



## Whetting Your Appetite for More Detroit

Posted by [Karen Dybis](#) Monday, August 9, 2010 at 9:53 am

Sometimes, you need to be a stranger in your own city.

Forget your usual haunts. Ignore traditional routes. Forgo friendly faces. It forces you to rethink Detroit. And that's not a bad thing.

This weekend, I attended Culinary Escapes' "Detroit Progressive Lunch Tour." This four-hour, fine-dining extravaganza was filling in both mind and body. I ate some tasty crocodile (Fishbone's Rhythm Kitchen Café, of course) and experienced the city through fresh eyes – and taste buds. Where else but Detroit can you eat a perfectly cooked piece of cod battered in a beer called "Ghettoblaster?" That came from Foran Grand Trunk (and [Motor City Brew Works](#)). Foran's also gave my fellow diners and I one of the city's best Ruben sandwiches inside this magnificent pre-Civil War building. And we ate way too many Better Made potato chips.

I attended the tour solo, forcing myself to chat up the other diners and get their take on the city, its food and its people. This is a city that constantly surprises you, and that for me remains part of its allure. No matter how many times I visit, no matter how much I think I know, no matter how many people I meet...there is always something else to learn. And that, my bloggie friends, is one more reason I choose to stay.

Some background on my tour: Ann Wilson founded [Culinary Escapes](#) in 2008. The goal is to create "culinary adventurers" with walking food tours of Detroit suburbs Royal Oak and Birmingham and downtown Detroit eateries. Culinary Escapes was the first company in Southeastern Michigan to offer walking food tours, a trend already prevalent in Chicago, New York and Seattle.

The tour gives you an insider's view of an eatery's or chef's personal food philosophy. For example, the sous chef at [Small Plates Detroit](#) explained the thinking behind the tapas dishes they serve and why. Additionally, Culinary Escapes exposes your palettes to a wide variety of regional Michigan foods. That focus on offering Michigan-made products is yet another reason why Foran's remains among my favorite watering holes. They do everything they can to use locally grown food. The same is true at [Angelina Italian Bistro](#) – the chef there told us that 99 percent of its food is made from scratch and much of it comes from local sources. (Try the pasta there; it's bananas. So good. There's this ravioli made with pulled pork. Trust me on this one.)

We walked to most places, which was surprising as well. It is impressive how many nice, friendly dining establishments there are in such a short distance. The tour took us to [Vicente Cuban Cuisine](#), another new one for me (although it is five years old; I fell off the cool bus in 2005 when I had my first kid, so that is why I missed it entirely). I loved how the owner, Maria, made sure we had enough to eat. I even cleaned my plate in her honor. It was no problem at all.

Here's what else I learned from my lovely tour guide and fellow patrons:

--Detroit's streets were built on a hub-and-spoke system just like Washington D.C. and Paris

--The fountain at Campus Martius was designed by the same company that did the one at the Bellagio in Las Vegas. It also can go 48 hours without repeating its pattern.

--Houdini used to have a magic shop where [Foran's](#) is now

--Detroit did not have a welcome center until [Inside Detroit](#) opened its doors along Woodward two years ago. (Check out its tours as well. They look crazy fun.)

--Detroit has the second largest theater district in the country (behind New York) with more than 13,000 seats in a two-block radius.

--Second Baptist Church in Greektown was a stop on the Underground Railroad, and you can tour the building to see this site (adding that to my Things to Do in Detroit list).

--There are more than 125 bars and restaurants within one square mile of downtown Detroit. Saturday, I ate at six of them. I've only got a hundred more to go. Care to join me?