



## TORONTO FOOD and DRINK

**HELLO, LADIES AND GENTLEMEN**, and welcome to the first instalment of The Concierge, the column that answers your travel questions with the same poise, savvy and dedication that I brought to bear during my 37-year career as head concierge at London's Saint Christopher Hotel. No, no – *not* that dodgy one in Piccadilly. The other one. In Knightsbridge. Obviously.

Anyway, very good of you to have made it this far. I say that because I had suggested to the editor that the concierge is accustomed to being up at the front – the better to serve the guests, you see – but he rather rudely told me, “Magazines don’t have lobbies – you’re at the back of the book.”

Thankfully, my guest this issue has not only restored my faith in Canadians’ politeness, she has actually made me want to visit Toronto, where I now understand there’s some remarkably fine food and drink to be had. Without further ado, then, here’s the charming Carolina Avaria, chef concierge at Toronto’s Four Seasons Hotel, on the city’s best eating and drinking experiences.

### WHAT ARE TORONTO'S BEST FOOD-AND-DRINK EXPERIENCES RIGHT NOW?

The first has to be restaurant tasting tables or bars. You might have to dig a little bit deeper into your pocket, but it’s worth it because you’re typically right at the kitchen’s edge and being served by the chefs themselves. And as a former theatre manager, I can tell you that it’s an entertainment experience. The second is culinary-and-drinking walking tours, which are great because you’re not confined to one experience or even neighbourhood. Ask

a savvy concierge to make sure you get sent to the right tour company, though, because you want to be entertained. What you don’t want is a situation where you have some sommelier that talks on and on and on, while you’re like, “You had me at ‘The grape...’!”

### SO WHERE SHOULD ONE MAKE A RESERVATION?

For tasting tables, I’m a massive fan of Alo (ABOVE), which is probably the best restaurant in Canada right now, thanks to chef Patrick Kriss. I also love Buca Yorkdale, which is right here by the Four

Seasons and run by chef Rob Gentile. Both places are simply phenomenal. For drink tours, Drink Toronto really stands out; they do cool neighbourhoods such as Kensington Market and Queen Street West. The Culinary Adventure Co. is also great.

### IF YOU HAD A FEW HOURS TO EAT AND DRINK AFTER WORK, WHERE WOULD YOU GO?

I’d stay here in Yorkville, of course! First I’d go for a glass of crisp Sauvignon Blanc at The Oxley, a British gastro pub that has a great front and back patio in summer, and a

great bar inside. Then I would walk over to Bar Mercurio and have one of the best pizzas in town.

### SOUNDS DELIGHTFUL! AND YOU HAD ME AT “BRITISH GASTRO PUB,” BY THE WAY.

Glad to help! After all, as one of my former service instructors often used to say, you can give people back their money, but you can’t give them back their time. ☺

Got a travel question for The Concierge? He’s ready to help. Tweet him @CanGeo\_Travel and use the hashtag #CGTConcierge.