



Granville Island

Granville Island: A Buyer's Market

On Vancouver's heart-of-the-city Granville Island, sooner or later, all roads lead to food and drink. Food doesn't get any fresher than at the open air Granville Island Farmers Market operating from 9am every Thursday from June through October outside the Arts Club Theatre. Discerning urbanites, including chefs from the city's restaurants, arrive early to sample, negotiate and purchase fruits, vegetables, just-picked herbs, flowers and unique processed products from 40 growers who come from as far away as the Okanagan and Pemberton Valleys.

Much of the farm-fresh fare heaped under tents is certified organic or naturally grown and all of it is local, including 18 varieties of specialty potatoes, heirloom tomatoes and apples, fiddlehead greens, squash blossoms, stinging nettles, pea tips, purple cauliflower, peaches, blackberries, wild strawberries, Coronation grapes and much more. Granville Island "groodies" (green foodies) not only have access to homegrown produce, preserves and honeys, but also the chance to meet the local farmers and growers behind them.

A few steps away from the Farmers Market is Liberty Wine Merchants. Robert Simpson is the man behind the wines at Liberty, now with six branches in British Columbia. Hip, savvy, and blessed with a fine palate, Simpson's Granville Island location has the largest selection of British Columbia wines including the Inniskillin Vidal Icewine Commemorative Edition, the official icewine of the 2010 Winter Olympics. A portion of the proceeds from every bottle will support the Canadian Olympic Team and the Vancouver 2010 Olympic and Paralympic Winter Games. On weekends, they often have complimentary wine tastings.

Quench your thirst for knowledge during a one-hour tour of the twenty-five-year-old Granville Island Brewery, the first microbrewery in Canada. Known for its lagers and ales, the beer is named after local neighbourhoods — Kitsilano Maple Cream Ale, Robson Street Hefeweizen, and Gastown Amber Ale. The whole family can enjoy a tour for a fee, three times a day. After a talk about the history and tricks of the trade, sample four tasters of all-natural, unpasteurized brew (root beer for children) while seated at one of the picnic tables in the Taproom.

For drinking and dining al fresco, Granville Island boasts three of the best outdoor patios in Vancouver. Sandbar's waterside rooftop deck at the 300-seat seafood spot has spectacular views and is open year-round. Vancouverites enjoy mild winters, and diners take advantage of the roaring fire and the cozy blankets. Everyone knows their signature dish is cedar-planked wild salmon, but few are aware of the superlative sushi bar tucked into the first floor and run by Hoshi evenings from Tuesday to Saturday. At sea level, Bridges' umbrella-decked space is one of the city's hangouts where people-watching is almost as popular as the views of False Creek and the North Shore Mountains. At the other end of the Island, the Dockside Brewing Company serves brewed-on-the-premises lagers and ales, but the real attractions are the beer-friendly grub and views onto False Creek with yachts passing by as close as the next table.