

Your Guide to the Best Golf in 2014

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Golf **Getaways**™

101 GREATEST GOLF HOLES

You Should Plan to Play This Year

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NORTH CAROLINA
No. 13 | Par 5

PLUS

Pebble Beach Golfing Gourmet Getaway

Sedona's Land of Enchantment

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FEBRUARY 2014
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MAGAZINE MEDIA

Golf's Gourmet Tour

Robert Kaufman hits the Beach — as in Pebble — to immerse his senses in a three-day parade of world-class food, drink and camaraderie. And then he keeps going.

CONSIDERING IT WAS THE COCKTAIL hour in Champagne, France, I had no problem justifying a sip of the bubbly some 5,682 miles away, near the edge of the Pacific at 8 a.m. on the California coast.

It's not my normal wake-up beverage but, after all, this was not just any golf course. I stood adjacent to Pebble Beach's famed first tee box, fulfilling my obligation — alongside a slew of new friends — to toast the start of a four-day gourmet orgy.

After juicing my chops and nibbling my way through the breakfast spread, it was tee time for an 18-hole, multidimensional feast, the kickoff to a belt-loosening weekend of culinary activities at the sixth-annual Pebble Beach Food & Wine extravaganza.

Over the past 25 years, I've strolled Monterey Peninsula fairways during professional tournaments, watching many of the greatest names in golf. But that pales in comparison to being there with clubs in hand playing in the Celebrity Chef & Winemaker Golf Tournament, stopping

at the Driscoll's fruit stand next to the 18th hole cart-park to pick up a bowl of fresh berries before prancing over to the seawall-bearing tee box to belt my first drive of the day at what many consider the most famous home hole in golf.

Had I the honor of starting my round with a far less genteel tee shot at, say, golf's most famous No. 7 hole, the downhill, cliffhanging 3-par, I would have enjoyed spiked coffee drinks at an oceanview tent hosted by The Cosmopolitan of Las Vegas. An opening round tee shot at No. 5 meant a tummy-ful of mouthwatering oysters or fresh tuna jetted overnight from Asia. I can still taste the mini pulled pork sandwiches served along the No. 9 fairway.

Eventually I took advantage of all the nutritious pit stops but, seriously, is eating, drinking and being merry any way to play golf at Pebble Beach? Well, this was a culinary celebration and not the U.S. Open, so can you spell a-b-s-o-l-u-t-e-l-y?

It's no secret that synergies between

Epic Feast

Teeling off on America's most famous finishing hole is appetizing enough, but toss in a tee box food station sporting top-notch gourmet food and wine and you'll get the idea of why Pebble Beach's annual culinary event is such a hit. By the time you get to the green, you'll get your fill.

PHOTOGRAPH
BY BOB SOLORIO





food, libations and golf are embedded into the game's culture, as inseparable as tailgating and football, but when these ingredients are incorporated into one stellar event with legendary food-and-wine talent cooking and pouring non-stop throughout the weekend at a world-class resort, it's easy to consider this the Super Bowl of 19th holes.

Of course, food-and-wine events at chic locales are nothing new. The Scottsdale Culinary Festival has been going strong since 1978. The Food and Wine Classic in Aspen is 32 years running. South Beach in Miami has hosted theirs for 13 years, and other popular foodie towns such as Las Vegas, Austin and New Orleans have jumped on the epicurean festival bandwagon. The list goes on.

Recognizing the breed of clientele attracted to these extravaganzas, Pebble Beach Resorts is not the only luxury property to exploit their golf asset to lure hedonistic golfers. Now 32 years old, the Kapalua Wine & Food Festival on Maui, in partnership with the Ritz-Carlton Kapalua, introduced a golf tournament on the Bay Course to their schedule a dozen years ago. Three years ago, south of the border, St. Regis Punta Mita Resort's General Manager Carl Emberson initiated the Gourmet & Golf Classic by taking advantage of two Jack Nicklaus-

designed courses and inviting home-country golf heroine, Lorena Ochoa, to conduct a golf clinic during the event.

But guess what? Even culinary wizards and grape Einsteins love to pack golf clubs along with their pots and corkscrews, and many gourmet bigwigs are highly coveted commodities employed to strengthen an event's notoriety. As a result, they receive multiple invites throughout the year — and with their own businesses to operate back home, they can attend only so many. The added bonus of a Grade A golf course might be the tipping point.

Known to millions as the star of *Iron Chef*, Chef Masaharu Morimoto participates in six or seven food-and-wine events each year and, although his confidence level on the fairways may not be comparable to the kitchen, he is just as passionate about what he can do with the irons in his golf bag.

"I love golf more than any other sport," he says. "Traveling for events is sometimes a bit stressful because I have to prepare for a demo outside my restaurant kitchen and also attend other events at night. If I can play golf, I can get rid of a lot of that stress."

Entrepreneur David Bernahl who, along with Robert Weakley, his partner at Monterey-based Coastal Luxury Management, founded

Loving Lorena

Mexico's all-time No. 1 golfer and former world No. 1 showed her stuff during last year's Gourmet & Golf Classic at St. Regis Punta Mita Resort, where iron shots lead to some "Iron Chef" sampling.

PHOTOGRAPH
BY ROBERT KAUFMAN



the Pebble Beach Food & Wine (they also run the Los Angeles Food & Wine), contends that golf is an important component to the event. But when more than 8,000 people attend the four-day feast in the Del Monte Forest with the opportunity for only 144 golfers to compete and pick up cooking tips while playing alongside such brand names of the culinary universe as Morimoto, Thomas Keller and Daniel Boulud, you don't need to be a scratch golfer to guess how quickly the tee sheet fills up.

Pebble Beach Food & Wine gets down to business with an opening-evening reception at The Inn at Spanish Bay where attendees have access to more than 200 wine-tasting stations, including many of the industry's heavy hitters along with a fine selection of lesser-known choices, and 23 of the weekend's top chefs offering bite-size samples showcasing their culinary skills.

But the first-night affair is merely an appetizer for the weekend-long menu of cooking demonstrations, wine seminars and dining experiences, any of which would be a welcome break from my poor-man meals at home. Especially the "interactive dinner" with telegenic food personality Guy Fieri cooking dishes like lobster ravioli, bucatini carbonara

and cilantro-wrapped prawns, each paired with premier wines. It's a meal I'd prepare about as often as receiving an invite to play Augusta National.

With a far more intimate crowd (maximum 350) attending the Gourmet & Golf Classic, the St. Regis Punta Mita Resort and next-door neighbor Four Seasons Punta Mita Resort make grand use of their seductive beach setting for the opening-night soirée, allowing for many guests to stroll barefoot in the sand sampling local cuisine prepared by acclaimed domestic and international chefs. Of course, "When in Rome" — so to speak — a few swigs of the indigenous tequila help cleanse the palate.

"This is an unprecedented extravaganza of culinary talent and sensational golf, all taking place in one of the most alluring settings in the world, and it has become a proud tradition we're honored to host for years to come," Emberson says.

Now that I've experienced being holed up for a few days at posh golf resorts at exotic venues swinging around the fairways of life and indulging incessantly in epicurean heaven, I'll know next time to begin my diet and sobriety regimen well in advance.

And pack a few doggie bags. ☐

Berried Alive

More culinary mastery at Pebble Beach Food & Wine, which starts with an opening meet-and-greet at Spanish Bay and continues down 17-Mile Drive to Pebble itself for great golf and goodies.

PHOTOGRAPH
BY ROBERT KAUFMAN

THE CIRCUIT

travel essentials

Call it the spring swing for well-heeled foodies, or perhaps the Golden Triangle of Gourmet Golf. If you view the world's best chefs in the same league as Tiger and Phil and love to spice your next great meal with some of the best golf the Western Hemisphere has to offer, these festivals are right up your fairway.

CALIFORNIA

After six years, the Pebble Beach Food & Wine has evolved into the West Coast's premier epicurean lifestyle event attracting 250 wineries, 75 celebrity chefs along with 8,000 guests attending a variety of wine seminars, cooking demonstrations, dining experiences and Grand Tasting events at venues throughout Pebble Beach Resorts. The Celebrity Chef & Winemakers Golf Tournament is contested the first day at Pebble Beach Golf Links. Ticket prices per person range from \$100 for a single event to \$4,750 for a VIP four-day pass, which provides access to all events and private after-hours parties with the chefs and winemakers. The next servings take place April 10-13.



♣ Prepping for Pebble

What better place to showcase some of the world's best food and wine than at America's top high-end resort course? Fresh seafood flown across the Pacific leads a true gourmet parade.

PHOTOGRAPH BY ROBERT KAUFMAN

MEXICO

This three-year old extravaganza takes place at the St. Regis Punta Mita Resort, the crown jewel of Mexico's Riviera Nayarit, just north of Puerto Vallarta. The event includes an impressive roster of international chefs, wine specialists, and tequila masters showcasing their talents for 350 guests throughout four days. For golf-minded attendees, a two-day tournament is contested on Jack Nicklaus' two signature courses, Bahia and Pacifico, with acclaimed Mexican golfer, Lorena Ochoa, participating in the weekend's festivities. Packages starting at \$1,515 per person include: three nights accommodations; golf tournament or two massages; invite to all event activities (lunches, dinners, wine and tequila tastings); farewell brunch and airport transfers. The fourth-annual edition takes place April 3-6.

HAWAII

On June 12-15, the 33rd annual Kapalua Wine & Food Festival will continue its streak as the longest-running food and wine event in the United States. Up to 2,000-3,000 oenophiles, gourmands and enthusiasts of the good life will convene on the island's western shores and, with Kapalua Resort as a backdrop and the Ritz-Carlton, Kapalua as the host hotel, will feast on the talents of celebrity chefs, including a strong Maui contingent, and renowned winemakers. Throughout the weekend, a variety of gourmet demonstrations, wine tastings, interactive seminars and the Grand Tasting – Kapalua Style – provide an impressive schedule of experiences at this high-caliber connoisseur's event. Highlights include the Festival Golf Tournament, played on Kapalua's Bay Course, Festival Winemaker's Dinner and the Kapalua Seafood Festival featuring 15 of Maui's finest restaurants.