

Aspen

JUNE 14 - 20, 2018 • ASPENTIMES.COM/WEEKLY

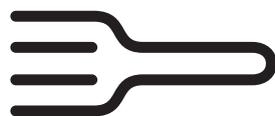
CULTURE/CHARACTERS/COMMENTARY

TIMES WEEKLY

FIND IT INSIDE



THE ASPEN RECIPE



Cooking up culture at 7,908 feet



MIND GAME

PRO TIPS TO INDULGE FREELY IN THE BEST WEEKEND EVER

STANDING ON the cool, slick surface of a gray-speckled white rock in an alpine grotto, I sink into reflection. A breeze tickles my bare arms, sun warms my face, and I wonder where the water trickling into this sapphire pool originates. I inhale deeply and taste minerals on my tongue. *What's on the other side of these stone boulders? How did I get here? How long will I stay?*



AMANDA
RAE

When I open my eyes moments later, however, I'm in another wonderland: the open-air SO Café on the rooftop of the Aspen Art Museum. Sunlight streams through Shigeru Ban's basket-weave wooden ceiling onto the table I share with three other women. We've just taken our first, glorious sips of sparkling blush rosé. I smirk, intoxicated already.

"The best way to prepare your palate is to connect to breath, it opens your olfactory system," says Marisa Hallsted, sommelier, yogi and founder of the Mindful Vine, which fuses those two worlds through pairing events. "When we receive something into the body, the olfactory system is the fastest way to send messages to our nervous system. It influences the entire experience."

Upon Hallsted's urging, I describe my fleeting journey aloud.

"I was on a rock, too!" Jayne Gottlieb and Lisa Cohen exclaim in succession.

Hallsted is leading us through an "intuitive tasting" in an effort to cultivate mindfulness—a practice that Gottlieb, yogi and founder of Aspen Shakti, and Cohen, a nutritionist, health coach and fitness expert, understand intimately.

"I create experiences so that people can immerse themselves in the present moment through the vehicle of food and wine," Hallsted explains. "It's about enjoyment and connection—more deeply to yourself and to each other."

I've come here to lunch with these ladies and explore the gazillion-dollar question: Is it possible to enjoy a more mindful Food & Wine Classic?

Over six consecutive festivals

thus far, I've done it all: pumped out plates beneath the tents with professional chefs, canvassed the field as a food journalist, gallivanted among pop-up parties as a seasoned local. Despite a hodgepodge of snapshots and social media posts to look back on, however, every event flies by in a voracious, booze-soaked, squealing blur. Though certain friends scoff at my mission—*come on, it's Food & Wine!* they chirp—I'm optimistic in my quest to go big yet make it more memorable.

"That's where mindfulness gets this bad rap: *Oh, I have to be a weirdo. I have to stop when I just wanna drink that sip of wine!*" Gottlieb says. "Well, drink two or three sips, do your thing, and then pause."

While a key to ultimate enjoyment while wandering this weekend's epicurean Disneyland might be to simply **slow down**, Gottlieb is quick to point out that calling upon consciousness does not require inviting that killjoy known as discipline.

"Even though we tend to think of the event as debauchery and gluttony, the process of how we engage with food and drink is full mindfulness," she says. "We're adding an element of consciousness—a **pause**—to something very habitual."

Hallsted reminds us to **check in**. "We're going to be surrounded by a lot of foodie connoisseurs, and they know: Swirl, smell, sip. It's a ritual process for a reason," she says. "When you're a couple of glasses in maybe you don't take the time to smell and you have to retrain your habit."

If step one is to stop and smell the wine, our next move might be to **taste thoughtfully**.

"There are going to be a lot of hand-passed, one-biters," Hallsted says. "Take a little nibble and then a sip. Then take different components with the same wine—sometimes chefs will put seven items on a dish. *Am I really enjoying this? Is my body enjoying this?* You know the answer intuitively."

On cue, food arrives: Greek salad dotted with ripe-red cherry tomatoes, cubes of creamy feta and tender chicken, thinly sliced cucumber. At each corner is a translucent fuchsia wheel nearly



three inches in diameter, edged with green.

"Isn't this radish amazing?" Cohen quips. "The outside is a dull beige; it kind of looks like a turnip. Then when you cut into it—unbelievable."

Take time to **indulge your sense of sight** during this weekend's visual smorgasbord, Cohen suggests. As a nutritionist who counsels folks struggling with weight issues, she cites science as good reason to **put the fork down between bites**.

"Slowing down and being mindful will cue your gut signaling what your true appetite is," Cohen explains. "Many people who are overweight will report that they don't know when they're hungry or full. It takes 20 minutes for the brain to signal the stomach that it's done. This is about changing your habit."

Now Gottlieb drops a fresh tip toward navigating the weekend: **Stay curious**.

"Think of three questions you might bring to the table," she says. "Consider: What am I gonna ask? What am I gonna learn? Because if you stimulate the conversation, all these things (slowing down, being present) start to unfold naturally."

Imagine how chefs—who spend weeks planning, ordering, prepping, and schlepping to the festival, only to practice nonattachment by releasing their creations to the

masses—feel when tipsy hordes gobble food, glassy eyed, while walking on by.

"Getting the story—where it was farmed, how long it took to get here, is the food still massively alive?—you start to get full with fewer bites because you're adding nutrients that are unseen," Gottlieb explains. "Connection makes the whole experience, for me, so much more colorful, richer and rewarding."

Hallsted notes that the Food & Wine Classic's inherent atmosphere of ego adds spice. "It creates this elevated energy of competitiveness: *How can I jam so much into one bite that I will be the most memorable, the most talked about?*" she says. "Jayne is offering an opportunity (at Shakti) to quell that." (See sidebar, opposite page.)

So, festivalgoers, sharpen those senses! Ask questions! Don't stuff your gullet mindlessly like a loathsome landmonster would. Bask in revelry, and **savor your buzz**.

"Really we're talking about how to have the best experience ever," Gottlieb concludes. "You don't have to be a yogi to want the best life ever."

She pauses, grinning wide. "That was so fun—I had a good time standing on the rocks!"

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Aspen Shakti is more than a yoga studio; it's a sanctuary of positive energy at the heart of town. Find mindfulness workshops and events all weekend—wine included, natch.

The Mindful Vine Summer Series

A Journey of Senses Dining Experience
 Led by sommelier Marisa Hallsted
 June 27, July 25, Aug. 29, Sept. 19
 Four courses + wine pairings, \$165 (advance)

The Cottage Aspen
 305 E. Hopkins Ave.
 themindfulvine.com

Food & Wine Week Aspen Shakti Style

Classes and themed events focused on mindful eating and drinking, hydration, energy, detoxification, purification and fraternization.

Thursday, June 14, 5-6:30 p.m.

Bubbles, Haute Buddhi Yoga & Beats

Includes opening toast on mindful drinking and meditation

Friday, June 15, 1-5 p.m.

Rosé All Day & Aspen Shakti Fragrance Launch Experience summer's most sparkling scent!

Saturday, June 16, 11 a.m.-12 p.m.

Champagne Flow(s)

60-minute, sensual journey: bubbles paired with live beats, breathwork, and yoga postures

Sunday, June 17, 11 a.m.-12 p.m.

Heaven for the Hung-over

Rebalance the body: lite yoga paired with morning mocktails and spritzers, summer beats, mindful meditation

Aspen Shakti

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