



Enjoy the summer outside – at home.

## Take a 'staycation' instead

Summer's here and the weather is getting warmer daily. But this year, according to several reports and surveys, a lot of people are opting for a 'staycation,' rather than planning a trip abroad.

Many are choosing to entertain at home, and enjoy their own backyards. Those who don't have the luxury of a large yard or deck will often have shared amenities available, such as fire pits, rooftop courtyards and communal barbecues.

A recent Weber Canadian GrillWatch survey shows that Canadians are planning to stay close to home for their holidays, and eat out less. Reasons given to take a home-based vacation include saving money (45 per cent) and the high cost of gas (31 per cent).

With more staycations being planned, many homeowners are using their backyards more than ever, which means barbecues, hot tubs, gazebos and patio furniture have become focal points, and areas where family and friends can gather. Hot sellers, according to [www.inside-outpatio.ca](http://www.inside-outpatio.ca), include outdoor wicker sofa lounging sets, porch swings, umbrellas, gazebos, and smaller, 'bistro-style' tables and chairs for smaller spaces.

Another option for a staycation is becoming a 'tourist in your own town.'

Even locally, there are deals to take advantage of. In North Vancouver, a CAP2010 pass recently became available to B.C. residents, which allows unlimited access to the Capilano Suspension Bridge until Dec. 31, 2010. The pass costs \$20.10, saving users 30 per cent off the regular adult rate.

"We recognize that more B.C. residents will be staying closer to home this summer and are pleased to offer them this pass to experience the park year-round," said Nancy Stibbard, president and owner of the bridge, in a release.

Several staycation ideas are offered online, in news stories, and in magazines, but the most common tips for a successful staycation include:

- schedule start and end dates
- decide what you want to do ahead of time
- unplug the TV and computer and plan fun activities
- see what is offered for free in your surrounding community
- invite people over
- do something you normally can't enjoy, like finally reading a new book

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Live well.  
Eat in. Or out...

Rooftop patios in Vancouver, like this one at a Townline project on Beatty Street, are becoming a common feature in new developments throughout Greater Vancouver. Reports say that more people plan to stick close to home and make use of amenities like these this summer.

**Off the front:** "I wouldn't doubt that in a couple more weeks I'll be doing dinners on (customers') patios."

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or preparing a week's worth of meals for a family. Clients can also choose from an interactive experience, where Ungaro mingles with dinner guests, or a discrete service, where he "hides" in the kitchen until the food is ready.

All-in-all, Culinary Ink is well-equipped to serve those of us who love our food, love our homes, and want to enjoy both together.

He even has a service for guys on a first date who are trying to impress that 'lucky lady.'

"We make it together once, and you can taste it and know what it's supposed to be like, and I leave all the moulds, plates, food, instructions and a recipe," he says. "The guy can look like a rock star chef without knowing a lot."

Like Greater Vancouver's new home devel-

opers, Ungaro's business is stretching across the region and throughout all kinds of homes.

"It's been actually about a 50-50 split between houses and condos," he says, of where his business travels take him. "I've been out as far as Delta."

Culinary Ink's office is located downtown, where luxury dining service is all the rage.

"I'm in Yaletown, so it's obviously one of the most affluent sections downtown," he says. "But it's kind of spreading out to the urban areas."

Our region is so diverse, it can often be tough to keep up with local trends and fashion. For example, downtown clients have the advantage of rooftop city living and panoramic skyscrapers, whereas homes in Delta and Surrey have larger tables and a neighbourhood backdrop. Ungaro says either way, any new home can be perfectly supplemented with properly cooked, homemade meals.

"The trend lately has been eating more at home; you find a lot of the fine dining restaurants reinventing themselves a bit," Ungaro says. "Most of the clients I've been going to since the weather's picked up, and I wouldn't doubt that in a couple more weeks I'll be doing dinners on their patios."

Not surprisingly, Ungaro's company motto

is appropriate for what you should be looking for in a new home in Metro Vancouver: "Fresh, local, approachable."

The chef has combined his love of food and entertaining and his affinity for tattoos to come up with a personal touch to catering and a clever title (that plays on "Culinary, Inc.").

It's similar to how people approach their tastes for homes, really. On food, he says to keep it simple and effective. "My biggest pet peeve is pretentious fine dining," he says. "I use layman's terms when I'm describing a dish."

As far as his business style, that too is applicable to personalizing a new home.

"It's more doing what you know and what's around you," he says.

On Culinary Ink's sharply designed website, each click of the refresh button brings with it a new quote about food by somebody famous.

Perhaps the simplest, most effective one is, "One of the very nicest things about life is the way we must regularly stop whatever it is we are doing and devote our attention to eating," by Luciano Pavarotti. Can you think of any better advice for when you're lounging around your new patio this summer?

Visit Culinary Ink at [www.culinaryink.com](http://www.culinaryink.com). Ungaro will also be appearing on an upcoming edition of *Lunch Television* on CityTV.

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