

More Than a Wine Destination: A Guide to Oxbow Public Market and Weekend Eating in Downtown Napa

By Kim Westerman

Most visitors to Napa have the county in mind, not the town. They're headed to the valley's famed vineyards, wineries and tasting rooms, knowing they'll have some good food along the way. But the wines themselves, most notably big Cabernet Sauvignons, aren't the only attraction. The city of Napa's small downtown area is a culinary paradise, from the collection of purveyors at Oxbow Public Market, a veritable foodie epicenter, to several destination restaurants within walking distance from there, including a Michelin-starred gem.

If you're able to stay overnight, the Westin Verasa Napa is perfectly situated within walking distance of everything in the downtown area and moderately priced. The big, comfortable rooms overlook the year-round heated pool and the Napa River beyond. And there are also bocce courts for use by guests. For families, one- and two-bedroom suites with full kitchens are ideal. Service is both informal and expert, and the hotel offers free wine tastings every night, along with free chair massages on the weekends. If you have time, get a treatment at the inviting and tranquil Gloria Curry Day Spa housed on the property. A hot stone massage and a deep-cleansing facial will set you right as you continue your culinary extravaganza.



The heated pool at the Westin Verasa Napa (Courtesy of Westin Verasa Napa)

Sunset Strip in Los Angeles when Frank was just 23, La Toque became a culinary institution in Wine Country, first in Rutherford from 1998 to 2008, and then at the Westin Verasa Napa, where Frank continues to cook contemporary-classic French food, beautifully plated and graciously served. The restaurant's Michelin-star is visibly earned in Frank's careful tasting menus that allow you to create your own three-, four-, or five-course meals. The world-class wine list, which holds a Wine Spectator Grand Award, has one of the best collections of highly allocated local wines available anywhere, not to mention the French stuff.

Our two favorite dishes were the beef carpaccio — meltingly fatty, perfectly sliced and topped with sauteed trumpet mushrooms — and the crisp rosti potato with creme fraiche and caviar.



Beef Carpaccio — meltingly fatty, perfectly sliced and topped with sauteed trumpet mushrooms. (Courtesy of Westin Verasa Napa)



Crisp Rosti Potato with creme fraiche and caviar. (Courtesy of Westin Verasa Napa)

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Price Range: \$\$