



California Outdoor
HOSPITALITY ASSOCIATION

**Culinary Tourism,
A part of the Experience
Based Economy**

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Culinary Tourism, A part of the Experience Based Economy

By Debbie Sipe

That Old Black Pot

Throughout this series, I've talked about the kinds of experiences that campers are seeking in the 21st century. We've talked about agritourism, nature tourism, and cultural tourism. What about culinary tourism? Culinary experiences are trending large these days. The Food Network is heavily watched. New shows are being created all the time. Visit California and major California destinations all feature dining and food trends on their websites. The consumer is looking for good & unique food experiences.



Many of you probably already cater to food experiences based on your region: wine tastings, fresh produce, crab and salmon seasons, food festivals California is bountiful in its food offerings. But have you focused on our industry's unique "camping cuisine?" As a point of interest, in 2011 campers and RVers spent over \$35 Billion on food and drink. Yes, that said \$35 Billion, with a B!

The obvious camping cuisine that comes to mind are Smores. I was fortunate to stay at a Ritz Carlton recently. They had not one, but two beautiful campfire pits. The guests flocked to these every night, even in the cold misty weather that we were experiencing. What's even more impressive, they would purchase "smore kits" from the hotel. A kit to feed 4 people cost \$48!

Your campers are hankering for these same experiences. Where legal to do so, create a central campfire area. Provide for free or sell, all the stuff needed to make Smores. Add to the experience, encourage your campers to bring their instruments, host sing-a-longs, have staff put on a skit, involve the campers. This is the stuff memories are made of!

In addition to selling Smore kits, the Ritz Carlton had another station near their fire pits: hot chocolate and coffee. But of course this was the Ritz, I could choose from three different kinds of chocolate, sprinkles or not, cinnamon, whipped cream, and flavored syrups. Because they had the correct liquor license, Baileys, brandy or whiskey were additional options. You can bet that I remember that cup of hot chocolate, even if I did pay \$15 for it!

Another food experience is "**Camp Pies.**" At the recent California RV Park Day, hosted by Paso Robles RV Resort, the event ended with a campfire, of course. The park employee's made Camp Pies for everyone. The basic recipe is pretty easy. Coat two



pieces of bread with butter, fill the middle with your favorite fruit filling or jam, squeeze inside a “Camp Iron” and cook over an open fire. If you want to get fancy, dust with a bit of powdered sugar before eating. YUM!!!

Another classic outdoor cuisine is Dutch oven cooking.

Dutch oven cooking has a rich heritage from the founding days of our country. It is so popular groups and clubs have formed hosting events, contests and cook offs! Has your campground hosted one of these events? If not, you should consider it. Many times Dutch oven aficionados will put on demonstrations and share the history of the art of Dutch oven cooking. Connect with a local chapter of the International Dutch Oven Society. A quick Google search provided the following links for California. A bit more research and I’m sure more chapters could be identified.



- Southern California Chapter International Dutch Oven Society: www.socaldos.org/
- Central California chapter of International Dutch Oven Society: www.ccdoa.webs.com
- Fortuna Dutch Oven Society: www.fortunadutchoven.com

My husband and I are involved in Scouts. And for a while, my husband with a group of other Scout leaders, hosted several Dutch oven demonstrations at campouts and Camporees. Time after time, this demonstration is always the highlight of the event. People have and will always connect with food. Don’t miss the chance to provide this type of experience-based event.



Interesting item to note in the images provided. Even Airstream, an experience-based product, uses culinary images to enhance the experience of camping in an Airstream.

Take lesson from the pros. Provide unique experiences that your guests can’t get anywhere else and they will remember your park, their weekend and their experience. You will make memories for

them and in turn, they will share those stories with their friends.

What is the Experience Based Economy?

James Gilmore and Joseph Pine II explain the science of the Experience Based Economy. They argue that businesses must orchestrate memorable events for their customers, and that memory itself becomes the product - the "experience". More advanced experience businesses can begin charging for the value of the "transformation" that an experience offers. As goods and services become commoditized, the customer experiences that companies create will matter most.

The basics of The Experience Economy can be found on [Wikipedia](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Experience_economy). A summary of Gilmore & Pine’s concept was published in the Harvard Business Review. [Click here to read](#). Additionally, videos are available on [YouTube](https://www.youtube.com/). Want even more detail? You can purchase their book [online](#) or at your local book store.



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PO Box 5648, Auburn, CA 95604 | (530) 885-1624 | www.CalOHA.org