FLOYD'S

MOUNTAIN DELIGHTS RANGE

FROM FOOD TO FIDDLING TO FINE ARTS

Robin Tierney

For a tiny town, Floyd, Virginia sure offers a delightful abundance when it comes to dining, live music and local art and craft. A long weekend's barely enough time to scratch the surface.

Take Oddfella's Cantina, for example. Vegan choices (not even counting the tapas bar upstairs) include a veggie antipasto platter, grilled eggplant, hummus with herbed flatbread, the Sacred Shroom marinated-and-grilled porta-

bella, Harvest Bowl of olive oil-sauteed seasonal veggies over rice and black beans with peanut sauce. A couple of frequent Floyd visitors at the next table reported the first two were quite good. Upon learning that the organic tempeh was made at the Twin Oaks intentional community, established nearby in 1967, that's what I ordered. Served with Asian sweet and sour sauce, rice, summer squash, roasted red peppers and spinach, the dish's taste rivaled its nifty pyramid-style presentation.

Increasingly, this town tucked in Virginia's Blue Ridge Mountains is drawing visitors for its cuisine scene, fine art and one-of-a-kind handcrafted goods. But it first gained fame for music; it's a top

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Floyd, VA, is a gem. This town, tucked in the Blue Ridge Mountains is drawing visitors for its fine art, one-of-a-kind handcrafted goods, and heritage music. What is delightfully surprising is it's wide variety of vegan fare.

Bluegrass and old-time bands are everywhere in Floyd - from The Floyd Country Store to restaurants, the barber shop, parks and sidewalks.

stop on Virginia's Crooked Road heritage music trail. The Floyd Country Store's beloved for its $5 Friday Night Jamboree featuring bluegrass and old-time bands as well as dancing. The store also presents free weekend concerts, jam sessions and open mics...so if you play, pack an instrument.

Elsewhere, performers fill restaurants, the barber shop, parks, and sidewalks with the sound of live, local music. I caught a terrific acoustic show down the street at Dogtown Roadhouse, where you can order tasty cheese-less brick-oven pizzas rich with sauce and veggies.

When it comes to art, Floyd's diverse talents produce an overflow of fine art and craft found in galleries, restaurants, and, just beyond downtown, at Jacksonville Center for the Arts, which showcases veteran and emerging artists.

Standouts at Troika Gallery, located downtown in the Station artisan center, include ceramics by potters of the 16 Hands collective, handmade paper art, brilliant textiles, and lamps hand-wrought from reclaimed materials. While managing the shop that afternoon, jewelry-maker Anne Armistead described Floyd's communal creative spark. "Something about Floyd attracts people from all walks of life. It's magical."

At Hotel Floyd (a site of functional eco-design) or the galleries, pick up a Floyd Artisan Trail brochure. It features contact information for dozens of artists, craftspeople and agricultural product artisans within a short drive of downtown.

Sharing is a core community value, and it extends from residents to visitors, explained Pat Sharkey, a jewelry designer involved in Floyd County sustainability, art and tourism projects. Here, small businesses, artists, farmers, musicians, and others share a passion for creative expression and quality. Few other places offer such an eclectic mix. Music spans Appalachian to gospel to newgrass to Grateful Dead-inspired jam bands. Artists range from blacksmiths and quilters to painters, potters and slab furniture-makers.

Between its terrific music and diversity of merchandise, you wouldn't expect the Floyd Country Store to invest heavily in the dining department. Yet it has recently expanded beyond traditional pies and vittles to a new Jingle Tap Cafe menu that always includes some vegan choices, such as a delicious red beet broth and zippy black beans over brown rice.

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The vegan food choices are as creative and innovative as the art and music. Everything from the red beet soup at the new Jingle Tap Cafe to the vegan pizza at the Dogtown Roadhouse is delicious and local.

Across the street at Black Water Loft, start any morning with a fresh juice, or pair its brewed-on-site Red Rooster coffee with a home-baked vegan-friendly treat. Its colorful art-filled lounge overlooks downtown passersby.

New businesses include Grateful Bread Bakery & Artist Garden (most goods are vegan, including the almond cranberry multigrain and scones) and the Artist's Table (its terrace sits above Harvest Moon gourmet market, which stocks some vegan and organic wares). Green Label Organic recently opened a shop selling fair-trade organic cotton clothing and crafts-with-a-conscience. WinterSun offers original hand-painted fair-trade threads. For funky-fun stuff, get immersed in Republic of Floyd.

Events? There's always something going on, from free Thursday concerts at the new, sustainability-minded Hotel Floyd to sidewalk

pickers to FloydFest, an annual mega-happening taking place July 23-27. The Community Pavilion's the place to be Friday evenings for the Floyd Artisan Market and Saturdays for the Floyd Farmers Market.

Floyd's Historic District, dating to 1831, appears on the National Register of Historic Places. But this is truly a place sure to captivate even the hippest travelers.

PLANNING A VISIT?

Floyd Visitor Info
http://visitfloydva.com

The Floyd Artisan Trail
http://www.floydartisantrail.org

Hotel Floyd
http://www.hotelfloyd.com

About the Author

Robin Tierney is a travel, outdoors and food writer who gets her energy from an all plant-based diet. Her whole household is made up of vegan athletes, including their adopted American Pit Bull Terriers. Reach Robin at **travelveg@live.com**.

Photos by Robin Tierney.