

TORONTO STAFF REPORT

September 22, 2005

To: Economic Development and Parks Committee

From: Deputy City Manager

Subject: The Winterlicious and Summerlicious culinary programs produced by Toronto Special Events.
All Wards

Purpose:

To provide Toronto City Council with an overview of the two culinary programs offered by Toronto Special Events and seek council approval on the current guidelines and operation of the programs.

Financial Implications and Impact Statement:

There are no financial implications resulting from the adoption of this report.

Recommendations:

It is recommended that:

- (1) Toronto City Council approve “Criteria, Process and Procedures: Winterlicious and Summerlicious” as presented in Attachment 1;
- (2) Toronto Special Events staff report back in January 2006 with the results from a consultation in partnership with the Ontario Hotel, Motel and Restaurant Association (OHMRA) to discuss other initiatives; and
- (3) the appropriate City Officials be authorized and directed to take the necessary action to give effect thereto.

Background:

In 2001, the Ontario Ministry of Tourism, Culture and Recreation recommended that the provinces’ wine and culinary sectors be developed as drivers for increased tourism in the

province, both in terms of attracting more visitors as well as extending length of stay and visitor spending.

The Ontario Wine and Culinary Tourism Strategy defines wine and culinary tourism as “tourism in which the opportunity for wine and/or culinary related experiences contributes significantly to the reason for travel to the destination or to itinerary planning while at the destination.” (from *Ontario Wine and Culinary Tourism Strategy Exec. Summary, 2001*)

The City of Toronto supports the development and production of many food related programs and events that meet a wide range of objectives within the hospitality industry and engage a variety of restaurants at all levels. Programs and events addressing the needs of some of the hospitality industry include: Bloor West Village Ukrainian Festival, Caravan, Corso Italia Toronto Fiesta, Hot & Spicy: The Island Soul Edition, Sante: The Bloor Yorkville Wine Festival, Taste of the Danforth, Taste of Little Italy, Taste of Lawrence, Taste of TEDA, Tastes of Thailand, Toronto Ribfest, Vegetarian Food Fair, Wine and Cheese Show and World’s Fare: Celebration of Food and Culture.

The Winterlicious and Summerlicious promotions address the objectives of culinary tourism and focus on fine dining establishments. Events such as the Tasty Thursdays Series, the WinterCity BBQ and the Celebrate Toronto Street Festival food components include restaurants from all forms of dining.

Winterlicious and Summerlicious promotions were created by Toronto Special Events in 2003 as added promotions to extend Toronto WinterCity Festival and the Celebrate Toronto Street Festival into city-wide celebrations. Winterlicious and Summerlicious have focused on creating unique dining experiences that showcase not only Toronto’s diverse cultural cuisine but also fine dining experiences at a compelling price point.

Toronto Special Events developed objectives for the Winterlicious and Summerlicious programs and established two seasonal culinary promotions that met the needs of the provincial government’s strategy and the recommendations outlined in the council approved Tourism Action Plan.

Winterlicious and Summerlicious Objectives:

1. Generate a positive economic activity and impact on the local economy;
2. Profile Toronto’s finest restaurants and chefs;
3. Create an incentive for residents and tourists to dine out at Toronto’s fine dining restaurants; and
4. Create a compelling, added incentive for tourists to travel to Toronto.

The Winterlicious and Summerlicious culinary promotions require that participating restaurants offer a three course prix fixe menu at one of two price point categories. The prix fixe offer must include a starter, entrée and dessert. Beverages, taxes and gratuity are additional. Restaurants who meet the criteria for participation (as presented in Attachment #1) receive a letter that informs them of the program and requests those interested to respond by a specific date and time.

Acceptance into the program is based on a first-come, first-serve basis. Participation is limited to a maximum number of restaurants to ensure management and growth of the campaign.

Comments:

In light of its continued success, staff have evaluated the program in consultation with the sector and confirmed that the process by which restaurants are selected to participate in the Summerlicious and Winterlicious programs should be maintained. This criteria and process has been embraced by Toronto's fine dining industry.

Staff facilitated a discussion group with representatives of Toronto's fine dining industry as well as the Ontario Hotel, Motel and Restaurant Association (OHMRA) to review and discuss the future of the program. The discussions concluded that both Summerlicious and Winterlicious maintain the current selection process and criteria.

As a result of engaging OHMRA and addressing the concerns expressed by other restaurants in Toronto, a framework for further consultation is being developed. Staff will report back to Council in January 2006 with a more detailed review of the consultation. Budget requirements and implications associated with the development of a new program will be addressed in the report.

Conclusions:

Toronto Special Events operates two successful restaurant promotions, Winterlicious and Summerlicious, in order to extend key events and generate further economic impact in Toronto by profiling a unique sector in need of support. The programs have been operating successfully since 2003 with continued increases in participation and economic generation. Upon consultation with fine-dining representatives and OHMRA, it was determined that the current programs should be retained and a broader program should be developed with approval from Toronto City Council. The current criteria as outlined in Attachment #1 are equitable and ensure controlled promotions. New restaurant promotions are under discussion with the involvement of OHMRA.

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List of Attachments:

Attachment #1: Criteria, Process and Procedures: Winterlicious and Summerlicious

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Criteria and Process:

Restaurants are notified to participate in the promotion if they meet the following conditions:

1. The restaurant must be located in the City of Toronto;
2. The restaurant must be rated in two or more of the following rating publications (most current published editions):
 - Zagat Survey - consumer based ratings
 - Patron's Pick - consumer based ratings
 - Toronto Life Annual Eating and Drinking Guide - critic ratings
3. The restaurant must have a minimum average rating of 3-stars or equivalent.
 - Restaurants meeting condition #2 are assigned average food and price values. These values are calculated using the ratings from the consumer and critic based rating publications used.
 - For consistency, food ratings are adjusted to values out of 100 (e.g. Zagat Rating: $23/30 = 77/100$) and price ratings are adjusted to reflect similar items paid for (e.g. all ratings to reflect dinner for 2, wine, taxes and tip). The average food and price rating for each restaurant is then calculated. Restaurants are sorted by average food and average cost values. From the sorted list of restaurants:
 - those with high average price and food values are identified to participate in the higher price category.
 - those with mid-range average price and food values are identified to participate in the lower price category; and
4. The restaurant must offer a unique dining experience to guests.
 - Restaurants that are part of a chain (same name, same menu at multiple locations) do not meet this definition.

The New Restaurant Exception:

If a restaurant has been open for two years or less and is not rated and/or does not fully meet the general criteria, the restaurant may be included on the notification list. The restaurant may be included if: the regular menu prices are in the same range as other restaurants on the notification list, the average price value for the same items paid for is also in the same range and general reviews indicate a high quality of food and customer service.

Newly opened restaurants are sourced through data received from Toronto Public Health, newspapers, magazines, and websites such as chefdb.com, torontolife.com, toronto.com. Once a restaurant passes the two-year mark, it no longer qualifies for "New Restaurant" exception and must meet all general criteria to be included on the notification list.

Grandfathered Restaurants:

At the inception of winter and summer restaurant promotions, prior to its current popularity, a number of restaurants who did not meet the criteria participated in the promotion. This clause acknowledges their efforts in engaging the restaurant industry and in championing our first campaign.

Terms and Conditions for Participating Restaurants:

1. Offer a unique dining experience. These promotions are intended to showcase the unique and diverse culinary offerings that set Toronto apart from other markets.
2. Provide excellent food quality and customer service to patrons. Failure to meet quality control standards may jeopardize involvement in future promotions. Quality control is monitored through consumer surveying and tracking of consumer feedback on dining experiences during the promotions.
3. Allot a minimum of 80% seating capacity of venue to promotion patrons without any time restrictions or blackout periods. This ensures the restaurant is fully engaged and committed to the promotion. This also limits consumer disappointment resulting from lack of capacity.
4. Restaurants must offer a minimum of two or more choices per course. This is vital to ensure quality control and a positive dining experience.
5. Pay a nominal fee to support marketing initiatives.
6. Comply with sponsor-related incentives and promotions and not engage other sponsors during the programme. Sponsors do not drive the promotion or influence selection criteria. Sponsors fund all aspects of programme including marketing initiatives.
7. Possess a DineSafe Green Pass issued by Toronto Public Health, at the time of the promotion.
8. Fully and accurately complete an Evaluation at conclusion of promotion.