

Thompson and Bill Muster. Photo courtesy of Craig Distl.

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Indianapolis' Cuisine Is a Walk in the Park - and More



Indianapolis' reputation as a sports hub is now being challenged by its rising stature as a culinary capital: the city boasts one of the best culinary scenes in the nation. Surrounded by numerous local farms, this Midwestern hotspot serves fresh produce raised and grown only a few miles outside of the metropolitan area.

Indy's vast range of gastronomic creations was showcased at the progressive dinner on Monday. Members dined and dashed through White River State Park, hitting five of the capital's most popular sights, each of which supplied a unique taste of the region.

At the Indianapolis Zoo, Executive Chef at Centerplate Matt Waller cooked up Indiana Wagyu and duck confit. However, the main dish was actually the sweet potato waffle. "The flavors all work well together," Waller said. "The sweet potato waffle is a tribute to the soul food restaurants in town."

Right across the bridge, SATW members shot some free throws and experienced sports the Hoosier way at the NCAA Hall of Champions. This venue grilled up traditional game day food such as pork tenderloin burgers, corn-on-the-cob and Indiana craft beer. "You can't beat our produce," Waller said. "We are the largest pork producer in the nation."

The Indiana State Museum was a favorite among many, mostly for the margarita shrimp and Gruyere grit cakes. Some of this southern dish's ingredients include pulled pork, pickles and grits. "Hoosiers are influenced by the rest of the world, especially the South," Waller said. The tour ended with shortcake and pastries at Eiteljorg Museum and a casual drink in the seats at Victory Field.

Dine-arounds Tuesday and Wednesday nights featured some of Indianapolis' signature spots, from the world-famous shrimp cocktail at St. Elmo's to an elegant five-course dinner with Spanish wines at Chef Joseph's. Also lauded by members were Eagle's Nest; Black Market; Chef JJ's Backyard; The Libertine; Lorenzo's; Mama Carrola's; Mesh on Mass; Naked Tchopstix; Saffron Cafe; Tastings; the Rathskeller; Santorini; Recess; Rick's Cafe Boatyard; R Bistro; Tavern on South and Zest.

Story by Chelsea Bengier; Photo by Ben Wiggins.

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