



A WEEKEND

Some of our favourite people, places and things to do in Prince Edward County, one of Ontario's hottest food and wine destinations.

away

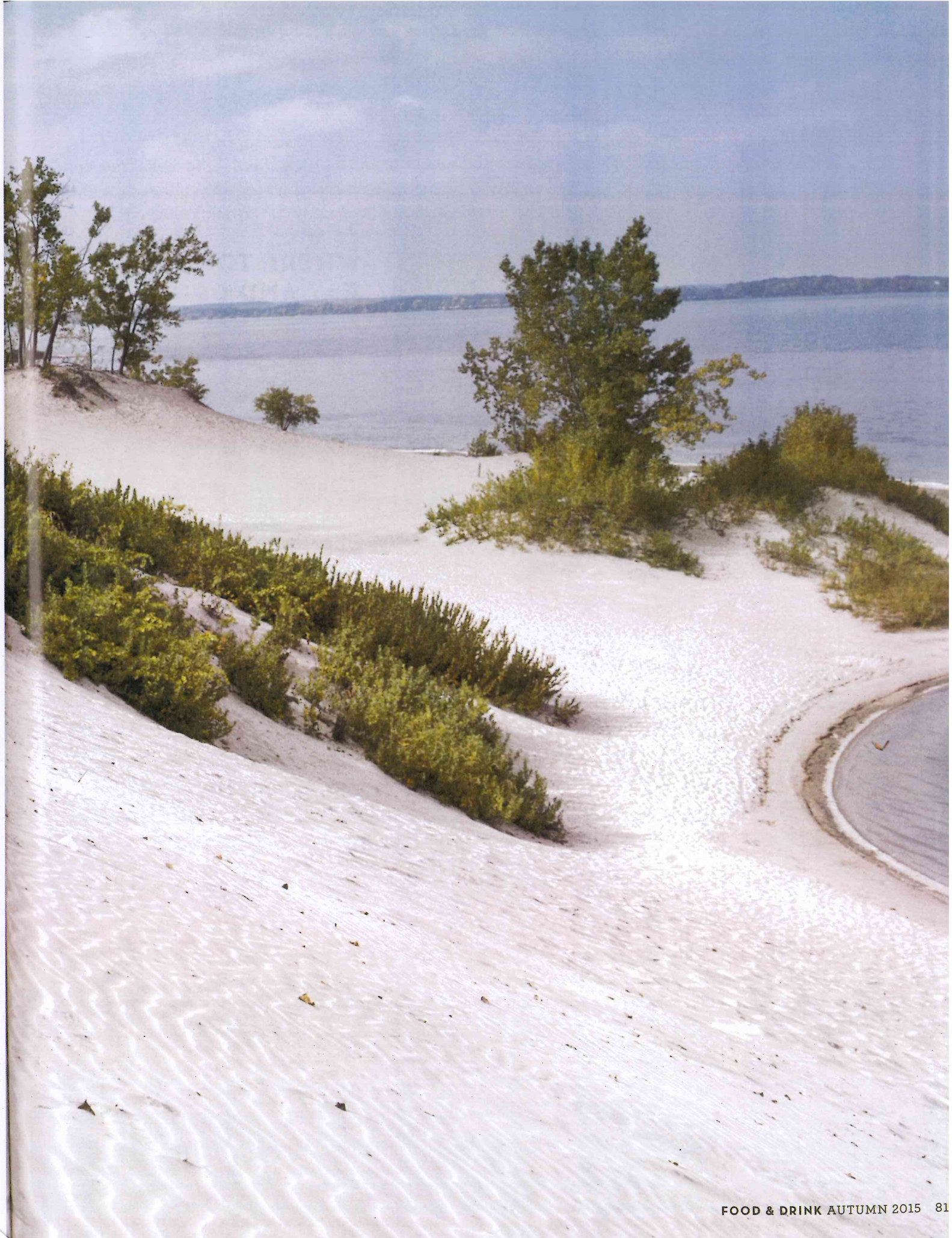
BY CHRIS JOHNS • PHOTOGRAPHY BY ROB FIOCCA

SEEMINGLY OVERNIGHT, Prince Edward County has gone from something of an insider's secret to one of Ontario's best-loved gourmet getaways: in-the-know shorthand is just "the county." Return visits unearth new discoveries, with pioneering winemakers and artists now joined by chefs, innkeepers and craftspeople. There's *almost* too much to see and do across this 1,000-square-kilometre region (the size, if not quite the climate, of Tahiti). We've divided the county's best into three distinct regions, so day trippers and weekenders can maximize their time, while more leisurely travellers can see the whole county. Mix and match

your preferences for an Ontario wine-and-food weekend with a dose of urban cool.

Not only do the areas of (from west to east) Wellington, Bloomfield and Picton contain a lively concentration of tasting, shopping and sleeping options, but each of these hubs has a fundamental connection to the surrounding region, beyond its location. That might mean making wine that expresses a particular soil type, serving dishes that use the best local products from the land and lake, or simply being the kind of laid-back places that make Prince Edward County a must-see destination this fall.

For more information and to plan your visit, please consult: prince-edward-county.com, winecountryontario.ca, ontariotravel.net, discoverwellington.ca, bloomfieldontario.ca, experiencepicton.com.



WELLINGTON

With a waterfront overlooking Sandbanks Provincial Park, access to some of the county's best wineries and a hot new boutique inn, this lakeside hub is the county's current "it" spot. Not bad for a town that dates back to the 18th century and boasts one of the oldest homes in Ontario (the circa-1780 Reynolds House).

WHERE TO EAT AND DRINK

1 TALL POPPY CAFÉ Locals greet each other by name in a tin-ceilinged room with a caffeinated hum. "These are the best scones I've ever eaten," a smitten visitor announces. A focused kitchen serves only breakfast and lunch. Black Walnut Gardens, an educational organic farm in nearby Milford, provides most of the vegetables for overstuffed sandwiches and crepes. tallpoppycafe.ca

2 EAST & MAIN BISTRO When the person at the next table asks how you're enjoying your wine, she's not nosy—she's probably the winemaker. County comfort (wooden tables, cheerful service) meets urban sophistication (delicate stemware, deep wine list) at this bistro, enthusiastically recommended by the farmers, fishermen and winemakers who provision the menu. Pair double-smoked-bacon-wrapped Prinzen farm chicken with a glass of Sandbanks Baco Noir for a taste of local terroir. eastandmain.ca



WHERE TO STAY

DRAKE DEVONSHIRE Commissioned art installations, check. Ping Pong table, check. Semi-ironic photo booth, check. Hipsterdom, in hotel form, has arrived in the county. Formerly a 19th-century foundry, the country cousin to Toronto art space/crash pad The Drake put the county on the map for a new (and perhaps more tattooed and bearded) demographic when it opened last fall. Even the non-skinny-jean set will enjoy sitting by the lakeside firepit. Matt DeMille, one of the most plugged-in young chefs on the new Toronto scene, is the real deal: his lake-to-table and farm-to-table menus are already inspiring foodie pilgrimages. drakedevonshire.ca



3 POMODORO

Classic Italian red sauce, featured here, is the heart and soul of an ambitious menu that goes beyond the classics to include slow-smoked pork with romesco sauce, or Waupoos raspberry semifreddo for dessert. Indulge at will; there's a comfortable guest suite available for booking right upstairs. pomodoropec.ca



**POMODORO TRATTORIA
MEATBALLS WITH POMODORO
TOMATO SAUCE**

recipe on page 156





HINTERLAND WINE COMPANY

➔ A modest exterior (a former dairy barn) fronts the county's only winery solely dedicated to producing bubbly. Founders Jonas Newman and Vicki Samaras save the sophistication for what goes into their bottles: crisp, complex sparkling wines (Ancestral, LCBO 426023, \$25.00) from estate-grown grapes like Gamay Noir, Pinot Noir and Chardonnay. For snacks, homemade barbecue smokes on the back patio all summer. hinterlandwine.com





The Grange



Norman Hardie Winery & Vineyard

WHAT TO SIP

➔ **THE GRANGE** “My father bought this farm in 1970,” says winemaker Caroline Granger. “Around 1999, I started to think about what my contribution to the land might be.” She decided on wine, and what was 12 acres is now the county’s largest winery, crafting elegant Pinot Noir (LCBO 230227, \$16.95), Chardonnay and Gamay varietals entirely from estate-grown fruit. Pick up one of the winery’s delicious picnic baskets and head out into the vineyard. grangeofprinceedward.com

➔ **NORMAN HARDIE WINERY AND VINEYARD** On the patio any warm summer day—and late into the fall until the harvest begins—the wine is flowing and the brick oven turns out beautifully blistered Napoli-style pizzas. Grapes for the South African-born winemaker’s Alsatian and Burgundian-style wines—deep and complex Unfiltered Pinot Noir (VINTAGES 125310, \$39.00), bright and fresh Riesling and bold, dense Cabernet Franc—excel in the limestone soil of his vineyard. normanhardie.com



WHERE TO WANDER, GRAZE AND BROWSE

1 Prince Edward County Lavender

A light breeze is the best advertising for the boutique here, stocking everything from lavender-infused body lotions to herbal teas. The farm’s lavender festival in early July coincides with peak flowering. peclavender.com

2 Wellington Farmers Market

In its fourth year, it’s already a local Saturday-morning tradition. “We’re so amazed at the products that are available,” says organizer Louise McFaul. “Everything from a portable pizza oven to kids selling cookies for charity.” Now that local winemakers are offering samples of their products, a trip to the market is like a county tour in one stop. Autumn is when the vendors start pickling and the colourful array keeps the market bustling. countymarkets.ca

3 The Millennium Trail

A 49-kilometre snippet of a former rail line, the Millennium Trail winds past wineries and marshes and wends through towns and farms. Keep your eyes peeled for beaver tending to their dams and more than 200 bird species, from mergansers to meadowlarks. Plenty of signage keeps hikers and cyclists on track. ontariotrails.on.ca/trails/view/millennium-trail/



BLOOMFIELD

Grand Italianate farmhouses and a rich Quaker and Loyalist past put a noble spin on this rural village. The smallest of the county's three main hubs is by no means sleepy or dated. A stroll reveals a main street full of life, with cool shops and packed restaurants.

WHERE TO EAT AND DRINK

1 AGRARIAN By day, the ground-floor shop has the best local cheese, charcuterie and condiments. At night, it's a candlelit speakeasy, complete with potent cocktails and live music. As the name suggests, Agrarian is closely aligned to the land: chef and forager Neil Dowson sources nearly every ingredient for his globe-trotting comfort-food menu—from cider-braised pork belly to Kerala fish curry to gourmet grilled cheese—locally. agrarianpec.ca

2 THE HUBB EATERY AND LOUNGE Sommelier Laura Borutski and her husband, chef Elliot Reynolds, are serving some of the most ambitious food in the county in this eclectic room (within Angeline's Inn). Lamb meatballs with pistachio and goat cheese, or smoked trout with crispy wontons, make savoury small plates and their hearty beet and apple salad with lavender honey dressing (featured here) makes the most of County produce. Homage to the DQ Dilly Bar, in grown-up flavours like rhubarb and mint, makes a sweet finale. angelines.ca



WHERE TO STAY

ANGELINE'S INN Brother and sister Alexandre and Melanie Fida are the second-generation team overseeing this family-run inn, with a hip garage-sale-meets-antique aesthetic. New motel-style budget rooms are bright and art-filled; suites in the 19th-century main house combine original tin ceilings with plasma TVs and rain-head showers. Families will love the more substantial spaces, like the Coachhouse Loft and the Chalet. angelines.ca

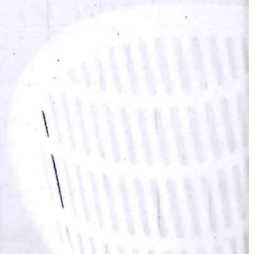


**THE HUBB
EATERY & LOUNGE
AUTUMN SALAD**

recipe on page 157

KOKITO

The shop's creamy, bright interior, chockablock with a carefully curated selection of home wares, art and accessories—much of it locally produced, from handcrafted oars to designer birdhouses—practically defines the county aesthetic. kokito.ca



WHERE TO WANDER, GRAZE AND BROWSE

1 Slickers Ice Cream

Even on brisk days, the lineups at Slickers attest to the popularity and quality of the inventive homemade ice cream at this local institution. Stop by for a scoop of apple pie ice cream, chockablock with apples and pastry, or a cone of toasted marshmallow. slickersicecream.com

2 Dead People's Stuff

"Most people come in because of the name," admits Sue Hierlihy, one of the owners of this vintage shop. The old garage is more than a gimmick; from the humble (old milk jugs and doors) to the elegant (vintage-crystal stemware, dapper canes), it's a carefully curated pile. deadpeoplesstuff.ca

3 Hagerman Farm Stand

The 110-year-old open-air stand is bursting with colourful produce, and, with the recent addition of a commercial kitchen, fresh-baked pies, tempura, homemade soup and all kinds of jellies and jams are available alongside big heads

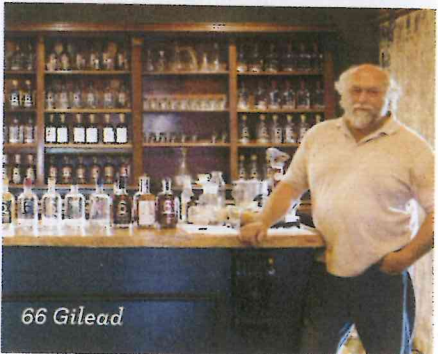
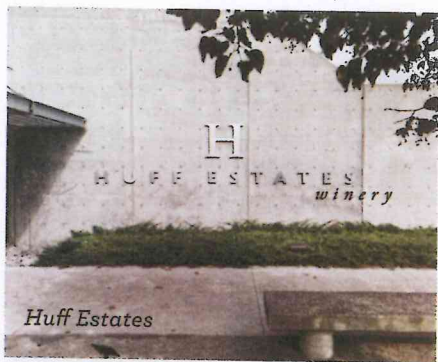
of cauliflower and ripe bushels of tomatoes. bloomfieldontario.ca/farm-markets-c199.php

4 Maison Depoivre

Christophe Doussot and his partner, Vincent Depoivre, spent two years renovating this farmhouse into a quaint shop, cooking school and B&B. Find the best French olive oil, vinegars, mustard and jam, along with a few local products. "We wanted to bring a little touch of France to the county," Doussot says. maison-depoivre.ca

5 Angelo Bean Sausages

Not sausages made from beans, but sausages made by Angelo Bean, an Italian immigrant (and former LCBO employee) who realized his dream of making sausages by moving to the county. Bean's local-wine-infused bangers are not sold through a storefront but are available at specialty shops in the county like Barley Days Brewery and Goodfellow Meats in Picton. angelobean.com



WHAT TO SIP

➔ **HUFF ESTATES** Born and raised in the County, owner Lanny Huff has the local terroir in his bones. Taste his Riesling Off Dry (VINTAGES 155606, \$17.95) in the dramatic tasting room and explore the elaborately planted gardens, sculpture garden and impressive accommodations (some with lovely outdoor patios), including a winemaker's suite that's a visitor favourite. huffstates.com

➔ **66 GILEAD** Radiologists turned distillers, Sophia Pantazi and Peter Stroz are at the forefront of the craft spirits movement in Ontario. Their Loyalist Gin (LCBO 319715, \$43.75), made without added sugar, utilizes heritage hop flowers—a reference to their property's origins as a hops farm—as well as lavender, coriander and juniper. The result is a highly aromatic distillation that suggests cucumber and sassafras with a mandarin finish that just calls out for some ice and a splash of tonic. 66gileaddistillery.com



PICTON

With a population approaching 5,000, Picton is the county's metropolis. The bustling main street is balanced by the calm, peaceful waterfront, and the fairgrounds are home to one of North America's last remaining Crystal Palace exhibition buildings, modelled on Sir Joseph Paxton's London, England, original.



WHERE TO EAT AND DRINK

1 MILFORD BISTRO The tiny nearby village of Milford is home to one of the county's best bistros. Simple cooking, local charcuterie and cheeses and a killer smoked chicken, along with a rotating selection of fine art, make this the area's unofficial community centre, albeit one that's only open Friday and Saturday for lunch and dinner. milfordbistro.ca



2 BLUMEN GARDEN BISTRO In fine weather, the elegant patio—surrounded by gardens, as the name suggests—is the picture of country charm with the stars shining above the trees. Cooler evenings are best enjoyed at fireside tables in the main dining room, with a plate of herbed wild mushroom ragout with chive dumplings and a glass of Grange Estate Gamay. blumengardenbistro.com

WHERE TO STAY

THE MANSE Innkeeper Kathleen Wylie makes sure that the rooms in this converted century-old stone-clad clergy house are contemporary and luxurious, but still comfortable and snug. The kidney-shaped outdoor swimming pool is a rare luxury in these parts and the porte cochère terrace encourages lingering. The best part of being a guest, however, might just be waking up to one of chef Christopher Wylie's exceptional breakfasts: second helpings of homemade bacon and smoked salmon, please! themanse.ca



3 THE MERRILL INN

Chef Michael Sullivan honed his craft in some of Toronto's best kitchens (The Fifth, Opus) before relocating to the county and this historic inn. His menu tweaks classic combinations subtly and deliciously: sticky jus infused with dried blueberries gives duck breast a complex kick; savoury goat-cheese-studded hominy is a comforting side to smoked cornish hen; while pan-fried perch, featured here, is elevated by a creamy homemade aioli. merrillinn.com



MICHAEL SULLIVAN'S PAN-FRIED YELLOW PERCH WITH LEMON AÏOLI

recipe on page 156



WARING HOUSE INN

For more than 150 years the Waring house has served as a landmark at the edge of Picton. Today, its 49 rooms are spread among five buildings. Antiques abound in many of them, giving a feel for what life well lived was like in the county's early days. Amelia's Garden, renowned for its local, seasonal cuisine, serve meals throughout the day while the more casual Barley Room is busy with locals who come for the regular live music performances. waringhouse.com

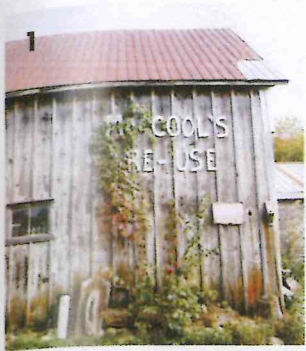
VICKI'S VEGGIES

This converted post office is a veritable grocery store with everything from homemade soups to farmer Vicki Emlaw's own special hot sauce. Pick up a few perfect heirloom tomatoes (Emlaw is not known as the "Tomato Lady" for nothing) and some fresh herbs for the start of a county Caprese salad. vickisveggies.com

Raspberries
Arugula
Potatoes
Radishes
Lettuce
Kale



WHERE TO WANDER, GRAZE AND BROWSE



1 MacCool's Reuse

Mid-century modern chairs and a vintage bar cart on the front lawn have you sold before you walk in the door of Cindy and Colm MacCool's antiques paradise. Vintage collectibles and custom pieces handmade from reclaimed materials beckon from every nook and cranny of the 150-year-old barn. maccoolsreuse.weebly.com

2 Sandbanks Provincial Park

It's still the region's most renowned tourist attraction and remains one of Ontario's most beautiful stretches of sand. Easily accessible from just about anywhere in the county, but officially considered part of Picton county proper. ontarioparks.com/park/sandbanks

3 Frugal & Company

Filled to the rafters with all of the things you didn't know you needed: a vintage Chinese checkers board game, the original Partridge Family album in vinyl, a rusty bucket emblazoned with the words, "Pure Ontario Honey." Somehow, this seemingly random collection of retro farmhouse knick-knacks and repurposed bagatelles, gathered together under one roof on Picton's main drag, all seems to fit together. frugalandcompany.com

4 Fifth Town Artisan Cheese

Goat milk cheddar won't save the planet, but this Platinum LEED-certified dairy and educational facility makes every effort to produce the greenest cheese around. fifthtown.ca

WHAT TO SIP



➔ **WAUPOOS ESTATES WINERY** At 14, Waupoos is one of the oldest wineries in the county—with one of the youngest winemakers. Amy Baldwin oversees a vast portfolio from icewine to Seyval/Vidal blends (Honeysuckle White VQA, LCBO 91934, \$11.95), strawberry wine to Geisenheim. The spacious property includes a petting zoo, gelato store, restaurant, inn, market and art gallery. waupooswinery.com

➔ **COUNTY CIDER COMPANY** One of the oldest and most beautiful properties in the county occupies a prime spot on an escarpment overlooking Waupoos Island and beyond. They've been farming apples from this orchard for well over 150 years and they make some of the most complex and delicious hard cider (LCBO 459370, 1 L, \$7.85) in Ontario. countycider.com

➔ **LIGHTHALL VINEYARDS** Taste now, before it's famous, and one day you'll be able to say, "I knew it when the winery was a Quonset hut." Winemaker Glenn Symons is a small producer of big, bold Chardonnay (LCBO 278226, \$25.00) grown from vines that dig deep into the limestone bedrock. lighthallvineyards.com

