FOOD & DINING NEWSLETTER

Food tours are popular in Europe, but could they take off in Rhode Island?

The beauty of Rhode Island Red Food Tours — similar to other food tours — is that it's not just about eating

By **Alexa Gagosz** Globe Staff, Updated October 3, 2022, 6:00 a.m.

A mini mezze plate from Greek restaurant and marketplace Yoleni's in downtown Providence. ALEXA GAGOSZ

This story first appeared in Globe Rhode Island's Food & Dining newsletter, a free weekly email about Rhode Island's restaurant industry that also contains information about local events, Q&As with chefs, dining guides, and more. If you'd like to receive it via e-mail each Thursday, [you can sign up here](#).

In Europe, food tours are a big part of the tourism industry. In London's East End, travelers can take half a day to sample English cheeses, fish and chips, or tarts at various restaurants, markets, and bakeries with [Eating Europe](#). In Rome, there's a vespa foodie tour by [Scooteroma](#) where visitors try cappuccinos and canettos at

Panella, a sample spread of street food at Trapizzino, and gelato from Aventine Hill.

Rhode Island, which is becoming a foodie destination, seems ready for some food tours.

Paula Silva, a sales associate with Residential Properties, said she started to see a shift in Providence's restaurant market around 2015. At the time, she said, the city's food scene was being driven by chefs and creative food entrepreneurs, and few people actually lived downtown. Silva, who said she isn't a great cook but has a real passion for food and the entire experience of eating out, knew she wanted to help these new restaurants succeed.

So she created Rhode Island Red Food Tours.

Rhode Island Food Tours operates two guided walking tours: One takes you through the downcity section of Providence and the other brings you to various places on

Broadway in [Newport](), which the locals call "restaurant row."

Double Zero's best seller, which is a truffle pizza with cashew cream, wild mushrooms, Tuscan kale, and lemon vinaigrette. ALEXA GAGOSZ

I recently spent a day touring with Silva, guide Jack Griffin, and 14 visitors from as far as Washington, D.C., and as close as Warwick. We sampled mini mezze plates from Greek restaurant and marketplace Yoleni's, dunked homemade pretzels into apricot butters from The Malted Barley, and tried a delicious slice of a vegan truffle pizza with kale and lemon vinaigrette from Plant City's Double Zero concept that wow'ed a lot of plant-based naysayers — just to name a few stops.

The beauty of the tour — similar to other food tours — is that it's not just about eating, Silva said. Chefs and restaurant owners come out and explain where ingredients are sourced from and how the dishes are prepared and discuss food, history, and culture. While we were walking from one place to the next, Griffin pointed out elements of Providence's architecture and talked about how the city has changed over time.

Rhode Island clam chowder with a clam cake from Dune Brothers Seafood in Providence. ALEXA GAGOSZ

I'd be interested to see what other tours come out of Rhode Island's vast food scene, which stretches from Woonsocket to Westerly. When it comes to the business of tourism, marketing food tours like they do in Europe could be another potential path to our state's economic recovery.

Silva, who has been a realtor in Rhode Island for 22 years, noted that plenty of people

are curious about food tours, but few know what they're actually all about.

"When I started it was hard… People always asked what's a food tour?" Silva told me. "For me, like my real estate business, it basically covers everything I love about our little state: food, history, art, and architecture."

If you have suggestions or need a recommendation, shoot me an email at Alexa.Gagosz@globe.com.

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