

Tasty tours

Get to know your edibles at delicious destinations across the West.

The only thing more fun than eating good food? Seeing how it's made—and scoring a free sample or two. You can do just that by visiting these producers, who offer behind-the-scenes tours, guided tastings, and flagship-store exclusives.

■ While **Cowgirl Creamery** makes most of its cheeses at its new plant in Petaluma, Calif., one cheese must still be produced at the original Point Reyes location: the Red Hawk triple-cream, which takes its signature orange hue from wild bacteria that thrive near Tomales Bay. Inside the creamery's converted hay barn, milk is agitated in silver vats, cheese makers scoop curds into molds, and rounds of cheese age on

metal racks. Sample the full Cowgirl line at the counter or order your favorite in a sandwich at the cantina.

■ At the **Ethel M Chocolates** facility in Henderson, Nev., you can watch as caramel melts in copper kettles and workers cut sheets of pecan brittle. If the post-tour chocolate sample doesn't completely quell your craving, tasting classes are offered hourly, with a view of the property's three-acre cactus garden.

■ **Harry & David** began in 1910 as a pear orchard, and from catwalks above the factory floor, you can still see the famed Royal Riviera pears getting hand-sorted, wrapped in foil, and packed into gift

baskets. Elsewhere, you may spot popcorn tumbling with caramel in rotating drums, and bakers pulling fresh fruit-cakes from the oven. The Medford, Ore., factory is busiest late summer through fall, as it prepares to ship millions of holiday gift packages.

■ No fewer than nine botanicals—including sarsaparilla root, cinnamon bark, and dried lime—go into **New World Distillery's** Oomaw gin. Try to identify each during a tasting and tour at the newly opened Eden, Utah, facility. Owners Chris and Ashley Cross lead groups through what looks like a laboratory, past two 2,000-liter fermentation tanks, two stills, and 20 bourbon barrels



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for aging. Along the way, you'll learn how to read a label and what "proof" means in terms of quality and flavor.

■ On a busy day, the **Joy Cone** factory in Flagstaff, Ariz., cranks out a staggering 3 million sugar, waffle, and cake cones. Watch the magic happen on a free tour (offered September to February) as you walk the production floor, where machines squirt batter into cast-iron molds and waffle irons. "It's very rhythmic," points out tour guide Michelle Raban. Afterward, everyone gets a freshly made cone—and a chance to fill it with soft-serve ice cream.

■ The prime time to visit **Lucero Olive Oil** in Corning, Calif., is October to December, when its olive orchards are harvested and the proceeds milled to make extra-virgin oil. Five different tours are available, but all end at the tasting



Follow the journey from bean to barista at the Starbucks Roastery.

bar. "The tour is fun, but the wow factor is the tasting," says Kristin Cook, marketing director. "It's like wine."

■ Inside the **Starbucks Reserve Roastery and Tasting Room** in Seattle, you can watch, listen, and smell as pneumatic

tubes shuttle green beans from storage silos to roasters and finally to the manufacturing line or the café bar. Snag a chair in the library to get a bird's-eye view of the entire operation—or to peruse any of 200 tomes on java. Then head to the bar for a coffee flight. —LEEANNE JONES

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