



THE STORY OF TREE TO TABLE Case Study

Dave Schonberger, Ottercreek Woodworks

November 2024





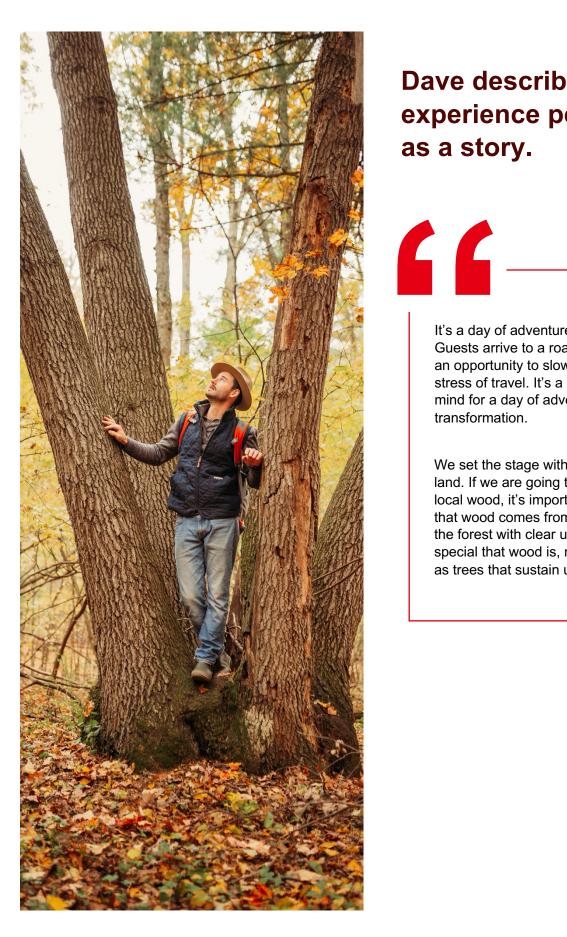
This case study is featured in the first part of the *Destination Dialogues 2024 Report: ReThinking and Crafting Experience Development in Canada's Destinations* by <u>Celes Davar</u>. The report delves into the key concepts and learnings presented in <u>Destination Dialogues 2024</u>, a virtual event organized by Destination Canada, to inspire, inform and empower rural destination development professionals. While Celes facilitated the virtual event, <u>Dave Schonberger</u> was featured as a speaker and Canadian experience host.

Dave Schonberger is founder of Ottercreek Woodworks in Tillsonburg, Ontario—and the architect and facilitator of <u>From Tree to Table: A Build-Your-Own Board Experience</u>.

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Red Seal carpenter, storyteller and experience development mentor, Dave crafts custom furniture and woodwork from local hardwoods, including unique charcuterie boards, that are sold in shops across Canada. Since 2019, he has hosted the From Tree to Table Experience, inviting guests to join him at his woodshop to create their own charcuterie boards. as an in-market experience available year-round.





Dave describes his experience personally, as a story.

It's a day of adventure and self-discovery! Guests arrive to a roaring fire. The fire is an opportunity to slow down, shed the stress of travel. It's a reset to clear the mind for a day of adventure and transformation.

We set the stage with some stories of the land. If we are going to be crafting with local wood, it's important to know where that wood comes from. I want to go into the forest with clear understanding of how special that wood is, not as lumber, but as trees that sustain us in so many ways.



FIRE



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Then we embark on the trail into the forest to discover the trees. The Mother Tree greets us as we enter the forest. She is the oldest and grandest tree in the forest, whom I have grown a deep relationship with, a mighty white oak.

As my feet connect with forest floor, I embrace the Mother Tree and lean into her deep forest wisdom. I invite guests to do the same.

It is here where we tap into the Wood Wide Web and discover a world beneath our feet mycelial fungi! Along the way we gather ingredients to make a freshly foraged tea. The ingredients change based on what the land offers each season. The flavour of the tea is ever changing, from one experience to the next.

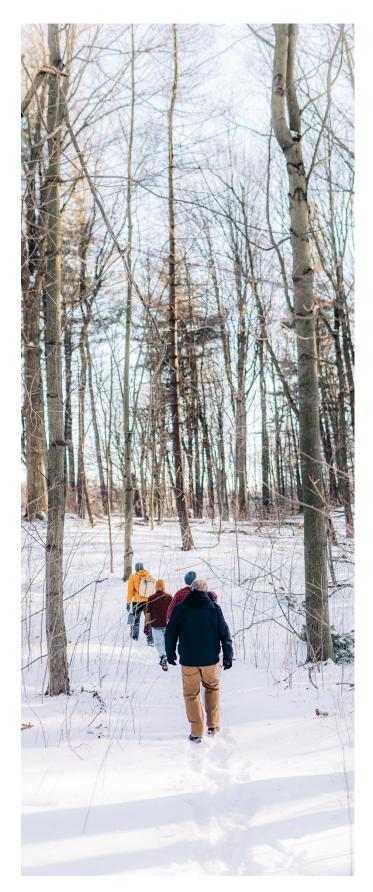
I invite guests to explore the forest with all of their senses. We're smelling the broken branch of a Sassafras tree, which smells like citrus, grasping the rich forest soil, full of mycelium, and standing in silence as we hear the forest move around us.

FOREST, FORAGE, DISCOVERY

Guests get an opportunity to choose a piece of wood and then design their own charcuterie board under my guidance. They choose a piece of wood that 'speaks to them'. Trust me, wood does speak to you! You just have to listen.

They get to use a combination of hand tools and power tools. They even get an opportunity to use my grandfather's drawknife, which is used to shape the live edge of the board. This is my most sacred tool; I let the guests use it.







THE WORKSHOP





At the end is the big reveal. The boards are oiled, revealing the true character of the wood, that was kept secret until just now. This is a special moment. All the hard work in crafting the board is rewarded in this moment. As the host, it's exciting to watch it all unfold. Finally, we celebrate with food from the local community. All the best charcuterie presented in an artistic way, immersing the guests in what our local farmers, producers and makers have to offer.



canaDa*

FOOD STORY



In fact, we created a road map of where it all comes from, A Feasting Box. The following taste of place food guide helps our guests to know where all of the foods come from, within my region.



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The <u>From Tree to Table Experience</u> is designed for a maximum of six guests to ensure an optimal and safe experience in the workshop. Pricing is available on the website.

Dave attributes the success of this award-winning experience to early conversations with Meredith Maywood, Product Development and Marketing Tourism Specialist at Oxford County, contacts at his regional tourism organization, Ontario's Southwest, and his mentor, Celes Davar, president and owner of Earth Rhythms. This guidance, tools and coaching enabled him to evolve, test and refine the experience—then launch it.

In summary, Dave says

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A great experience should have layers and substance, it should be more than just one thing. From Tree to Table is an opportunity to share a vision, an overall shift in thinking about our environment, each other and how these two elements mesh. It's about getting to the root of a greater concept: self-discovery, appreciation, regeneration and shared knowledge, making an impact in even the smallest of ways. It's not just about building a board. The actual value of From Tree to Table for me, is that it transcends the physical wooden charcuterie board. My artistic intention is to create space for meaningful conversation and deepened relationships, while showcasing the wonder of trees in a way that contributes positively to the health of my community and planet — and having fun at the same time. It's so much more than a board.

- Dave Schonberger





CONTACT INFORMATION

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