

# CRAIN'S DETROIT BUSINESS

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## Taste of the community

Culinary tours serve up new perspectives on metro Detroit

BY [NATHAN SKID](#) | JUNE 1, 2009

### Rambling in Royal Oak

Just outside the bustling Royal Oak Farmers Market, Ann Wilson, founder of Culinary Escapes, organizes a set of wireless headsets for a tour. They help her fight the noise and commotion.

Meanwhile, guide Marq Blanks walks the market, making sure the usual suspects are prepared for the tour.

The pair is set for what should be a perfect day for the two-mile walking tour of downtown Royal Oak's edible wonders.

As always, they'll start at the market, then hit eight neighborhood gems, including Superior Fish Co., Goldfish Tea, Pizza Paesano and Hermann's Bakery.

Culinary Escapes' Royal Oak tours average about 12 people and cost \$35. Tours are held every Saturday from April through October. There are plans to launch tours in Ferndale and Birmingham.

The goal, Blanks says, is to foster an approachable neighborhood through connections among clients and vendors.

Rich Weiske enjoys the tour's weekly visit to his station at the market. He's the beekeeper and owner of Green Toe Gardens, which has 40 hives within Detroit's city limits and snagged the best white honey and best overall honey awards from the Michigan Beekeepers Association in 2005.

"The tours expose a lot of people to the market and our products," Weiske says. "(Culinary Escapes buys) samples to pass out to clients, which helps get people to come back to the market and purchase our products."

Wilson says the tours give confidence to those who may be too timid to venture out on their own.

"People are more willing to get out of their comfort zone and visit new places if they are on a tour. It creates a safe environment for them to try new things," Wilson says. "They say, 'I have my tour guide and I trust her.'"

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### Hungry for an experience?

Culinary Escapes

- Cost: \$35 a person
- Stops: Nine stops on foot: Royal Oak Farmers Market, Superior Fish Co., Goldfish Tea, Hermann's Bakery, Royal Oak Brewery, Memphis Smoke, Gayle's Chocolates, Zumba Mexican Grille and Pizza Paesano
- Length: 3 1/2 hours
- Contact: (248) 331-7296 or [www.culinary-escapes.com](http://www.culinary-escapes.com)