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If you're any kind of epicurean, hurry posthaste to the nearest ski resort

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Here's to a foodie scavenger hunt of Mont-Tremblant in the Canadian Laurentians

Pam Grout

So here's the thing about ski resorts.

The good ones, the name brand resorts, the ones your ski buddies dream about all have a ridiculously large number of impressive restaurants.

You don't have to like schlepping around mountains with giant boards attached to your feet. You just have to like eating out, to enjoy experimenting with creative cuisine.

I'm particularly fond of Mont-Tremblant, an easy-to-get-to resort that readers of Ski Magazine regularly vote #1 in eastern North America. Because it's in Quebec and has its own airport (it looks like a ski chalet and doesn't even bother with a luggage belt), it has a distinctive European feel.

You get the French vibe, the intriguing ski instructors named Pierre and Jacques (back home, they'd be Peter and Jack) and a food scene that rivals anything you find in a big city. Only in Mont Tremblant, with its charming rues (or Pedestrian Village, as they call the main drag), the inspiring restaurants are right there, easy to walk to, brimming with intriguing choices. You might even see a red fox or a coyote on the stroll there.

Here's a scavenger hunt of do-not-miss-these:

1. Down an Extreme Onction at La Diable. La Diable, named after the river that runs through the nearby Mont-Tremblant National Park, is a cozy microbrewery that also happens to have a decadent menu. Think poutine, sausage with homemade sauerkraut, lamb burgers and pork ribs that fall right off the bone. The Extreme Onction, one of many devil-themed craft beers that are brewed on site, is a Belgian Trappist-style ale with 8.5 percent alcohol.

2. Try cooked scallops wrapped in carpaccio in wasabi and avocado sauce at Gypsy. Yep, there's loads of tapas (flank steak on caramelized onion is another fav) at this magical, Spanish-inspired eatery inside Le Westin Mont Tremblant. They also have a killer brunch and lots of vegetarian options.

3. Meet the real Catherine of Creperie Catherine. With more 60 varieties of old-fashioned crepes, this long-time favorite with long-time skiers (Mont-Tremblant has been around since 1939. It's the second oldest ski resort in North America) even offers gluten free waffles. Catherine Schmuck who honed her skills in the Merchant Marines often comes out to greet regulars, some of who refuse to eat anywhere else (for all three meals) during their Mont-Tremblant vacation.

4. Sample a beaver tail. No, not that kind. Beaver tails are basically Canadian donuts, made with whole wheat, stretched into the shape of a beaver's tail and topped with such yumitudes as maple butter or cinnamon and sugar. Popular throughout Canada, beaver tails Mont-Tremblant style (sold at a takeout stand near the ski hill) often feature ham and cheese or steak.

5. Enjoy temperature diversity at Fairmont Hotel's outdoor spa pools. It doesn't quite seem fair. The giant hot pools, open to guests of the hotel's Moment Spa, are massive enough to need a life guard who, during the winter, is suited up in winter parka, mittens and hats and shivering under a blanket while happy spa-goers are luxuriating in the steamy pools. The spa, where I had one of the best massages of my life (Ask for Denis), has 15 treatment rooms, a beauty salon with natural light and a cosmetics boutique.

6. Have a spring roll of the moment at O Wok. I've heard of soup of the day and weekly specials. But O Wok, an Asian-inspired restaurant not far from the free, open-to-everyone gondola, is so Zen they change their spring rolls by the moment.

So sure, Mont-Tremblant has everything a skier could want—nearly 100 downhill trails, four snow parks, more than a dozen ski lifts—but the real reason I go is for the lively patios, pubs, upscale restaurants, microbreweries and unbelievable food.