

FRANCE TODAY

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Close to Heaven:
Val d'Isère

The *Artist* Star
Jean Dujardin

Pale and Mellow:
Very Rare Cognac

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Inside:
2012 Travel Study Guide

France Celebrates 125 Years of a Living Symbol of Freedom



This statue given by France to the great people of America can be the statue of all those throughout the world who choose freedom over dictatorship. It is not simply a statue, it is an idea, and what the French and the Americans wanted to say was that this idea of freedom isn't just for the Americans or just for the French—it is for all the peoples of the world. ”



—Nicolas Sarkozy
President of the French Republic
Liberty Island, NY - Sept. 22, 2011



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Cover: Bud vase, 22 22 Editions, Photo © Jean-François Fanet

CALENDAR

What's On & What's Up

FOR YOUR NEXT TRIP TO FRANCE

PARIS

La France en Relief

Sixteen masterpieces from the French national collection of relief maps, dating from the reign of Louis XIV to Napoleon III's Second Empire, and originally intended for military use. The extraordinary, minutely detailed, three-dimensional, topographical scale models of fortified cities include Brest, Briançon, Besançon, Strasbourg and Cherbourg, the largest at 1,700 square feet.

Grand Palais, main entrance Ave Winston Churchill, 8th, Métro: Champs Elysées Clemenceau.
www.lafranceenrelief.fr
€5 Jan 18–Feb 17



Relief map of Cherbourg, first constructed 1813–1819, at the Grand Palais

Gaston Fébus (1331–1391), Prince Soleil

Illuminated manuscripts and miniatures, drawings, silver tableware, gold coins and luxurious objets d'art recounting the life of Gaston Fébus, a flamboyant medieval prince, Count of Foix and Lord of Béarn, politician, poet, author and

passionate hunter, whose *Book of the Hunt* was an important 14th-century reference manual of the animal world.

Musée de Cluny, 6 place Paul Painlevé, 5th, Métro: Cluny-La Sorbonne. 01.53.73.78.16.
www.musee-moyenage.fr
€8.50 Through Mar 5



Gaston Fébus, *The Book of the Hunt*, c. 1387–1407, at the Musée de Cluny

Manon

A new production of Jules Massenet's perennial favorite opera whose fickle heroine is torn between love for the Chevalier Des Grieux and the temptations of luxurious life with richer suitors. Staged by film director Coline Serreau, with French star soprano Natalie Dessay in the title role and Italian tenor Giuseppe Filianoti as Des Grieux.

Opéra Bastille, Place de la Bastille, 12th, Métro: Bastille, 08.92.89.90.90 (from abroad +33.1.71.25.24.23)
www.operadeparis.fr **€15–€180**
In repertory Jan 10–Feb 13

Les Masques de Jade Mayas

Elaborate funerary masks made of jade mosaics, some with inlays of other semiprecious stones, were created for the governors of important Mayan cities to insure them eternal life. Fifteen have been discovered, most of them included in this show of



Francesco Guardi, *The Doges' Palace Seen from the Sea*, c. 1780-1790, at the Bibliothèque Nationale de France

more than 100 Mayan objects never before shown outside of Mexico.

La Pinacothèque de Paris, 28 place de la Madeleine, 8th, Métro: Madeleine. 01.42.68.02.01. www.pinacothèque.com €10 Jan 26-June 10



Funerary mask in jade mosaic, 660-750, at the Pinacothèque de Paris

Casanova, La Passion de la Liberté

Celebrating the acquisition of the original manuscript, in French, of Giacomo Casanova's autobiography, *L'Histoire de Ma Vie*, an exhibit of some 250 manuscripts, paintings, drawings, engravings, sculptures and film clips tracing the life and times of the legendary 18th-century Italian libertine. Some facility with French is necessary to enjoy this one.

Bibliothèque Nationale, Site François Mitterrand, Quai François Mauriac, 13th, Métro: Bibliothèque F. Mitterrand. www.bnf.fr €7 Through Feb 19

PROVINCE

Tomi Ungerer et Ses Maîtres

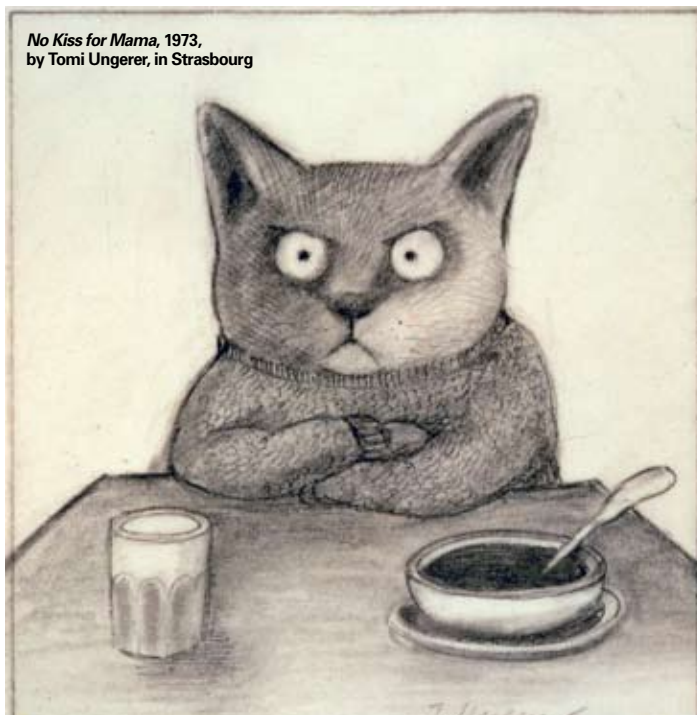
Subtitled "Inspirations and Dialogues", a major exhibit of some 300 works celebrating the 80th birthday of the artist, illustrator and cartoonist by documenting the many artists who influenced him, including Dürer, Grünewald, Holbein, Casar David Friedrich, Daumier, Goya, Ernst, Dix, Grosz and Ensor.

Musée Tomi Ungerer, 2 ave de la Marseillaise, Strasbourg,

03.69.06.37.27. www.musees.strasbourg.eu €6 Through Feb 19

Sous les Tilleuls, Les Modernes: De Monet à Soulages

The Musée Unterlinden (under the linden trees, or *sous les tilleuls*) is renowned for its splendid collection of medieval and Renaissance art, including Matthias Grünewald's magnificent 16th-century Issenheim altarpiece, but it also has a solid modern and contemporary collection, on show for the last time before it moves to a new extension in 2013: Monet, Renoir, Rodin, Bonnard, Dix, Soutine, Dubuffet and a unique tapestry of Picasso's *Guernica*.



No Kiss for Mama, 1973, by Tomi Ungerer, in Strasbourg

Musée Unterlinden, 1 rue d'Unterlinden, Colmar, 03.89.20.15.50. www.musee-unterlinden.com €8 Through Feb 19

AND DON'T FORGET

these events and their closing dates:

PARIS

Giacometti et les Etrusques

Pinacothèque de Paris, Jan 8

Edvard Munch Centre Pompidou, Jan 9

La Cité Interdite Louvre, Jan 9

L'Espagne Entre Deux Siècles Musée de l'Orangerie, Jan 9

Beauté, Morale et Volupté Musée d'Orsay, Jan 15

Paul Klee Polyphonies Cité de la Musique, Jan 15

Napoléon III et l'Italie Musée de l'Armée, Jan 15

Au Royaume d'Alexandre le Grand Musée du Louvre, Jan 16

Matisse, Cézanne, Picasso:

L'Aventure des Stein Grand Palais, Jan 16

Fra Angelico Musée Jacquemart-André, Jan 16

Des Jouets et des Hommes Grand Palais, Jan 23

Sempé Hôtel de Ville, Feb 11

Pompéi-Un Art de Vivre Musée Maillol, Feb 12

The Wyeths Mona Bismarck Foundation, Feb 12

L'Hôtel Particulier Cité de l'Architecture, Feb 19

Henri-Edmond Cross Musée Marmottan Monet, Feb 19

Cézanne et Paris Musée du Luxembourg, Feb 26

Le Peuple de Paris au XIXe Siècle Musée Carnavalet, Feb 26

Et Lutèce Devint Paris Crypte Archéologique Parvis Notre Dame, Feb 26

Expressionismus & Expressionism Pinacothèque de Paris, Mar 11

Fantin-Latour, Manet, Baudelaire Musée Delacroix, Mar 19

Kremer Collection, L'Age d'Or Hollandais Pinacothèque de Paris, Mar 25

Histoires de Babar Les Arts Décoratifs, Sept 2

PROVINCE

L'Age Roman Musée Sainte-Croix, Poitiers, Jan 16

Jacques Gruber et l'Art Nouveau Galeries Poirel, Nancy, Jan 22

L'Europe des Esprits Musée d'Art Moderne et Contemporain, Strasbourg, Feb 12

Charlie Chaplin Palais Lumière, Evian, May 20

Ronan & Erwan Bouroullec Centre Pompidou-Metz, July 30

SWITZERLAND

Dalí, Ernst, Miró: Le Surréalisme à Paris Fondation Beyeler, Basel, Jan 29

For more Calendar events: www.francetoday.com/

A la Carte

by Alexander Lobrano



L'Office

PARIS

L'Office

More than ever, Paris is a magnet for ambitious young chefs from all over the world. The latest cook to join the growing foreign talent pool is American Kevin O'Donnell, who worked in Italy and at New York City's excellent Del Posto before teaming up to take over **L'Office** with French business partner Charles Compagnon. In an ever more gastronomic corner of the 9th arrondissement, L'Office was a good little restaurant in its previous incarnation, but it's even better now. O'Donnell and Compagnon have given it an attractive makeover, with low lighting and sea-green walls curiously hung with a hunting trophy or two. The blackboard menu changes daily, but starters served at a recent dinner demonstrated O'Donnell's inventive Italianate style—a serving of oven-roasted pork belly came with a fried egg, a rich puree of slow-baked tomatoes, a few leaves of arugula and a scattering of pickled red onion, while white bean soup was garnished with a large crouton topped with a few spicy sprigs of wild fennel and a transparent ribbon of *lardo di Colonnata*—pork lard cured and aged in marble basins in Colonnata, Italy. Main courses were excellent too: a rich “*pot-au-feu*” that was

actually more like a deboned osso bucco and a juicy, alabaster chicken breast slow-cooked for hours before a final grilling, served with girolles, celery-root puree and pickled radishes. A “melting” chocolate cake with grilled bananas, hazelnuts and banana ice cream was pleasant enough but didn't compare to the casual but confident culinary elegance of the main meal. Reserve well in advance.

3 rue Richer, 9th, 01.47.70.67.31. Lunch menus €19, €24; dinner €27, €33

PARIS

A Fine Pair

Thanks to low rents and gastronomically adventurous locals, the 11th arrondissement continues to be a hatchery of really good, new and affordable restaurants. Among the latest, **La Cave de L'Insolite** is a wine bistrot with a talented Irish chef in the kitchen sending out dishes like marinated salmon and veal steak with roasted potatoes and beets. 30 rue de la Folie Méricourt, 11th, 01.53.36.08.33. Lunch menu €14, à la carte €30

Over at the handsome **Le Petit Cheval de Manège** (the little carousel horse), Xavier Thiery, formerly of the very upmarket Lucas Carton and Lapérouse, cooks up terrific modern bistrot dishes like ceviche of sea bass with avocado, black olives and oranges or grilled scallops in leek cream sauce on a giant duxelles-filled ravioli. 5 rue Froment, 11th, 09.82.37.18.52. €35

BORDEAUX

Cretan Catch

When he opened La Tupina in the Vieux Bordeaux quarter in 1968, restaurateur Jean-Pierre Xiradakis not only created one of the city's most emblematic addresses—



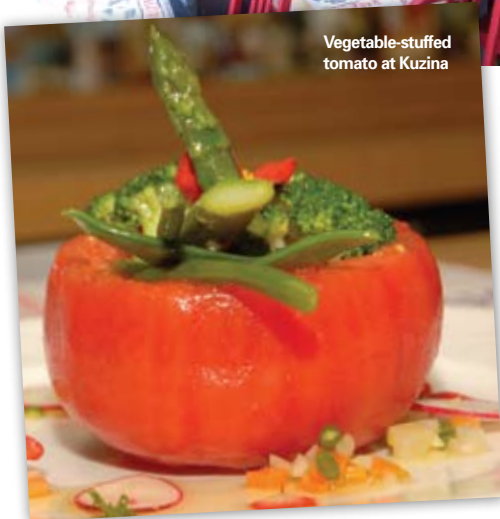
Le Petit Cheval de Manège

L'Office © B. Heller



Kuzina

Vegetable-stuffed tomato at Kuzina



MONTPELLIER

Château Lunch

When seeking winter sun in France, Montpellier, in Languedoc-Roussillon, is a wonderful destination. Not only is it one of the most popular holiday cities among the French themselves, it's also young, lively, endowed with some excellent museums, and the local restaurant scene just keeps getting better and better. The latest find is **Folia**, at the Château de Flaugergues, a charming 18th-century château and wine estate run by Count Henri de Colbert and his family. Open for lunch only from Monday to Friday, the relaxed, good-value restaurant features the delicious market-driven cooking of young chef Thierry Alix, who formerly had his own restaurant in Sète. Alix's menus change almost daily, but a few recent offerings included *brandade de morue* made with artichoke mouseline instead of potatoes; leek velouté sparked up with an Espelette pepper cream quenelle; sautéed lamb with olives garnished with creamy polenta and beet mousse; and poached orange with white-chocolate ganache—all original and delicious. Plan to visit the château's spectacular gardens for a post-prandial stroll, too. 1744 ave Albert Einstein, 04.99.52.66.35. Three-course prix-fixe lunch menu €19.50

Prices are approximate, per person without wine.

Alexander Lobrano's book Hungry for Paris is published by Random House. www.hungryforparis.com.

Find it in the France Today Bookstore: www.francetoday.com/store

For all our restaurant reviews: www.francetoday.com/

a charming bistro specializing in southwestern French farmhouse cooking—but also gave this beautiful but forlorn and rather forgotten district a major boost. Today, Xiradakis's restaurants line nearly a whole street in what's become a thriving and fashionable neighborhood. The newest of them is **Kuzina**, a seafood restaurant with a menu inspired by the island of Crete, recalling his Greek ancestry. The mosaic-clad interior features an ice-filled counter displaying the catch of the day, just as often found in Greece, and the wood-topped tables are set with sheets of Greek fishmonger's wrapping paper. For starters at a recent lunch, marinated swordfish was served with a yellow-beet "gazpacho", and a velouté of red cabbage came with scallops and a spinach-filled blini. Next came beautifully prepared fresh cod steak with lentils, and sea bream cooked in a salt crust and garnished with shiitake mushrooms. Desserts were terrific too—caramelized clementine with chestnut sabayon, and lime-spiked cheesecake. 22 rue Porte de la Monnaie, 05.56.74.32.92. Lunch menu €18, à la carte €50



Folia at the Château de Flaugergues

BOUTIQUE BEAT

Secret Corners

by Jennifer Ladonne

FRANCK ET FILS

Imagine Galeries Lafayette without the crowds, Bon Marché without the attitude, Colette without the noise and you've got **Franck et Fils**. One of Paris's best kept secrets, this little gem of a department store is also one of the city's oldest. When Emma Franck first opened her *mercerie*, or notions shop, in 1897, her selection of beautiful fabrics, elegant ribbons and original hats—and her one-day sales, very innovative for the time—made it a go-to spot for elegant Parisiennes. The little boutique quickly grew to become one of the first department stores solely dedicated to women. After World War I, Madame Franck moved to the larger premises still in use today. The elegant building is small enough to peruse in an hour or two, and the sweeping central staircase, plush dove-colored carpets and choice selection of designer goods, along with exclusive French labels for things like cashmere and gloves and a smashing jewelry collection, make it a perfect spot for a leisurely afternoon's shopping. A lovely tea room serves pastry delights from La Grande Epicerie in the big Bon Marché department store on the Left Bank (Franck et Fils is now owned by the Bon Marché Group). While there is not the sheer quantity found in other department stores, in fact a large part of the appeal is that the selection has been astutely narrowed down. The salespeople actually seem eager to help, and the store is still known for its limited sales outside of the usual sale periods. 80 rue de Passy, 16th, 01.44.14.38.00. www.francketfils.fr

NATURAL ELEGANCE

The upscale shops along rue du Pont Louis-Philippe—one of the thoroughfares connecting the Ile Saint Louis and the Marais—fall into three categories: original women's clothing, high-end stationers



Silk and cashmere scarves at Iki Galerie



and some of the more interesting jewelry to be found in the Marais, including the new **Iki Galerie**, the latest and most unusual shop on the two-block lineup. Owner Colette Gohel has represented artisanal jewelry and textile designers for 20 years, first in Rennes and since last November in Paris. Her new, light-filled space offers an ideal venue for the 20 or so independent jewelry makers represented here.

The Japanese word *iki* conveys a notion of innate sophistication combined with a touch of audacity or daring, says Gohel, who describes her jewelry as having a “natural elegance” imbued with the graceful forms found in nature. Marie Charpentier's sculpted silver bracelets and necklaces resemble undersea corals with smooth pearlescent centers. Lorna Balteanu's intricate necklaces of macramé silk cord are laced with tiny pearls, and Armel Barroud's whimsical Calderesque fish earrings and double tiger-head necklace are shaped in gold, red and silver wire. Gohel also stresses the jewelry's approachability—all of the pieces are one-of-a-kind or made in very limited editions, but their artiness is not assertive and they can easily be worn everyday. For a final flourish, Iki also carries a small selection of highly original silk and cashmere scarves. 18 rue du Pont Louis-Philippe, 4th, 01.44.61.44.27. www.iki-galerie.com

PAMPERED PETS

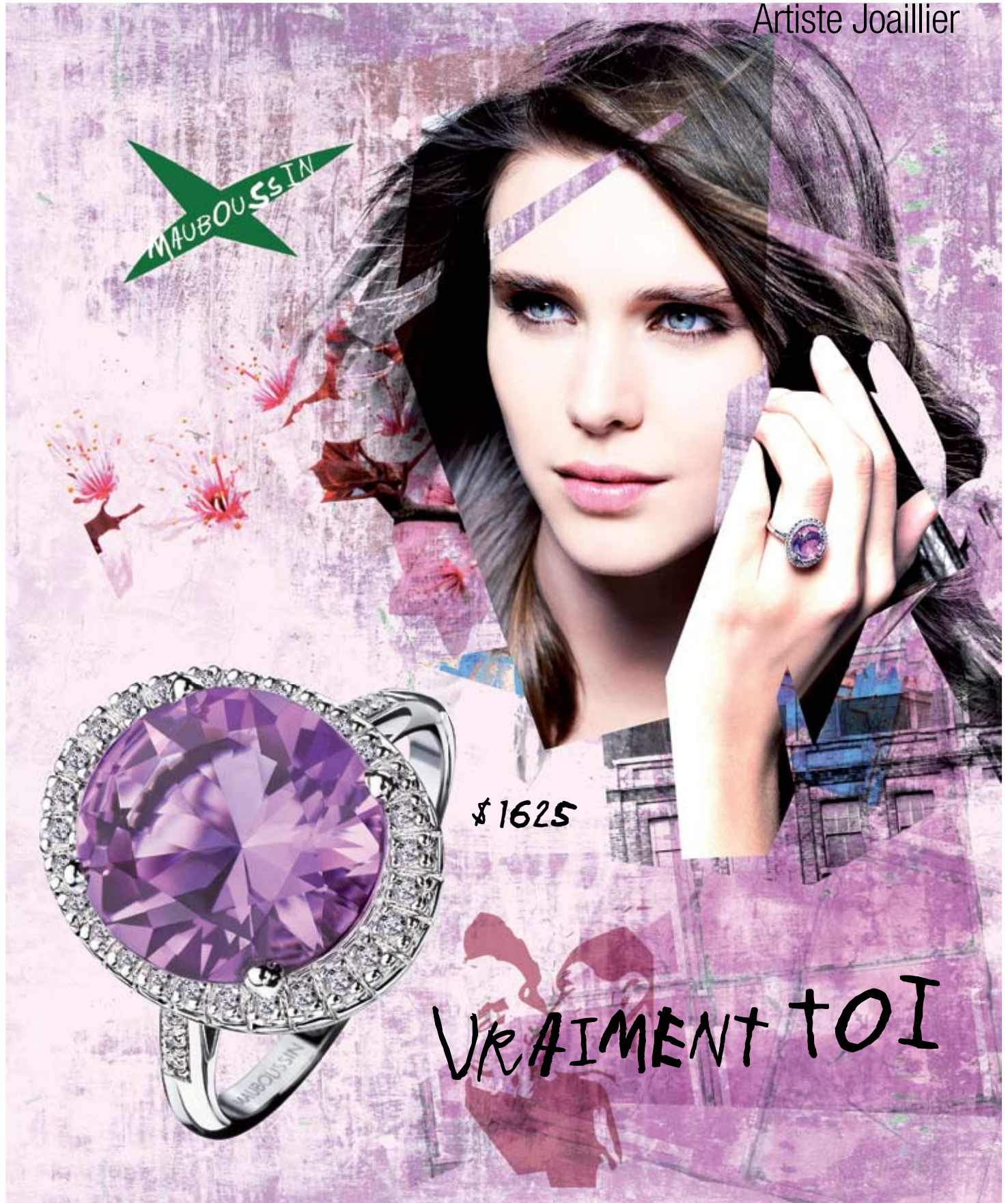
The first and only department store in Paris devoted to cats and dogs, **Moustaches** is brimming with items hand-picked for quality and originality. The store is divided into sections that reflect every aspect of a pampered pet's life: play, taking a walk, dressing up, hygiene, snack time and “repose”. The departments have clever titles, too, like *Sur Mon 31*—a French expression for putting on the dog. A wall full of collars, harnesses and leashes includes everything from sturdy leather models in candy-colored or metallic-finish leather to over-the-top rhinestone numbers that would do Hollywood poodles proud. Parisian pets are patently no less style-conscious than their owners: an urbane Burberry-esque plaid overcoat, comfy velour “jogging” suits and a sleek leather bomber jacket seem to be essentials for the well-appointed canine. Whether your pet prefers to gnaw on a pig's ear or stalk a bunch of pheasant feathers, there are scores of provocative toys, and a cat carrier in mauve velvet with silver piping wouldn't be out of place in the court of Cleopatra. 32 rue des Archives, 4th, 01.42.71.05.21. www.moustaches.fr ■

For more of the best French boutiques and shopping:
www.francetoday.com

Paris. 20, place Vendôme
New York flagship at 714 Madison Avenue (212) 752 4300

MAUBOUSSIN

Artiste Joaillier



\$1625

VRAIMENT TOI

Design Now

by Jean Bond Rafferty



Dance With Fashion ad for Galeries Lafayette by Jean-Paul Goude

BRILLIANTLY GOUDE

When France's Wizard of Oz—Jean-Paul Goude—steps out from behind the backstage curtain, it's always to thunderous applause. The artist, photographer, filmmaker, art director, creator of ingenious advertising campaigns and choreographer of spectacular live events is being celebrated with a first Paris retrospective, *Goudmalion*, at the Musée des Arts Décoratifs (until March 18). When Goude gets going, the action is fast-forward. The show opens with elements of his most extravagant creation, the July 14, 1989 Bicentennial parade in Paris celebrating the 200th anniversary of the French Revolution. The show starts at the entrance, where one of 30 giant mechanical dolls that twirled down the Champs-Élysées stands with her vast skirt cut

away to display Goude's cleverly devised mechanics. Stretching almost the entire length of the museum's grand nave, the gigantic steam-spouting locomotive that led the festivities is flanked by video screens replaying the big event, showing that when it rains—and snows—on Goude's parades, it's part of his plan. Excerpts—with English commentary—show the British contingent marching in a downpour, thanks to Paris Fire Department hoses, while the Russians were powdered with artificial snow.

Goude's art installations are arranged with the same signature panache: A live model swathed in evening gown and pearls glides mysteriously around the exhibition, while two busts of his iconic muse, Jamaican-American singer Grace Jones, indulge in a dramatic face-off. Other galleries trace Goude's career from childhood drawings of Indians through his years as art director of *Esquire* (featuring his oil-on-photo painting of Chairman Mao breasting the waves of the Yangtze river with a rubber Donald Duckie) to such witty advertising-clip gems as a be-feathered Vanessa Paradis swinging in a birdcage for Chanel's Coco perfume and the irresistible adventures of the Kodakettes, mischievous kids clad in red-and-white stripes, for Kodak, that brought smiles from both parents and children visiting the show on a recent Sunday afternoon. Bravo, Monsieur Goude! Your show is a delight. www.lesartsdecoratifs.fr

STRIKING A NEW CHORD

The Manufacture Pleyel has been making connoisseur pianos since 1807—one of its earliest clients was Frédéric Chopin. Later such famous Art Nouveau and Art Deco designers as Jacques Majorelle and Jacques-Emile Ruhlmann were brought in to design frames; more recently the company has collaborated with contemporary designers including Andrée Putman. Now Pleyel has decided to exploit its state-of-the-art savoir-faire in woodworking, lacquer and veneer craftsmanship by launching a contemporary furniture collection. American-in-Paris decorator Hilton McConnico was one of the first to step up to the challenge, designing a Pleyel sofa

and armchair finished in bands of matte and brilliant lacquer, also available



Wonderful Archie stool by Philippe Maidenberg and Hilton McConnico's armchair, both for Pleyel

McConnico chair, Maidenberg stool © Govin Sorel, Goude © Jean-Paul Goude

Ceramic and fabric collaboration by Pierre Frey and ceramicist Vincent Buffile; insert, a Bakou printed weekend bag



FLOWERS AND FIREFLIES

When winter comes can spring be far behind? Artist and designer Joy de Rohan-Chabot's latest *Lucioles* (Fireflies) collection in wood, bronze and glass provides a whimsical foretaste of balmy days in a magical garden. Inspired by her poetic vision of nature, Rohan-Chabot's huge iridescent bronze butterfly spreads its wings to support a cloud-shaped glass tabletop while delicately



in birch plywood and varnished Makassar ebony. The rounded backs of the sofa and chair echo a piano's curves, and comfort is assured by cushions covered in leather, velvet or silk taffeta. Paris-based designer Alice Etcaetera's *Harmonie et*

Contraste oval dining and coffee tables are made of solid, smoothly rounded or oval natural olive ash with a contrasting black lacquer central strip and curved black lacquer supports. Her wavy Art Deco-style folding screen features a central panel of brilliant black lacquer between two panels of olive ash. Hotel architect and designer Philippe Maidenberg's line of *Wonderful Archie* medium-high stools has a suitably musical inspiration, derived from the stage stool he invented for saxophonist Archie Shepp. Produced in a 99-piece limited edition, it comes in mahogany or birch plywood with solid beech legs in a choice of colors and finishes. www.pleyel.fr

MIXED MEDIA

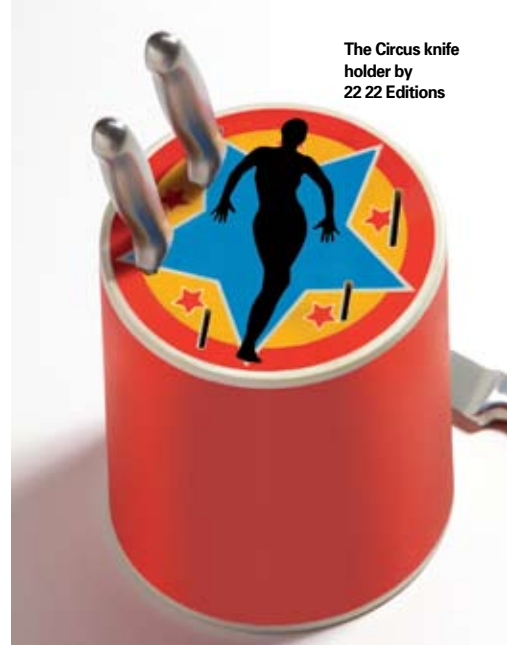
On vacation in Provence, French fabric king Patrick Frey discovered the ceramic artistry of Vincent Buffile in the Aix-en-Provence studio the ceramicist shares with his wife Monique. Their meeting led to mutual enthusiasm for a creative collaboration. Buffile's "ink-splattered" abstract ceramic designs gave birth to the new black-and-white Pierre Frey fabric called *Léo*, while such graphic Frey fabric motifs as *Ondes*, *Théssalie*, *Concorde* and *Rameaux*, along with Bakou from the printed Frey handbag and luggage accessory range, inspired a collection of Buffile's decorative ceramic plates, vases and cachepots. Pierre Frey, 2 bis rue de Furstenberg, 01.43.26.82.61. www.pierrefrey.com; www.buffile-ceramiste.com

trees are hung with beautiful butterflies and glass candle jars that twinkle like fireflies when lighted at night. Each bronze design, made in collaboration with the Fusion foundry in Auvergne, is unique, but similar sculptural works may be ordered on commission. www.joyderohanchabot.com; www.galeriematignon.com

FROSTED, FRAGILE AND FUN

Faridha El Gabsi and Jean-Claude Cardiet, a former perfume flacon designer, have pledged their 22 22 Edition Design production company to champion humor and poetry in "beautiful objects that combine function and fiction", recounting stories with a twist to add mystery—and a dash of surrealism—to everyday objects. Their six-object first collection tells some eclectic tales, from a frosted-glass *Biblio* lamp in the shape of luminous books that slips in among the real ones on the shelf to a *chaise longue* strung with pearlized plastic balls. Still stylish, but more mainstream, an updated cane-patterned chair is "designed like a construction puzzle" and made of laser-cut metal. "As beautiful and fragile as an art object" is Cardiet's description of the porcelain *Ciel & Terre* (Sky & Earth) bud vase that reverses into a basket or a candleholder—the product of a newly developed Limoges porcelain technique. The most fun: the hot-red enameled porcelain knife holder emblazoned with the female-silhouette target of a

The Circus knife holder by 22 22 Editions



The cane-patterned laser-cut metal chair by 22 22 Editions



circus knife-thrower that is bound to brighten up the most minimalist kitchen. www.2222editiondesign.fr ■

For more Design Now: www.francetoday.com/

Flowering garden chair by Joy de Rohan-Chabot



VAL D'ISÈRE

A beautiful Alpine village with simply magnificent skiing

by Ellen Wallace



The closest you can get to heaven on earth is Val d'Isère, some people will argue—and they are right—because it has one of the best bakeries in France, the family business of native son Patrick Chevallot, who holds a coveted medal as a *Meilleur Ouvrier de France* for pastry and confections.

Of course the resort village, snugly nestled in an Alpine valley at 6,000 feet in altitude, also has spectacular skiing, snowboarding and other winter sports for the adventuresome—like ice-wall climbing—along with great food, delightful bars, hotels for every taste and budget, and a surfeit of visual charm, thanks to local stonework and village architecture that dates back several centuries.

Skiers' paradise

Val d'Isère is one of several well-known French *stations de ski* that fan out from the valley town of Albertville, the home of the 1992

Winter Olympics. In the French *département* of Savoie, near the glacial source of the Isère River and only a few miles from the Italian border, Val d'Isère is easily reached by car, only a 3-1/2 hour drive from Geneva, which has the closest international airport; Lyon, the closest major French hub, is slightly farther away. The Alpine drive is beautiful and relatively easy, but if you're doing it in winter, snow tires are a must. (Chains are rarely needed but should be on hand just in case.)

The last 16 miles, all uphill from the town of Bourg Saint Maurice, offer a spectacular view of the Vanoise National Park and the Tarentaise Valley, with the road flattening out only when you reach the modern, 1960s ski-buff hamlet of Tignes. Together with Val d'Isère it makes up the vast Espace Killy ski area, named after famous local son Jean-Claude Killy—triple-crown winner of Olympic gold in downhill, slalom and grand slalom in 1968, with a series of World Championships and World Cup titles *en plus con-*





The village center with its 16th-century church



The Chevallot bakery

firming him as one of the world's all-time great skiers.

Beyond their shared peaks and ski lifts, Tignes and Val d'Isère could not be more different. In the space of some two-and-a-half miles, the high-rises and noisy nightclubs of Tignes give way to beautiful Val d'Isère, with some 1,200 or more year-round residents and a true village life, despite the steady influx of tourists from December to early May. Traditional Savoyard architecture dominates, with local pale gray stone facades, wood trim in abundance, giant beams and extended roofs that offer

protection from the wild winter weather. A fine example is the new local history museum, well worth a visit, which opened in time for the holidays.

The village also has summer visitors, since there's a high pass open to Italy and mountain trails for experienced hikers, but it lives off its winter sports business. The road to Italy is quickly invisible once the first big snowfall arrives, giving the impression that this is the last stop for humans—after this Mother Nature takes over the rugged peaks and animal life that are part of the Vanoise National Park and its nature reserves.

The ski area is simply magnificent, a perfect mix of exacting runs for the world's best skiers—Val d'Isère is a regular World Cup host—and a manageable layout of three main ski sectors that hook up at the top, with plenty of opportunities for beginners and fair-weather skiers.

Serious sustenance

The first clue that this is serious ski-bum country is the main street at 8:00 am, where corners are crowded with young guys and their gear waiting for the free shuttle bus to get them to the lifts when they open.

This is also the moment when you realize that baker Chevallot's cozy main-street shop is like no other in France. Business is booming, and while half the clients are buying bread for the family's breakfast, the other half is stomping the snow off ski boots and stocking up on hearty *salés*, savory specialties that go straight into their backpacks—two-inch thick quiches, for example, spinach and salmon or maybe goat cheese and leek. A smiling couple is enjoying breakfast at a corner table of the bakery's little tearoom.

"We make things for people going off to do sports, who need something to sustain them," says Chevallot, who stops every two minutes to greet another old friend as people stream in the door. Some are returning skiers, but early in December, most are villagers talking weather and taxes.

The bakery produces extraordinary



bread, including varieties made with potato puree and Beaufort cheese. But there are elegant delicacies too, as the pastry display in the window makes clear.

“We do the classics,” says Chevallot, “lem-on tarts, éclairs and *gâteaux aux myrtilles*, but our specialty is old recipes, traditional ones that many bakeries have abandoned, thinking people aren’t interested anymore. We rework them a bit,” he adds as he makes a sweeping gesture toward the bakery’s shelves, piled high with the kind of goodies that bring out the child in all of us.

Snug shops, funky cafés

Both exquisite French cuisine and traditional Savoyard dishes are easy to find in Val d’Isère too. The hotel Le Savoie, across the street from Chevallot, gave the reins of its restaurant Le Grain de Sel to 29-year-old chef Alexandre Fabris who, despite his youth, is noted for updated recipes from his grandmother and her generation.

The Chevallot bakery and the Wine Not wine bar at Le Savoie are just two of the many stops in Val d’Isère that are a distraction for those who are not hell-bent on getting to the ski runs. There are so many great little shops, and they aren’t all selling just sports gear, as in many resorts.

The narrow lanes of the old village are ideal for snug little boutiques, funky cafés and restaurants—and nearly a pedestrian’s dream. Cars are allowed, but there is virtually no parking on the streets. (Tip: drop off your bags at your hotel and leave the car in one of the parking lots.)

Glorious snow!

In 2008, the village also stopped using salt on the streets. The snow remains gloriously white and fresh-looking as a result, but

also because it is constantly reworked by a fleet of snowplows whose drivers have an extraordinary job, re-creating village streets and spaces using snow, to guarantee that pedestrians remain kings. The plows churn up the snow every morning to keep it from getting icy underfoot, and they block off streets with new snowbanks. (Tip: if you’re nervous about icy patches, treat yourself to a pair of mini-chains for the bottom of your boots, available at sports shops.)

Snow is what Val d’Isère is all about, and the best place for it is on top of the mountain. The piste maps from the tourist office are easy to use (but if you have an iPhone definitely get the piste-map app). The Solaise is the lift area at the center, just above the village, but the bus takes only 10 minutes to reach either end of the village, and from there you’re at the top in 10 to 15 minutes. North of the village the slopes are austere and covered in avalanche protection fences. The ski slopes are all on the village’s south side, meaning they are mostly north-facing and the snow lasts longer, but the valley is wide enough for skiers to be in the sun most of the time. Lifts are open until 4:45 pm, even in early December.

It’s fairly amazing, given its World Cup-level skiing reputation, to discover that Val d’Isère is also a very family-friendly resort. The center of the village was cleared (and a pedestrian tunnel run under it) to create an open play space for kids and snowmen, where in midwinter little groups gather with ski teachers at the start of lessons. Just under the Olympic ski lift in the village center, the three-year-old sports center offers a swimming pool, fitness room, therapy pool and a kids’ play area. ■



VAL D’ISERE NOTEBOOK

WHERE TO STAY

Most hotels are open early December to mid-April.

PALATIAL

Les Barmes de l’Ours Hugging the Olympic run, Michelin one-star restaurant, balconies with great views, magical spa. Scandinavian, American or Savoyard-style rooms. Top floor suite is a honeymoon must!

Chemin des Carats, 04.79.41.37.00, www.hotel-les-barmes.com

Le Savoie Recently renovated, spacious hotel rooms and suites for families, great play areas with toys and electronic games. Restaurant Le Grain de Sel (try the Bresse chicken), splendid dessert menu from top French pastry chef Philippe Rigollot. *Avenue Olympique, 04.79.00.01.15, www.lesavoie.com*

REASONABLE

Avenue Lodge Chic, contemporary, warm and welcoming, great restaurant and bar, convenient, good service. *Avenue Olympique, 04.79.00.67.67, www.hotelavenuelodge.com*

Ormelune Two years old, best deal in town with range of prices, funky bright design, airy rooms. *Rue Noël Machet, 04.79.06.12.93, www.ormelune.com*

Les Lauzes Basic, comfortable, cozy dark wood paneling. *Place de l’Eglise, 04.79.06.04.20, www.hotel-lauzes.com*

WHERE TO EAT

Other than hotel restaurants

Maison Chevallot The heavenly bakery. *Val Village (main roundabout), 04.79.06.16.09, www.chevallot.com*

La Sana Quick but good hot lunch outdoors at foot of the central village chairlift. *Résidence Le Grand Cocor, 04.79.07.04.54.*

Le Coin des Amis Asian food, nibbles, beer, takeaway. *Place Jacques Moufflier, Le Vieux Val.*

La Corniche Fondue, raclette, stone-grilled meats and authentic Savoyard dishes. *Vieux Village, 04.79.06.18.75.*

Le Wine Not The wine bar at Hôtel Le Savoie, light meals from noon on, works with one of France’s top sommeliers, tasting courses on offer. *Avenue Olympique, 04.79.00.01.15.*

La Casa Scara Inexpensive southern Italian food, sometimes a special open wine of the day. *Place de l’Eglise, 04.79.06.26.21.*

For more travel features: www.francetoday.com



Fondue Savoyarde

by Christina Rebuffet-Broadus

Friends, still dressed in their ski garb, gather on a restaurant terrace to skewer bread cubes onto long forks before dunking them into a bubbling cast-iron or earthenware *caquelon*. Steam wafts from the pot, a miniature volcano among the snow-capped summits. The image might date from an old 1950s postcard, but fast-forward to the 21st century, and not much has changed slopeside. A ski vacation in the Alps still means fondue.

The wintry meal gets its name from the verb *fondre*, to melt. There's no debate about that. But the argument over where fondue comes from and exactly what goes into it, however, rages up and down the mountainside.

Swiss or Savoyarde?

For most people around the world, fondue symbolizes Switzerland,

Dipping chunks of bread into a cauldron of melted cheese is a traditional Alpine treat—but who dunked first?

ranking right up there with chocolate and precision watches. But for the French, cheese fondue is 100% Savoyarde, from France's premier ski region. So who dipped into the gooey goodness first, the Swiss or the Savoyards?

According to Isabelle Raboud Schüle, director of the Musée Gruérien in Bulle, Switzerland, fondue first delighted elite city-dwellers in places like Zurich, where the earliest known recipe appeared in 1699. "It's hard to say exactly who invented the dish," she cautions, "but throughout the 18th and 19th centuries, recipes for fondue were common in urban bourgeois

kitchens." Swiss kitchens, that is.

On the other side of the Alps, Thierry Thorens, gourmet writer and chef at Morzine's La Chamade restaurant, claims that fondue resulted from the need to use leftover cheese. Alpine peasants enjoyed few luxuries and cheese was one of their more precious treasures. According to Thorens, melting several cheeses together

offered a way to use leftover cheese, morsels that would have otherwise been lost.

It's important to remember that the Alps form a natural border, but man drew the Franco-Swiss frontier right through them. "Cheesemakers from Switzerland's Gruyère region would naturally have traveled to Savoie and the French Jura," Raboud Schüle points out. "The cheesemakers shared their savoir-faire with their neighbors, since Swiss dairy farmers had perfected hard-rind cheeses like Gruyère."

Marketing melted cheese

Fondue may have been around in various homemade forms since the 17th century, but Switzerland and the rest of the world would have to wait for a between-the-wars surplus of cheese for the dish to climb to its iconic status. During the 1930s, Swiss farmers produced much more cheese than Swiss citizens consumed. To boost sales, the Switzerland Cheese Marketing agency needed to convince people to eat more cheese, and the more different preparations there were to tempt them the better.

In a smart move, the Union suggested four different types of fondue, each linked to a different region. A citizen of Fribourg would then be proud to serve a pot of bubbling vacherin cheese mixed with a little water. In the Valais area, a little tomato sauce added a signature rose tint. In Geneva or the Vaud region, local wines spiked local fondue. People soon latched onto *their* regional recipe, which joined the ranks of popular specialties.

Fondue savoyarde followed suit, using more French cheeses than Swiss. A common recipe calls for 1/3 Comté, 1/3 Beaufort—two of France's finest mountain cheeses—and 1/3 Swiss Gruyère. Some French fondue fans may also add Abondance, a semihard cheese named after the Savoyarde breed of cows who supply the milk, and a town in the Haute-Savoie. But, as in Switzerland, no single recipe reigns.

From clay pot to caquelon

An 18th-century cook would hardly recognize a modern fondue set. Although the enameled cast iron caquelon, its convenient alcohol burner and color-coded forks made for many successful soirées in the 1970s, the earliest fondue equipment consisted of more rustic material—often just a clay pot and glowing embers. Raboud Schüle notes

that "the burner-caquelon couple has only been standard household equipment since the 1950s. It wasn't so common for earlier generations."

After World War II, the cheese marketing agency renewed its 1930s campaign, again pushing people to ratchet up consumption of Gruyère and Vacherin. A plentiful supply after years of wartime restrictions, improvements in fondue paraphernalia and intense marketing efforts meant that Alpine society simply melted for rich, decadent fondue. What's more, it's a fun, easy dinner that brings friends and family together around a delicious dish. Who wouldn't melt over that?

*You may have to buy
a round of drinks,
kiss your neighbor or
run naked through
the snow.*

And what a choice of paraphernalia there is. Fondue sets have long been a popular Alpine souvenir. Some are decorated with edelweiss, others come in bold Bordeaux red or sapphire. There's even a small heart-shaped pot for a romantic chocolate fondue dessert. While fondue apparently still has a long life ahead, it has been popular for long enough to earn its own rites and language.

Do you speak fondue?

An invitation to a fondue dinner offers the occasion to observe a number of rituals that have developed over the years. The best opportunity is when *il fait un temps à fondue*—it's fondue weather. The wind chills, the clouds cloak the sun and the atmosphere absolutely calls for something hot, filling and comforting.

Once the caquelon bubbles, your host may insist on tracing figure eights in the melted cheese, supposedly the best way to prevent a solid ball from forming. "It's more of a mnemonic device so you don't forget to stir the mixture from time to time," contends Raboud Schüle. "There's no magic in the figure eight."

While dunking, plant the bread firmly onto the fork. If it falls off in the cheese, you're sure to get a *gage*—an obligation to buy a round of drinks, kiss your neighbor, or worse, run (somewhat) naked through the snow. Better be sure your bread cube can survive a fondue dunk if you want your dignity to survive a fondue dinner.

After the cheese has been swirled up forkful by forkful and finished, the pot will be crusted with toasted cheese. The near-burnt layer even has its own name—*la religieuse*—and this "nun" at the bottom of the pot is for some, a near-religious delight. Some say that's where the name comes from. Others claim the vaguely Communion-wafer texture led to the name. In either case, the scraping sound at the end of the meal means that, for some, the best is yet to come. ■

LA FONDUE SAVOYARDE

If you can't find all these cheeses, use a mixture of Emmental and Gruyère

*4 oz. shredded Beaufort cheese
4 oz. shredded Emmental cheese
4 oz. shredded Comté cheese
1 garlic clove
1 glass of white Savoie wine, such as
Apremont, or any light, delicate white wine
Baguette bread cut into 1 inch cubes
several hours before eating*

If you're having the fondue at night, cut the bread into cubes in the morning. This way they will have time to dry out just

enough to help them stay on the forks when dipped into the melted cheese.

At serving time, cut the garlic clove in half and rub the inside of the fondue pot with it. Add the white wine and place the pot on the stove over medium heat. When the wine is hot, add the cheese by handfuls, stirring constantly. Do not add all the cheese at once. Stir the mixture until it is homogenous. Add pepper to taste and transfer the fondue pot from the stove to the burner on the table.

Each guest sticks a cube of bread on their fork and dips it into the pot, being careful not to lose the bread!

Blithe Spirit

*Some of the rarest Cognac in the world
owes its existence to the English*

by Chris Redman

Nobody knows for sure why the practice started. Maybe it was an early example of the bulk buy. A plausible but unprovable explanation is that English merchants were getting tired of seeing their supplies of French brandy interrupted by the incessant Anglo-French wars of the 18th century and decided they needed a strategic stockpile from which to supply their customers. But whatever the reason, sometime around the 1750s a few enterprising English merchants, operating mainly out of the ancient port of Bristol, started buying their Cognac from France in barrels rather than bottles, which tend to get smashed in stormy seas. They bought it young—presumably because it was cheaper that way—then matured it in their own cellars. Because it arrived in England much sooner than would otherwise have been the case (and before it could be sold legally), it was dubbed “early-landed” Cognac.

What happened next is not the subject of any historical record or account but clearly involved a good deal of that wonderful ingredient, serendipity.



Just as somebody in Bourbon County, Kentucky, discovered that charred barrels make a better whisky, the good merchants of Bristol observed that the young, early-landed Cognac they had placed in their deep, dank cellars not only got better with age—a phenomenon already recognized by the Cognac cognoscenti—but also matured in a way that was decidedly different from the brandy laid down for aging in France. It was paler, mellower and somehow softer and more fragrant—particularly if the barrels were left undisturbed like sleeping beauties for ten or twenty years. The merchants liked it and so did others. Customers for the early-landed, Bristol-aged Cognac soon included the great colleges of Oxford and Cambridge, whose fellows liked to indulge in good brandy when they weren't knocking back the vintage port. Members of the aristocracy and even the royal family itself were not far behind.

The flavor factor

A market was born, and word of this early-landed brandy soon got out. The French Cognac houses could have scuppered the Bristol merchants by denying them their raw material, but the market was too porous, and if an embargo was

ever considered it was certainly not implemented. Instead many Cognac houses—notably Hine and Delamain, founded respectively by Englishman Thomas Hine and Irishman James Delamain—decided to get in on the act and started shipping their own brandy to England to be landed early.

What the Cognac houses realized was that they could not replicate the early-landed taste back home in France. This was due entirely to the conditions in which early-landed Cognac is matured. Bristol's deep cellars, carved out of the chalk that lies underneath the port city, are cooler and much damper than the *chais* of Cognac and Jarnac, the twin towns of Cognac production. Relative humidity in the latter fluctuates between 40% and 60% while in Bristol's cellars the humidity rarely falls below 95%. And whereas the temperature of the French *chais* can reach as high as 72° F in the summer months, Bristol's cellars maintain a steady, chilly 46–53° F. The main result is that the two brandies mature in ways that make them very different. France's drier, warmer cellars make for higher evaporation of water and alcohol from the spirit, with the water disappearing faster than the alcohol (which evaporates at a rate of around 2% a year—the so-called *part des anges*, the angels' share). As a result the ratio of alcohol to water (the so-called cask strength) remains higher. So when it's time to bottle the golden liquid, the France-matured spirit is watered down to reduce the alcohol content to the customary 40%, whereas early-landed Cognac loses less water, thanks to its humid surroundings, and hits the 40% alcohol mark naturally.

But the most important flavor factor is the difference in the ways the maturing spirits with their particular alcohol and water levels react with the barrel and the surrounding atmosphere (remember, wooden barrels are not 100% airtight and watertight). Cognac matured under French conditions extracts and assimilates more compounds such as tannins from the wood of the barrel and becomes more oxidized, giving it a much darker hue than early-landed Cognac, with hints of so-called *rancio*—the term given by Cognac aficionados to that complex blend of aromas



Sixth-generation Bernard Hine, the company's honorary president

and tastes from the wood that intensifies with age. Early-landed Cognac, on the other hand, is characterized by its finesse and fragrance, its lighter color, its delicate floral notes and long finish—characteristics that make it a favorite with connoisseurs.

Legendary years

The vintage mystique has also drawn these connoisseurs to early-landed Cognac. Until relatively recently it has been very difficult to bottle or buy vintage Cognac in France—that is to say, Cognac bearing the date of the year in which it was distilled and the date it was bottled (thus allowing the buyer to calculate how long it spent maturing in the barrel). The law changed in 1989, but before that there was no mechanism in the French regulatory system that allowed Cognac of a particular vintage to be easily segregated from other years

until the time came for bottling, and vintage statements were effectively banned.

Cognacs were—and still largely are—blends of spirit from different years, different distillations and different barrels, the aim being a consistency of taste to maintain a house style rather than showcasing a particular year with its idiosyncrasies. So Cognac connoisseurs who wanted to taste a special vintage—the legendary 1928 or 1948 for example—were forced to go to certain retailers, like Averys of Bristol or London-based Berry Bros. & Rudd, to buy from their early-landed supplies. Through the years, however, some of the Cognac houses, including Hine and Delamain, have built up early-landed stocks in Britain—which is why they can now offer vintage Cognacs.

These days very little early-landed Cognac is matured in Bristol, where the famous old cellars have been forced out by redevelopment in the city center. Hine also has stocks maturing on the Scottish island of Islay, justly famous for its great malt whiskies. But most early-landed stocks are now in the tender care of John Barrett, whose Bristol wine background led him to found the Bristol Spirits company back in the 1970s. Since then



James Delamain (1738–1800)

Barrett has become the virtual custodian of early-landed Cognac, first in an underground quarry near the village of Wickwar in rural Gloucestershire and now in the northern port of Liverpool, where he also matures early-landed rum. Barrett won't confirm how many hogsheads of Cognac are slumbering in his cellars but there's enough, he says, to keep the connoisseurs happy for the foreseeable future. Let's drink to that. ■

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IHA101



Of Bakers and Baguettes

by Susan Herrmann Loomis

I tear the end off the baguette I've just purchased at Aux Blés d'Or, my favorite bakery in town, and bite into it as I walk home through the chilly mist of an early Indian summer morning. As I listen to the sounds of a French town waking up, my mouth is flooded with an intoxicating yeasty, toasty flavor.

I never tire of that first, crusty bite of baguette, though I experience it nearly every morning. It's so fulsome, so satisfying, so comforting. It's also reassuring, just like the golden light from the bakery that is the only one ablaze early in the morning. When everyone sleeps, the baker is in his flour-dusted domain, working so that we can eat.

Bread wasn't always so easily had in France. The French Revolution was about bread—not the lack of it, but its price. Then, only the very wealthy could indulge. “Let them eat cake” (or brioche, as it is thought Marie Antoinette actually said) eventually led to regulated bread prices, and a hearty recipe that included three-fourths white flour and one-fourth rye so that not only could the citizenry enjoy bread, it was nutritious, too.

Today, bread prices are no longer regulated. What happens—and this is something of a well-kept secret—is that bakers

regulate themselves. They decide, neighborhood by neighborhood, to “fix” the price of a baguette. That way, no one undersells anyone else. The other thing bakers do is make sure one of their profession is open in each neighborhood, every day. They stagger their days off and their vacations. Is this proof that revolutions work?

It's more likely proof that the French adore their bread. On average, they consume about five ounces a day, and a recent poll showed that the French bakery is a French person's favorite shop.

Conqueror's loaf

It's easy to understand why when you walk into Aux Blés d'Or. Not only does baker Frédéric Bénard offer more than a dozen varieties of bread, but his companion, Nadège Marais, makes each client feel as if they've just caused the sun to rise. She greets those she knows by name, asks about their children, their illness, their pet. For regulars, she's got their favorite bread wrapped and ready by the time they get to the cash register. For others, she takes as much time as needed to help them decide what to purchase. Whether it be an ordinary baguette or an apple tart, the greeting and the treatment are exactly the same.

Depending on the time of day, Bénard

might have come up from his basement ovens and be behind the counter too, surveying the bread supply and getting a quick glimpse of those who eat his wares. “I like to see what the clients are actually buying,” he said. “Besides, it's fun up here!”

For Bénard, 40, there was never any doubt about what he wanted to do with his life. “I always wanted to be a baker,” he said. “I grew up in a bakery and loved it.” His mother convinced his older brothers to be bakers, and him to specialize in pastry. “I never thought about not doing what she said,” he said, laughing. “But I loved making bread so I studied that too.” He confesses to being occasionally torn between the disciplines. “One day I'll focus more on pastries,” he said. “For now, bread keeps me busy.”

Bénard is up at 3 am, six mornings a week, to get the ovens hot, the dough mixed, the breads shaped. The whole place looks as if someone went through it with a giant sifter. “No matter how much we sweep, there's always flour everywhere,” he said.

Aux Blés d'Or offers new varieties of bread to its clients on a regular basis. Where does Bénard get his ideas? “From the flour mills,” he said. “They offer us premixed flours and recipes. I like to offer new things to our clients.”

“New” breads might include a rustic loaf called a *fagotine* that is made with flour and

powdered sourdough. “The powdered sourdough gives it an old-fashioned sourdough flavor,” Mr. Bénard said. “I want to make my own sourdough, but it’s tricky, and right now I don’t have time to do it.” He just introduced a fat little loaf called *Hastings, le pain des conquérants* (the bread of conquerors). The reference is to the Battle of Hastings, in 1066, when the Norman William the Conqueror gained control of England. With its blend of rye, barley and wheat flours, and its heavy complement of sunflower and flax seeds, this Hastings could well sustain an army. *Retrodor* is another popular loaf made with flour ground from different wheat varieties.

Milling around

Not too far from Aux Blés d’Or, in the town of Bernay, André Sourdon, 57, works his own particular magic with bread. His specialty? Some of the same varieties as Bénard, but his methods include two major exceptions.

“I grind my own flour,” Sourdon says with pride. “I’ll take you to see my mill if you’re interested.”

He didn’t have to ask twice. We jumped in his car and were soon driving down narrow country roads. We pulled off near a large timbered house with a river running through the sheep-mown backyard. We got out, went down a few steps and across a narrow bridge to an ancient mill with a small water wheel. “Here it is,” he said. “I changed all the paddles a few years ago, but other than that, I haven’t had to do anything.”

Sourdon, who has recently retired from full-time baking, paid his solemn respects to the water wheel then motioned me inside the mill. He flicked a switch. Outside, the water wheel began to turn; inside, the cogs and belts of this small mill, which was first built four hundred years ago, then refurbished a hundred years ago, began to turn. There



wasn’t a creak or a crack, but a gentle, confident hum. “I grind local grain twice a year, keep the flour cold and use it every day,” he said. The resulting loaf is a whole-wheat wonder, filled with flavor, texture and life.

Back at the bakery he led the way down to his basement workspace, which smelled like a floury brewery. There, he showed me his second exception—a plastic bucket filled with puffy sourdough starter. “We use it every day,” he said. “We bakers are so privileged. We work with the beginning of life. That’s what fermentation is, that’s where it all begins.”

Sourdon agrees with Bénard on the subject of *levain*, or leavening. “It is tricky; you have to watch it, take its temperature, keep it stable,” he says. “You just learn how to do it, and it makes your bread fantastic.”

Bénard and Sourdon are two country bakers. One is in the middle of his career, the other is nearing retirement. Both enjoy every crumb of their business, in somewhat different ways. Each bodes well for the present and future of French bread. ■

Susan Herrmann Loomis teaches cooking classes in Normandy and Paris. www.onruetatin.com. Find her cookbooks in the France Today Bookstore: www.francetoday.com/store

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BREAD AND CINNAMON CREAM TART TARTE AU PAIN A LA CREME ET CANNELLE

The following recipe comes from the region of Alsace. I could have supplied a recipe for French bread but, really, only the bakers here do it right. So make this dessert, take a bite and close your eyes. Bread never tasted so good!

For the dough:

- 1 tsp active dry yeast
- 1 cup (250 ml) milk, heated to lukewarm
- 1/2 cup (100 g) sugar
- 3-1/2 to 3-3/4 cups (475–500 g) unbleached all-purpose flour
- 1 tsp fine sea salt
- 2 large eggs
- 1/2 pound (250 g or 16 tbsp) unsalted butter, cut in pieces, at room temperature

For the cream topping:

- 2 cups (500 ml) crème fraîche
- 6 tbsp vanilla sugar
- 1 heaping tsp ground cinnamon (preferably from Vietnam)
- 2 firm apples, peeled, cored and thinly sliced

1. Prepare dough: Combine yeast, milk and sugar in a large bowl or the bowl of an electric mixer, and mix well. Add 1 cup (135 g) of flour and the salt and mix well. Add eggs one at a time, mixing well after each. Add enough remaining flour so dough is thick. It will be quite soft and even sticky. Don’t add more than the maximum amount of flour, as this is a soft dough—too much flour can toughen it. Knead dough by slapping it against the sides of the bowl until it becomes quite elastic, about 10 min by hand, 5 min in a mixer.
2. Add butter several pieces at a time, mixing until it is incorporated. Continue kneading until dough is increasingly elastic, about 8 min by hand, 5 min in mixer.
3. Cover bowl with a damp cloth and let dough rise in a warm spot until doubled, about 1-1/2 hours.
4. Heavily butter and flour a 12-1/2 inch (32 cm) round cake pan.
5. Lightly flour your hands and punch down dough so it is completely deflated. Turn dough into prepared cake pan, pressing it out nearly to the edges of the pan. Cover loosely and let rise in a warm spot until it is 2-1/2 to 3 inches high and nearly fills the pan, about 45 min.
6. Prepare topping: mix together crème fraîche and vanilla sugar.
7. Preheat oven to 400° F (200° C)
8. When dough has risen, dust three fingers with flour and poke holes all over top of dough, dipping fingers into flour occasionally so they don’t stick. Slowly pour crème fraîche over dough. Most will run into the holes, while some will run over the side. Sprinkle cinnamon evenly over top, arrange apple slices over all, place in center of oven, and bake until golden and puffed, 25 to 30 min.
9. Remove tart from oven and let cool for 5 min before serving.

10 servings

FILM PICKS

Top 10 French Train Films

The clack of the rails and the whirr of the camera have a long history together. Here's a cinematic train journey through France.

by Cécile Mouette Downs

FIRST TRAIN OUT...

L'Arrivée d'un Train en Gare de La Ciotat (Arrival of a Train at La Ciotat) Auguste & Louis Lumière, 1895

One of the first movies ever made, this 50-second silent documentary shows with dramatic effect the entry of a train into the station of La Ciotat, in Provence. Legend says that the life-size moving image of the steam locomotive coming directly at the audience created panic among the spectators unfamiliar with the magic of moving pictures. This short jewel, first presented in January 1896, can be seen on YouTube, as can several other films by the brothers Lumière, widely considered the inventors of cinema.

TRAIN NOIR

La Bête Humaine Jean Renoir, 1938

This spellbinding melodrama uses trains as metaphors for working men's camaraderie, masculine vitality, jealousy and madness. Jacques Lantier (Jean Gabin) witnesses the murder of the railway boss by fellow train engineer Roubaud (Fernand Ledoux) and his wife Séverine (Simone Simon). Lantier, in love with Séverine, stays silent. When he embarks on an affair with Séverine, she urges him to kill her husband. One of Renoir's masterpieces and probably his darkest film, *La Bête Humaine*, loosely

based on Emile Zola's novel, is said to be a precursor of the Hollywood version of *film noir* in the 1940s.

TRAINS AND WAR

La Bataille du Rail (The Battle of the Rails) René Clément, 1946

During the Nazi occupation, when France's Vichy government used French trains to help the Germans deport French Jews to concentration camps, French railway workers supported the Resistance by sabotaging train traffic. *La Bataille du Rail* tells their true story in fictionalized form. Filmed right after the end of the war, with the support of Resistance members, it is one of the most honest and realistic war films ever made and won universal praise when released.

ALONE ON A TRAIN

Bébert et l'Omnibus (Bebert and the Train) Yves Robert, 1963

Returning from a day trip to Paris, the young Bébert (Martin Lartigue, the unforgettable Petit Gibus in Yves Robert's previous film, *La Guerre des Boutons*) stays at the back of the train while his big brother, Tiennot (singer Jacques Higelin), tries to meet a girl in the front. During the journey the train is divided, the brothers are separated and soon Bébert finds himself alone in a strange town.

Memorable adventures ensue, not only for Bébert but for those he encounters, until Tiennot finally finds him to bring him home.

MURDER ON THE NIGHT TRAIN

Compartment Tueurs (The Sleeping Car Murder) Costa-Gavras, 1965

On the night train from Marseille to Paris, a young woman is murdered in the sleeping compartment she shares with five passengers. As the other passengers, who are both primary witnesses and suspects, are killed one by one, urgency mounts for Inspector Grazziani (Yves Montand) to find the murderer. Based on the acclaimed novel by Sébastien Japrisot (author of *L'Été Meurtrier* and *Un Long Dimanche de Fiançailles*, both also adapted into successful movies), this gripping and mysterious thriller is Costa-Gavras's first movie.

STRANGER ON A TRAIN

Notre Histoire (Our Story) Bertrand Blier, 1984

The protagonist of this tragicomic and surreal love story, Robert (Alain Delon), is an alcoholic garage owner who happens to be traveling by train when an attractive woman (Nathalie Baye) enters his compartment and offers to make love to him. When she leaves, the lonely Robert decides to follow her,

ready to go to any lengths to become part of her life. Legendary actor Alain Delon won his first and only César for his turn in this film, a departure from his usual more heroic roles.

TIED for SEVENTH:

Zazie dans le Métro (Zazie in the Underground) Louis Malle, 1960. Surrealist comedy.

Deux Heures à Tuer (Two Hours to Kill) Ivan Govar, 1966. Thriller.

Un Soir, Un Train (One Night... a Train) André Delvaux, 1968. Drama/fantasy.

Le Train (The Last Train), Pierre Granier-Deferre, 1973. Historical drama.

J'ai Epousé une Ombre (I Married a Dead Man) Robin Davis, 1983. Thriller.

Train d'Enfer (Hell Train) Roger Hanin, 1985. Thriller.

Train de Vie (Train of Life) Radu Mihaileanu, 1998. War comedy.

Trailers of most of these films are on www.youtube.com

For more Film Picks: www.francetoday.com



BOX OFFICE

The top 10 movie hits in France

- 1 Intouchables** (Untouchable) Eric Toledano, Olivier Nakache
- 2 The Twilight Saga: Breaking Dawn-Part 1** Bill Condon
- 3 In Time** Andrew Niccol
- 4 Immortals** Tarsem Singh
- 5 Arthur Christmas** Sarah Smith
- 6 Black Gold** Jean-Jacques Annaud
- 7 The Adventures of Tintin** Steven Spielberg
- 8 Les Neiges du Kilimandjaro** (The Snows of Kilimanjaro) Robert Guédiguian
- 9 Mon Pire Cauchemar** (My Worst Nightmare) Anne Fontaine
- 10 Les Adoptés** Mélanie Laurent

BEST SELLERS IN FRANCE

FICTION

La Couleur des Sentiments (The Help) Kathryn Stockett (Jacqueline Chambon)

Rien ne s'Oppose à la Nuit Delphine de Vigan (JC Lattès)

L'Art Français de la Guerre Alexis Jenni (Gallimard)

Dans les Forêts de Sibérie Sylvain Tesson (Gallimard)

Lettre à Johanna Blanche Marci (Le Tigre Bleu)

CDs: Pop & Rock

21 Adele (Columbia)

Mylo Xyloto Coldplay (Capitol Records)

Running Still Charlie Winston (PID)

The Best of Pink Floyd: A Foot in the Door (Capitol Records)

50 Words for Snow Kate Bush (ANTI-Records)

DVDs

Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows: Part 2 David Yates

Cars 2 John Lasseter, Brad Lewis

The Smurfs Raja Gosnell

The King's Speech Tom Hooper

Pirates of the Caribbean: On Stranger Tides Rob Marshall

Find French films in our France Today bookstore: www.francetoday.com/store

Other possible sources: www.amazon.ca, www.amazon.fr, www.facets.org, www.fnac.com

When you order DVDs or videos from France, you'll need a multiformat DVD player that can read Zone 2 DVDs or a VCR that can read Secam VHS.



Dujardin and Bérénice Bejo
in *The Artist*

Jean Dujardin

by Lanie Goodman

When actor Jean Dujardin accepted the role of George Valentin, a big 1920s silent-movie star whose Hollywood career is ruined by the arrival of the talkies, he knew it would be unlike any other role he'd done before. For one thing, the film itself, *The Artist*, was a silent movie. Second, without dialogue, he had to rely heavily on his debonair, sometimes predatory smile to build his character. The ultimate challenge was a strenuous five-month workout learning to tap dance à la Gene Kelly. And moreover it was the first time he had ever co-starred with an animal—Uggie, the loyal little fox terrier who follows him everywhere in the film.

On the up side, the actor says, he was spared the task of working on his English with a dialogue coach, since his thick French accent isn't likely to disappear that easily. But *The Artist* is (give or take a few surprise effects) completely silent, shot in glorious

black-and-white and jazzed up with a lively musical score.

Dujardin had already worked with director Michel Hazanavicius in his two hugely popular spy spoofs, *OSS 117: Cairo, Nest of Spies* and *OSS 117: Lost in Rio*, in which he plays the bumbling secret agent of the title. But when Hazanavicius first approached him about shooting a film with no dialogue, he says, he declined the offer at first, then quickly changed his mind.

"Everything I've chosen to do—from my early TV comic sketches to now—seems to have one thing in common," he says. "*C'est le plaisir*. It's taking pleasure in what I'm doing. I want to feel that I'm going to have fun. After all, that's what I'm being asked to do—amuse people. I don't want to make films just to make films!"

Living a fantasy

His performance in *The Artist* won the Palme d'Or for Best Actor at the Cannes Festival last May, and has since been showered with unanimous praise worldwide. (In November, the movie also won the

New York Film Critics Circle awards for Best Picture and Best Director.) Come the Academy Award nominations this month, the film may become an Oscar contender, and so might Dujardin. But he's unwilling to speculate on how the film's great success might propel his career even further into the international limelight.

"I'm already living my fantasy," he says. (Modesty is his forte, it would seem from previous interviews.) "Imagine being asked to shoot a film in the US, in Los Angeles, inside the Warner Brothers studio.... It already went beyond my wildest hopes. Sure I like to dream, but I'm also pragmatic."

How does he explain the film's obviously universal appeal? "It's the genre itself," he says. "The silent era, the black-and-white, the swinging music and the love story... it all adds up to a certain nostalgia for that period. People like to remember that time. Today you have the impression that everything rushes by too quickly. Back then it seems as if there were fewer problems and more time to enjoy life. That's the feeling I had had when I visited all the 1920s

OSS 117: Cairo,
Nest of Spies



Lucky Luke



monuments in LA—the downtown theaters, Mary Pickford’s house—you can imagine how much pleasure there must have been, living in that time.”

That certain smile

To prepare the role of Valentin, a vain matinee idol with a pencil-thin mustache and smoldering eyes (think Douglas Fairbanks meets Rudolf Valentino with a bit of Errol Flynn’s panache), Dujardin says he watched countless black-and-white movie classics by early directors from F.W. Murnau (“I loved *Sunrise!*”) to Frank Borzage. But mostly, he adds, mugging it up for the camera came from knowing the script inside and out.

“Generally, I re-read a script about 50 times before the shoot,” he admits with a grin. “I don’t know why—maybe to reassure myself—but I think it’s a way to ask myself questions about the character. Knowing the entire script by heart helps me figure out what kind of smile I’ll want to use, or generally how to modulate the way I’m playing the character at any particular moment.”

His character in *The Artist* not only makes

his fans swoon, but also catches the fancy of a pretty girl—and aspiring actress—in a Hollywood preview crowd, Peppy Miller (superbly played by Bérénice Bejo, in real life the wife of director Hazanavicius). But as Peppy swiftly rises from a perky extra to the toast of Hollywood, Valentin sinks into an abyss when the talkies arrive and he stubbornly tries to produce another silent film himself, descending headlong into financial ruin and the final disintegration of his unhappy marriage.

Dujardin says that one of his favorite moments in the film is when Valentin, washed up, with a film nobody wants to see, finds himself in front of a pawn shop window and steps into the reflection of a tuxedo on display—a sad vestige of his former glamour.

Echoes of Charlie Chaplin? Undoubtedly. “Chaplin was a genius,” says Dujardin. “He knew how to make the bridge from silent movies to talkies. He was hugely creative.”

Surf’s up

Despite Dujardin’s currently soaring career, some French audiences still associate him primarily with the zany adolescent humor of the wildly popular *Brice de Nice* (2005) in which he played a caricature of the Southern California surfer with sun-bleached hair, whose eternal quest for the perfect wave—off the calmly lapping shores of the Mediterranean—angles right off into the giddily ridiculous.

Similarly, in *99 Francs* (2007, directed by Jan Kounen) and *Lucky Luke* (2009, directed by James Huth), based on a popular French comic strip about a fearless cowboy, Dujardin has enjoyed a popular success that goes hand in hand with his mile-a-minute colloquial delivery and his jokey off-screen personality. He shared screenwriting credit on *Lucky Luke*; worked with directors including Bertrand Blier (*Le Bruit des Glaçons*), Nicole Garcia (*Un Balcon sur la Mer*) and Guillaume Canet (*Les Petits Mouchoirs*, in the US *Little White Lies*); and is often cited for his versatility.

What triggered his desire to become an actor? “Timidity, I guess,” he says with a smile. “Like many actors, I had the desire to hide behind roles and use them to mask my own personality. And thanks to your roles, you exist a bit more—you actually become *more* yourself by playing other people.”

As a schoolboy, he says, his penchant for

“second-degree” humor and relentless mimicking of his teachers was revealed early on. “I wasn’t turbulent in class,” the actor says, “but I was clearly better at imitating than studying.” He started honing his comedy skills while doing his military service, and continued with a band of young comics in cabarets and small theaters in Paris, which in turn led to TV talent shows and a long series of brief TV comedy sketches with Alexandra Lamy called *Un Gars, Une Fille*. His first big film break, *Brice de Nice*, was based on one of his stand-up routines.

Pure pleasure

For the moment, Dujardin plans to concentrate his career in France, and dodges the question about whether or not he’d be interested in playing a role in an English-speaking film. “I’m French and I like working with French actors,” he declares a trifle defensively. “I don’t think I interest Americans all that much... I mean, it’s not like they’re waiting for me or anything like that.”

But he’s positively ebullient when describing his next film, *Les Infidèles*, co-written with Gilles Lellouche, which deals with male infidelity, inspired by Dino Risi’s 1963 *Les Monstres*. Divided into six 15-minute shorts by six different directors (including Hazanavicius and Kounen), Dujardin describes it as “a kind of measured delirium.”

After that, he will be teaming up with actress Cécile de France to shoot *Mobius*, a spy drama about a powerful money launderer, directed by Eric Rochant.

But right now all the big buzz is about *The Artist*. Does the actor miss George Valentin? Was it difficult to remove himself from the glam charisma of the Hollywood era? “It’s never difficult to leave a part,” he says without hesitation. “All I had to do was shave my mustache and that was that! Of course, there’s always a part of him that will stay inside of me.” He pauses, for the first time in the conversation. “You know,” he says, “everyone is always asking me about all the extreme difficulties of playing such a role—when actually it’s just a question of *pleasure*.” Not surprisingly, the only two words the actor utters, in the final moment of *The Artist* are “with pleasure”—in English, with a Maurice Chevalier-like accent. And pleasure surely sums up what Dujardin is wholeheartedly giving his audiences at the moment. ■

For more *Rencontres*: www.francetoday.com

2012

TRAVEL STUDY GUIDE

The best way to learn almost anything is to jump in and do it, and if possible to have a wonderful time while you're at it. When it comes to mastering French, there is no way faster and more fun than total immersion in France, surrounded by the language from morning coffee and croissants to an after-dinner stroll in Saint Germain des Prés or down the magical Cours Mirabeau in Aix-en-Provence. And nowhere better to master the art of French cooking than Paris, or a regional gastronomic bastion like Alsace or Lyon. Whether your passion is wine tasting or watercolor painting, or just the pleasure of perfecting the language while plunging into *l'art de vivre* in France, the following pages offer a comprehensive look at the many possibilities available throughout the country. For an expanded version of this guide, along with practical information about planning a travel/study trip, see www.francetoday.com

LANGUAGE CLASSES

IS AIX-EN-PROVENCE

Installed in a beautiful *hôtel particulier*, or private mansion, the IS Aix-en-Provence language school has been teaching French as a foreign language since 1972. In addition to French courses taught by a highly qualified staff, the school offers a warm, convivial learning environment, a cozy sense of community among students and an array of entertaining cultural experiences.

Each year the school welcomes more than a thousand international students with varying levels of French and differing objectives. In addition to general and intensive French courses, IS Aix offers specialized programs for business executives and French teachers. Classes are small—never more than ten people—and students have the option of taking additional private lessons to supplement regular courses.

The institute's director Anna Diaz stresses the importance of practical use of the language to reinforce skills newly acquired in the classroom. "Using French and practicing learned skills are essential to success and progress," says Diaz. If practical use is combined with a personal passion, she adds, then retaining newly acquired French is even easier.

With that in mind, the institute has created several language courses combined with Provençal cooking and oenology classes,



painting workshops, golf, horseback riding and even sailing lessons. Morning language courses are followed by afternoon activities conducted exclusively in French, by French professionals in their respective fields, meant to put language skills to work, introduce students to new vocabulary and reinforce French in an interactive situation.

Students of all ages are welcome, but most participants in IS Aix's programs are "typically between their late forties and sixties," says Diaz. "They lead an active lifestyle and want to get an introduction to Provence, or to explore in more depth its culture, wine,

food and historic sites." The institute's weekly excursions include guided walking tours of Aix with its superb architecture and famous fountains; visits to the Calisson d'Aix factory where the city's traditional fruit-and-almond-pastry candies are made; and trips to nearby Avignon, a vibrant contemporary city still surrounded by its medieval walls, or the perfume capital of Grasse.

The institute helps to arrange housing based on student preferences—total immersion by staying with a local family, small studio rentals, or larger apartments, possibly shared with other students. The

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* www.accentfrancais.com
www.lsf-france.com
www.imls.fr



Montpellier

OFFICE DE TOURISME

LANGUAGE CLASSES

institute makes every effort to be sure that students are comfortable, says Diaz. “It’s a very important step in getting the confidence to speak, and to dare to make mistakes.”

9 cours des Arts et Métiers, 04.42.93.47.90, www.is-aix.com

INSTITUT LINGUISTIQUE ADENET - MONTPELLIER

There is no better setting for studying French than Montpellier, a lively, student-filled metropolis whose academic traditions date to the 12th century and the founding of the University of Montpellier, one of the oldest universities in the world. The capital of the Languedoc-Roussillon region, only six miles inland from the Mediterranean coast, Montpellier enjoys a sunny, temperate climate and an easygoing southern French lifestyle.

Tucked into a pedestrian area behind the city’s central square, the Place de la Comédie, and its majestic opera house, the Institut Linguistique Adenet was founded in 1998 by Claudia and Stefan Adenet-Kaven. “We are a medium-sized school,” says director Adenet-Kaven, “big enough to offer all courses at all language levels year round, and small enough to have a very personal atmosphere.”

Courses range from one week to a full nine-month term. General morning courses average 15 hours a week, but more ambitious intensive programs and additional private lessons are available.

“Groups are small, with a maximum of ten students per class,” says Adenet-Kaven. “We use an interactive teaching method, involving each student in active class participation.”

The school also organizes leisure activities for practicing French outside the classroom, including wine and cheese tastings, tours of Montpellier and excursions to the wetlands of the Camargue; nearby Nîmes with its Roman amphitheater and the exquisite Roman temple known as the Maison Carrée; and Arles, with its own Roman arena and theater, its fabulous Saturday morning market and its memories of Vincent Van Gogh, who lived and painted there in 1888.

I.L.A. can also arrange housing—home stays with families or studios with kitchenettes in student residences within walking distance of the institute.

39 Grand Rue Jean Moulin, Montpellier, 04.67.60.67.83, www.ila-france.com



The Grand Rue Jean Moulin in Montpellier, location of the Institut Linguistique Adenet

CENTRE INTERNATIONAL D'ETUDES DE LANGUES DE STRASBOURG

As the capital of France’s Alsace region and the seat of the European Parliament and the Council of Europe, Strasbourg has an international dimension that goes well beyond its strategic location on the Franco-German border. To support the city’s international expansion, and to promote the teaching of French, the Strasbourg Chamber of Commerce created the Centre International d’Etudes de Langues—the International Center for Language Studies—in 1976.

Known by its French acronym, CIEL, the adult-education language school is located in the training-center complex of the Chamber of Commerce and Industry, a 10-minute tram ride from the city center. Its extensive state-of-the-art facilities include 40 spacious classrooms, a 260-seat auditorium, seven computer rooms with more than 100 computers, a multimedia area and its own cafeteria.

A separate resource and study center provides a dozen computers with free Internet access and selected language-practice programs, a well-stocked newspaper and magazine stand, and a library especially

adapted for language students with dictionaries, grammar books and easy-to-read French books and novels. A cinema club offers free screenings of French films.

Hundreds of students of all levels of proficiency enroll at CIEL every year, taking morning or evening courses that range from two- or four-week general programs to year-long training in business and professional French. Classes are limited to small groups of no more than 12, conducted by master’s-degree teachers variously specialized in French as a foreign language, phonetics, language sciences and French literature.

The center assists with finding accommodation, from home stays to university residence halls, furnished apartments or apartment-hotels offering preferential prices for CIEL students. And when it comes to free time, Strasbourg is one of France’s richest cities, with an architectural gem of an Old Town center, wonderful museums, a splendid Gothic cathedral, an excellent opera house and streets filled with boutiques, luscious pastry shops, beer taverns, *winstubs* and restaurants galore.

234 avenue de Colmar, 03.88.43.08.31, www.ciel-strasbourg.org



CIEL - Strasbourg's state-of-the-art resource center

VERLAINE LANGUE - PARIS

Students of all levels are welcome at Verlaine Langue, a small language school in the charming Buttes aux Cailles neighborhood in the Paris's 13th arrondissement. Founded in 2002 by Claudine Lencot and Jean Hébert, who both hold advanced degrees in teaching French as a foreign language from the Sorbonne, the school focuses on giving individual attention to each student. Classes are limited to a maximum of six, and are often even smaller.

Tamara and Jim Underwood had almost no experience with French when they moved to Paris with their adolescent twin sons for six months this year, so they quickly searched for a small school to learn some basics, and enrolled for a three-week course at Verlaine Langue.

They found the two-hour daily classes to be well structured and tailored to individual needs, says Tamara. "Classes followed learning a new language in a very instinctual way," she adds, and they appreciated the way that all students are expected to contribute equally to class discussions.

After only three weeks of morning lessons at Verlaine Langue, and homework in the afternoons, progressing "from very



Claudine Lencot teaches a small group of eager beginners at her school in Paris, Verlaine Langue

remedial comprehension and speaking to being able to communicate more confidently," says Tamara, the Underwoods set off on a camping trip through the French countryside, and report that with their new language skills they were able to travel on their own with no communication problems.

Verlaine Langue also offers longer-term courses and classes geared to more experienced levels. Francophile Eileen Boxer, a designer in New York, had a basic understanding of French, but decided to take a four month sabbatical in Paris to sharpen her skills, taking basic and intermediate courses taught by Lencot. "Her coaching was terrific," Boxer says. "Within a few days

I was understanding a lot more." After two months, Boxer was ready to join Hébert's more advanced class. "I thought I'd never be able to understand him, but I did. He's incredibly entertaining, and very knowledgeable," she adds. Boxer, in her mid-fifties, also found the school to be very personal and accommodating: "I felt like I was really taken care of. Claudine and Jean were very gentle coaches." After the full four months, she had acquired facility in the language, and more importantly, she says, confidence in herself and her French skills.

18 rue Martin Bernard, Paris 13th,
01.45.88.05.75, www.verlaine-langue.com

—C.C. Glenn

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COOKING CLASSES

LE CORDON BLEU PARIS

On a quiet block in the 15th arrondissement, Le Cordon Bleu Paris is a hive of activity. White-capped, uniformed students scurry up and down the staircase, some headed to class, others carrying foil packets of finished dishes they've concocted. A delicious whiff of chocolate comes from the pastry lab, where intensely focused students are constructing sculptures of chocolate flowers and hearts. Some of these international students are enrolled in one of the three levels—basic, intermediate and superior—of cuisine or pastry courses that last from two to three months; others are in the full nine-month program to earn the Grand Diplôme in both.

In 1895, French journalist Marthe Distel founded a magazine called *La Cuisinière Cordon Bleu*, and shortly afterward opened the school; trading on the French reputation for

gastronomic excellence, it attracted foreigners from the start, and over the years the term Cordon Bleu became international shorthand for an accomplished, professional-level cook.

But Le Cordon Bleu also offers a tempting roster of two-hour to four-day demonstration or hands-on classes aimed at the home cook. (All classes are translated into English by in-house interpreters.) One of the most instructive—and fun—is the Paris Market Tour, in which a Cordon Bleu chef conducts a walking tour of one of Paris's open-air markets, then brings the class back to the school for a buffet lunch and a 2-1/2 hour demonstration using the just-purchased market produce (129€).

Other demonstration courses include Chef's Secrets, in which a chef prepares and explains several dishes (41€); and Food and Wine Pairing, led by a chef and



a wine expert, involving a variety of dishes complemented by appropriate wines (59€). Both two-hour demo classes are followed by tastings with wine.

Discovery Workshops are hands-on themed courses including macarons, petits fours both sweet and savory, seasonal and holiday cooking and "Cordon Vert" or vegetarian dishes. Longer courses such as Classic and Modern Sauces or French Regional Cuisine last from two to four days. And in addition to the regular list of home chef classes, there are many daily demonstrations for 45€; the list is available online quarterly; call to reserve.

What sets Le Cordon Bleu apart from other schools is the focus on technique. So if you'd like to learn to prepare a *blanquette de veau* or a *financier* where Julia Child did, sign up at Le Cordon Bleu Paris and bring some French culinary savoir-faire home with you.

8 rue Léon Delhomme, Paris 15th. 01.53.68.22.50.
www.lcbparis.com

—Vivian Thomas

L'ATELIER DES CHEFS

A fun way to combine lunch and learning, for those who understand French, is L'Atelier des Chefs' half-hour lunch session. Energetic young chefs



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Internet : www.alliance-toulouse.org



help students cook a delicious meal (among many possibilities: marinated lamb brochette with herbed semolina, duck with caramelized honey/soy sauce and polenta). After a perfectly choreographed—and convivial—half-hour session of chopping, sautéing, stirring and deglazing, students are shown how to present the finished products on the plate in a professional manner, then proceed to an adjacent dining room to enjoy the fruits of their labor. It's amazing how much L'Atelier des Chefs can accomplish in a half hour. Even more amazing, the class costs only 15€, with an optional addition of a glass of wine, cheese, dessert and coffee for €7. You'd pay the same for a café lunch, without the lesson.

Calling itself the “new generation of cooking courses”, L'Atelier des Chefs was founded in 2004 by Nicolas Bergerault, a former Nestlé executive and passionate cook, and his entrepreneur brother François. Starting with a

single Paris location, the school has been so successful that it now has seventeen sites: seven in Paris, and one each in Lyon, Bordeaux, Aix-en-Provence, Strasbourg, Nantes, Dijon, Lille, Toulouse, London and Dubai. The relaxed and informal classes are enjoyable hands-on sessions with dynamic, well-trained chefs, ranging from those short lunchtime classes to two-hour multi-course meals (54€–72€), and themed classes such as lobster, macarons, holiday meals and even cocktails. On a typical day in Paris, 15 or more courses may be offered but it's still best to book ahead.

Signing up could not be simpler: check the website for availability; sign up online (no credit card information is requested) and pay on site. A few of the teaching chefs speak some English; to find out, check the website for the class you want and call the appropriate location to ask. www.atelierdeschefs.fr

—V.T.



A hands-on class at the Paul Bocuse Institute

INSTITUT PAUL BOCUSE - LYON

Students at the Institut Paul Bocuse are first welcomed in the Château du Vivier, an elegant manor house in Ecully, just outside of Lyon. Home to Les Saisons, the teaching restaurant, the château is the centerpiece of the Institut Bocuse's three-building campus in a suburban park. Next door is the research center, a state-of-the-art laboratory and kitchen for cuisine and hospitality studies, complete with an “experimental” dining room. But most students will spend their time in the newest

of the three buildings, the *école de cuisine*, which offers everything from three-year degree programs for budding professionals to single-day workshops for amateur gourmands.

The one-day workshops, ranging from *Le Foie Gras* to *Tout Chocolat*, are aimed at the casual cook, but they are available only in French, so reasonable fluency is a prerequisite. Serious *amateurs de cuisine* might consider the three- or six-week courses, which start with the fundamental techniques of French cooking: knife skills, making stocks, hygiene and kitchen



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Susan Herrmann Loomis with her Rue Tatin students

safety. The school's goal is to teach techniques, not recipes, so that students leave with a solid base of skills to apply to any recipe. The first two weeks concentrate on both traditional and contemporary savory cuisine, followed by a solid week of sweet *pâtisserie*. The six-week course, which generally attracts career-changers, then moves on to bread baking and tastings of cheese, wine and tea.

The courses can be physically demanding. Students are on their feet in the kitchen from 8:30 am to 4 pm, with a one-hour break for lunch. The midday meal is included in the program price, and the group, limited to 10 people, eats together at the school. A set of professional knives, chef's attire and cookbooks are also provided. The three- and six-week courses are available in English once or twice a year.

One, two and three-day workshops, €140-€480. Three-week course, €3,700; six-week course, €5,100, accommodation not included. Château du Vivier, 8 Chemin du Trouillat, Ecully. 04.72.18.02.20.

www.institutpaulbocuse.com

—Emily Liedel

ON RUE TATIN

Author of nine cookbooks and *France Today's* own cooking columnist, Susan Herrmann Loomis teaches English-language classes both in Paris and in her lovely, half-timbered 15th-century house on rue Tatin in Louviers, a small town in Normandy not far from Rouen and Monet's house at Giverny. Classes are aimed at cooks of every level. The focus, says Loomis, is on "French techniques, the finest ingredients, and fun!"

In Normandy, students can choose courses of one, four or six days, and can also come for a Country Lunch. Courses begin with a welcome dinner on Sunday evening; four-day courses end on Wednesday afternoon,

six-day courses on Friday afternoon. In between, the schedule is packed with hands-on classes in Rue Tatin's professionally equipped country kitchen, along with wine tastings, visits to local markets, farmers, fishermen and even potters and other craftsmen. A visit to Rouen includes a bistrot lunch and an afternoon free to tour and shop.

Herrmann Loomis is passionate about fresh, locally produced ingredients and, as readers of her column know, she's also poetic as she sings their praises. Depending on the season, the menus prepared in her classes might include such treats as end-of-summer tomato tarts, salad with toasted walnut-oil vinaigrette, marinated wood-fire-grilled pork chops, duck breast with blood-orange sauce, fresh sea scallops with green-tea cream, braised romanesco with garlic and lemon, and of course the real apple *tarte Tatin*. When weather permits, meals are enjoyed in the garden, facing the 12th-century church.

Paris classes are held in a streamlined kitchen in Saint Germain des Prés. Morning sessions, from 9:30 am to 2 pm, start with a market tour to buy the ingredients for dishes that will be shared for lunch; evening sessions, 5:30–9:30 pm, are slightly more formal and include a candlelight dinner. A sample menu might include lentil soup with scallops and orange-flower lamb with walnuts and fresh herbs. Courses range from €250–€2,500.

1 rue Tatin, Louviers, 09.64.18.60.39. www.onruetatin.com

—J.F.

TEEN COOKS

Youth must be served, it's said. But how much more satisfying if youth itself can do the serving—preferably a three-course meal showcasing French cuisine. Thanks to



Teen Cooks at work

an inspired cooking school for teenagers, that's now possible. So while parents are enjoying Paris or the Loire, teenagers can be learning the secret of a good béchamel or a perfect profiterole under the guidance of Midge Shirley, who runs Teen Cooks for 15- to 18-year-olds in her gracious country home in the Charente Maritime region, about 40 miles inland from La Rochelle on the Atlantic coast.

A former Eurocrat who quit the corridors of power in Brussels to indulge her culinary bent, Shirley has written gastronomy columns and cook-books, but what she really likes to do is share her cooking skills with young people starting out on life's gustatory journey. "I try to awaken a passion for food," she says, "and cooking well is a skill that will never let you down."

Now into her fourth season, Shirley has welcomed teens from around the world, although Americans and British predominate. The one-week

courses usually run from Sunday to Saturday. Boarding at the house, students prepare a three-course meal each day, hands-on, with ingredients they buy at local markets, including seafood fresh off the boats of La Rochelle. Marketing and other outings also offer an opportunity for students to practice their French, although the language is not a requirement for the course.

Teen cooks don't spend all their time in the kitchen, of course. There's a swimming pool, a well-stocked library of books, music and movies, and visits are scheduled in the local area. Courses are limited to five students at a time. Aprons, towels, pool towels and hair dryers are provided. The £475 fee (or dollar/euro equivalent) covers food, accommodation, excursions and airport transfers.

129 route de la Vaillette, Saint-Pierre-de-l'Isle, 05.46.24.65.09.
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—Chris Redman

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KEY

Setting

- Urban
- Countryside
- Online

Attendees

- Adults
- Adults & Teens
- Teens
- Children
- All ages
- College level

Requirements

- Some French needed
- Fluency required
- Specific start date and length

Available/Included

- Certificate preparation
- No housing
- Leisure activities



France is divided into five geographical areas, each with its own area code. For calls within France, area codes use two digits: 01, 02, 03, 04 and 05. When calling from the United States, dial 011 for international and 33 for France, then delete the zero in the French area code. For example, if the telephone number shown in the listings is 01.55.12.13.14, to call from outside France you will dial 011.33.1.55.12.13.14.

GENERAL SEARCH INFORMATION

CampusFrance: Website portal for studying in French universities. Guides to choosing schools, applying and living. Visit website or call for prices.

Tel: 1.202.944.6294, www.usa.campusfrance.org/

01 - PARIS

ACCORD ÉCOLE DE LANGUES Paris ☎ 01.55.33.52.33 www.french-paris.com		€300 for 26 lessons/week for 1-4 weeks; €280 for 5-8 weeks. Options include intensive classes, one-on-one instruction, summer program for families, programs for seniors and business French.
ALLIANCE FRANÇAISE PARIS Paris ☎ 01.42.84.90.00 www.alliancefr.org		€180 to €238/wk for 20 hrs. Options include intensive, evening, private (hourly fee) and thematic classes including Art de Vivre à la Française, Vivre à Paris and business French.
COURS DE CIVILISATION FRANÇAISE DE LA SORBONNE Paris ☎ 01.44.10.77.00 www.fle.fr/sorbonne		Check website for class options and prices. Courses coincide with academic calendar. Registration online available.
ÉCOLE FRANCE LANGUE Paris ☎ 01.45.00.40.15 www.france-langue.fr/en		€230 for 20 lessons + €30 enrollment fee. Cooking class available. Internship possibilities. Specific programs for 50+. Additional campus in Nice.
ÉCOLE DE LANGUE FRANÇAISE POUR ÉTRANGERS (ELFE) Paris ☎ 01.48.78.73.00 www.elfe-paris.com		€400/wk for 15 hrs; €790/wk for 30 hrs. Extra cultural excursions available for a fee. New special language courses for Au Pairs. Housing €230/wk and up.
ÉCOLE LUTECE LANGUE Paris ☎ 01.42.36.31.51 www.lutece-langue.com		€224/wk for 15 hrs; €128.5/wk for 7.5 hrs; €61/wk for 3 hrs. Classes range from private lessons to French cuisine, à la carte lessons. Online registration available.
INSTITUT CATHOLIQUE DE PARIS Paris ☎ 01.44.39.52.68 www.icp.fr/ilcf		Check website for class options and prices. Options include civilization courses, university preparation, teacher's training and summer programs.
INSTITUT PARISIEN Paris ☎ 01.42.66.18.08 www.institut-parisien.com		€248 for 15 hrs/wk; €409 for 25 hrs/wk. Prices decrease based on duration of stay. Courses in conversation, phonetics, expression and written expression. Special program for Au Pairs. Homestays available.
LIVE AND LEARN Paris ☎ 763.374.2444 www.liveandlearnlanguages.com		\$1525/wk for 15 hrs; \$1700/wk for 20 hrs. All classes are immersion, with one to two students per class. Room and board included (homestay).
VERLAINE LANGUE Paris ☎ 01.45.88.05.75 www.verlaine-langue.com		€240 for 2 wks; €315 for 3 wks; €395 for 4 wks; 2 hrs/day. Housing suggestions provided. Maximum of 6 people per class.

02 - NORTHWEST

CENTRE INTERNATIONAL D'ÉTUDE DES LANGUES (CIEL) Brest ☎ 02.98.30.45.75 www.ciel.fr		€160 to €295/wk 20 hrs for hrs + material fees. DEFL certification available. School accredited by the University of New Hampshire.
CENTRE LINGUISTIQUE POUR ÉTRANGERS Tours ☎ 02.47.64.06.19 www.clc.fr		€790 for 2 wks of 20 hrs/wk. Combination of professional French and cultural classes, intensive classes and classes for two people available. Homestays available, as well as furnished studios for longer stays.
CŒUR DE FRANCE ÉCOLE DE LANGUES Sancerre ☎ 02.48.79.34.08 www.coeurdefrance.com		€435 for one week of 25 lessons. Family and couple's classes available. Cultural excursions available.
ÉCOLANGUES Angers ☎ 02.41.25.73.73 www.ecolangues.com		First wk €600, then €540/wk for 25 hrs. Housing included, homestays available. One-on-one and duo courses available in General & Business French.
FRANÇAIS À LA CARTE Tours ☎ 02.47.96.42.18 www.lessonsinfrench.com		Consult website for course offerings and prices. Grammar, business French and test prep courses offered.
FRENCH IN NORMANDY Le Petit Quevilly ☎ 02.35.72.08.63 www.frenchinnormandy.com		€199 for 15 hrs/week; €310 for 25 hrs/wk. Cooking course and tourist activities available. Half & full board and airport transfers available.
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LE POYENVAL Bazoges-en-Pareds ☎ 02.51.51.26.85 www.lepoyenval.com		€1195/wk all-inclusive; €130 for day course. School and housing in a castle. Other classes offered: art, photography and wine tasting.

03 - NORTHEAST

CENTRE INTERNATIONAL D'ÉTUDES FRANÇAISES Dijon ☎ 03.80.39.35.60 www.u-bourgogne.fr/CIEF		€475 for 2 wks; €685 for 4 wks; €1140 for 8 wks; €1365/semester. Offered by l'Université de Bourgogne. Prices vary from summer to winter sessions. Cooking classes offered.
CIEF DE L'UNIVERSITÉ DE REIMS Reims ☎ 03.26.47.04.11 www.univ-reims.fr		€800/semester. €320 - €400 for 3 wks. 3-week summer courses available. Half-time enrollment available. Housing available.
CENTRE INTERNATIONAL D'ÉTUDES DE LANGUES (CIEL) Strasbourg ☎ 03.88.43.08.31 www.ciel-strasbourg.org		From €400 for 2 wks (15 to 20 hrs per wk). Classes start every two weeks year-round. Private classes to work on your own objectives and workshops available. Evening courses offered.

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04 - SOUTHEAST

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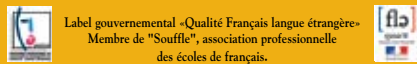
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05 - SOUTHWEST

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