



Expert Tips to grow your group sales

By Group Tour Media, publisher of *Group Tour* and *Student Group Tour* magazine

Recipe for Culinary Travel Success

Cook up irresistible culinary itineraries to tempt tour groups.

Step 1: Assemble your ingredients.

Your area has plenty of culinary offerings. Not sure? Grab a stack of index cards and list every food-related business in your area that could accommodate a group. Don't rely solely on your memory.

Use the internet to "google" each of these categories:

- Restaurants (also consult websites like Urbanspoon, Yelp)
- Breweries, wineries, distilleries, tasting rooms
- Bakeries, confectioneries, candy shops
- Cheese and specialty food boutiques
- Ethnic eateries and shops
- Food manufacturing or factory tours
- Dinner theaters and cruises
- Farms, farmers markets, u-picks, food festivals
- Boutiques for culinary gear and kitchen gadgets
- Cooking schools and classes

Step 2: Go shopping

Review all your food-related contact cards. Give priority status to businesses with:

- Well-known chefs or owners
- A regional angle
- A historical angle
- Anything "award winning"
- A unique product
- A great story

Starting with your priority cards, visit these businesses. Taste their offerings, take notes and photos. Meet with the owners and senior staff. Talk about your intention of raising the profile of your area's culinary offerings and listen to what they say. Note who is passionate about their product and eager to spread the love. Everywhere you go, make connections and expand your network. **The best way to start buzz is to get your own people talking.**

Step 3: Start cooking

After your research, dump the inappropriate cards. The ones that remain are your best ingredients for a culinary itinerary. Lay these cards out on a table.

Stir the cards, looking for:

- Logical categories or themes
- Links to group travel trends like student travel, mancations, girlfriend getaways, nostalgia, adventure travel, cultural/historical travel
- Links to popular trends, styles, entertainment
- Combinations that celebrate your area's history or regional specialties.
- Connections to established tour destinations and festivals

Once you've identified some tasty groupings, prepare your itineraries. For inspiration, peruse samples at www.grouptourmagazine.com/resources/itinsearch.php. Use evocative language to fire up the planner's imagination. Sell the sizzle. Stress unique and special experiences.

When you've worked up some draft itineraries, ask your local receptive operators to taste your work. They'll have insights into the special needs of tour groups.

Double check the final itinerary with every business mentioned (include their contact information) and ...

Step 4: Serve

Promote, promote, promote! Post your delicious fare online and on social media. Ask every business mentioned to publicize what you've got cooking for groups.

*We'd love to see what you've cooked up!
Email your tastiest itineraries to editor@grouptour.com*

View what's hot in *Group Tour Culinary*,
www.grouptourmedia.com/emag/culinary2014/