling fish in the Scandinavian culture, the idea of cooking large pots of fish outdoors to feed lots of people must have been very appealing. Partly out of necessity and abundance, and partly out of the desire to gather together to cook and eat good food, the fish boil was born.

In those early days, the ingredients and tools used to feed a settlement full of hungry people would have been whatever was available. The development of the fish boil during those early settlement days in the north country point to the essential ingredients - fish, potatoes, onions, water, salt, firewood, and kerosene. With these essentials, staples in the homes of the time, you can keep a family fed even during the coldest months.

But, why the 'boil over?' Is it just to please the pyromaniac in us?

No, actually, there are reasons why a traditional fish boil must boil over. Whitefish and lake trout are oily fishes. Cooking the fish in water along with the potatoes (starch) and the onions (sugar) will result in an oily, frothy substance forming on the surface.

Whether by accident or design, someone at sometime boiled that pot over and realized that with the 'boil over' went the oil and froth, resulting in a very clean and tasty dish.

Today, the essentials for a good fish boil remain similar to the fish boil of a century ago. Of course, you can update it a little, but the basics are still there.

You need a large fire pit with lots of firewood, a huge sturdy pot, lots of fresh water, a couple basket inserts if you have them, a long pole and two strong people to pull the pot off after the boil over.

Once you get your setup ready, you'll need your whitefish or lake trout, potatoes, onions, salt, and any herbs and seasonings you like.

Most importantly, you'll need kerosene and one brave volunteer with good running shoes to throw the kerosene onto the fire. Oh yes, you'll also need a camera to capture that brave volunteer as he or she runs like crazy the moment they realize you weren't kidding about the explosion.

After the 'boil over' occurs and the contents are dumped out onto a large table, everyone grabs a plate and lines up to help themselves. Once you get a plate heaped full of fish, potatoes, and onions, you might want to try the grand finish, which is a ladle full of melted butter drizzled all over the plate. Then grab a little cup of coleslaw and some rye bread and dig in.

Those early settlers really knew how to turn a meal created for simple survival in the Great Lakes wilderness into a feast for the ages. And now so can you!

Pasties - Tasty Pocket Lunch Of The Northern Great Lakes

To begin with the first question; it's pronounced "PASS teez."

Now that we have that out of the way, where does the term come from? The origin of the word is believed to be from the Anglo-French "pasté" or formed from flour, also known as dough. Since pasties can't be made without dough, this is an accurate translation, although not necessarily as descriptive as it could be.

It is widely believed that pasties were introduced to the mining communities in the northern regions of the Great Lakes by English immigrants. Miners were leaving Cornwall, England, during the 1800s as mines there were closing down. The rich mining region of the northern Great Lakes region was just developing and work was plentiful.

No one knows for sure if the Cornish people invented the pasty; many cultures have similar foods. But, we know from diaries and stories written during the time that pasties were eaten in the mines in England, and we know the miners immigrated to the Great Lakes mining areas. It's safe to assume they brought their recipes with them. Here is an excerpt from one such story from the Cornish mines:

Deep Down, a Tale of the Cornish Mines

Author - R.M. Ballantyne

"His working costume consisted only of a pair of linen trousers; his colour from top to toe was red as brick-dust, owing to the iron ore around him; his food was a slice of bread, with, perchance, when he was unusually luxurious, the addition of a Cornish pasty; and his drink was water."

"These sat down in a row, and, each man unrolling a parcel containing a pasty or a thick lump of cake with currants in it, commenced the demolition thereof with as much zeal as had previously been displayed in the demolition of the rock. This frugal fare was washed down with water drawn from little flat barrels or canteens, while they commented lightly, grumblingly, or laughingly, according to temperament, on the poor condition of the lode at which they wrought."

If you were working in the iron ore mines in the cold northern Great Lakes region, and you saw a miner enjoying a piping hot meat and potato pie 'sandwich' for lunch, wouldn't you ask for the recipe?

Root crops used in the recipe by the Cornish miners also translated perfectly in this cold Great Lakes region. Potatoes, onions, and rutabaga (swede in England) grew abundantly in the frigid north. If beef wasn't available, which it often wasn't, pork could easily be used instead. And the simplest dough recipe worked very well, producing a nice flaky pastry for the pasties.

The popularity of this simple crusted sandwich grew as more people (miners, farmers, loggers, and fishermen) saw the value. One region in particular, the Upper Peninsula of Michigan, took this tasty pocket lunch and ran with it. Anyone who visits the region will have many opportunities to enjoy an 'original' pasty around every corner. However, the entire northern borders of Michigan, Wisconsin, and Minnesota will boast they are home to the best pasties anywhere. Truthfully, they're all delicious and well worth the drive.

If you want to try your hand at making pasties, here is a recipe that works well. I believe it is fairly authentic, mainly due to its simplicity. You want to start by preparing the dough ahead of time so it can rest. Here are the ingredients:

3 cups flour
1 1/2 teaspoons salt
1 cup very cold butter, chopped
6 tablespoons very cold water

Put the flour and salt into a bowl, mix them together, then add the butter pieces and cut the butter into the flour using a couple knives or forks or pastry cutter. Start adding the water a couple tablespoons at a time, stirring in between, until the mixture forms a dough that sticks together. Form a ball with the dough, then knead the dough a few times on a lightly floured work surface until nice and pliable. Form again into a ball,

dust lightly with flour and wrap the dough ball in waxed paper and put back in the bowl. Put the bowl in the refrigerator for a half hour.

Now make the filling while the dough rests. Here are the ingredients:

1 pound beef, ground or finely chopped
1 pound pork, ground or finely chopped
2 large onions, diced
2 large potatoes, diced
2 medium swede (rutabaga), diced
generous sprinkle of salt
dash black pepper
6 small slivers of cold butter

Prepare all the filling ingredients, put everything in a big bowl and mix together. You can use more beef than pork, more pork than beef, or all beef, or all pork. The idea behind this traditional food is you use what you have on hand and what is readily available.

Now you are ready to make the pasties. Remove the dough from the refrigerator and divide the dough ball into 6 equal pieces. Lightly flour a working surface and roll out each segment of dough into a circle (which should end up about 9 to10 inches in diameter).

Divide the filling evenly between all six of the circles, spreading it evenly into half the center of each pasty, leaving a little room around the edges. Brush a little water around the edges, then fold the unfilled half over the filling and seal the edges with a fork or with your fingers, turning the edges over crimping them closed. Picture a half moon shape.

Cut the initials of each person eating the pasties into the bottom edge, just above the crimped edge, then cut a small slit in the top. Put on a baking sheet and bake in a hot oven (350 to 375) for a half hour. After the half hour, stick a cold sliver of butter through the slit on the top of the pasty, put the pasties back in the oven, and continue cooking for another half hour or until golden brown.

Remove the pasties from the oven, cover with a clean slightly damp flour sack towel, and allow to cool for fifteen minutes before wrapping in wax paper, then clean towels or flannels to keep warm until lunchtime. May be reheated before eating by any means available.

In those early years, it was very common for workers to stick a few hot pasties in their pockets as they left the house. I do believe the pasty could be considered the earliest example of a "convenience food - comfort food" combination. I hope you take the time to discover this tasty pocket lunch yourself.

Friday Fish Fry - A Tasty Great Lakes Tradition

Drive the country roads around the Great Lakes region on a Friday night and I guarantee you'll encounter more than enough places to stop and enjoy a fish fry. Today you will find supper clubs and cozy taverns, many with signs for "All You Can Eat" fish fries peppered throughout small towns north to south and east to west.

How did this Friday night tradition start? Many attribute the popularity of the Friday night fish fry in particular to the Catholic observance of abstinence from meat on Fridays. With a large German Catholic population settling in Wisconsin, enterprising tavern owners saw a market. Of course, the beer drinking crowd of Germans would congregate in the family-friend taverns of the times. By introducing a platter of crispy, delicious fried perch to the patrons at a reasonable price, the Friday fish fry couldn't help but become a tradition.

Perch was plentiful in the region's lakes so the fish was cheap. During the 1800s, it was common for fishermen to make deliveries to taverns where the fish could be stored along with the cold beer. The combination of fried fish and beer was inevitable. While the German Catholic families congregating in the taverns on a Friday night, frying up a batch of readily available perch made sense.

As the Friday night fish fry caught on, the popularity spread. Soon, more items were added to the menu. German settlers in the region shared their recipes for potato salad, which became a much loved addition to the fish fry plate. The Dutch farmers in the area brought along their cabbage to make "koolsla" which we know as coleslaw. Like perch and potatoes, cabbage was plentiful and cheap. The tavern owners could afford to practically give the plates of food away at this rate, resulting in the "All You Can Eat" fish fries.

With just these three offerings - perch, potato salad, and coleslaw - the Friday night fish fry was born. Started as an inexpensive dinner in family-friendly taverns for groups who did not eat meat on Fridays, things would change slightly in the coming century.

During the Prohibition era, the family-friendly taverns disappeared. But the tradition of gathering for a large, inexpensive fish fry meal was still very important, especially on Friday nights for a large number of Catholics in the region. But even non-Catholics had become accustomed to this Friday fish ritual.

Soon, the 'supper club' became the place for people to socialize over a platter of fish. These restaurants were family-friendly and boasted big fish fries for big appetites, often including very large salad bars filled with a wide variety of salads. Again, the "All You Can Eat" Friday fish fries were a popular choice with large Catholic families and anyone who wanted a big meal for a cheap price.

Today, the Friday fish fry is not only a tradition in restaurants, supper clubs, and taverns around the Great Lakes region, but you'll find festivals all over the area that feature fish fries. Although the fish itself may have changed throughout the years (perch is less plentiful now), the simplicity of the meal remains constant.

The next time you are in one of the Great Lakes states, and you see a sign for a Friday fish fry, pull in. Enjoy a pile of fish, potato salad, and coleslaw and count yourself as one of the lucky ones who can say they were treated to a Great Lakes tradition!

Celebrating Beautiful Michigan - Land Of Festivals

When you look at a map of the Great Lakes, you may notice something a bit unusual about one of the states - Michigan. Not only is this state in two pieces, each piece is surrounded by water, forming two distinct peninsulas.

The Ojibwa word mishigamaa translates to "large water" which most definitely describes what the early French explorers would have encountered traveling this area.

It's easy to see with the sort of land and water mass Michigan has, there are ample opportunities for festivals to spring up everywhere. Just look at the shoreline peppered with cities and towns that are anxious to get the tourist and locals alike to enjoy all that this particular Great Lakes region has to offer.

With borders along four of the five Great Lakes, it won't take you long to stumble upon a lakeside festival whether you're driving north, south, east, or west. Let's take a look at just a few of the many festivals to enjoy during your Michigan travels.

Tulip Time Festival - Holland

You might have guessed this one with a town name like Holland. This festival is all about the beauty of this flower and the people associated with it; the Dutch. You'll be able to learn the Dutch Dance, experience 19th century Holland, including food, shopping, crafts, and stage events. You also won't want to miss the Town Crier competition. And don't forget your camera! The tulips are so beautiful you won't believe they're real.

Traverse City Wine and Art Festival - Traverse City

Local wineries are the focus for over 5000 people during this summer festival. The Michigan 'wine coast' is alive and well, and playing host to a nice selection of artists, restaurants, and, of course, wine. You'll also have plenty of music and dancing to go along with your wine tasting.

National Blueberry Festival - South Haven

This 50 year old tradition has blossomed into a national festival with over 40,000 folks visiting this tiny beach town for this one event. Of course, you'll get plenty of blueberry to enjoy, but you'll also hear great music, all sorts of activities, and even more food.

National Cherry Festival - Traverse City

This area makes claim to the world-record tart cherry harvest. This is reason enough to have a festival. Of course, you'll find cherries used in all sorts of delicious foods to

enjoy. With more than 150 events peppered along the lake shore, it's understandable why this festival has been named in the USA Today's top 10 festivals.

Our Lady of Lake Huron Parish Festival - Harbor Beach

This is a little festival with a big heart. You can enjoy three days of family fun including traditional fish fries, chicken dinners, games, and loads of refreshments. There are also auctions and even 'water wars' so everyone has a chance to cool off!

Mackinac Island Fudge Festival - Mackinac Island

While fudge was not invented on Mackinac Island, Mackinac Island's fudge has become probably the most popular fudge in America. As a matter of fact, when you visit Mackinac Island, you notice two distinct aromas - horses and fudge. The island does not allow motorized vehicles; thus the horses. And, the fudge is being made everywhere. During the Fudge Festival, this sweet concoction is worked into every food and beverage you can imagine. Enjoy the 'Fudge on the Rocks' event and you may never want your regular libation again!

Great Lakes Folk Festival - East Lansing

The Michigan State University Museum produces this unique summer festival. You'll find a delightful combination art fair, music festival, county fair, and ethnic festival, celebrating the cultural heritage of Michigan and the Great Lakes region. Through dance, music, storytelling, crafts, and food, traditions rooted deep in this area's culture are shared and enjoyed by many visitors and locals, alike.

The Apple Cider Century - Three Oaks

Combine between 15 to 100 miles of bicycling through orchards, forests, and wine country with tasty apple cider and friendly folks and you've got yourself one beautiful festival. This is not a race or a test of stamina. This is a tour for bicyclists of all levels of expertise to have a chance to ride in a safe, controlled environment, with lots of stops along the way to enjoy refreshments and fun. This is also a fund-raiser, so you can feel good about enjoying the scenery and cider while you support local charities.

Harvest Stompede - Leelanau Peninsula Wine Trail

Why walk through the vineyards when you can run? This is a one-of-a-kind dream course which meanders through rolling vineyard rows that are heavy with ripe wine grapes ready for picking. Not up for a run? You can walk this course, as well, and still enjoy the tours and some world class wines and the season's local culinary delights. Run, walk, and taste the local wines and food pairings on a beautiful Autumn day. Sounds like a good excuse for a festival.

Oktoberfest - Old Town Lansing

We couldn't celebrate this region without a real old fashioned German Oktoberfest event. You'll find plenty of German food, live music, dancing, and of course, German-

style beer. This two-day event attracts visitors from all over the region. As their promotional flyer says; "How can one resist two days of musik, essen, and bier?" How indeed!

Winter Carnival - Houghton

The festivals don't stop just because the snows come. In fact, this festival celebrates the region's abundance of snow by building big snow and ice sculptures, taking sleigh rides, and of course, with lots of warming, hearty foods and beverages.

Michigan is an expansive state comprised of two peninsulas with over 3,000 miles of freshwater shoreline, more than any other state. Anywhere you go in the state, you are within just 85 miles of one of the Great Lakes. With all these opportunities to explore, and a festival just about every week of the year, it makes sense to take time to add Michigan to your list of vacation destinations.

Great Lakes Fruit Belt - The Snow Belt Surprise

At first glance, one may not automatically think of fruit production when they think of the Great Lakes region. After all, isn't it awfully cold up there? Isn't this the "snow belt?"

Well, yes, the Great Lakes region can get cold and does get plenty of snow. The lakes will freeze and the temperature will dip way below zero. However, in parts of the region, the lakes themselves actually help moderate the temperatures by absorbing the summer heat and cooling the air, then radiating that heat back in the fall to warm the air. Along with this temperature buffering, there is plenty of rainfall and rich soil to feed many types of fruit.

The economics and industry of the region also helped develop fruit production. As the wilderness was logged off, more room to plant fruit became available. At the same time these fruits were taking hold, metro areas were growing and railroads were being built. Now, fruit could be shipped from the shores of the Great Lakes to cities both near and far. This, of course, encouraged even more fruit production.

Let's take a look at a few of the fruits that are commonly grown around the Great Lakes 'fruit belt.'

Apples

There are many very hardy apple species to choose from when it comes to planting in the colder climates. With some varieties able to withstand temperatures as low as 40 below zero, it's no wonder apples top the list of fruits that are most prolific in every northern Great Lakes region. Apples are one of Ontario's biggest fruit crop, with countless orchards sprinkled around the shores of Lake Ontario, Lake Erie, and Lake Huron. Again, because these lakes moderate the temperatures causing the air temperature to change slowly, the growing season is extended, which is important if

you want your fruit to ripen.

Cherries

There are a variety of cherries that grow along the Great Lakes shores. Even though several wild cherries, some quite bitter, were known to grow along the lakes, the most well known sweet cherry was planted in Michigan in the mid 1800s. This orchard flourished much to the delight of settlers and natives. Again, because the lake tempered the climate, the cherry trees took hold and produced tremendous amounts of cherries. This prolific crop's reputation spread across the region and soon both sweet and tart cherries were being grown everywhere along the lakes.

Plums

You will find plums grown far and wide, from the Atlantic Ocean to the Great Plains. The variety known as the Canada Plum grows along the Great Lakes into New York State. A rather compact tree, this is a favorite for the backyard gardener. Just a few plum trees tucked into the corner of the yard will yield enough little plums to make a few batches of jam.

Grapes

This one may be a surprise. Yes, grapes are not exclusive to California. New York state is actually right behind California and Washington in grape production. But, the grape production doesn't stop there. There is actually a "grape belt" within the fruit belt which extends along the south shore of Lake Erie.

The next time you think about a bag of apples, a bowl of cherries, or even a glass of wine, think about the Great Lakes and this northern fruit bonanza!

The Great Lakes Residents - A Fish Tale

When the French explorers first heard tales of 'freshwater inland seas' told by the natives along the shores of the St. Lawrence River, they could scarcely believe their ears. As the tales told of fish so plentiful that tribes could feast all year, the stories became even more unbelievable.

But time and exploration proved the tales to be true. Soon, the Great Lakes Basin was mapped and it was discovered that this was, in fact, the largest freshwater sea in the world with a wide variety of fish to be harvested.

Today, you will find a mix of native and introduced fish species in the waters of the Great Lakes. Anglers will be treated to catches which include lake trout, salmon, walleye, perch, white fish, small mouth bass, steelhead, and brown trout.

However, the modern world has threatened the fish population by overfishing, pollution, and sometimes invasive species. You would have to look back to the late

1800s to find the largest harvests of fish; over 140 million pounds of fish. But, the modern world has also endeavored to solve these problems by researching and developing fisheries techniques to build the populations back up and make them self-sustaining.

In Lake Erie, walleye fisheries are recovering. In Lake Superior, the trout population is improving and becoming self-sustained. Almost half the salmon and trout population in Lake Michigan, Lake Huron, and Lake Ontario are now reproducing on their own, in cleaner, better natural habitat.

If you look at each of the Great Lakes, you'll find a few species that are considered the lake's mainstay. Here is a sampling:

Lake Superior is the largest and coldest of the lakes. You'll find herring, rainbow smelt, whitefish, and yellow perch which support the commercial fishermen.

Lake Huron will yield whitefish as the primary species, along with yellow perch.

Lake Erie is still the most productive of the Great Lakes in terms of harvest volume. The species include yellow perch, salmon, and walleye.

Lake Michigan also will serve up yellow perch, salmon, and walleye.

Lake Ontario in past years yielded American eel, yellow perch, bullheads, sunfish, and rock bass. Today, however, with renewed efforts at removing pollution, you'll now find ample catches of salmon, trout, yellow perch, and small mouth bass.

We can't forget the many rivers, streams, and smaller lakes that provide even more fish species. You'll find excellent trout streams that offer award winning fly fishing. You can bring home a nice catch of crappie, bluegill, perch, pike, and bass without too much trouble from many of the smaller lakes and rivers.

Between sport fishing and commercial industry, the Great Lakes region provides billions of dollars in trade and jobs. Through smart management and scientific research, the Great Lakes waterways will remain vibrant and alive - with these incredible fish species and the people who enjoy them!

Cooking Info Resources

Metabolic Cooking Fat Loss Cookbook - 250 Fat Torching Recipes To Banish Your Boring Diet And Burn Fat Faster!

Anabolic Cooking & Muscle Building Cookbook -Complete Cookbook And Nutrition Guide For Bodybuilding & Fitness with Over 200 Muscle Building Recipes

First Timers Cookbook - Online Cooking Course That Will Change The Way

500+ Healthy Chinese Recipes Cookbook - Low Fat & Low Carb Chinese Food

Think About Cooking

America's Favorite Restaurant Recipes - Like You Never Seen Before!

Now You Can Cook Dishes Like Pros! Superstar Chef Reveals Everything

Make Your Favorite Restaurant Dishes At Home! - Secret Recipes From Ny Times Best Selling Author

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