

## Their Itinerary Is Your Menu



Joe Fornabaio for The New York Times

Tony Muia leading a tour on the Coney Island boardwalk.

By SETH KUGEL

Published: August 26, 2007

WHEN you were a toddler, you needed someone to tell you what to taste. Cheerios, yes. Dirt, no. Electrical outlets, no way.

As an adult, you presumably don't need much help, though occasionally a sommelier comes in handy. So the idea of a food tour may seem odd: why pay someone to tell you what to eat?

In short, because it's a way to participate in, and not just observe, life in New York City. And with the right guide, it can be almost exhilarating.

Still, it's not for everyone. If you check Chowhound.com before your e-mail, can distinguish single-origin chocolate made in São Tomé from that made in Tanzania, or have 28 bottles of hot sauce sizzling in your cupboard, you're probably savvy enough to set out on your own and make the city your cafeteria. But for others — visitors, especially — the tours are well worth it...

What seemed doomed to be the lamest of the five, the **Original Greenwich Village Food Tasting and Cultural Walking Tour run by Foods of New York**, turned out to be the most entertaining. Michael Karp, one of several guides for these daily excursions, has lived in the Village for 22 years, and it shows. He knows everyone, loves pranks and off-color jokes, and points out all kinds of secret spots, from the narrow entranceways that lead to hidden houses to the best-smelling grate in town (funneling up kitchen smells from the restaurant Risotteria).

And, of course, there's food: samplings include pizza, cannoli, rice balls, fresh-from-the-oven chocolate-chip cookies and **fine cheese (from Murray's, no surprise)**. You don't get to eat at Palma, a French-Italian restaurant, but you do get to peek into its farmhouse kitchen.

### VISITOR INFORMATION

**Foods of New York, \$40; (212) 209-3370; [www.foodsofny.com](http://www.foodsofny.com).**