

*Cook 'Em Up Some Bison & Some Beans, Red Deer 2005*  
*Diamond dee's Foodie Tootle Bus Tours*

**Explore Direct: Once Upon A Time in the West**  
**Red Deer, January 25, 2005**

**Cook 'Em Up Some Bison & Some Beans: Planning a Regional Cuisine Event**  
**Co-Presented by: "Diamond" dee Hobsbawn-Smith**

**The Bus Tour: Seven Years of Foodie Tootles**

**Purpose of "Foodie Tootles" Bus Tours**

The purpose of this grassroots experience:

- \* to directly re-connect urban residents with the rural growers and producers who make and grow our food;
- \* to give urban residents and rural growers an opportunity to do some farm-gate shopping;
- \* to give rural growers access to direct marketing to their urban clients;
- \* to provide a sensory experience of livestock and acreages, fencelines and gardens;
- \* to see and smell and taste how the other half lives;
- \* to give local growers a captive audience for airing agricultural views and philosophies;
- \* to have fun in the beauty of rural Alberta!

**On the Ground: Advance Details**

\* **Choosing Host-Participants: a variety of experiences or a thematic tour?**

Optimal number of stops: 3-4, depending on distance travelled.

Consider travel time at outset, time spent on bus between each spot, travel time at close of day to return to departure point. Plan no more than 1 ½ hours at the outset, 1- 1 ½ hours' driving time between each stop, and 1 hour home.

\* **Arrange a pre-tour visit to each location for detailed mapping, location, inspection and confirmation of details.**

Negotiate and confirm:

- a welcome by host, with intros. Be specific about arrival and departure times.
- On-site tour is imperative, 30-90 minutes. Inquiring minds want to know.
- Word of mouth sells. Provide samples and stories.
- Outdoor Seating: chairs, benches, etc.
- RAIN OR SHINE?
- Drinks on-site are always a good idea.
- Sales of your food to participants.
- Sales of food to tour guide (for final meal at day's end, if included.)
- Sufficient staff and technology to facilitate this smoothly and promptly. One person can't do it all. Are you *cash-only*? or can you do Interac and credit cards? Personal cheques? (People are coming to shop...)
- Bathroom facilities in each location, please. We will need to pee. (It is fine to suggest the back 40 as a suitable spot if that is what *you* do...)

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\* If having dinner at final spot: fridge space, cooking facilities, seating and access  
\* brochures and cards on hand, so Tootlers can take home info to interested friends.

\* **Get the bio details right:** names of hosts, dogs and kids, hours of operation, years in biz, payment types accepted, what they make and sell.

\* **Book the bus;** look for overhead storage, seating for 40-44, undercarriage storage capacity for coolers, etc. Provide bus line with *detailed* driving route and turning points. The bus driver may not know roads out of town! Make no assumptions.

\* **Send out a letter of confirmation in advance to all hosts.** Include all negotiated details, itinerary/time line, arrival and departure times, contact info.

\* **Write Itinerary and expense projection.**

- Build in flex time: things always take longer with 40 people!
- Be accurate about costs. Buses are expensive to rent, and it is not reasonable to expect growers to sell their food cheaply or to give it away.
- Advertise. Fill the bus. Charge a fair price that reflects value for attendees while covering costs.
- Investigate insurance and need for waivers. Accidents happen.

**On the Bus:**

Take along:

- \* easily consumed food and drink
- \* napkins
- \* garbage bags for trash
- \* Insurance waivers
- \* List of attendees with contact numbers
- \* good maps in detail
- \* bios/brochures, contact info and phone numbers of hosts on itinerary
- \* coolers on board for safe transport home of perishables!
- \* feed/water the bus driver, and take up a tip collection for the driver
- \* hats, water bottles
- \* staff for on-site meal
- \* all necessary cutlery, plates, garbage bags, hand tools and serving dishes for meal at last spot.

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**On Site:**

\* Remind tour that this is a home; respect the likelihood of a septic tank; respect privacy.

\* announce clear departure and event times

\* thank hosts.

\* **Events need not be complicated.** They should reflect what you and your business do.

**Sample on-site events:**

**Country Lane Chickens:** owners Jerry and Nancy Kamphuis and kids showed off their antibiotic-free chicks and young chickens. Jerry had cooked some chicken to taste.

**Hotchkiss Herbs and Produce Ltd:** Tracy and Paul Hotchkiss toured the tourists through their greenhouses, returned to the barn for samples on tables laden with arugula, chard, tomatoes, dried tomatoes and vegetables. We ate a luscious salad of greens and veggies.

**a7 Ranch and Alexandra's Natural Garden:** John Cross grilled a taste of strip loin and sausages, then he toured half the party through the fields, talking about water issues, land conservancy and Pekisko Creek's political issues. Alex walked people through her 1-acre high-country gardens, pulling weeds, tasting, answering organic growing, short-season/high altitude growing issues, and seed source questions, taking snapshots.

**Rocky Mountain Resorts Game Ranch:** explanation of issues and challenges in farming wild game by responsible vet, then tours of the fields and animals... Bison, elk and caribou... then dinner, gathered along the way, was served.

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**City Palate Foodie Tootle VI Itinerary:**  
**Sunday, 25 July 2004**

**PRIOR to 8:30 AM.**

All participants gather at **The Cookbook Company, 722-11 Ave. SW**

**8:30 Am SHARP**

Depart The Cookbook Company aboard chartered bus.

(Storage space below and overhead.) Bring coolers.

*(snack on juices, water, cheeses, fruit, scones and sweet bread from Brûlée Patisserie)*

**Head for O Foods:**

North on Hwy 2 to Crossfield turnoff. Exit on right lane and go over overpass, heading west/north on Hwy 2A to Didsbury turnoff # 582.

Westbound on #582, thru 2A 4-way stop, down hill, take right at Zion Evangelical church to stay on 582, north of Didsbury, thru s-turn, back to 100 km limit. Once out of town, 5 km west. Down hill, cross bridge, up hill.

Turn south (left) on Range Road 2.3 (blue sign), go south to only house, about 500 m in. Small narrow road, no signage.

**9:30 am**

**Arrive O Foods.**

Tour, taste, talk, buy.

*(gather salad greens, veggies for dinner)*

**11:30 am**

**Depart O Foods.**

**Return to Hwy 2 northbound. Head for The Jungle:**

North to Innisfail on Hwy 2 for 6 km past overpass over Antler hill (Innisfail turnoff). At bottom of hill, west on Old Pole Rd., be in left lane for turn across traffic. 2.5 km west, on north side of road. Signage.

*(snack on juices, water, fruit, cheeses, scones and sweet bread from Brûlée Patisserie)*

**12:30 pm**

**Arrive The Jungle**

Tour, taste, lunch, u-pick, talk, buy.

*(gather berries, greens, veggies, preserves for dinner.)*

**2:30 pm**

**Depart the Jungle**

**Return to Hwy 2 southbound. Head for Buffalo Horn ranch**

south on hwy 2 to Hwy 27, (Olds exit on right side of road) west on 27 thru Olds.

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North on range road 4.0 (eagle hill) for 2 km, down hill & across bridge, keep right on asphalt. 1 km north, past blue house; on east side is cedar house w/green roof in centre of the quarter

**3:30 pm**

**NOTE: Time-sensitive Option: Make detour farther north to Pearson's and Eagle Lake Co-op for berries, pie, salsas**

Arrive Buffalo Horn ranch

Taste, talk, tour, get set for dinner.  
(gather and set up grill, salads, etc.)

**6:00 pm**

Dinner is served. Menu:

Dee's braised beans

Jungle greens and dee's dressing

Alberta/Canadian cheeses

bread

O Foods seasonal raw vegetables

bison mixed grill (sausage and steak or roast)

dee's cookies, squares, sweets, Pearson's pie, seasonal fruits

beer, wine, Kicking Horse coffee

**7:30 pm**

Depart for Calgary

**8:30 pm**

Arrive The Cookbook Co. Go home with the day's wonderful foods. Go home!

*City Palate July-August 2003: Tootling For Five Years...*

**Calgary's City Palate:  
Tootling in Alberta for Five Years**  
by dee Hobsbawn-Smith

Five years ago, my friend Gail Norton said to me, "Why not take a busload of city folks out to see your favourite farms?"

"Sure," I said. "That sounds like fun." It was.

Forty-odd folks signed up and boarded a big yellow bus with bad springs. We bounced north to Natricia Dairy, crawled south through the city like a sun-stunned big yellow wasp along the interminable southern stretches of The Deerfoot to Hotchkiss's tomato greenhouses, then bounced north again (in inexplicably bad map-planning) to Pearson's Berry Farm. Along the way, we phoned Beck Farms and ditched them, running late. We arrived - still later-- at Calgary Bison Company, our final stop, where we ate the best smoked bison I have had to this day, along with fresh tomato salad and goats' cheeses of perfect ripeness, washed down with Alberta beer. We fell out of the bus, really late that night, loaded down with tomatoes, berries, bison and bonhomie, in front of the Cookbook Company.

"So that was fun," said Gail brightly the following year. "Let's do it again."

"Okay," I said. "That sounds like fun."

And we did it again.

This year, we celebrated the fifth anniversary of what, for me, has become the highlight of the summer. Foodie Tootle V, The Anniversary Edition, was the best so far. But we say that every year.

Over the years of The Tootle, a few themes have emerged, some intentionally, others unwittingly.

**\* We always get lost, some years worse than others.** One year, we headed for the Saskatchewan border on a true prairie washboard of a gravel road, looking for a tank of fish in a haystack, so to speak. We finally turned around when I figured out that the leading digit I had written for the range road (or was it the township road?) should have been a 2, not a 1. We lost half an hour that afternoon. Another year, we turned south instead of north en route to a ranch. A prior tootle to tour locations and the best maps in Alberta have minimized the problem. So too has my learning about just how far [not too!] and how fast [not very!] we can travel in one day, what with questions to ask, food to taste, and farmers to talk with.

**\* We always eat really well.** The morning starts with snacks baked by Brûlée patisserie, and culminates in dinner at our final destination. Along the way, we eat, and we collect things to eat later, from the province's best gardeners and growers, and then we eat again. Tough day. We have coolers stashed in the belly of the bus. By day's end they are jammed full with the shopping results of forty foodies by the time the bus disgorges them, and us, at day's end.

**\* Our hosts are always incredibly generous, and not just with their food.** At Person's Berry Farm in the rolling hills west of Bowden, we ate Joyce Pearson's fabulous berry pies with coffee and ice cream. At Hotchkiss, Tracy Hotchkiss set out yummy tomatoes and her best baking in the big barn for after our tour through the jungle-like greenhouses filled with the heady scent of tomatoes growing on Triffidesque vines. At The Calgary Bison Company, Linda and Jerry Rohl smoked their bison. Oh my. Even the Butt Shredder on board was impressed. At Valbella in Canmore, we munched nearly everything that Walter von Rotz's award-winning smokehouse produces. Then there was the year we broke the deck at Tracy and Tony Marshall's family farm in Aldersyde. We all bought Highwood Crossing's canola oil by the case to cover the cost of the repair.

**\* There is always a spot no one wants to leave.** Last year, we pulled in to the a7 ranch, an historic slice of God's Country west of Nanton. After an hour of snacks with John Cross and garden tours with Alexandra Luppold, no one wanted to board the bus even though dinner awaited at The Garden. Two years ago, tootlers were fascinated by the fenced hills of Canadian Rocky Mountain Game Ranch outside of DeWinton, wandering between herds of caribou, elk and bison. In our inaugural year, cheesemaker Virginia Saputo and scientist Mark D'Amato of Natricia toured us through the new facilities in Ponoka, answering questions about goats, milk, hand-ladled chevre, and the differences between St. Maure and Pyramide. In the years we go to Hotchkiss, Paul Hotchkiss happily explains his pet project to anyone with a glint of interest in either sustainable gardening or growing great tomatoes.

The purpose of this grassroots experience has always been to re-connect urban residents with the rural growers and producers who make and grow our food. The Tootle is a wonderful chance for people with no experience of cattle, or acreages, or fencelines, or even gardens, to see and smell and taste how the other half lives. A fortuitous by-product is that the growers and gardeners get to sell their goods to 40 happy foodies at the farmgate.

The fact that we are celebrating five years (Five!) of tootling in and around Calgary is amazing. When it began, I had no idea it would burgeon into a tradition. To our hosts, the farmers and true foodies of Alberta -- thank you. We appreciate your generosity with your time, your homes, your food, your expertise and your commitment to the best. Thank you for sharing!

**City Palate July-August 2003: Tootling For Five Years...**

**Over the past 6 years, Foodie Tootles have visited the following businesses:  
(updated January 2005)**

**a7 ranch & Alexandra's Natural Garden, Nanton, 2002 & 2003**

**Baker Creek Berry Co., High River, 2003**

**Buffalo Horn Ranch Natural Meats, Olds, 2004**

**Calgary Bison Co., Delacoeur, 1999**

**Country Lane Chickens, Strathmore, 2002**

**Greenview Aquatic Farm, Calgary, 2001**

**Heritage Recipes Bakery, Calgary, 2000**

**Highwood Crossing, Aldersyde, 2000**

**Hotchkiss Herbs and Tomatoes, Calgary, 1999, 2000 & 2002**

**Hoven's Certified Organic Beef Ranch, Innisfail, 1999**

**Natricia Dairy, Ponoka, 1999**

**O Foods, Didsbury, 2004**

**Pearson's Berry Farm, Bowden, 1999, 2004**

**Rocky Mountain Resorts Game Ranch, DeWinton, 2002**

**R & K Farms, Calgary, 2003**

**Sylvan Star Cheese Farm, Sylvan Lake, 2001**

**The Garden, Calgary, 2001**

**The Jungle, Innisfail, 2004.**

**Valbella Meats, Canmore 2000**

*dee Hobsbawn-Smith is a chef, food writer and author. A farmer's daughter and grand-daughter, she currently makes her home in Calgary with two sons, spouse, and assorted dogs and cats. Her garden is the province of Alberta.*

## A guide for an annual event to showcase Alberta grown and processed foods into food service.

(Developed/abstracts from -Summary report 2003 Dine Alberta: Savour Regional Flavour)

### General Points to consider and establish for your event

- **Establish vision and purpose, define parameters and develop mandate.**
- **Develop criteria for participants.**
- **Develop committee structure of meeting schedules, people, defined roles, and communication methods.**
- **Identification and approach of possible funding partners:**
  - Levels of government
  - Travel Alberta and other tourism partners
  - Commodity/producer groups
  - Write proposal, (based on your vision and mandate).
- **Develop and produce Producer Directory**
- **Develop promotion and advertising plan:**
  - Press releases, personal appearances (community events, conferences, talk shows, TV spots, radio interviews)
  - Develop media launch
  - Ongoing media liaison

Develop criteria — size, type, print runs — for print materials ads, menus, collateral pieces, menu sheet

-Seek quotes for design and production of materials

Source information on ad buys for TV, radio, web, billboards and other media

Present information and material proofs to committee

Handle execution of all promotional materials on time and on budget
- **Maintain and continue developing relationships with participants, acting as a resource for them before and during Dine Alberta**
- **Periodic evaluations and intra-committee updates.**

## Execution of program:

### **Identify and make initial contact with possible participants**

- Meet with possible participants to explain program
- Make final selection of participants
- Ongoing communication with participants in person and by other means.

### **Execute promotion and advertising plan**

#### **Evaluation of program:**

- Meet with participants for feedback
- Develop and execute survey for participants
- Collection of data, data input and analysis
- Develop reports to be used by funding partners, Participants, the public and the media
- Major report to contain full analysis
- Individual directed analysis for specific interests, such as media and other interested parties

#### **Promotional package**

- Identification of key media and development of lists of front-line contacts in all media:
- -Daily and weekly newspapers, TV, radio, web-based and print.
- -Identification of possible media partners and sponsors: Western Living, Westjet Magazine, Venture Magazine, Avenue Magazine, Where Magazine, City Palate, National consumer magazines
- -Travel Alberta/Canada and other tourism partners
- -Producer/commodity groups
- Media launch in Calgary and Edmonton
- -Full media kit to contain: Explanation of vision and mandate of program
- -Story ideas based on vision
- -Story ideas based on participants

Participant biographies and photos

Photo gallery

Recipes

## **Timelines to D Day (Dine Alberta)**

### **Six months to D Day:**

Establish vision and purpose, define parameters and develop mandate.  
Develop criteria for participants.  
Develop committee structure of meeting schedules, people, defined roles, and communication.  
Identification and approach of possible funding partners  
Write proposal, based on vision and mandate.

### **Five months to D Day:**

Identify and contact possible participants

### **Four months to D Day:**

Choose and contact final participants  
Develop promotion and advertising plan  
Develop criteria for print materials ads, menus, collateral pieces, flat sheet

### **Three months to D Day:**

Develop and solidify working relationships with participants  
Seek quotes for design and production of materials  
Source information on ad buys for TV, radio, web and other media  
Develop media launch  
Start interim producer directory

### **Two months to D Day:**

Handle execution of all promotional materials on time and on budget  
Work with participants on menus and product sourcing

### **One month to D Day:**

Execution of program  
D DAY Dine Alberta kickoff

### **One to four months after:**

Publish and distribute final producer directory  
Evaluation of program  
Begin next year's planning