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Plan a Monthly Girls' Group Outing to Create Memories

Tour de Tasting Divas



The fun continues despite winter's chill at Ritz Carlton Lake Tahoe Northstar Resort. – Photos courtesy Ritz Carlton Lake Tahoe Northstar Resort



By Lori Pearce

Science along with common sense says that spending time with girlfriends can be therapeutic and fun. Positive endorphin reactions go far beyond the actual meeting and start with planning, (where to go, what are you going to do, what are you going to wear, etc.) Then they move into looking forward to the event, (the anti-

pation) and, of course, the gathering itself. Joyful feelings emerge long after the festivities end, providing a lifetime of memories. Whether it's a girls' night out or a "sisters" get away weekend, the effects are beneficial and lasting. Here's a monthly guide to some ideas for your girls' group therapy, which, of course, includes spirited beverage pairings.



October

Mystical Musings. Book a tarot card reader or psychic for your soirée. A Cabernet tasting with a movie, like "The Witches of Eastwick" or "Practical Magic," entertains the group as guests have their individual readings. A chocolate fountain with an eclectic array of dippers will nicely complement Cabernets. Chakra stones or crystals are an enchanting take home memento from the hostess.





November

Bountiful Potluck Brunch. Guests bring a dish to share, and the hostess sets up a bloody Mary bar with flavored vodkas and a garnish station, (olives, celery, bacon, pickled beans, pickles, cheese, chiles, etc.) Gratitude cards serve double duty as place cards and a take-away, and, in lieu of a blessing, everyone reads their card aloud before breakfast. Bonus: Collect coats, canned food, socks or gift cards from guests to donate to a local organization benefiting those in need.

December

Holiday Shenanigans. Meet up for a ferry ride into San Francisco. Coffee, snacks and shopping at the Ferry Building start your adventure, followed by a brisk walk downtown. Ice skating at Union Square is sure to get you in the holiday spirit. A trek up the hill to the Fairmont to spy the gingerbread houses before sipping mulled wine or spiked cocoa and having a late lunch rounds out the day. (Feeling spunky? You may find some holiday parties to crash along the way. Just don't tell 'em that we sent you.)

January

Bodega Bay Chowder Day. This annual event is a self guided tour tasting chowder from a variety of restaurants at the coast, and perfect to make a couple's day. Rent a limo bus so that you can cleanse your palate with some bubbles between tastings. Pack a picnic and end your day at Doran Regional Park sipping California Chardonnay. (Anthony Bergland at North Bay Charters is our preferred limo bus driver and company providing rockin' tunes and clean flutes at every stop.)

February

Galentines. Get the girls together for an interactive dining experience. The hostess picks a theme, like Moroccan or Brazilian, finds recipes, does the shopping, and puts a recipe with corresponding ingredients in a bag. Each guest, or team, picks a bag, and is tasked with making an appe-

Top to bottom, left: Bloody Mary bar pairs perfectly with a November potluck brunch; Bodega Bay's Chowder Day in January warms guests as they enjoy the coast. Right: Holiday adorned gingerbread houses are a delight inside and out; try something new like this Moroccan Tajin beef stew with rice. – Photos courtesy Bodega Bay Chamber of Commerce, Fairmont San Francisco Hotel, iStock





tizer, soup and/or salad, side, main dish or dessert. A signature cocktail, like a Morocopolitan, made with mahia, a fig and aniseed spirit, pays homage to the eventing. Matching the table decor to the theme adds a festive touch.

March

Dinner and a movie. There's usually no shortage of chick flicks that we'd rather not drag our guy to see. So, grab your princess tribe, meet up for bites before the show, and settle in for a fun night. Make sure you pick a theater where wine is served and the seats recline. Don't forget to coordinate and pre-purchase your seats. We recommend a comedy to keep the evening upbeat; think "Bad Moms" or "Bridesmaids."

April

Hop, skip and a jump! Tahoe is a short drive away and the ideal locale for a ladies only adventure. Rent a home to share, sleep in, take rejuvenating forest walks, catch up on the latest gossip, read a juicy novel, and along the way enjoy some boozy best bets; Findleton Winery in Camino off Highway 50, Lake Tahoe Paint and Sip at South Shore, the free tram to the Ritz Carlton at Northstar for an afternoon cocktail, (the old fashioned or lemon drop are deliciouso,) and the Tourist Club Bar is a Truckee dive bar must.

May

A Few of Our Favorite Things. Shhh! These are some of our best kept secrets, and make for a lovely impromptu afternoon outing. Pinots at Karah Estate in Cotati; Royal Cuvee at Gloria Ferrer, Sonoma; margaritas at Copita, Sausalito; cocktails at Hi Dive, San Francisco. Thursday night wine tasting at Wilibeas, Petaluma, and organic grape vodka

Top to bottom, left: Great girls' excursions can be had at the oldtime Raven Firm Center in Healdsburg; Fidelton Winery outside of Placerville; Gloria Ferrer bubbles in Sonoma; Right: Experience wine country with AutoCamp glamping on the Russian River; stop by cozy and unique Olema Cottages; take in Indian Springs in Calistoga for minerals springs, lush gardens and luxury accommodations; the iconic AAA Four-Diamond Fairmont Sonoma Mission Inn & Spa provides an impeccable setting to relish the enviable Sonoma lifestyle. — Photos courtesy of Santa Rosa Cinemas, Fidelton Winery, Gloria Ferrer, AutoCamp, Olema Cottages, Indian Springs Calistoga, Fairmont Sonoma Mission Inn & Spa



tasting at Hanson of Sonoma Distillery round out our favorites list.

June

Glamping. Stay in a luxury tent or airstream at Autocamp Russian River, a deluxe cabin at Petaluma KOA, or a quaint home at Olema Cottages for a girls' get-away. Pre-planned activities like yoga, a scavenger hunt, and designing vision boards complete a tranquil weekend which is sure to include a few bottles of vino. For fun: Everyone brings wine they have never tried before and purchased just because they liked the label. Perfect to taste around the campfire while having s'mores.

July

Brew Tour. Warm summer days may find you wanting to cool down with a summer ale, lager, sour, stout, pilsner, wheat, saison or bock. There's no shortage of breweries from Russian River Brewing Co., Lagunitas and Marin Brewing Co. to more intimate tasting rooms like Crooked Goat, Libation, and Iron Springs. Many brew pubs and beer gardens are family friendly, so kids and hubbys may want to tag along. Most are pet friendly, too.

August

Self-Care Experience. Local spas like Graton, Sonoma Mission Inn and Indian Springs Calistoga offer pool privileges for a nominal fee or with a spa treatment. Bar and food service is also available. After the obligatory selfie, we suggest everyone turn off their phones to totally tune into the present moment to focus on relaxing and recharging. A crisp rose' will rise nicely to this occasion. As they say, "rose' all day."

September

Sun-Day at the Races. Accessorize with your girlfriend group and your floppy, your fascinator, or your tiara and head out to Golden Gate Fields. Some Sundays are \$1 days; parking, admittance, hot dogs and even mimosas are only \$1. Cheers. (Check the website for the \$1 day schedule.) Oh, and there's horse racing! Newcomers can bet on the pretty-colored horse or the name that inspires you. Good luck. ■

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