

Walden Pond: A Thoreau-ly worthwhile day trip

By WILLIAM J. KOLE
Associated Press

CONCORD, Mass. — Henry David Thoreau went to the woods because, as he famously put it, “I wished to live deliberately.”

Two centuries after the “Walden” author’s birth, people are still deliberately following in Thoreau’s footsteps to discover Walden Pond, the little lake he immortalized.

Whether you’re visiting Boston or the Berkshires, the pond and the bucolic Massachusetts town of Concord are Thoreau-ly worth a side trip. Here’s why:

Walden Pond

A retreating glacier formed it 10,000 or so years ago, but it was Thoreau — born in Concord 200 years ago this summer on July 12, 1817 — who really put Walden Pond on the map. He spent two years and two months in solitude and reflection on its shores, writing “Walden” (the book’s full title is “Walden; or, Life in the Woods”), about grasping at the meaning of life by living simply and coexisting with the natural environment.

Today, Walden Pond is a popular fishing hole stocked with trout and frequented by walkers, boaters, swimmers, sunbathers and birdwatchers in warm weather. In winter, there’s snowshoeing and cross-country skiing. You can wander the shaded dirt path hugging the oblong pond; at 1.7 miles, it’s perfect for walkers and runners of all abilities, and its serenity provides a spectacular backdrop for foliage in autumn.

A can’t-miss attraction on Walden Pond State Reservation is the reconstruction of the tiny wooden cabin where Thoreau lived and worked. There’s also a gleaming new solar-powered visitor center that opened last October, featuring interactive exhibits about the man considered a founder of the modern environmental movement. Officials say the pond and center draw about a half-million visitors from around



In this July 12 photo, a couple walks along the shore of Walden Pond in Concord, Mass. Two centuries after Thoreau’s birth, people are still following in Thoreau’s footsteps to discover Walden Pond, the little lake he immortalized, and its picturesque and historic environs.



In this 2010 file photo, people enjoy an afternoon at Walden Pond, in Concord, Mass.

the globe each year.

Thoreau at Walden

Thoreau made a big splash at Walden Pond.

Working at a simple green desk in the cabin he built himself, the former schoolteacher completed

“Walden” in 1854. One hundred and 63 years later, it’s a classic known for lines such as, “The mass of men lead lives of quiet desperation,” and, “I went to the woods because I wished to live deliberately, to front only the



In this July 2012 file photo, a stone inscription marks the actual site of Henry David Thoreau’s cabin on the shores of Walden Pond in Concord, Mass.

essential facts of life, and see if I could not learn what it had to teach, and not, when I came to die, discover that I had not lived.”

If You Go

WALDEN POND: Located in Concord, Massachusetts; <http://www.mass.gov/eea/agencies/dcr/massparks/region-north/walden-pond-state-reservation.html> or 978-369-3254. Open daily year-round; hours vary by season.

GETTING THERE: Walden Pond State Reservation is most easily accessible by car. Parking is \$15 for out-of-state license plates, \$8 for Massachusetts plates. From Boston, you can ride the MBTA commuter rail (Fitchburg line) to the Concord stop; then take a taxi or Uber to the pond. Admission to the reservation and visitor center is free.

TIPS: Dogs, fires and camping aren’t allowed. Only boats with electric motors are permitted on the pond

But Thoreau was many things — philosopher, naturalist, transcendentalist, abolitionist, early climate change advocate — and he wrote other acclaimed works, including “Civil Disobedience,” an 1849 essay in which he agitated against slavery and government overreach.

Concord and environs

Nestled about 20 miles northwest of Boston, Concord is famous for Revolutionary War landmarks enshrined in Minute Man National Historical Park, a leafy spot to picnic and learn more about the first battles that led to American independence from England.

Thoreau isn’t the only renowned writer who created here; Ralph Waldo Emerson sketched out his celebrated essay “Nature” in town, and it’s the hometown of Pulitzer Prize-winning author Doris Kearns Goodwin.

The Concord Museum houses some truly iconic Americana, including the lantern that hung in a church steeple during Paul Revere’s fateful 1775 ride warning that the British were coming.



Laura Agra via AP

Flaky fish tacos.

Flaky fish tacos with vegetable slaw

By KATIE WORKMAN
Associated Press

A good fish taco is in a class by itself. My kids tried their first in a beachside restaurant in Florida, and suddenly the world of tacos had a new category. And as any mother will tell you, when fish comes in a form your kids can embrace, that’s a beautiful thing.

Sometimes the fish is fried (fabulous), sometimes it is grilled (also fabulous), and easiest and most accessible of all, sometimes it is pan-seared (still, fabulous).

And the very best part of cooking fish for tacos? If it falls apart when you are sauteeing or flipping it, who cares? You’re going to flake that sucker up anyway.

This recipe calls for any white, flaky fish, allowing you the flexibility of seeing what’s freshest where you are shopping. Don’t be shy — talk to that fishmonger. He or she will be only too happy to tell you what to buy.

The fish in these tacos is topped with a chopped vegetable salad that adds brightness and crunch. Use either flour or corn tortillas, whichever you prefer, but do take those extra few minutes to warm them up in a skillet so they soften and get a bit more flavorful.

Katie Workman has written two cookbooks focused on easy, family-friendly cooking, “Dinner Solved!” and “The Mom 100 Cookbook.”

FLAKY FISH TACOS & VEGETABLE SLAW

Start to finish: 30 minutes

Serves 4

- 2 tablespoons olive oil, divided
- 4 (6-ounce) filets tilapia, cod, barramundi or other flaky white fish
- ½ teaspoon ground coriander
- ½ teaspoon ground cumin
- Kosher salt and freshly ground pepper to taste
- 8 radishes, thinly sliced
- 1 cucumber, peeled, halved lengthwise, seeded, and cut into thin half moons
- ½ red onion, cut into wedges, then slivered
- ½ cup chopped fennel
- ¼ cup chopped olives (optional)
- 2 tablespoons fresh lemon juice
- 8 6-inch flour or corn tortillas
- Crumbled queso fresco to serve

Heat a large heavy skillet, preferably nonstick, over medium high heat. Add one tablespoon of the oil. While the oil is heating, sprinkle both sides of the fish filets with the coriander, cumin, salt and pepper. Sear the fish for about three minutes per side, until browned and cooked through. Transfer the fish to a plate and break it into small chunks. Tent with foil to keep warm. Wash the skillet out.

While the fish is cooking, combine the radishes, cucumbers, red onion, fennel, olives (if using), lemon juice and the remaining tablespoon of oil. Season with salt and pepper.

Return the clean, dry skillet to medium high heat and cook the tortillas for about 20 seconds on each side for flour, 45 seconds on each side for corn, until lightly browned in spots and softened. Stack them on a plate.

Serve the tortillas with the fish and the vegetable relish, along with the queso fresco on the side. Let everyone assemble their own tacos.

Nutrition information per serving: 343 calories; 86 calories from fat; 10 g fat (2 g saturated; 0 g trans fats); 85 mg cholesterol; 347 mg sodium; 27 g carbohydrate; 0 g fiber; 5 g sugar; 37 g protein.

Blending two Mexican favorites together

By THE CULINARY
INSTITUTE OF AMERICA
for the Associated Press

If you’ve spent much time traveling in Mexico or the southwestern United States, you may have seen folks enjoying an agua fresca on a hot day. Agua frescas are simply water blended with sugar, fresh fruit, seeds (like chia) or dried flowers to make a refreshing, non-alcoholic drink.

Fruits like lime, pineapple and watermelon are all popular in agua frescas, but none is more recognizable than the jewel-toned water of the hibiscus flower. Known across the region as agua de Jamaica, hibiscus aqua frescas are sweet and floral.

The hibiscus’ use in traditional Latin American cooking doesn’t stop there. In Mexico, the bright red flower can be found in everything from tacos to quesadillas, salsas, liquors and desserts.

Martin Matysik, a chef at the Culinary Institute of America, makes a hibiscus margarita, combining two of Mexico’s most beloved beverages for a hot-weather (or any-weather) cocktail.

In this recipe, we’ve used mescal, the earthier cousin to tequila. It’s a distilled spirit derived from the agave plant and has many regional styles.

You’ll also notice that the recipe includes honey liqueur, which should be available at most liquor stores. If you can’t find it, just omit it and add a dash of honey, which will provide the light sweetness and rich flavor that helps round out the tartness in the cocktail. Experiment with fragrant and floral honeys, like orange blossom.

Since this drink is otherwise sweetened, use unsweetened hibiscus water. If you’d like, you can make a big batch (use about 1 cup of dried flowers for every 3 cups of water), reserve some for the cocktail, and sweeten the rest to make a classic agua de Jamaica. Sweeten it to taste with simple syrup or agave syrup. The mixture also makes the perfect popsicle.

Dried hibiscus flowers



Phil Mansfield/The Culinary Institute of America via AP

Hibiscus margarita.

HIBISCUS MARGARITA

Servings: 1

Start to finish: 5 minutes active, 4 hours inactive

- 1 lime wedge, for preparing glasses (optional)
- Smoked vanilla salt, for garnish (optional)
- 2 ounces Hibiscus Water (recipe below)
- 1 ounce mescal
- 1 ounce honey liqueur
- ½ ounce orange liqueur
- 1 ounce agave syrup
- ½ ounce freshly squeezed lime juice
- Sliced limes, for garnish
- Vanilla beans, for garnish (optional)

Prepare a tall glass by wiping the lime wedge around the top rim. Dip the rim of the glass in smoked salt, fill with ice, and set aside.

In a cocktail shaker filled with ice, combine the hibiscus water, mescal, honey liqueur, orange liqueur, agave syrup and lime juice. Shake vigorously, and then strain into the prepared glass. Garnish with lime and vanilla beans, if using, before serving.

HIBISCUS WATER

Makes 8 servings (about 2 cups)

- 2 cups water
- ⅔ cup dried hibiscus flowers

In a large pitcher or container, combine the water and flowers. Set aside to soak for at least 4 hours or up to overnight.

Drain in a fine mesh sieve, using a wooden spoon to press out all of the liquid, and discard the flowers.

Nutrition information per serving: 307 calories; 1 calories from fat; 0 g fat (0 g saturated; 0 g trans fats); 0 mg cholesterol; 2 mg sodium; 38 g carbohydrate; 0 g fiber; 34 g sugar; 0 g protein.

can be purchased online, but you’re likely to pay a premium. If you have a local market that specializes in Mexican or Latin American products, you will almost certainly find hibiscus flowers and other regional delicacies.

Because if you’re making margaritas, tacos can’t be far behind!

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