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Cherry-Oh

Posted by Kat Robinson on Thu, Jun 24, 2010 at 10:56 AM



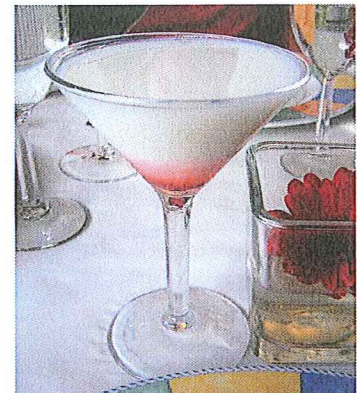
TART BEAUTY: Montmorency Cherries at Seaquist Orchards

Well, really, where have I been? Cherry country, that's where. I've spent the past four days in beautiful Door County, WI on an unrelated (to Eat Arkansas) assignment.

I'll be revisiting my travels on Tie Dye Travels in the coming weeks (nothing new there yet, folks, just hold your horses). But I did want to share a brief overview with you while I had just a moment. Click through if you'd care for a look.

I revealed my plans to head north to Facebook fans last week, and had many suggestions for cheeses to try and lamentations that I wouldn't be able to try the brats. However, Door County's not what most people think of as typical Wisconsin. It's a simple, clean and beautiful area of the world full of rural farms and art galleries surrounded by some of the most heartbreakingly beautiful stretches of coastline.

Door County's most popular food staple is the Montmorency Cherry. This tart little wonder will be deep red and up for prime picking come a week and a half from now. A good growing season has this year's crops coming out of the orchards two weeks earlier than normal. They're best for pie fillings, pancakes and baking, though more than one local introduced me to the concept of Cherry Bounce (a fifth of brandy, a cup of sugar and a pound of fresh picked cherries packed away in a bottle and hidden until Christmas for fine wintertime consumption).

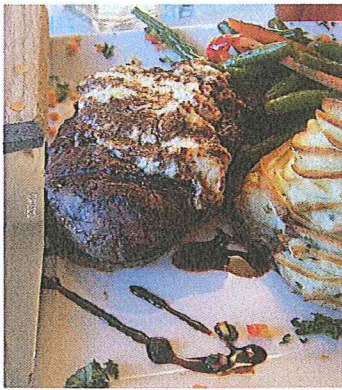


DIVE IN: Harbor Fish Market's White Chocolate Cherry Martini





GOOD START: Cherry Stuffed French Toast at White Gull Inn



STRONG SAUCE: Steak with cherry reduction at Harbor Fish Market

I have to share some of my favorites. For instance, the Door County Cherry Stuffed French Toast at the White Gull Inn in Fish Creek. Good Morning America named the dish the best breakfast in America, and for good cause. The tender egg-soaked bread sandwiches a thick layer of slightly savory cream cheese custard, the whole dish drizzled and plunked with tart cherries in their own syrup. For me, the cherries provided just enough sweetness to fulfill my need for sweet; the rest of the dish was substantial enough to get just about anyone through a morning of perusing Fish Creek's shops and galleries. I doubled up on the cherry goodness with a glass of tart cherry juice.

At Harbor Fish Market in Bailey's Harbor, I had a decent little steak with a Door County cherry reduction that was just about as good as any steak sauce I've had recently. Their White Chocolate Cherry Martini featuring tart Door County Cherry Juice is also primo.



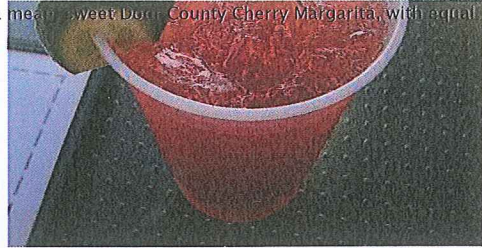
CHERRY DELIGHT: Old Post Office's Cherry Pie

My favorite cherry pie was at the Old Post Office in Ephraim, following an old fashioned fish boil out back. The perfect balance between salty and savory, soft and crunchy was arrived at in its nicely thick crust, enhanced with the addition of vanilla ice cream and a cup of coffee.

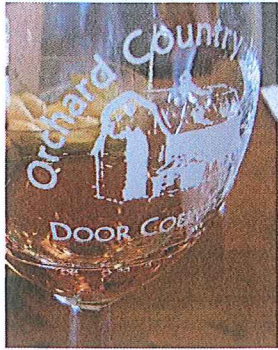
You can find all sorts of drinks that use Door County cherries up there. For instance,



there's a place called Fred and Fuzzy's Waterfront Bar & Grill near Sister Bay that serves up a mean, sweet Door County Cherry Margarita, with equal parts cherry juice and lime margarita mix.



HEY, RITA: Chery Margarita at Fred & Fuzzy's



WINE TIME: Orchard County's Finest

I found, though, that I prefer even cleaner varieties of cherry goodness. Like the Cherry Blossom and Dark Cherry wines at Orchard Country near Fish Creek. The Dark Cherry's rather sweet as far as wines go (comparable to some of our own Arkansas-created wines) but has nice deep bitterless undertones, while the Cherry Blossom's kiss of tart goes well in its light red wine base. I'm not much for judging wines, but I know what I packed in my checked baggage.

When it gets right down to it, though, my favorite was the cherry juice I found at Country Ovens in Forestville. When I walked into the building, I was overpowered by the scent of cherries... and I sampled everything they'd let me try — milk and dark chocolate covered dried cherries, dried blueberries, cherry trail mix. Their cherry juice, though, was the bomb. I kept going back and filling my little sample cup, and I had to leave with a bottle in my pack because it was just too darn good.

So I'm heading home (that is, if I can get my delayed Green Bay flight to connect with my amazingly on-time Chicago flight) and back to Arkansas, where it's peach-and-tomato season and the first blackberries are just starting to ripen on the vines. I've enjoyed my stay, but there's no place like home. More to come.



BOTTLE OF JOY: Cherry Juice from Country Ovens

Tags: cherries

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