



AP Photo/Bruce Schreiner

This 2012 file photo shows the Jim Beam visitors center at its distillery in Clermont, Ky. Tourism in the heart of bourbon country, on the upswing for years, reached a milestone in 2016.

## Bourbon trail buzzing with a million visits

By BRUCE SCHREINER  
Associated Press

LOUISVILLE, Ky — Forget the bottle, a record number of people are experiencing Kentucky bourbon from the barrel, touring distilleries where they can sniff, sip and see whiskey crafted from the source.

Tourism in the heart of bourbon country, on the upswing for years, reached a milestone in 2016. Visitors made more than 1 million stops at distilleries along the Kentucky Bourbon Trail and Kentucky Bourbon Trail Craft Tour last year, the Kentucky Distillers' Association said Wednesday.

It shows that “people don’t just want what’s in the bottle,” association president Eric Gregory said. “They have a thirst for Kentucky’s bourbon culture.”

Many tourists visit multiple distilleries and each stop is counted as a visit, the group said.

The tour started in 1999 and has ridden a wave of popularity as the bourbon and whiskey industries enjoyed growing sales worldwide, in part driven by higher demand for premium spirits and cocktails. The tourism attractions had double-digit attendance growth in 2016 compared with the prior year, and attendance has shot up 300 percent in the past decade, the group said.

Last year, more than 200,000 people visited Jim Beam’s flagship distillery in Clermont, Kentucky, and its whiskey-related attraction that features a small distillery in downtown Louisville, Beam officials said.

The parking lot is routinely filled with out-of-state visitors at the flagship distillery.

“There’s no such thing now as down time,” said Kim Bennett, who leads the Beam brand’s bourbon experiences in Kentucky.

Beam now offers tours seven days a week at the Clermont distillery to keep up with demand, she said. Longer tours allow visitors to delve into the intricacies of bourbon making.

“They want to have that true, deep experience, and that’s what we’re giving them,” she said.

The Kentucky Bourbon Trail tour, showcasing nine distilleries, had 888,733 visits, up 17 percent from the 2015 record level, the group said. Those distilleries produce bourbon’s biggest brands, including Jim Beam, Evan Williams, Wild Turkey, Maker’s Mark, Four Roses and Woodford Reserve.

The Kentucky Bourbon Trail Craft Tour, with 11 small distilleries, had 177,228 visits last year, a 32 percent increase from the previous year and up 187 percent over 2013, the association said. Those distilleries are spread across Kentucky.

Gregory called the record tourism numbers a “cause for celebration for the entire commonwealth.”

“Think of what 1 million tours means to Kentucky in jobs, tax revenue and positive publicity,” he said.

The latest boost for bourbon tourism came from a new state law that allows distilleries to obtain licenses to offer by-the-drink sales.

Since the law took effect last July, at least 20 distilleries have obtained licenses, Gregory said. The measure also lets the distilleries sell more of their whiskey and offer slightly larger free samples.

The cocktail bar has been a popular spot since opening last September at Beam’s flagship distillery. One out of every three adult visitors has stopped to purchase a mixed drink, Bennett said.

The Woodford Reserve distillery, which drew about 135,000 visitors last year, hopes to start offering classic cocktails sometime this year, said Mark Bacon, global brand director.

“It’s for us to enhance the experience, and if that brings more folks, that’s great,” he said.

Distilleries are also offering mixology and culinary classes.

The continued tourism surge comes amid an overall expansion in the state’s \$3 billion bourbon sector. The association said its member distilleries are in the middle of a \$1.3 billion building boom that includes expanded production facilities and new tourism centers.

An industry patriarch, Bill Samuels Jr., who retired after a long career as the top executive at Maker’s Mark, said bourbon tourism generates strong promotional value: “Those million, they go home and they tell 20 million,” he said.

# Cheesy beer dip and pretzels sure to be the MVP of any Superbowl party

By KATIE WORKMAN  
Associated Press

It is easy enough to put out bag after bag of chips during a Sunday football-watching party, or any other gathering for that matter. And it’s not much harder to go the extra step and put those chips into an actual bowl ... you know, if you’re feeling classy.

But how about making a 15-minute snack that will have the crowds calling your name from the stands (or, in all likelihood, from the couch)?

A hot pretzel served up

with a creamy, cheesy dip is the kind of food you would be thrilled to happen on and buy at a stadium. But you can easily find these soft pretzels in the frozen aisle of your supermarket, and they heat up quickly in the oven. While you are heating the oven and baking the pretzels (which take less than 5 minutes!), you can stir together a quick cheese-and-beer dip for dunking. And while you are stirring you can imagine the expressions of happiness that will greet you when you plunk down this platter of hot

pretzel goodness.

If you have a big crowd and want to make a larger batch of pretzels, double the dip recipe and keep it warm in a slow cooker. It can also be gently reheated over low heat in a saucepan if it starts to thicken up too much.

Katie Workman has written two cookbooks focused on easy, family-friendly cooking, “Dinner Solved!” and “The Mom 100 Cookbook.” She blogs at <http://www.themom100.com/about-katie-workman/>



Sarah Crowder via AP

Soft pretzels with hot Cheddar cheese beer dip.

### CHEESY BEER DIP WITH HOT PRETZELS

Start to finish: 15 minutes  
Serves 12

- 2 (13-ounce) boxes of frozen hot soft pretzels, 12 pretzels in all
- 3 tablespoons unsalted butter
- 3 tablespoons all-purpose flour
- ¾ cup milk, preferably whole
- ¾ cup good beer
- 2 teaspoons brown mustard
- Sriracha or other hot sauce to taste
- 4 ounces cream cheese, cut into pieces
- 2 cups shredded sharp cheddar
- Coarse or kosher salt and freshly ground pepper to taste

Prepare the pretzels according to package directions.

Meanwhile, in a saucepan over medium heat, melt the butter. Add the flour and cook, whisking constantly, for 2 minutes. Slowly whisk in the milk and beer, then increase the heat to medium-high and bring the mixture to a simmer. Add the mustard and Sriracha and cook, whisking occasionally, until the mixture begins to thicken, 3 to 5 minutes.

Whisk in the cream cheese until it’s melted, then add the cheddar cheese in several batches, whisking until each batch has melted before adding the next. Serve hot, with hot pretzels.

*Nutrition information per serving: 364 calories; 131 calories from fat; 15 g fat (8 g saturated; 0 g trans fats); 36 mg cholesterol; 551 mg sodium; 47 g carbohydrate; 1 g fiber; 1 g sugar; 10 g protein.*

## This grain salad might be the key to healthier eating

By THE CULINARY INSTITUTE OF AMERICA  
Associated Press

If you’re anything like the rest of us, you might tend to needlessly overcomplicate your life. You plan an elaborate dinner for a Wednesday night. You schedule a meeting across town at rush hour. With all of the small, daily challenges we face, when it comes to healthy eating, the key to success is making life as uncomplicated as possible, so that choosing the right foods is a piece of fruit.

You have likely seen pictures with refrigerators stacked full of organized containers and healthy weeknight meals ready to throw in a slow cooker. It’s a great idea that is probably not in the cards for most of us, but it does serve as inspiration to make one or two small changes that can drastically improve the quality of our lives and our lunches.

Grain salads, like this recipe for Farro with Roasted Winter Vegetables, might be the key to healthier eating in the new year.

If you’re stuck in a lunch rut — ordering in to the office every day, eating a peanut butter sandwich, or skipping it altogether — grain salads are an easy way to mix it up. Made with nutritious and hearty whole grains like wheat berries, barley, and quinoa, grain salads are packed full of protein, fiber, and vitamins. When you combine grains with your favorite fruits, vegetables, lean proteins, and nuts; and top them with flavorful vinaigrettes, herbs, and spices, you can eat a different salad every day, with just a small amount of effort.

At the beginning of the week, cook a big batch of grains to cool and refrigerate. Each day, add your favorite salad veggies or leftovers to make a satisfying lunch that changes every day of the week. In minutes, you could have a salad of wheat berries, roasted Brussels sprouts, dried cherries, and chopped pecans. And the next day, wheat berries with grilled chicken, roasted red peppers, and balsamic vinaigrette. Remember, grain salads aren’t just for stuffing your lunch box. Mix your cooked grains with almond butter, a splash of honey, chopped apples, and cinnamon for breakfast-on-



Phil Mansfield/The Culinary Institute of America via AP

Farro with winter vegetables.

### FARRO WITH ROASTED WINTER VEGETABLES

Start to finish: 2 hours, 5 minutes (Active: 35 minutes. Inactive: 1 hour, 30 minutes)

Servings: 5

#### Roasted Squash

- 4 tablespoons olive oil
- 1 ¾ cups (about 8 ounces) diced butternut squash
- 1 ¾ cups (about 8 ounces) diced acorn squash

#### Farro Bowl

- 3 tablespoons olive oil
- 3 tablespoons minced onion
- 2 cups uncooked farro
- 4 cups water
- 1 tablespoon oil
- 2 cups chopped cabbage
- ½ cup chopped parsley

Preheat the oven to 450 degrees F. In a medium bowl, toss the butternut squash and acorn squash with the olive oil. Transfer the squash to a foil-lined baking sheet

and place in the oven. Roast until the squash is cooked and brown around the edges, about 1 hour. Remove from the oven and set aside.

Meanwhile, in a medium pan, heat the olive oil over medium heat. Add the onion and cook until the onion has softened and is fragrant, about 2 minutes. Add the farro and cook for about 2 more minutes.

Add the water and bring the mixture to a simmer over medium heat. Cover the pan and simmer until the farro is cooked and the water is absorbed, about 25 minutes.

While the farro is cooking, heat the oil in a large pan over medium heat. Cook the cabbage until it is softened and browning around the edges, about 5 minutes.

Transfer the cabbage to a large bowl and mix it with the cooked farro and vegetables. Stir in the parsley. Serve hot, or refrigerate and serve chilled.

*Nutrition information per serving: 486 calories; 142 calories from fat; 16 g fat (2 g saturated; 0 g trans fats); 0 mg cholesterol; 12 mg sodium; 71 g carbohydrate; 14 g fiber; 2 g sugar; 13 g protein.*

the-go. Or use a leftover salad to stuff bell peppers, cabbage, or halved acorn squash for a hearty dinner. How’s that for meal prep?

Keep in mind that some farro sold in the United States is processed to remove some or all

of its tough outer bran for ease of cooking. Labeled as “semi-pearled” or “pearled,” this farro is stripped of its coveted whole grain status, as well as much of its nutrients. Whole grain farro requires a little bit of extra time to prepare; you’ll want to soak

it overnight before cooking it, to ensure the perfect chewy texture.

This article was provided to The Associated Press by The Culinary Institute of America in Hyde Park, New York.