

# FRANCE TODAY

The Magazine of French Travel and Culture

March 2011  
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Great Dining  
in Normandy

*La Cuisine  
Martiniquaise*

Tasting the *Terroir*  
in Burgundy



VOLUME 26, NO. 3  
[www.francetoday.com](http://www.francetoday.com)





# Calling all travel enthusiasts!

French Institute Alliance Française (FIAF)  
presents

## Travel Day

**Tuesday, March 22, 2011**

12–8pm

**French Institute Alliance Française (FIAF)**

Tinker Auditorium: 22 East 60th Street, NYC (between Madison & Park Aves)

Entrance is free and open to the public

### Special Events

12–2pm **Free Wine Tasting**

2–6pm **Free French Language Workshops**

6pm **Prize Drawing with exciting prizes—including a trip for 2 to Paris!**

Prize list to be announced on [fiaf.org](http://fiaf.org) in mid-February

Each attendee will receive a complimentary ticket for the drawing

**Come to FIAF's Travel Day where travel experts from FIAF partners will answer questions, share their latest insider tips, and offer you exclusive deals and discounts!**

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**Cover:** Normandy oyster poached in a jus of red cabbage at restaurant Jean-Luc Tartarin in Le Havre. Photo Courtesy Jean-Luc Tartarin © Guy Isaac

## CALENDAR

# What's On & What's Up

FOR YOUR NEXT TRIP TO FRANCE

### PARIS

#### ArtParis: Just Art!

The annual spring modern and contemporary art fair, with some 120 international galleries presenting painting, sculpture, drawings, photos, videos and installations.

*Grand Palais, Ave Winston Churchill, 8th, Métro: Champs-Élysées-Clemenceau, 01.56.26.52.34. [www.artparis.fr](http://www.artparis.fr) €20 Mar 31-Apr 3*

#### Dans L'Intimité des Frères Caillebotte

This first-ever exhibit presents the paintings of Gustave Caillebotte, friend and benefactor of his fellow Impressionists, together with the photographs of his brother Martial, offering a unique look at the private world of a wealthy Parisian family in the late 19th century.

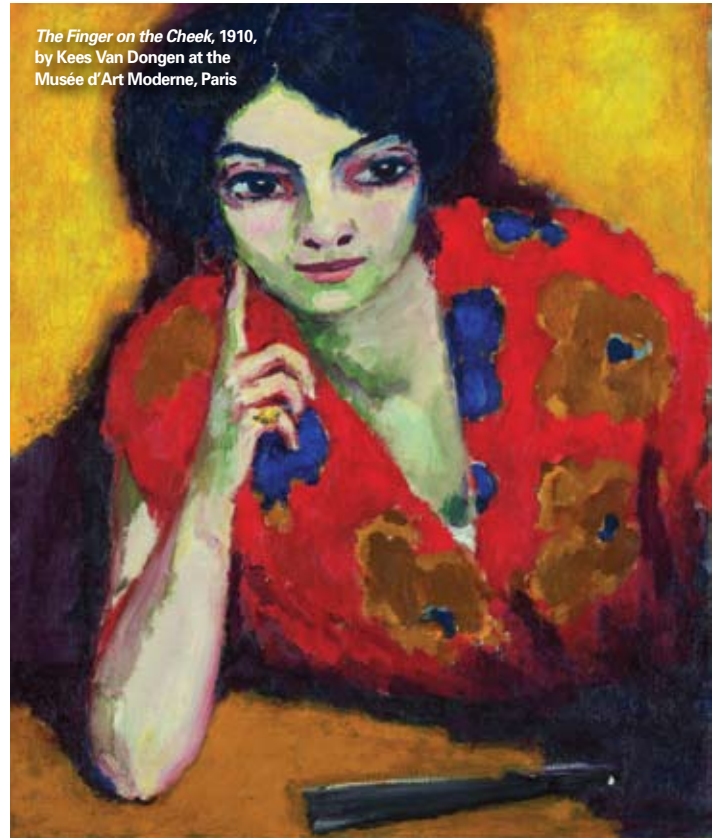
*Musée Jacquemart-André, 158 blvd Haussmann, 8th, Métro: Miromesnil, 01.45.62.11.59. [www.musee-jacquemart-andre.com](http://www.musee-jacquemart-andre.com) €10 March 25-July 11*

#### Odilon Redon, Prince du Rêve, 1840-1916

A contemporary of the Impressionists, Redon was a



*Fleurs, after 1895, by Odilon Redon at the Grand Palais, Paris*



*The Finger on the Cheek, 1910, by Kees Van Dongen at the Musée d'Art Moderne, Paris*

painter of mystery and dreams, a precursor of Surrealism, a superb colorist and, surprisingly, also renowned for his exquisite floral pastels. This show of some 270 works documents his evolution from dark and even macabre subjects to brilliant color and light, and includes little-known decorative works.

*Grand Palais, Entrance Champs-Élysées, 8th, Métro: Champs-Élysées-Clemenceau, 01.44.13.17.17. [www.rmn.fr](http://www.rmn.fr) €11 Mar 23-June 20*

#### Miró Sculpteur

For the first time in 40 years, an exhibit devoted to the witty, audacious, colorful and uniquely surrealist sculptural works of Joan Miró, who spent most of his career in France.

*Fondation Dina Vierny - Musée*

*Maillol, 61 rue de Grenelle, 7th, Métro: Rue du Bac, 01.42.22.59.58. [www.museemaillol.com](http://www.museemaillol.com) €11 Mar 16-July 31*

#### Sous l'Egide de Mars

Subtitled *Armor of the Princes of Europe*, the show "under the aegis of Mars" brings together spectacular masterpieces of 16th-century ceremonial armor made for François I, Henri II, Charles IX and Henri III of France, Erik XIV of Sweden, Holy Roman Emperor Maximilian II and other royal warriors.

*Musée de l'Armée, Hôtel des Invalides, 129 rue de Grenelle, 7th, Métro: Invalides, 01.44.42.38.77. [www.invalides.org](http://www.invalides.org) €8 Mar 16-June 26*

#### Van Dongen: Fauve, Anarchiste et Mondain

An exhibit focused on the years

*Rower with Top Hat, 1877–1878, by Gustave Caillebotte at the Musée Jacquemart-André, Paris*



the Dutch artist spent in Paris during the “*années folles*” of the early 20th century—at once a Fauve painter, rebel and anarchist, and a devoted denizen of Montmartre and Montparnasse.

*Musée d'Art Moderne de la Ville de Paris, 11 ave du Président Wilson, 16th, Métro: Alma-Marceau, 01.53.67.40.00. www.mam.paris.fr €10 Mar 25–July 17*

### Nature et Idéal, Le Paysage à Rome 1600–1650

An exhibit documenting the rise of landscape painting in early 17th-century Rome, when nature became a subject in itself. Works by Carrache, Lorrain, Poussin, Rubens and others.

*Grand Palais, Entrance Clemenceau, 8th, Métro: Champs-Élysées-Clemenceau, 01.44.13.17.17. www.rmn.fr €11 Mar 9–June 6*

### Siegfried

The third installment of the Paris Opera's first production of Wagner's Ring Cycle since 1957, staged by Günter Kramer, with German tenor Torsten Kerl in the title role and Katarina Dalayman as Brünnhilde.

*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 Mar 1–30*

### PROVINCE

#### De Delacroix à Marquet: Dessins de la Collection Olivier Senn

Some 130 drawings and graphic works in the third show drawn from the collection of Le Havre merchant and connoisseur Olivier Senn, donated to the museum in 2004, with works by Delacroix, Whistler, Boudin,

Guillaumin, Marquet and Eva Gonzales.

*Musée d'Art Moderne André Malraux, 2 blvd Clemenceau, Le Havre, 02.35.19.65.77. http://musee-malraux.ville-lehavre.fr €5 Mar 12–May 22*

### Richelieu à Richelieu

An exhibit in three cities of the Loire Valley reuniting works from the personal art collection of Cardinal de Richelieu, acquired and commissioned by him for his family château in Touraine, a vast palace destroyed in the 19th century.

*Musée des Beaux-Arts, 1 rue Fernand Rabier, Orléans; Musée des Beaux-Arts, 18 pl François Sicard, Tours; Musée Municipal, Hôtel de Ville, 1 pl du Marché, Richelieu. Mar 12–June 13*

### Velasquez, Ribera, Giordano: Portraits de la Pensée

Fifty paintings by 17th-century European artists symbolizing philosophical thought, with works by the three artists of the title and their contemporaries in Spain, Italy and the Netherlands.

*Palais des Beaux-Arts, Place de la République, Lille, 03.20.06.78.00. www.pba-lille.fr €7 Mar 11–June 13*

### Le Goût de la Nature

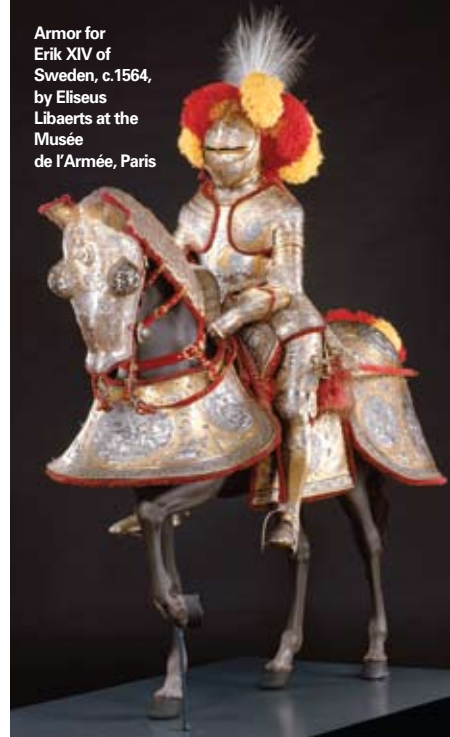
Eighty 19th- and 20th-century landscapes from the museums of Strasbourg, including works by Corot, Courbet, Dix, Monet, Signac, Sisley and Valloton. A parallel show of strictly Alsatian landscapes, *L'Alsace Pittoresque*, is at the Musée d'Unterlinden in Colmar.

*Musée des Beaux-Arts/Galerie Heitz, Palais Rohan, 2 pl du Château, Strasbourg, 03.88.52.50.00. €6 Mar 26–Aug 15*

### Chagall et L'Avant-Garde Russe

More than 150 paintings, drawings, graphic works and sculptures by Marc Chagall and 24 other artists of the early

*Armor for Erik XIV of Sweden, c.1564, by Eliseus Libaerts at the Musée de l'Armée, Paris*



20th-century Russian avant-garde, including Gontcharova, Kandinsky, Larionov, Jawlensky, Malevitch and Zadkine.

*Musée de Grenoble, 5 pl de Lavalette, Grenoble, 04.76.63.44.44. www.museedegrenoble.fr €8 Mar 5–June 13*

### AND DON'T FORGET

these events and their closing dates:

#### PARIS

- Moebius-Transe-Forme** Fondation Cartier, Mar 13
- Mondrian/De Stijl** Centre Pompidou, Mar 21
- Franz Xaver Messerschmidt** Musée du Louvre, Apr 25
- Cranach et Son Temps** Musée du Luxembourg, May 23
- Naissance d'un Musée** (Romanov/ Esterhazy Collections) Pinacothèque de Paris, May 29
- Animaux Sans Réserve!** Musée Cernuschi, July 10
- Angola, Figures de Pouvoir** Musée Dapper, July 10
- Clichés Japonais** Musée Albert Kahn, Aug 28
- Paquebot France** Musée de la Marine, Oct 23

#### PROVINCE

- Rowan & Erwan Bouroullec** Arc en Rêve, Bordeaux, Mar 27
- Daumier, Steinlen, Toulouse-Lautrec** Palais Lumière, Evian, May 8
- Je Crois aux Miracles** Collection Lambert, Avignon, May 8

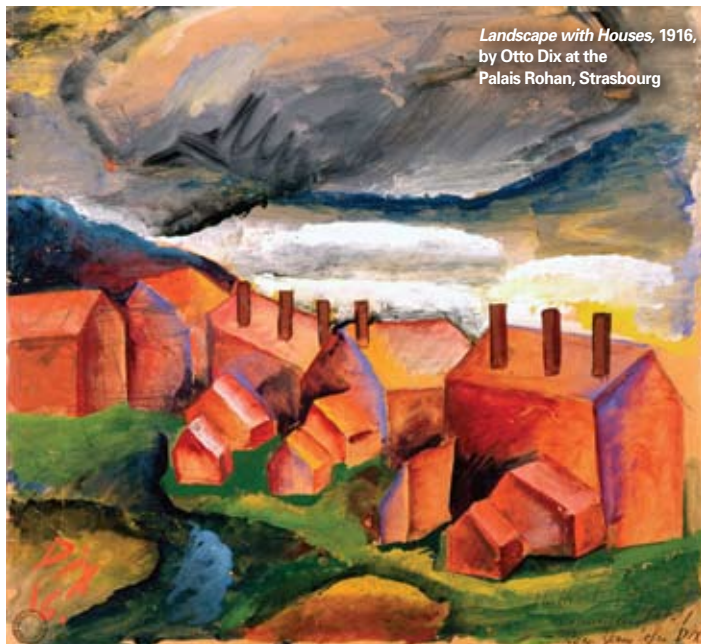
#### BELGIUM

- Venetian and Flemish Masters** BOZAR, Brussels, May 8

#### SWITZERLAND

- De Renoir à Sam Szafran** Fondation Gianadda, Martigny, June 13

*Landscape with Houses, 1916, by Otto Dix at the Palais Rohan, Strasbourg*



# Happening in Paris

by Jennifer Ladonne



Eric Bompard boutique



It's only natural that **Eric Bompard**, purveyor of fine cashmere, would settle on that bastion of bourgeois chic, the rue du Bac, for his new flagship store, which carries his full range of styles for men, women and kids. The ultra-sleek two-story boutique makes a nice counterpoint to the elegant 18th-century building, and says a lot about Bompard's strategy: be up-to-the-moment but not stray too far from the classics.

At a time when even H&M is cashing in on the cashmere craze, Bompard remains the gold standard: his togs are made from top-quality Mongolian yarns, from 2-ply through 14-ply, in a huge range of sophisticated colors. Anything you could possibly want in cashmere Bompard's got, from dressy and casual scarves and gloves to overcoats, underclothes, a half-dozen different caps and, of course, any kind of sweater under the sun. Salespeople are knowledgeable and will gladly explain how to keep your cashmere in good enough shape to pass down

to your grandkids—first rule: never dry clean! Cashmere should be washed, by hand or machine. Even the adorable shrugs and chic oversized jogging suits are destined to last for years, and the cute children's styles actually make a lot of sense, since machine washing is obligatory. Bompard's cashmere may be a bit on the pricey side, but that's okay because—current craze or no—cashmere really never goes out of style.

31 rue du Bac, 7th, 01.40.20.11.41.  
www.eric-bompard.com

Speaking of cashmere and the rue du Bac, there's also the spanking new **ASAP** boutique (As Sustainable as Possible), which brings a classy Italian edge to its luxury cashmere creations. The name's a bit unwieldy, but the concept is sound: retrieving discarded or overstocked cashmere and other luxury yarns from top fashion houses and giving them new life. The concept of sustainability here means using only natural dyes and manufacturing the garments in Italy

to safeguard the tradition of excellent craftsmanship and keep the carbon footprint down. It also means a move away from fashion's normal *raison d'être*, the "forced replacement of seasonal goods", by offering styles that can be worn season after season. Fortunately, ASAP proves that lofty ideals and a great sense of style can go hand in hand: the clothes may be as sustainable as possible, but they are also beautiful. Styles include smocked cashmere knit dresses in dusky hues or a stylish dot pattern; an elegant serpent-weave button-down sweater, long open-weave scarves, and flowing featherweight cardigans. Clever and useful items, like cashmere



Cashmere dress by ASAP; top, ASAP's cashmere hats



## NEW AT LE PRINTEMPS: LUXE & ACCESSOIRES

After the restoration of its splendid historic-monument facades, Le Printemps Haussmann in Paris has just launched its exceptional new shopping universe of Luxe & Accessoires — three spectacular floors designed by the renowned Canadian architectural team of George Yabu and Glenn Pushelberg, whose star clients include Lane Crawford, Bergdorf Goodman and Tiffany. With gleaming white marble floors, silvery steel escalators and black-framed glass display cases around a glittering, light-filled atrium, the vast new space is a paragon of French elegance and Parisian sophistication — a unique and innovative setting for the world's most luxurious, most creative and most desirable brands of handbags, gloves, sunglasses, scarves, fine watches and precious jewelry, along with a Ladurée tea salon, Pouchkine coffee corner, Cojean restaurant, a VIP Private Lounge and exclusive Printemps Concierge Services. 64, boulevard Haussmann 75009, Paris - Tél. + 33 (0)1 42 82 57 87

Top: the new atrium with floating steel sculptures by Nami Sawada. Right: Steel ribbon sculpture by Swada Hirotochi. Left: fine watches and precious jewelry on the *premier étage*





MK2 Concept Store



At Monoprix: Mont St Michel bag and, below, striped sweater; bottom, pillow cover by La Cerise sur le Gâteau

eyeshades, adorable ear socks or a luxurious cap-and-booties set for newborns, make great gifts. There's also a small range of handsome vegetable-tanned leather goods. 99 rue du Bac, 7th, 01.42.22.28.90. [www.asaplab.it](http://www.asaplab.it)



French budget behemoth **Monoprix** has made an ultra-popular hit with its long series of collaborations with top French designers and brands, creating exclusive mini-collections of clothes and accessories that are slightly more upmarket than their classic in-house label Autre Ton. The chain has already tapped Bensimon, Lucien Pellat-Finet and lingerie diva Fifi Chachnil, and most recently the 100-year-old brand Le Mont St Michel and the textile label La Cerise sur le Gâteau (cherry on the cake).

Although **Le Mont St Michel** has been around awhile, the label became a contemporary hit in 2001, when Alexandre Milan, scion of the company's founding family, took over with a line of chic ready-to-wear, mining Breton themes from classic fishermen's sweaters to the sportswear common in his native Pontorson, just a few miles from the spectacular Mont Saint Michel Gothic abbey on its tidal island in the sea. Milan's upbeat and affordable Monoprix collection includes lightweight, brightly striped cashmere sweaters and an adorable boxy raincoat with epaulettes and patch pockets.

**La Cerise sur le Gâteau** is designer Anne Hubert's runaway success story, putting her talents to the test with textiles that use "basic elements from grandma's kitchen sprinkled

with flashy touches and quirky images"—brightly colored tap shoes, the Eiffel Tower, a wedding cake. For Monoprix, Hubert has branched out into women's and kid's clothes, totebags and pillows in a cheerful assortment of summery flowered prints. Highlights include a beautiful western-cut blouse and string bikinis all in bright florals, and the charming junior line includes a smocked bikini, sundress, shorts and a skirt with an adorable matching sunhat. Ideal for spring-starved shoppers, the collection arrives in stores on March 16. *Monoprix shops are found throughout the country.* [www.monoprix.fr](http://www.monoprix.fr)



Taking the entertainment theme a few steps further, the new **MK2** concept store in the gigantic riverside MK2 movie-theater complex next to the Bibliothèque Nationale is a bit like an encore. Shopaholic moviegoers needn't succumb to the post-movie blues when they can shop from 10 am till 10 pm, and until after midnight on weekends, for books, CDs and DVDs, cool computer gear, chic clothes, toys, jewelry, watches and even perfumed bath salts. Grab a pre-movie snack at the *épicerie*, where you'll find plenty of American-style foodstuffs otherwise unheard of in Paris: goldfish crackers, Hershey bars, hand-cut potato chips or a €250 bottle of Rubicon Estate Cabernet (that's F.F. Coppola's wine label, if you didn't know). There are also plenty of French delicacies on hand, too, like gourmet sardines from Normandy, canned foie gras, flower-scented sugars and Bollinger Champagne.

Everything in this clever shop is as hip as can be—with a slight nod toward edification. Even the stuff for kids includes a superb original-vintage child-sized Eames chair. But maybe the smartest thing about it is catering to an already captive audience.

*Concept Store, MK2 Bibliothèque, 128-162 ave de France, 13th, 01.53.61.71.70. [www.mk2.com](http://www.mk2.com)* ■

*For more of the best French boutiques and shopping: [www.francetoday.com](http://www.francetoday.com)*



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# Great moments to experience and share in Aquitaine and Bordeaux.



## Stock up on local delicacies at a farmhouse market in Périgord

From April to October gourmet markets are held on the squares of historic villages. It is an opportunity for locals and visitors to get together and feast on the local produce: foie gras, duck magret, confits, ewe's cheese... All washed down with a good Aquitaine wine, in a particularly festive atmosphere.

[www.dordogne.chambagri.fr](http://www.dordogne.chambagri.fr)



## Visit an art and crafts workshop

For seven generations the Cazaux, a family of Basque artists, have mastered the ceramic arts and created unique interior and exterior pieces. Come and see them in action in their workshop (appointment required) or admire their works in their shop in Biarritz.

[www.cazauxbiarritz.com](http://www.cazauxbiarritz.com)



## Pick grapes at a Bordeaux château

At a prestigious château or a small family estate in the Médoc, Saint-Emilion or Sauternes, you can spend a day out in the vines with the harvesters in September. It's a great opportunity to take part in a thoroughly enjoyable tradition.

[www.bordeaux-tourisme.com](http://www.bordeaux-tourisme.com)  
[www.lesmedocaines.com](http://www.lesmedocaines.com)  
[www.sauternais-graves-langon.com](http://www.sauternais-graves-langon.com)



## Delve into the secret of Monet's Water Lilies

In the heart of the Lot et Garonne region you will find an enchanting place which is home to 250 species of water lilies: the Jardins Latour-Mariac. Claude Monet regularly came here to select flowers for his home in Giverny, and these gardens were the inspiration for his famous series of Water Lilies.

[www.latour-mariac.com](http://www.latour-mariac.com)



## Take cookery lessons in a Bordeaux palace

At the heart of Bordeaux, share a very special moment with Pascal Nibaudeau, the Michelin-starred chef who orchestrates the divine seafood cuisine at the Pressoir d'Argent, the restaurant of the 5-star Regent Grand Hotel Bordeaux.

[www.theregentbordeaux.com](http://www.theregentbordeaux.com)  
Bookings: +33 557 304 342

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[www.tourism-aquitaine.com](http://www.tourism-aquitaine.com)



## Be an oyster farmer for a day

One hour's drive from Bordeaux, in the Bay of Arcachon, climb aboard a fisherman's boat at high tide and accompany an oyster farmer to the oyster beds, where you can learn about the job before returning to the oyster farmer's shack for a tasting session!

[www.lege-capferret.com/Les-ateliers-ostreicoles.html](http://www.lege-capferret.com/Les-ateliers-ostreicoles.html)  
[www.bassin-arcachon.com \(pescatourisme\)](http://www.bassin-arcachon.com (pescatourisme))



## Antiques and wine at a Médoc château

Hire a château all for yourself for a weekend and take part in wine and antiques workshops. You will become an authority on both Médoc wines and ancient patinas!

[www.pauillac-medoc.com](http://www.pauillac-medoc.com)

# Design Now

by Jean Bond Rafferty



## CREATIVE ERUPTIONS

An obsession with obsidian? Not exactly, but the rocklike volcanic glass produced when hot lava meets cold water has inspired two design collections currently on show in Paris.

For Un Regard d'Obsidienne (Visions of Obsidian) at the **Galerie Pierre-Alain Challier**, 13 contemporary *créateurs*, from silversmith and architect to sculptor and designer, picked up curator/designer Jean-Baptiste Sibertin-Blanc's challenge to create new objects from this semiprecious material that varies in color from glistening black to translucent green and brown stripes, depending on how it is cut.

The fascinating results are original and striking: Absence, Paris-based Israeli designer Arik Levy's pair of black and white coupes, one full, the other empty, reveal rugged brown striped surfaces reminiscent of a Pierre Soulages painting. Mathilde Brétilot's table centerpiece, *Le Lac des Cygnes* (Swan Lake), has smoothly curved



translucent shapes that seem to float on a base of green glass. The black spirals of Christian Ghion's *Vibration Minérale* vase echo lava forcing its way to the surface. A few creations are delightfully whimsical: silversmith Roland Daraspe has concocted a silver-handled black obsidian spinning top, the *Tourbillon*; glass sculptor Marion Fillancq's prehistoric flint shapes sport bronze feet; Elie Papiernik's transparent obsidian zebra is framed in steel and wood; interior architect Olivier Gagnère's black *Manège* (Merry-go-round) candlestick swirls with sinuous shapes of striped obsidian and 18-karat gold. The designs were all handcrafted by Armenian artisans. "Each piece took from three

weeks to two months to make," says Michel der Agobian, whose company Cub-Ar has revived the obsidian tradition in Armenia. "Obsidian is very fragile," he adds, "so out of ten attempts, only seven succeed." 8 rue Debelleye, 3rd, 01.49.96.63.00. (Through Mar 12) [www.pacea.fr](http://www.pacea.fr)



Already ahead of the curve with an obsidian design last year, *haute* decorator **Alberto Pinto** has dedicated his second collection of limited-edition furniture and home accessories to Vulcan, god of fire, metalsmiths and volcanos. The elegant *Chaos* console's helter-skelter base of geometric steel forms and oxidized black lacquer top symbolizes the explosive moment of a volcanic eruption. The opaque black glass top of the *Magma* coffee table takes on the irregular form of a fresh lava flow, while the graphic *Tephros* end table's hammered steel top with a bronze patina seems to have been powdered with volcanic ash. Named for two famed Italian volcanoes, the *Etna* and

Obsidian: top left, Mathilde Brétilot's centerpiece; top right, Arik Levy's coupes; bottom left, Christian Ghion's vase.

*Stromboli* lamps have incandescent, silvered and brilliantly colored glass bases. 11 rue d'Aboukir, 2nd, 01.40.13.00.00. [www.albertopinto.com](http://www.albertopinto.com)

## MATERIALS FOR REFLECTION

**Galerie Kreo's** current exhibition *Matières à Réflexion* might sum up the current trend in Parisian design—across the board, designers are exploring new possibilities in a plethora of materials. But the avant-garde Kreo comes up with new twists on the subject. For the last piece of her *Natura Design Magistra* collection, Dutch designer Hella Jongerius imagined a curious snail venturing across her *Escargot* table, all fashioned in creamy white Bernadaud porcelain. French designer Martin Szekely continues his investigations into carbon fiber with the sleekly minimal *Heroic Carbon*



Snail table by Hella Jongerius and, above, Martin Szekely's carbon fiber bench, both at Galerie Kreo



bench, stool and library steps. And Olivier Gagnère moves into the fantastical with a feathery mirror, handmade by one of the last *plumassières* of French haute couture. 31 rue Dauphine, 6th, 01.53.10.23.00. (Through Mar 19) [www.galeriekreo.com](http://www.galeriekreo.com)

### GILDING THE SILVER

Innovative designers are transforming even the rarefied realms of historic French silversmiths. For **Christofle**, founded in 1850, American Karim Rashid—as unconventional in dress (a

### SOME LIKE IT HOT

Radiators are rarely aesthetically interesting, but **5.5 Designers** have come up with a seductive solution: Using Thermovit Elegance active glass panels, invented by Quantum Glass, that heat electrically, the French design quartet created a series of innovative systems that combine transparent high-tech heated panels with poetic landscapes in colorful wood, steel or marble. Called *Matières à Chaud* (Hot Materials) and produced by Saasz, the new-look radiators will be launched at next

month's Milan furniture design fair. Available at *Glass House*, 4 Passage Saint-Avoye, 3rd. 01.53.01.77.00.



Karim Rashid's centerpiece and bowl for Christofle

pendant for pink suits) as in design—has dreamed up limited-edition silver-plated accessories and furniture with golden trim (think 21st-century Versailles). His Silver Smooth centerpiece is a shallow coupe lined in gold; another, Silver Ray, is composed of pie-shaped silver steps with gold risers. Trompe l'oeil silver waves flash with gold on the Kaskade coupe, while the Kaskade end table is sculpted from layers of spiraling silver strips. [www.christofle.com](http://www.christofle.com). Last year, **Puiforcat** turned radically modern by asking Patrick Jouin to design Zermatt, the company's first solid stainless steel cutlery. In a back-to-the-future first, the 2011 version is finished like vermeil, in a gold immersion. [www.puiforcat.com](http://www.puiforcat.com)

### THE PAD FAIR

Now in its 15th year, the **Pavillon des Arts et du Design**, the annual Parisian art and furniture fair held in the Tuileries Gardens (this year Mar 30–Apr 3) continues its move toward modern and contemporary design. PAD's London offshoot in the autumn has begun to outshine the original, attracting a new clientele from India, Italy, Russia, and North and South America, but this year's strong Paris slate of French and international exhibitors may redress the balance. Among the top-rank foreign dealers: New York's Cristina Grajales, Stockholm's Modernity—bringing museum-quality works by Scandinavian designers including Arne Jacobsen—

Guy de Rougemont's 1967 sculpture at Galerie Diane de Polignac



and the cutting-edge London Carpenters Workshop Gallery, showing Studio Job's Robber Baron series of bronze furnishings celebrating the US's 19th-century magnates and Russia's nouveau oligarchs.

Paris galleries including Downtown, Jacques Lacoste, Alain Marcelpoil, Olivier Watelet and Camoin-Demachy will represent French Art Deco and 20th-century design, while contemporary dealers are bringing their own showstoppers: Perimeter Art&Design will field Guillaume Bardet's marble totem lamp, Matali Crasset's table centerpiece and jewelry, and Mathieu Lehanneur's L'Age du Monde research project; the Tools gallery debuts with such stars as Maarten Baas and new talents Guillaume Delvigne, David Enon, Toni Grilo, Oskar Zieta and Victoria Wilmette. Galerie Diane de Polignac will spotlight a new limited-edition ebony-and-steel modular sculptural table by French artist Guy

de Rougemont, along with his original 1967 sculpture that inspired the polished-chrome Cloud coffee table he made for legendary decorator Henri Samuel. And Béatrice Saint-Laurent's new BSL gallery will highlight Nacho Carbonell's geomorphic Luciferase pieces made of metal, resin epoxy, sand and colored pigments along with Lito Karakostanoglou's equally unusual Cage Scarab necklace. [www.padparis.net](http://www.padparis.net) ■



Alberto Pinto's Stromboli lamp

Arne Jacobsen sofa at Stockholm's Modernity gallery



De Rougemont: Courtesy Galerie Diane de Polignac; Rashid: Courtesy Christofle; Jacobsen: Courtesy Modernity Gallery, Stockholm

# The New NORMAN CONQUEST

by Alexander Lobrano



Minute-smoked scallops with endive and gorgonzola salad at Jean-Luc Tartarin in Le Havre

Apple granité at Sa.Qua.Na.





Sea bass with yuzu mashed potatoes and arugula jus at Jean-Luc Tartarin



A new constellation of young chefs in Normandy is putting out to pasture the culinary cliché that the best eating in their beautiful green province inevitably involves cream, cider, Camembert and vats of butter. The venerable Norman quartet hasn't been banned from the region's best new kitchens—those ingredients are just being used differently, and that's one reason why Normandy has now joined such famous gastronomic regions as Burgundy and Alsace as a terrific destination for a gourmet safari.

"I think of butter as a condiment. It's best used sparingly," says Alexandre Bourdas, chef at **Sa.Qua.Na.** in Honfleur, which won its second Michelin star last year. (Short for Saveurs, Qualité et Nature, the name is also the Japanese word for fish.) "Norman cider is a terrific ingredient too," he says. "Soft or hard, there are many great ways to use it."

Delicious proof of how Norman apples can come to the table in a new guise is the *foie gras de canard poché au jus de pomme et au pommeau de M. Vauvrecy refroidi et servi comme une terrine*—succulent duck foie gras poached in apple juice and *pommeau* (a mix of apple juice and apple brandy)—on the menu at chef Ivan Vautier's restaurant **Le Pressoir** in Caen.

Even Normandy's most famous cheese, Camembert, is getting a makeover, as can be seen in chef Franck Quinton's *émulsion de Camembert au lait cru de chez Gillot, salade à l'huile de noisette et poire*, an airy Camembert emulsion accompanied by salad dressed with hazelnut oil and garnished with pear. Quinton is the third generation to run his family's auberge, the one-star **Manoir du Lys** in Bagnoles-de-l'Orne. He's a supporter of all things Norman, which is why he uses Gillot's raw-milk Camembert, and never any of the hundreds of thousands of pasteurized-milk Camemberts churned out daily by the Normandy industrial dairy Lactalis.

Young Norman chefs praise the bounty of the rest of the Norman larder, too. "The reason I like cooking in Normandy is that it has superb local produce," says Bourdas. "My scallops come from the Bay of the Seine, my vegetables from Gérard Legruel in Saint-Germain-sur-Ay on the Cotentin peninsula, my ducks and pigeons are local and so are most of the dairy products."

"Perhaps it's because of the *bocage* (hedgerow) system of agriculture," says **Jean-Luc Tartarin**, chef and owner of the stylish one-star restaurant in Le Havre that bears his name. "Agriculture in Normandy hasn't been as heavily industrialized as it has in other parts of France. There are still a lot of small farms here, and that explains why the quality of Norman produce is so good." Normandy produces 13 different AOC (Appellation d'Origine Contrôlée) products, including Camembert, Livarot cheese, butter from Isigny, Calvados, pommeau and pays d'Auge cider. AOC labels are also pending for ciders from the areas of Perche, Cotentin and Caux, and for *pré-salé* lamb from the salt meadows around the bay of Mont Saint Michel. Normandy also boasts a variety of *Label Rouge* products (another official French marker for quality), including fowl and vegetables, notably carrots from Créances.

### Honfleur and Rouen

Warm hospitality and informality seem to be new keywords at many of Normandy's best new tables. "The whole solemn, silver-plated cloche style of dining is out of date now," says Bourdas.

Le 37 in Rouen



Chocolate mousse with pineapple-juice sherbet and caramelized meringue, sprinkled with roasted cacao bean shards at Sa.Qua.Na.



Ivan Vautier-Le Pressoir in Caen



Anthony and Cindy Caillot at A Contre-Sens



L'Endroit in Honfleur



Chocolate and cherry dessert at A Contre-Sens in Caen



“When people go out these days, they want to relax and have a good time.” With this in mind, the ash-gray Zen-influenced dining room of his Sa.Qua.Na. in Honfleur is furnished with white Corian-topped wooden tables and linen runners, and his menu, which changes often, is clearly designed to surprise and entertain. A superb recent meal there included foie gras with a “*tapenade*” of Granny Smith apples, milk, sorrel and mint, followed by roast saddle of lamb with puréed fresh almonds, grilled treviso and a *réglisse* (licorice) and gentian *jus*.

**L'Endroit**, Honfleur's trendiest bistro, is just as delightfully convivial, with a loftlike, vaguely industrial décor and an appealing menu of dishes like baby clams with chorizo, squid prepared carbonara style and an upside-down tart of rabbit with olive tapenade.

Just across the Seine estuary from the travelers' favorite trio of Deauville, Trouville and Honfleur, native Norman chef Jean-Luc Tartarin has put the fascinating but still mostly under-the-radar city of Le Havre on

the map as a mandatory gourmet halt during any visit to Normandy. His handsome eponymous restaurant is found on the city's curiously elegant Avenue Foch, the centerpiece of the post-World War II rebuilding of the devastated city by architect Auguste Perret. It's well worth the journey there to sample such dishes as lobster and Utah Beach oysters in seaweed-ginger bouillon, or pigeon roasted in cocoa beans with a *jus* enriched with ewe's milk cheese and chocolate.

Gilles Tournadre, one of Normandy's most famous chefs, not only cooks at his two-star restaurant Gill in Rouen, but he has also recognized the local trend towards easy-going and affordable dining by opening the nearby **Le 37**, a fashionable good-value bistro, in partnership with his former second chef Sylvain Nouin. Recent highlights of their regularly changing menu included a *tarte Tatin* of beets and onions with mozzarella and smoked duck salad to start, and veal shoulder caramelized with spices and served with horseradish-spiked mashed potatoes.

### Caen

Like Le Havre, Caen too was badly damaged during World War II, but today it's a thriving city and the industrial center of Normandy. The moving and quite fascinating Mémorial de Caen: Cité de l'Histoire pour la Paix, a museum and monument devoted to the history of the war, should be seen by everyone traveling anywhere near, and in fact is a

destination in itself. But Caen has also emerged as a great magnet for *les fines gueules*.

Young chef Anthony Caillot's restaurant **A Contre-Sens** is a handsome place, with exposed stone walls, beamed ceilings and cyclamen colored chairs. Caillot takes pride in serving contemporary Norman cooking with an international touch. As a starter, his Norman oysters are cooked in their shells with seaweed butter and a crust of apples and hazelnuts, and his main courses include dishes like slow-cooked veal with Créances carrots seasoned with yuzu and garnished with veal sweetbreads and mushrooms spiked with masala, an Indian spice blend. Reservations are essential here.

At his sleek contemporary Caen hotel—a great overnight stop on a tour of Normandy—Ivan Vautier is inspired by faraway places for his menu at Le Pressoir. Memorable dishes on his ever-changing menu include scallop carpaccio with Tahitian vanilla, lime and white balsamic vinegar; cod cooked in coconut milk with parsnips and a coriander condiment; and a chocolate *feuillantine* with dark chocolate cream and apricot sorbet, a dessert that he served to the visiting heads of state who dined here during the celebrations for the 60th anniversary of the D-Day landings.

### Pastoral corners

The edgy new cooking in Normandy isn't just an urban phenomenon either. Today you'll find terrifically inventive food in some of the most pastoral corners of the province. After training at Guy Savoy, Lasserre and Ledoyen in Paris, Benoît Delbasserue has won a reputation as an inventive fish cook at **La Mare Ô Poissons** in Ouistreham, not far from the D-Day landing beaches. This stylish modern dining room is a great place for lunch too, and dishes like fresh sardines in a soy-pineapple vinaigrette, sole meunière with dried fruit, and Livarot ice cream show off Delbasserue's technical talent and culinary imagination.

Beyond the D-Day landing beaches, the Cotentin peninsula is a beautiful and relatively little-traveled corner of Normandy, with small, charming seaside resorts and an interior of lush green pastures. One of the Cotentin's newest Michelin-starred tables is **Le Mascaret** in Blainville-sur-Mer. Another native Norman, chef Philippe Hardy cooked abroad for several years, including a stint

as chef at the French Embassy in Sofia, Bulgaria, where he met his wife Nadia. But his real passion is the superb produce of his home turf, which he cooks with brilliant simplicity. Local clams are grilled and garnished with homemade tomato chutney; pré-salé lamb from the bay of Mont Saint Michel is served with potatoes roasted in hay; and the catch of the day, hauled in from local waters, comes with simple but delicious garnishes like seaweed butter.

If the wave-washed beaches of coastal Normandy attract many travelers, the lush green interior is somewhat less known and equally beguiling. Outside of the fly-in-amber Belle Epoque spa of Bagnoles-de-l'Orne, the cooking of Franck Quinton at the Manoir du Lys is easily on par with the edgiest of Paris restaurants. Try his *girolle* mushroom soup enriched with reduced chicken stock and garnished with herb-roasted tomatoes, or the grilled sea bass with white beans in shellfish stock with *chanterelles*, and for dessert the quince-and-ginger marmalade with apple juice.

In nearby Argentan, chef Arnaud Viel does delicious riffs on traditional Norman dishes at his restaurant in the **Hostellerie de la Renaissance**. A starter of oysters from Saint-Vaast with chorizo caramel, sweet onions and artichokes shows off Viel's deft gastronomic modernity, as does his superb pré-salé lamb served with grilled almonds, a garlic croquette, a lamb-navarin ravioli and quinoa with *légumes oubliés* (forgotten, or old-fashioned, vegetables like parsnips). With so many really outstanding new restaurants, it's no surprise that the latest Normandy invasion is comprised of both French and foreign gourmets eager to sample the region's better-than-ever cooking. ■

## NORMANDY NOTEBOOK

**A Contre-Sens** 8 rue des Croisiers, Caen. 02.31.97.44.48. Menus €17–€21 (lunch), €44 (dinner); à la carte €50. [www.acontresenscaen.fr](http://www.acontresenscaen.fr)

**L'Endroit** 3 rue Bréard, Honfleur. 02.31.88.08.43. €30

**La Mare Ô Poissons** 68 rue Emile Herblin, Ouistreham. 02.31.37.53.05. Menus €22 (lunch), €29–€37 (dinner); à la carte €50. [www.lamareopoissons.fr](http://www.lamareopoissons.fr)

**Le Manoir du Lys** Route de Juvigny-sous-Andaine, La Croix Gautier, Bagnoles-de-l'Orne. 02.33.37.80.69. Menus €40–€75; à la carte €65. [www.hotel-restaurant.manoir-du-lys.fr](http://www.hotel-restaurant.manoir-du-lys.fr)

**Le Mascaret** 1 rue de Bas, Blainville-sur-Mer. 02.33.45.86.09. Menus €25 (lunch), €39–€76 (dinner); à la carte €80. [www.restaurant-lemascaret.fr](http://www.restaurant-lemascaret.fr)

**Le Pressoir–Ivan Vautier** 3 ave Henry Chéron, Caen. 02.31.73.32.71. Menus €26 (lunch), €47–€79 (dinner); à la carte €65. [www.ivanvautier.com](http://www.ivanvautier.com)

**Hostellerie de la Renaissance** 20 ave de la 2ème D. B., Argentan. 02.33.36.14.20. Menus €18 (lunch), €27–€52 (dinner); à la carte €60. [www.hotel-larennaissance.com](http://www.hotel-larennaissance.com)

**Sa.Qua.Na** 22 pl Hamelin, Honfleur. 02.31.89.40.80. Menus €65–€95. [www.alexandre-bourdas.com](http://www.alexandre-bourdas.com)

**Jean-Luc Tartarin** 73 ave Foch, Le Havre. 02.35.45.46.20. Menus €29 (lunch), €44–€89 (dinner); à la carte €65. [www.jeanluc-tartarin.com](http://www.jeanluc-tartarin.com)

**Le 37** 37 rue Saint Etienne des Tonneliers, Rouen. 02.35.70.56.65. Menus €19–€24; à la carte €38. [www.le37.fr](http://www.le37.fr)

*Prices are approximate, per person without wine.*

Alexander Lobrano's book *Hungry for Paris* is published by Random House. [www.hungryforparis.com](http://www.hungryforparis.com). Find *Hungry for Paris* and more in the France Today bookstore: [www.francetoday.com/store](http://www.francetoday.com/store). For more restaurant reviews see [www.francetoday.com](http://www.francetoday.com)

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# La Cuisine Martiniquaise

by Agnès Lascève



Mount Pelée

**C**reole cuisine à la martiniquaise is the fruit of many influences—over the centuries, many customs and cultures were superimposed to produce a broad palette of flavors. Culinary traditions remain strong in Martinique, and recipes are handed down from mother to daughter. Every occasion, whether a holiday or a family gathering, is a pretext for feasting and many kitchen artisans still offer ancestral recipes.

In the pre-Columbian era, the island's original inhabitants were Amerindians—the two principal ethnic groups were Arawaks and Caribbean Indians. They lived primarily by fishing and hunting, but they also practiced agriculture, growing manioc, or cassava, and eating peppers and *roucou*, the seed of a bush also used as a dye—*roucou* seeds flavored the oil used in fish dishes. The buccaneers of the Caribbean introduced grilled and smoked meats, and each nationality of those seafaring Europeans brought recipes from their own countries. Spanish paella was transformed into *matété* or *matoutou*; the Dutch inspired *dombrés*, flour-based dumplings that absorb the taste of their sauce. The French contributed tripe, among other things, and the Portuguese arrived with salt cod. African slaves, with their knowledge of root vegetables, started growing them on the island; merchants from India disembarked with their spice mixtures; and so it went. Each new arrival, whether a willing

settler or a slave, enriched the island's gastronomy with new flavors. Cross-breeding exists in cuisine too.

This small bit of fertile land is blessed by the gods—everything grows in Martinique, and even though traditional Creole gardens—tiny plots cultivated behind the island's cabins—have gradually been abandoned, it appears that the new generation is starting to understand their importance once again. Many fruit and vegetable growers are now cultivating *légumes pays* (native vegetables) and herbs, and their local orchards are again bearing fruit.

The sea is omnipresent in Martiniquaise cuisine. Shellfish, crustaceans and fish are eaten both raw and cooked. The basics of fish cookery are spices and marinades, generally based on limes, chives and peppers, and the techniques most often used are poaching, fricasseeing and grilling. If the island's famous barbecued lobster, stuffed land or sea crab and *chiquetaille de morue* (shredded cod in a vinaigrette sauce) can be found in any restaurant at the beach or inland, other rarer dishes are only offered at the most authentic addresses.

Do you know what *une touffée* is? (Or *un touffé*, depending on your source.) Or how about *tiritis*, *matoutou*, *chatrous*, *z'habitants* or *lambis*? The first is a dish of minuscule fish scooped up in a net and cooked à l'étouffée (smothered), covered and simmered slowly in their own juices. *Matoutou* (sensitive souls, stay away from this one) is a dish of crabs that are cracked into pieces while still alive, cooked briefly over high heat, then simmered with spices for about





Top chef Jean-Charles Brédas



Condiments, spices and drinks at the Marché de Sainte Anne



Foie gras and banana millefeuille at Le Brédas

Market © Comité Martiniquais du Tourisme - Luc Olivier, Chef Brédas and foie gras Courtesy, Jean-Charles and Marie-Julie Brédas

15 minutes and served with rice. *Chatrous* are octopus; *z'habitants* are crawfish; *lambis* are conches, large mollusks that, if not pounded into tenderness before cooking, have the consistency of rubber. *Blaff* is a court bouillon, often highly spiced, used for poaching fish.

The omnipresent spices and peppers are powerful signature ingredients in the cuisine of the entire Antilles region. The dish called *féroce*, for example, is well named: mashed avocado mixed with cod and fresh hot peppers and thickened with manioc flour, it's an invigorating appetizer served when avocados are in season. There are many *ragoûts* (stews), of fish or meat, usually poultry or *cabri* (kid), and a lot of curries, also called *colombo*. But fortunately, as relief for the palate, these highly spicy dishes are accompanied by salads of *carambole* (starfruit) and mango, flans or terrines of papaya (also known as pawpaw), *veloutés* of sweet potatoes or bananas, and gratins of *christophine* (chayote, a pear-shaped fruit that tastes something like cucumber) or *giraumon* (a squash similar in flavor to pumpkin).

In this land of plenty, mango and breadfruit trees grow on the roadsides, especially in the north of the island, and in home cooking, root vegetables have a strong tradition. Recently, professional cooks have stopped boycotting these native vegetables—the fad for mainland produce is finally over. Today it's not even unusual for chefs to grow vegetables in their own *potagers*. They also don't hesitate to head for the capital, Fort de France, after the dinner service is over, to the big

wholesale fruit and vegetable market that opens about midnight. There they can find super-fresh produce sold by families that come in from the country and sell only what they grow themselves. On the other hand, large-scale cultivation of bananas and pineapples means that local chefs always have these fresh fruits available. (Here, bananas are used in both sweet and savory dishes, depending on the variety.)

The Martiniquais, as island inhabitants are called, adore sugar, and with local sugarcane, one of the island's great resources, they make much more than rum (see *Martinique Rum*, France Today, February 2009). All sorts of sweets and preserves made from native fruits are concocted by island artisans. *Tototes confites* are made from breadfruit; *filibo* is candied tamarind; *lotchio* is a ball of grated coconut in syrup; *doucelette* is cane sugar cooked down into a crisp bar. There are also bars of brown or white coconut, and nougat made of cashews or *pistaches* (the confusing local name for peanuts). For anyone with a sweet tooth, these exotic flavors are irresistible.

More classic, but just as interesting, is the island's chocolate. The **Elot** company is justly proud of celebrating its centenary, and, while local cacao production has dropped and provides just 30% of the beans used in their chocolate, all the beans are roasted on site. Fifty percent of the beans come from Africa, which gives the chocolate a robust and slightly bitter flavor; 20% comes from Central America and the rest from the Caribbean. That seems only fitting, since it was the Caribbean Indians who planted the cacao trees when they

arrived on the Ile des Fleurs, as Martinique is sometimes called, where the plant flourished in an ideal climate.

The company was founded by Auguste Alexandre Elot in 1911, the same year that Halley's comet appeared, and the comet figures on all the company's packaging. To keep the bars from melting in the island's heat, the recipes used here are not the same as those for more temperate climates. Less fat is used and the granular structure is different. Sweetened with the island's cane sugar and flavored with local vanilla, the taste is unique and delicious. Besides the classic dark chocolate bar—the most interesting—the company also makes milk chocolate and dark chocolate with lime zest, bits of candied pineapple or grated coconut. An absolute must is the “communion chocolate”, or feast-day hot chocolate, in which the cocoa is perfumed with cinnamon, enriched with praline and thickened with cornstarch. Elot chocolate is found all over the island.

Another team of *chocolatiers*, the **Lauzea** brothers, never cease to invent new flavors for the ganaches in their *bouchées*, or filled chocolates. Of course there's rum, but also tropical mint, cinnamon, pineapple and, more surprisingly, hot pepper and *bois d'Inde*, a highly aromatic berry similar in flavor to the clove. The very pretty boutique is full of these sophisticated chocolates and *pâtes de fruits*. (23 route de Didier, Fort de France, 05.96.56.98.83)

For a long time, Martiniquais women made and sold delicious, simple ice cream from stands in the street. Health regulations forced them out of business, but Claude Constant took up the relay and opened a little shop called **Ziouka Glaces**. An immensely talented artisan, Constant has expanded his line and now offers sorbets made of all sorts of local fruits and herbs, including a ginger-cinnamon version that will delight the most jaded palate. The ice cream flavors, aside from the standard vanilla, chocolate, peanut and rum raisin, might include manioc, corn or giraumon. Everything is natural—no artificial coloring or preservatives—and the flavors on offer depend on what's in season. You can eat in or take out. The Ziouka shop is located in the north of the island, not too far from the legendary Mount Pelée, whose summit is almost always hidden by clouds. The saying goes that if you are lucky enough to catch sight of the summit, you're sure to return. (1 pl Jules Grévy, Le Carbet, 05.96.78.49.40)



Martinique crab

Another local specialty that all visitors must try, Vireel fruit juices are prepared daily and sold in the refrigerated section of food shops. They come in small-sized bottles that encourage you to try several flavors—passion fruit, pineapple, mango or the more unusual Cythera plum and acerola (wild cherry). You'll also find them at gas stations and bakeries, along with Tivolienne coffee. A mixture of Arabica and Robusta beans, roasted daily, this highly

aromatic coffee has a unique and powerful taste perfectly suited to the island's climate.

For spices, the covered market in Fort de France is a must, where the vendors rival each other in their efforts to lure customers. Some of them are amiable, others less so. A good choice is **Ti Dédette**, at the center of the market, a well-supplied stand where the personable saleswoman is generous with information and explanations. You'll find all the spices needed for *colombo*, *bois d'Inde* for *blaff*, manioc flour for *féroce*, and cinnamon and vanilla beans for desserts.

After marketing, stop at **Chez Carole** for lunch. Carole Michel, a sweet woman with a luminous smile, runs the show alone in her restaurant kitchen. Lunch is served at big tables, half in the market and half on the street. Start with a *ti punch* before enjoying the authentic Martinique cuisine. Everything's fresh, and very good. ■

## MARTINIQUE NOTEBOOK

### HOTEL

**Le Domaine Saint Aubin** Laurent and Joëlle Rosemain have skillfully created a delicious ambiance in this beautiful colonial home overlooking the sea. The charming bedrooms, the salon and dining room with their 19th-century furnishings, the cool air circulating with no need for air conditioning, and the *table d'hôtes* open to non-residents make it well worth a detour. *Petite Rivière Salée, La Trinité, 05.96.69.34.77. www.ledomainesaintaubin.com*

### RESTAURANTS

**Le Petibonum** A beach restaurant that stands well out from the pack, where charming owner Guy Ferdinand welcomes you like a distinguished guest. His relaxed attitude belies his eagle eye—nothing escapes him, and everyone on his amiable staff bends over backward to satisfy you. On the menu you might find warm skate salad, poached *kérax* (a type of crawfish) served with grated giraumon and plantain fritters, spicy pork colombo, and sorbet made from local tangerines. *Le Coin, Le Carbet, 05.96.78.04.34.*

**Le Brédas** Unquestionably the great table of Martinique, set in the countryside north-east of Fort-de-France, it's worth the entire trip. With boundless imagination and faultless technique, Jean-Charles Brédas gracefully blends the culinary traditions of his native island and France, merrily mixing local products with classics and making lucky diners wonder what secret ingredients the devilish chef has tucked up his sleeve. There's an explosion of aromas and sweet spices, of familiar and transcendent flavors, baffling but always just right. There's no showing off, but plenty of sensuality. It's a symphony without a false note, even when it's a classic turned upside down.

The *chiquetaille* of grilled cod is used as a condiment; profiteroles are stuffed with conch; lobster is cooked in a lacy membrane of caul fat. The traditional *gratin de fruits de mer* is seasoned with sour herring and perfumed with spices. Foie gras is served hot, in a banana *millefeuille* accompanied by little sweet spiced onions, a marvel of alchemy. Beef roast is first marinated with orange zest and black pepper and the shrub sauce (rum steeped with citrus peels and cane syrup) is a delicate counterpoint, giving the dish an exotic touch that reminds you that this is Martinique and nowhere else. The menu changes according to the chef's whims and the produce in his garden. The spacious dining room opens onto the garden, the tables are prettily set with china by ceramicist Victor Anicet, and Marie-Julie Brédas is a delightful hostess. *Entrée Presqu'île, Rivière Blanche, Saint Joseph, 05.96.57.65.52.*

**TAXI DRIVER** Bilingual Michel Labeau, 06.96.26.47.37. [mike.labeau@wanadoo.fr](mailto:mike.labeau@wanadoo.fr)

# How About a Big Mac au Poivre?

How McDonald's won the battle of France and turned the country of wine, cheese and star chefs into its second most profitable market

by Stanislas Kraland

**Cliché #1:** Americans are fat porkers who eat junk food at McDonald's all day long.

**Cliché #2:** The French eat so well, and have such exquisitely fine-tuned palates, that lots of Americans cross the Atlantic just to get a taste of that *merveilleuse cuisine*.

Only the second part of Cliché #2 is true. A lot of Americans do fly over to visit our country and eat some of the best meals of their lives. As for the rest, the notion seriously needs to be amended. For starters? One simple fact: the second most profitable market in the world for McDonald's, right behind the US, is France. Yep.

That's what I discovered when I was researching a story which would eventually turn into a documentary for French television. This is the kind of news that turns up with one single, simple Google search. No one tries to conceal it from the public. So how come it didn't make headlines in the land of wine, cheese and great chefs? Was it shame? Sheer chance? My guess is that the statistic is so unsurprising to the French that no one felt impelled to make a big deal of it.

The figures speak for themselves. Each day, some 1.7 million customers eat at McDonald's in France, to the cash register ring of about €3.9 billion a year. To give you an idea, that's about the same amount the government lost when the value-added tax (VAT) was recently lowered from 19.5% to 5.5% for the entire French catering industry.



A McCafé and a macaron

## Secret passion

McDonald's—or McDo, as the French call it (rhymes with slow)—is a giant company employing some 63,000 people in France, and opening about 40 new outlets every year, for a total—including franchises—nearing the 1,500 mark. And McDo is number one in providing the French with “French” fries and hamburgers. Hence the title of the documentary, *McDo: Une Passion Française*. A French passion.

What went wrong? How come a country so proud of its cuisine turned so massively to McDonald's? Why, in a land where McDonald's product is often identified as *merde*, does McDo sell so many hamburgers? Part of the answer is that every passion has its own complicated reasons. Another factor is that the French are terrible at anger management.

The story starts in 1979 when McDonald's officially opened its first restaurant in Strasbourg. Officially is the operative word. In fact, McDonald's gave France a first try in 1971 and opened a dozen outlets before deciding to really give the French market a go. Then from 1979 to 1999 McDonald's

silently invaded France. TV news footage from the 1980s shows French customers with terrible haircuts and weird-looking clothes eager to eat hamburgers and fries. In commercials French families and kids played with Ronald McDonald. It turned out that, in spite of the so-called cultural exception, the French behaved just like the Americans, the Dutch and the British: give them cheap fast food and they'll eat it.

1998 was no different. As the French soccer team won the World Cup on their home ground, its main sponsor was McDonald's, as goalkeeper Fabien Barthez starred in a TV ad promoting the Big Mac. A year earlier McDonald's had proposed its first hamburger with a French twist—the McDeluxe, with a mustard-based sauce. The brand also created a new French fry: the potato. It is fried, but it isn't shaped like a stick, it looks like a potato quarter. Designed for the particular taste of the French, it came with a special white sauce.

## The angry raid

But then, on August 12, 1999, the love affair was cut short as a bunch of wild French sheep

breeders rampaged through a McDonald's in the town of Millau, in the southern Aveyron region. They were led by a long-time ecology-minded slow food activist, famous for his moustache ever since, José Bové. But if Bové tactfully called the rampage a *dismantling*, in fact the anti-McDo movement was born.

Bové and his *paysan* buddies made headlines the world over. Hordes of Gauls crashing into a McDonald's was pure journalistic gold. Officially, the raid was to protest against tariffs the US had imposed on 60 European products including Roquefort, the blue-veined sheep cheese made exclusively in Roquefort-sur-Soulzon, a town just south of Millau.

The US had lost a battle at the World Trade Organization, which upheld a European Union decision to ban imports of hormone-laden US beef, and had imposed the 60-product tariffs in retaliation.

For José Bové the new tariffs were unfair. "Dismantling this McDonald's was the only way to make ourselves heard," he said. "Had it been another fast-food restaurant we would have dismantled it as well," he added, denying that he had some kind of specific anti-McDo bias. Really? Was the target just an accident? Nothing really particular against McDo?

Wrong. For it also turned out that a few weeks before the dismantling a dark-bearded man wearing a dark suit and a dark shirt went to Millau with a speech to make: Paul Ariès, a left-wing political scientist. In January 1999 he had published his *Little Treatise Against McDonald's*, a corrosive pamphlet denouncing the American giant, and he was touring France making speeches against McDo. In Millau he had received a warm welcome. "When I went to Millau to make my speech people were mad," he says. "The next day the local newspaper asked in its headlines 'What is the population of Millau going to do?' France has always been the country of cuisine, it's part of our identity. And if McDo became a political pawn, it's because one cannot attack the French table without being punished." If Paul Ariès hadn't travelled to Millau to make that speech in mid-1999, it is likely that France wouldn't be McDo's second most profitable market today.

### Battle joined

After Millau, the battle for France began. McDonald's launched a new offensive. The

first move was audacious. Responding to Bové's anti-globalization stance, McDo presented itself as a French company. In 2001 they invested in the Salon de l'Agriculture, France's biggest agricultural fair. "It could have been seen as a provocation, since José Bové was a symbol for peasants and the land, but it worked," says Frédéric Fréry, strategy professor at the ESCP business school in Paris. "Seventy-five percent of McDo's supplies come from France. The company has a very good relationship with French farmers, since McDo is one of their biggest customers."

McDo also devised a bunch of new weapons. First they created new products, including a large choice of different hamburgers—you can now have a McDo with goat cheese, blue cheese or Cantal cheese *au poivre*—balanced with more salads—try Spicy West, Farmer or Caesar—and fruit—anyone for a Petit Kiwi on a popsicle stick?

Secondly, they realized that the French weren't exactly like Americans—they used McDo the French way, taking their time to eat. Surveys also reported that McDo is a place of high conviviality, a value that the French link to eating. Hence the physical remodeling of French McDos, transforming the fast-food outlets into welcoming restaurants. Then there were massive advertising campaigns aimed at changing France's perception of McDo. And with all that, McDo made it happen. In 2002 McDo's French turnover was €2.2 billion, and it shot up to €3.9 billion today. "In the end," says Fréry, "I believe that Bové helped McDonald's. He gave them a push."

Take the new McDo in Beaurains, near Arras. At the opening last October, the place was spic and span, the interior design elegant and trendy, the employees seemed proud. So was mayor Pierre Ansart, who attended the opening along with some 200 fellow citizens, happy to welcome the creation of 50 jobs. José Bové and the anti-McDo movement appeared to be long gone. Indeed, the current French McDonald's is light years away from the purely American version prevailing in France a decade ago.

McCafé arrived in France in 2004, and there are now McCafé coffee shop corners in

116 McDo outlets and more are on the way. A Parisian McCafé offers a standard French espresso, for example, that tastes better than one costing twice the price in the average bistrot, as well as croissants and also *macarons* made by Holder—the same company that manufactures the famed *macarons* for Ladurée, a prime symbol of French *savoir-faire*. Except that once again, McDo's price is highly competitive. And of course, as the character Vincent Vega noted in Quentin Tarantino's movie *Pulp Fiction*: "In Paris, you can buy a beer in a McDonald's." And wine too, he might have added. The French mission has been McComplished.

### On target

Some don't see it that way, of course, and resistance is still in order. When I asked Jean-Luc Petitrenaud, a French food writer and TV presenter, for his thoughts on France's silver medal for McDo-eating, he gave me a staggering reply: "People eat American sandwiches because they don't want to treat themselves well. It's a bit as if they didn't want to shower, or use creams on their skin."

But are 1) being French, 2) loving French cuisine, and 3) eating at McDonald's so antithetical? Jean-François Mallet, a former chef turned photographer, doesn't think so. Author of an outstanding book entitled *Take Away*, Mallet has a passion for what he calls street food, and ordinary dishes we eat everyday. From that perspective, McDo's success makes a lot of sense. "What's the French national dish? *Steak frites*," he says. "And what does McDo do? Ground steak and fries. True, they put that into some bread, but they're pretty much on the national target!"

So should the French fear the expansion of McDo? That's what I asked François Simon as we were eating together at McDo. Simon is probably France's most eminent food critic, and reputedly an inspiration for Anton Ego, the food critic in the animated film hit *Ratatouille*. While munching on a fry he said: "I'm not shocked. When a culture is strong it can allow for such alien elements to invade it—sushi, pizzas, hamburgers, all that's OK to me. No need to worry about it." A hamburger, a coke, the remaining fries and a McFlurry were also on the table, as ready evidence. But they didn't last long. ■



A Petit Kiwi on a stick

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# Shine On!

Crystal embroidery, metallic reflections, iridescent sequins, shiny taffetas and shimmering silks, topped by glittering bijoux and impertinent little flying-saucer cocktail *chapeaux*—there's sheen to spare in the spring/summer couture collections this year

Borrowed from the young Parisian street, skirts and tunics over leggings are everywhere, version deluxe. At Chanel, Karl Lagerfeld's hip-slung looks are pale pastel, frothy and sweet as a *Ladurée macaron*, but frosted and twinkling with crystal embroidery and beading—even silver-sequined leggings under tweed suits and dresses. Giorgio Armani deserted his signature neutral colors for molten metallic fuchsia, crimson, turquoise and silver with lightning flashes of electric blue. John Galliano looked back to Dior's New Look, with cinched waists and wide skirts, in a tribute to famed 1950s Dior illustrator René Gruau. And Jean Paul Gaultier puts Mohawk crests and feather topknots above a sophisticated collection in jet black with accents of peppery red and gleaming gold.

Photographs by Guy Marineau

Armani



Chanel



Gaultier



Dior



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# Action in The Aude



Carcassonne

*In the quiet reaches of Languedoc-Roussillon, price factors include gardens, views, airport access and—in one case—extraterrestrials* by Suzanna Chambers

**N**ews that a quiet village in the south of France is the only place that will be saved when the world allegedly comes to an end on December 21, 2012 is playing havoc with house prices in the area.

According to several groups of what local residents call “esoterics”, the tiny village of Bugarach, in the Aude department of Languedoc-Roussillon, has been chosen by extraterrestrials as the place to be when Armageddon occurs everywhere else on the winter solstice of next year. The date is said to be the final day of a cycle in the ancient Mayan calendar, and the day on which doomsayers predict earthly civilization will come to an end.

Bugarach, with a population of just 189, sits at the foot of the Pic de Bugarach, the highest mountain in the Corbières winegrowing area. Esoteric followers believe that the peak is an “alien garage”, full of extraterrestrials who are waiting there underground until the end of the world, when they will leave, taking with them any humans who might want to go along.

Surprisingly, the farfetched claims aren’t bolstering house prices. In fact, they are having the opposite effect. Locals say the improbable reports have been very detrimental to the previously

unheard-of village in its remote southwestern corner.

Bugarach’s mayor Jean-Pierre Delord is said to be so unhappy he has warned he will call the army to protect the village if thousands of people turn up there on December 21 next year. “If 10,000 people turn up tomorrow, as a village of 200 people we will not be able to cope,” he said recently. “I have informed the regional authorities of our concerns and I want the army to be at hand if necessary, come December 2012.”

Another disgruntled resident is Marie Marselli, a real estate agent at M&M Immobilier in nearby Quillan. The highly unusual prophecies are stopping sales in the area, she says. “You would have thought that this would have been positive publicity for the area, but it hasn’t been. It has put a brake on property sales.”

“People seem to have been put off coming to the area. At the same time sellers don’t want to lower their prices because of the publicity, so we have come to a full stop.”

Indeed property prices across the Aude, one of five departments in the Languedoc Roussillon region, appear to be very uniform, with no one sector experiencing greater highs or lows than any other, according to real estate agent Elaine Youngs, who runs the real estate firm Aude Ariège Property.



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The Aude is divided into four very different areas: Razès, Corbières, Minervois and the Montagne Noire, with the capital city of Carcassonne at its center.

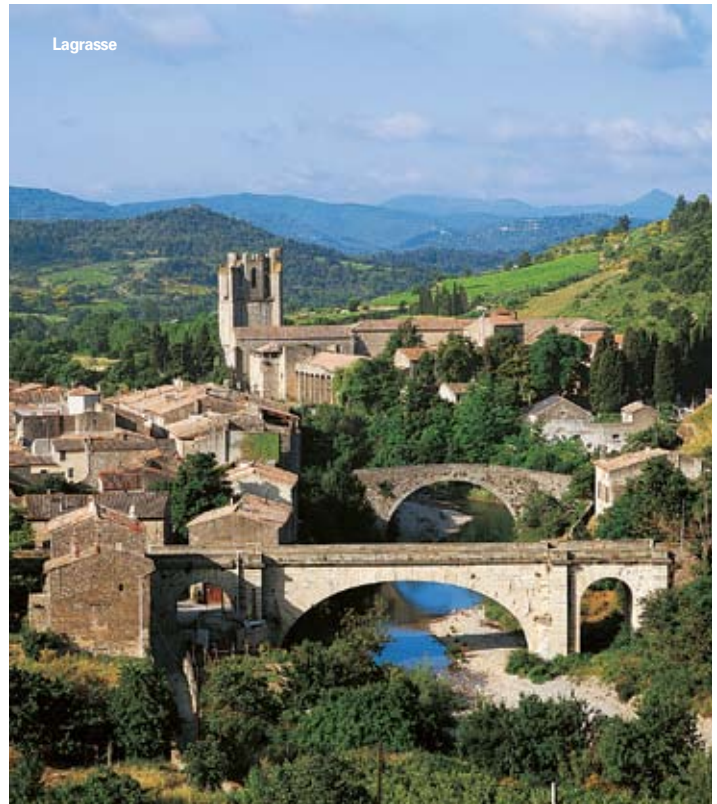
Carcassonne is a medieval citadel town with its double ring of ramparts still perfectly intact. Situated in the wide geographic corridor that leads up from the Mediterranean between the Massif Central and the Pyrenees, the town was extremely important strategically and the object of many fierce battles over the centuries. During its long history, Carcassonne has been a Roman town, a Moorish conquest, a feudal stronghold, a Cathar citadel and a frontier fort before finally becoming the tourist honeypot it is today.

Prices in Carcassonne have seen a considerable increase in the last decade, thanks to the area's popularity with foreigners who travel on the many budget airlines that now fly into the region. Carcassonne, Toulouse and Nîmes airports are all served by low-cost carriers from Paris and a number of British airports, making the trip from the UK and even the US to spend a sojourn in the sun all the easier.

Southwest of Carcassonne the area of Razès is characterized by circular hilltop villages known as *circulades*. The views from properties in any one of these villages looking out towards the Pyrenees are stunning.

Southeast of Carcassonne, the Corbières area is much wilder and more remote than its westerly neighbor. The beautiful sweeping landscape is frequently punctuated by austere Cathar castles, most of them in ruins, which date to the 13th century.

To the northeast, the Black Mountain sector is a large, very green forested area with a cooler climate than its neighbors. And finally the Minervois, a lot flatter than the rest of the *département*, includes a



stretch of the Mediterranean coast. Both Corbières and Minervois are winegrowing areas, formerly the source of immense quantities of simple table wines, whose reputation for quality is fast on the rise.

Across the board, prices in these areas are down. "It's been a very difficult three years, with the recession and the exchange rate," says real estate agent Youngs. "Prices have dropped significantly. Many British people have moved back to the UK, and because the exchange rate is favorable, they have been able to drop their prices and still go back with more than they paid initially. People are taking offers, and pricing more realistically."

But the situation may now be looking up, she adds: "At the end of last year things did get better, and I hope they are going to go back to being almost normal." Normal, says Youngs, would be around €180,000 for a three-bedroom village house with a small garden in any one of the quaint hilltop villages in the Razès area, where she has lived for the last ten years.

Modern villas on the outskirts of larger towns go for slightly more, at an average of €190,000, according to figures on *www.aude-france-property.com*, an Internet property website that Youngs also works with. "It's very difficult to find detached houses with gardens unless your budget is over €250,000," the website also advises. "It doesn't matter that you don't mind being outside a village, it just isn't the way houses are built here."

Youngs adds that it is also almost impossible to find a complete ruin to fix up. "It's very difficult to find a ruin with land, since most of those kinds of properties have largely been taken. They are very much at a premium round here. But there are still a few village houses to renovate."

However, she warns against trying to make a huge profit out of a renovation project, as many people have done in the past. "The idea of buying a house, doing it up and then making a killing when you sell it just doesn't work anymore." ■

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The outdoor dining terrace

# La Coquillade

Set back in the vineyards on a lush hilltop near Apt, the recently opened La Coquillade is an eco-friendly 28-room neo-Provençal hotel with six *bastides*, or large farmhouses, facing a timeless sweep of countryside. Granted, the rustic beams have been painstakingly treated to look ancient, but never mind—this is still deep Provence, with no cutesy tourist trappings. Each of the airy, prettily designed rooms is different, decked out in sumptuous pale earth-tone fabrics and sleek contemporary furnishings. The split-level honeymoon suite has its own pool and state-of-the-art steam bath. The owner, Swiss entrepreneur Andreas Rihs, is a die-hard cycling enthusiast, and he offers guests high-tech mountain bikes to explore the surrounding Luberon hills.

In the kitchen is young chef Christophe Renaud, who trained with Jean-Luc Rabanel at the famed L'Atelier in Arles. Expect exquisite, wildly imaginative combos, from beet-and-Granny-Smith gazpacho to flavorful salads composed of 20-odd tomato varieties. Main dishes might include homemade foie gras, rare “forgotten” vegetables from the hotel’s garden and whimsical desserts like banana spring rolls with Espelette pepper and passion fruit sauce. In good weather meals are served on the terrace, surrounded by fields of pungent lavender.

Next door, in the hotel’s 74-acre vineyard, the Cave Aureto is a gleaming ultramodern winery producing award-winning red, white and rosé wines—try what they call their “*petit miracle*”, AOC Luberon, a superb blend of syrah and grenache, with notes of plum, licorice and dried figs. And for music lovers, the summer international piano festival at La Roque d’Anthéron—an extravaganza with the world’s finest pianists performing in mostly outdoor venues (this year July 22–August 20)—is less than an hour’s drive away. *Doubles start (low season) €150. Gargas, 04.90.74.71.71. www.coquillade.fr* ■

—Lanie Goodman



The pool



A junior suite



Louis Jadot's Chambolle-Musigny vineyards

# Chambolle-Musigny vs. Morey-Saint-Denis

## Tasting the *terroir* of the Côte de Nuits

by Panos Kakaviatos

To accompany the Kobe beef, a customer at the Chanticleer Restaurant on Nantucket Island took my advice and ordered a Domaine Pierre Amiot et Fils Morey-Saint-Denis Aux Charmes Premier Cru 2003, which I had recommended as full-bodied. He knew his Burgundy, and remarked that it was also earthy, “reflecting Morey-Saint-Denis”. A Domaine Georges Roumier Chambolle-Musigny 2003, with its elegant fruit and satiny refinement, might have paired better with beef of such quality. It would have cost much more, too. I understood his point about earthiness in Morey-Saint-Denis. Up to a point. As I have subsequently learned, working as a sommelier, simple explanations for Burgundy’s *terroir* go only so far.

It was near freezing in Burgundy this past December. Rain fell nonstop. Everyone was catching colds. But sampling wines from the previous harvest aging in barrels, from Gevrey-Chambertin, Morey-Saint-Denis and Chambolle-Musigny, proved heartwarming. The 2009 vintage shines bright, yielding smooth and rich wines, full of character. Just as enjoyable were discussions with winemakers over



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Jacques Lardière of  
Maison Louis Jadot



Sylvain Pitiot at Clos de Tart

the basic (and not so evident) differences among these celebrated appellations.

Of the three, all named after adjoining villages on the Côte de Nuits, Gevrey-Chambertin is the northernmost. With just under 1,500 vineyard acres, it counts nine out of the 24 Côte de Nuits grand cru vineyards. Gevrey-Chambertin wines are recognized as rich, concentrated and “masculine”, as opposed to the southernmost of the three, the more “feminine” Chambolle-Musigny.

About one-third the size of Gevrey-Chambertin, Chambolle-Musigny includes two grands crus—Musigny and Bonnes Mares—and seems to produce more delicate wines, but with just as much character. Much has been said in comparing Gevrey-Chambertin and Chambolle-Musigny. Explaining two famous grands crus from each, Nadine Gublin of Domaine Jacques Prieur said that Chambertin has a colder climate and tends to have more evident structure than Musigny. “Musigny is more forward and more elegant; it has a structure that is very silky and satiny, while Chambertin has greater finesse, but needs more time to reveal itself—it is more serious and discreet.”

### Devilish deals

Sandwiched in between, the smallest and least well known of the three is Morey-Saint-Denis because, until the 1950s, its wines were

## BURGUNDY: 2009 vs. 2005

Barrel samples from 2009 at Domaine Georges Roumier in Chambolle-Musigny were delicious. Roumier wines are often very good—and just as hard to find—even in lesser vintages, but buyer Gilles Mony, of the Paris boutique Au Verger de la Madeleine, describes 2009 wines as “pure and silky, with excellent body”. Similar reactions led to inevitable comparisons with the 2005 vintage—the last one that engendered such excitement. Jasper Morris, Burgundy specialist with London-based merchants Berry Bros. & Rudd, says 2009 was a “vintage of enormous charm,” but not as “tightly knit” as 2005. “Many 2009s will be ready for drinking before the 2005s,” he adds.

For some winemakers, the 2005 vintage is superior in terms of structure and longevity. Thierry Brouin of Domaine des Lambrays says 2009 Clos des Lambrays Grand Cru “is already drinkable, while the 2005 will be a longer distance runner”.

Philippe Prost of Maison Bouchard Père & Fils in Beaune calls 2005 “beautiful, but strict,” while he describes 2009 as “baroque” with higher levels of alcohol, lower levels of acidity and more immediate pleasure. Jacques Lardière at Maison Louis Jadot agrees, professing a slight preference for 2009, especially in Gevrey-Chambertin. “The best of the 2009 are exactly like 1959,” he says, citing a vintage renowned for its richness and intensity.

At Domaine Jacques-Frédéric Mugnier, Frédéric Mugnier calls 2009 a “great vintage, like 2005. The 2009 may not have the perfect balance of the 2005 but it seduces you more with its rounded aspect; it is very full-bodied and rich.” For Mugnier, 2009 has the staying power that defines a great vintage: “I cannot say which will last longer,” he adds with a smile, “but both will outlast me.”

blended into the wines of the two neighboring villages and sold under their labels. Morey-Saint-Denis is sometimes described as a hybrid. “A cross between Gevrey and Chambolle, more structured but with less fragrance than the latter and less sturdy than the former,” wrote Clive Coates in his landmark book *The Wines of Burgundy*. But the devil is in the details, and some terroirs in Morey-Saint-Denis yield smooth and elegant wines that offer superlative price/quality ratios. Even wines from its five grand cru terroirs often pale in price when compared to their counterparts in Chambolle-Musigny and Gevrey-Chambertin.

Take the Domaine Dujac Clos Saint-Denis Grand Cru, with a sap-filled, elegant and floral expression in 2009. Or the Clos des Lambrays Grand Cru, which exhibits pristine dark fruit, cassis-like richness expressed as spicy perfume, and a finely structured palate with good texture and a long finish. Many decent village and premier cru wines in Morey-Saint-Denis can be bought for rather affordable prices at the Morey-Saint-Denis boutique in the village center, near the grand cru Clos de Tart, which has unfortunately become very expensive.

### Elegance and substance

The sheer elegance of Chambolle-Musigny cannot be denied. In his 19th-century classification of Burgundy wines, Jules Lavalley wrote that it produces “the most delicate wines of the Côte de Nuits”. Some attribute the silkiness of Chambolle-Musigny to its lighter limestone soils. The better wines, however, are not only delicate but also

substantial on the palate. Jacques Lardière has been making wine for Maison Louis Jadot since the 1970s. When we sampled a grand cru Clos Saint-Denis from Morey-Saint-Denis and compared it to his Musigny Grand Cru, the difference was clear. Coming from 90-year-old vines, the Clos Saint-Denis exuded perfume and power, almost too tannic today to appreciate. The Musigny was both rich and elegant—indeed more giving.

One of the best producers in Chambolle-Musigny is the Domaine Jacques-Frédéric Mugnier. As we tasted 2009 samples, owner Frédéric Mugnier described his premier cru Chambolle-Musigny Les Fuées: “It comes from vines just next to the Bonnes Mares Grand Cru, in the northern part of the village, which, when compared to the southern parts [Le Musigny, Les Amoureuses] is not as flowery or fruity,” he said. “We have a more mineral tendency, a bit of Morey-Saint-Denis character, which is earthier,” he explained. “While Fuées is earthier, Amoureuses is more airy.” It was fascinating to discern differences *within* Chambolle-Musigny. The northern Bonnes Mares Grand Cru was somewhat closed, albeit refined, while the southern Musigny Grand Cru seemed far more expressive.

### **Bonnes Mares Grand Cru**

A closer look at Bonnes Mares reveals that while most of its vineyards lie in Chambolle-Musigny, a smaller part to the north is actually part of Morey-Saint-Denis. For many observers, including *Wines of Burgundy* author Coates, richer and deeper soils in Morey-Saint-Denis yield weightier wines, while finer and lighter *terres blanches* in Chambolle-Musigny result in a silkier, more perfumed style. But Jacques Lardière, who has made Louis Jadot Bonnes Mares for 25 years, threw a curve ball as we tasted at Louis Jadot. He said that until recently it included wines from both sections of the Bonnes Mares vineyards. “Our contract with the grower in Morey-Saint-Denis ended in 2006. Interestingly, since then the Bonnes Mares has become more virile than before, so for me the Morey part was actually the more subtle.”

It has been said that once you answer a single question about Burgundian terroir, ten more questions arise. The best way to understand and be enchanted by Burgundy is to visit the vineyards and taste. Ask questions about how the wines are made. And don't forget that however any vintner or winemaker explains terroir, the winemaking and vineyard work also affect the taste. ■

*Panos Kakaviatos writes regularly on wine.*

[www.connectionstowine.com](http://www.connectionstowine.com).

For more notes on 2009 barrel tastings:

[www.connectionstowine.com/burgundy/mostly-2009s](http://www.connectionstowine.com/burgundy/mostly-2009s)

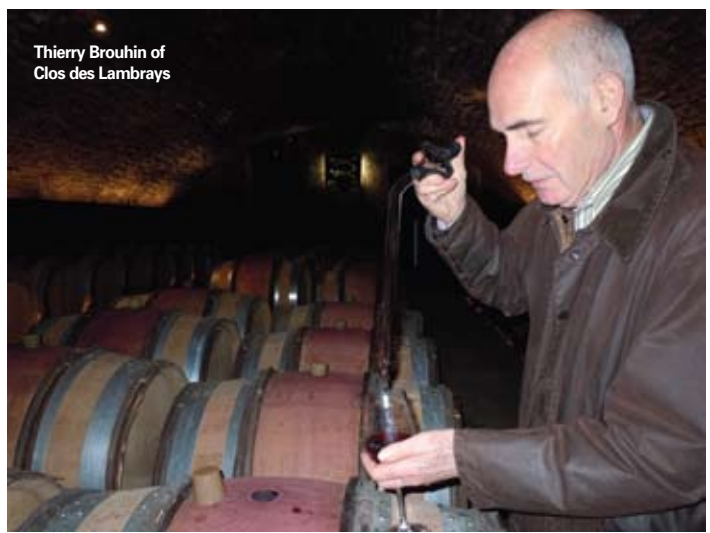
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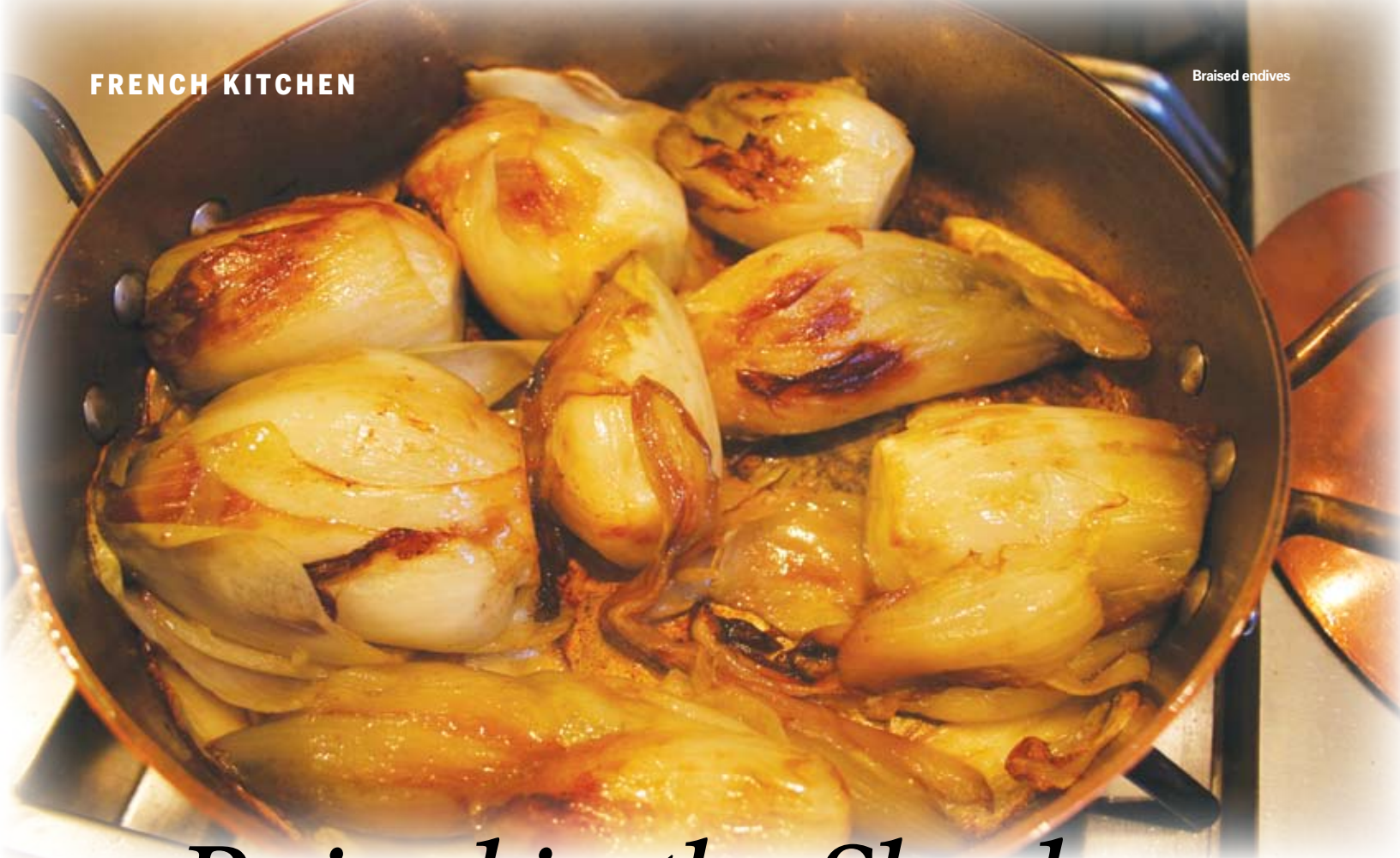
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# Raised in the Shadows

by Susan Herrmann Loomis

I am awash in Belgian endives. You know the vegetable—they look like small, ivory-colored torpedos tastefully tipped in either pale yellow or crimson red. They come from the north, and they are winter's and early spring's answer to the quest for freshness.

While the endive was mentioned in a historical text as early as the 16th century, there is no certainty it was the vegetable we know today. For one thing, the *cichorium*, or chicory family, is large and includes curly endive, radicchio, sugarloaf, red chicory and a host of other salad plants.

The endive we know and love (*Cichorium intybus*) was the result of a lucky accident. As the story goes, a Belgian peasant had tossed away some chicory roots in a barn. He chanced upon them one day and found that, ignored in the dark, they'd grown a pale ivory "flower," which he tasted and found

delicious. He took what he had to market, and from that chance encounter was born the love story between the northern consumer and the endive.

Farm wives took up the baton and cultivated endives for their families, in soil-filled buckets under the kitchen table, hidden from the light. Commercial production began in the 1930s. Farmers in Belgium were the instigators of the endive industry, which is why endives are often identified as Belgian in English speaking countries, but in fact France now produces about half of the world's 450,000 tons of this juicy vegetable.

How did the endive get from under the farm table to the field? It took enormous industry and imagination, for the endive thrives in warm soil and cool temperatures. To create an industrial production, heating pipes were laid under vast, flat fields in chilly northern France. I remember standing in one of those fields on a bleak, midwinter day when only chunky soil was obvious, thinking

of the network of warmth underneath my feet. What an idea, to actually heat soil.

But it works. Endives grown in the soil in northern France, often sold under the label *Perle du Nord*, are considered the world's finest, sought after for their firm juiciness and sweet flavor. Their crunch is edged with a slight bitterness that adds depth and interest to this unusual vegetable.

Endive cultivation begins this month or next, while we gastronomes are still enjoying the vegetable's crunch. Fields are cultivated carefully so as not to disturb the pipes underground. Seeds are sown, and in October leafy green plants are harvested, roots and all. The leaves are cut off right at the crown of the root and used to feed animals. The roots are the jewel of the endive; they will give birth to the pearly white vegetable we know.

Called "*carottes*," the roots are planted in rows and covered with long, low corrugated metal tunnels. The tunnels are each



covered with a tarp, straw, then another tarp, to provide insulation. This stage is called *forçage*, when the roots are forced to produce the endive.

If it's a very cold season, the endive will grow in four long weeks, or about 30 days. In a normal wet year, they take four short weeks, or about 25 days. During that time, the nascent endives require coddling. The temperature of the tunnels and the temperature and humidity of the soil are checked often, surreptitiously, so as not to let in any light in. Light causes the endives to turn green, and a green endive is reprehensible and bitter.

Once the endives are ready the tunnels are dismantled and the endives excavated. Assembly lines of workers trim the endive from the root and peel away the outer leaves. Each endive, referred to as a *chicon*, is calibrated then carefully packed in crates lined with light-reflective purple paper.

A totally different method of endive production has also developed, first in the north and now throughout the world, far from the warmed soil and cozy tunnels. Hydroponic endive production was introduced in 1975 with an endive variety called "Zoom", enabling production anywhere, since it's not dependent on climactic conditions. Needless to say, this event had traditional endive growers scratching their

heads, as they saw quantities of endives available, for lower prices. The endives are grown in stacked racks; a hydroponic producer can raise ten times the amount raised by a traditional producer, with less work and at far less cost.

While hydroponics does nothing more than chemically reconstitute the soil, the endive it produces differs greatly from the *endive de terre*. It has its fans because its price is low, the quantity almost unlimited, and it is available throughout the year. But while it is fatter, that girth is chemically infused water, resulting in a vegetable that is less firm than an endive grown in soil. Its flavor also lacks depth and complexity.

Farmers who produce the endive in soil reacted to the hydroponic onslaught by creating the Perle du Nord brand. They guarantee their endives are produced without the use of chemicals, and that they are carefully husbanded from earthy start to finish. Perle du Nord has been successful, and the brand now includes a handful of other quality vegetables, including cauliflower and lettuces.

So why am I awash in endive? Because I'm lucky enough to have several producers of *endive de terre* right in my neighborhood, and it's been a good endive year. While these don't benefit from the label Perle du Nord, they don't really need it. They're sold directly

at the farmers' market, by the people who raise and harvest them. Lines form as soon as they're available—this year it wasn't until mid-December, but we'll be able to enjoy them through April.

Good year or bad, I'm a big endive consumer. I use the leaves for dipping. I slice the little torpedo in rounds and combine it with Roquefort and walnuts, then dress it with walnut oil and lemon juice for a gorgeous salad. I slice it in half and braise it with winter herbs. I add it to soups, and occasionally I nibble on it all by itself. Few fresh vegetables offer such crunch, such juiciness and such versatility during this late winter season. ■

*Susan Herrmann Loomis teaches cooking in Normandy and Paris. www.onrueatatin.com. The latest of her ten books, Nuts in the Kitchen, is published by HarperCollins. Find it in the France Today bookstore: www.francetoday.com/store*

*For more food stories and French recipes: www.francetoday.com/life\_and\_style/chefs\_corner*

### NADINE'S BRAISED ENDIVES

Nadine is a friend from northern France. This is her specialty.

2 lbs (1 kg) Belgian endives, stems trimmed  
2 tbsp extra-virgin olive oil  
Sea salt and freshly ground black pepper  
3 tbsp crème fraîche or heavy, non ultra-pasteurized whipping cream  
1-1/2 cups (125 g) grated Gruyère

1. Place endives (whole) in a large, heavy ovenproof saucepan. They should be in one layer, but don't be concerned if they are crowded, because they shrink in the cooking. Drizzle with the oil, season generously with salt and pepper, and turn so they are coated. Cover and cook over medium-low heat, turning occasionally, until they are soft and tender and well browned, about 1 hour.

2. Preheat the broiler.

3. When endives are cooked, dot them with crème fraîche and sprinkle with cheese. Place them about 3 inches (7-1/2 cm) from the broiler, and broil until cheese is melted and golden, 4 to 5 minutes. Serve immediately.

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## DIVORCES

03/06 | 8:30P ET

A film by Valérie Guignabodet, with François-Xavier Demaison, Pascale Arbillot, Mathias Mlekus and Brigitte Catillon

Married couple Valentine and Alex, both lawyers specializing in family law, prefer to handle amicable divorces, ones that differ from the awful cases of the last generation. But, when their own marriage fails, there's nothing amicable about it!



### GRANDE OURSE, LA CLÉ DES POSSIBLES

03/17 | 9:30P ET

A film by Patrice Sauv , with Marc Messier, Normand Daneau and Fanny Mallette

To save his best friend's life, Louis-Bernard must journey to a parallel world to find the Cl  des Possibles, a treasure enabling its owner to visit infinite universes where all of life's possibilities await.



### L'ABSENCE

03/01 | 8:30P ET

A film by Mama Keita, with William Nadyam, Ibrahima Mbaye and Mame Ndoumb  Diop

After 15 years away, Adama returns to Senegal after receiving a worrisome telegram about his grandmother's health. Once Adama realizes the message was a phony attempt by his sister to lure him home, he tries to return to France as soon as possible.



### OSCAR ET LA DAME EN ROSE

03/13 | 9:30P ET

A film by  ric-Emmanuel Schmitt, with Mich le Laroque, Amir and Amira Casar

When hiding behind his parents' door, 10-year-old Oscar learns that he has just 12 days to live. Angry at them for lying to him about his health, he decides that he will never talk to anyone ever again... until he meets a straight-talking lady in pink.

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## FILM PICKS

# Top 5 Films with Mathieu Amalric

Winner of the Best Director award at the Cannes Film Festival last May for his most recent film, *Tournée* (On Tour), Mathieu Amalric is also one of France's top actors. First discovered in eccentric roles in *auteur* films, he's now moving into the big-budget scene.

by Julien Bisson

### MOST INTELLECTUAL

**Comment Je Me Suis Disputé... (Ma Vie Sexuelle)** (My Sex Life... or How I Got Into an Argument) Arnaud Desplechin, 1996  
Mathieu Amalric's career has always been closely linked to director Arnaud Desplechin. This early movie brought recognition to both of them, despite its nearly three-hour length and weighty dialogue. Amalric plays Paul Dedalus, an assistant professor of philosophy who keeps taking wrong turns as he tries to begin what he would call his "life as a man". Engaged to Esther (Emmanuelle Devos) in an on-and-off relationship for ten years, Paul falls in love with other girls, including the weirdo Valérie (Jeanne Balibar) and the charming Sylvia (Marianne Denicourt), who was already paired with his best friend. Brilliantly scripted and performed, the film is a fine example of French *auteur* work, and it won Amalric a César for Most Promising Actor.

### MOST PSYCHOTIC

**Rois et Reine** (Kings and Queen) Arnaud Desplechin, 2004  
Desplechin reunited his two favorite actors in this poignant family drama. Nora (Emmanuelle Devos) is the reclusive single mother of a beloved son, Elias, whose father is deceased. When Nora discovers that her own father has terminal

cancer, she seeks out her ex-husband Ismaël (Amalric), whom her father had helped to raise. But Ismaël, a nutty viola player, has been committed to a mental institution, where he has met another patient, Arielle. Combining moments of pure comedy with solemn tragedy, *Rois et Reine* is packed with remarkable secondary characters, including Madame Vasset, played by Catherine Deneuve. But it is Amalric who stands out as the mercurial Ismaël, winning a César for Best Actor that he richly deserved.

### MOST DRAMATIC

**Le Scaphandre et le Papillon** (The Diving Bell and the Butterfly) Julian Schnabel, 2007  
Based on the memoir by Jean-Dominique Bauby, the former editor of French *Elle*, the film depicts Bauby's life after a massive stroke left him with "locked-in syndrome", paralyzed from the neck down and only able to communicate with the outside world through the blinking of his left eye. Recalling his past or getting new fantasies, the 42-year-old Bauby (Amalric) begins to laboriously dictate a book in which he explains how it feels to be trapped in his motionless body (the "diving bell") while his spirit keeps flying like a butterfly. Johnny Depp was originally intended to play the role, but American artist and director Julian Schnabel finally decided on

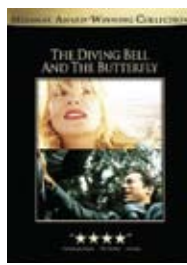
Amalric—a very wise decision in light of his astonishing performance.

### MOST EPIC

**Un Conte de Noël** (A Christmas Tale) Arnaud Desplechin, 2008  
Desplechin's actors seem all part of a film family, so it's no wonder to find a number of them united in this disturbing Christmas story. Junon Vuillard (Catherine Deneuve) has just learned she has cancer and needs a bone marrow transplant. But the only two compatible donors are her son Henri (Amalric), the black sheep of the family, and her grandson Paul, a suicidal teenager. In fact, the dysfunctional Vuillard tribe has more than its share of psychotic characters, including a depressed daughter, two wife-exchanging cousins and a father who recites Nietzsche. Inspired by French cinema's Nouvelle Vague in the 1960s, *Un Conte de Noël* displays a complex world of emotions, where fights and bitter words often cede the stage to joyful moments. The film may strike some viewers as even more weird than its characters, but Mathieu Amalric is, once again, terrific as an unlovable son considering sweet revenge.

### MOST INTERNATIONAL

**Quantum of Solace**, Marc Forster, 2008  
This 007 movie is probably not Amalric's best vehicle, but it is further evidence of his wide-ranging talent.



Here he plays Bond's nemesis, Dominic Greene, a renowned developer of green technology, whose shady deals involve a brutal coup in Bolivia as well as the blockage of the country's fresh water supply. But James Bond (Daniel Craig) is on hand to stop his dastardly scheme and leaves him to a cruel death in the desert. Surprisingly convincing as a villain, Amalric proves here that he can also hold his own on international screens, three years after his first try in Steven Spielberg's *Munich*.

### TIED FOR SIXTH

**La Sentinelle** (The Sentinel) Arnaud Desplechin, 1992  
**Fin Août, Début Septembre** (Late August, Early September) Olivier Assayas, 1998  
**Un Homme, un Vrai** (A Man, a Real One) Arnaud and Jean-Marie Larrieu, 2003  
**Munich** Steven Spielberg, 2005  
**L'Ennemi Public N° 1** (Mesrine: Public Enemy No. 1) Jean-François Richet, 2008  
**Les Herbes Folles** (Wild Grass) Alain Resnais, 2009

Trailers of most of these films are on [www.youtube.com](http://www.youtube.com)

## BOX OFFICE

- The top 10 movie hits in France
- 1 Hereafter** Clint Eastwood
  - 2 The Way Back** Peter Weir
  - 3 Le Fil à Jo** Philippe Guillard
  - 4 Season of the Witch** Dominic Sena
  - 5 La Chance de Ma Vie** Nicolas Cuche
  - 6 The Green Hornet** Michel Gondry
  - 7 The Borrowers** Hiromasa Yonebayashi
  - 8 How Do You Know** James L. Brooks
  - 9 Angèle et Tony** Alix Delaport
  - 10 Tangled** Byron Howard, Nathan Greno

## BEST SELLERS IN FRANCE

### FICTION

- Dernière Nuit à Twisted River** (Last Night in Twisted River) John Irving (Seuil)  
**Des Gens Très Bien** Alexandre Jardin (Grasset)  
**La Vie Très Privée de Mr Sim** (The Terrible Privacy of Maxwell Sim) Jonathan Coe (Gallimard)  
**Le Fil** Michel Rostain (Oh! Editions)  
**Marina** Carlos Ruiz Zafón (Robert Laffont)

### CDs: French Pop

- Bretonne** Nolwenn Leroy (Mercury)  
**L'An Demain** Têtes Raides (Tôt ou Tard)  
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**Bleu Noir** Mylène Farmer (Polydor)  
**Putain de Stade** Indochine (Jive)

### DVDs

- Invictus** Clint Eastwood  
**Shutter Island** Martin Scorsese  
**Sherlock Holmes** Guy Ritchie  
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**Up in the Air** Jason Reitman

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PORTRAIT

# Stéphane Hessel



*The 93-year-old activist, survivor of Nazi camps and former French ambassador has become a national phenomenon with his best seller Indignez-Vous!*

by Julien Bisson

Remember the famous scene from Sidney Lumet's film *Network*, when the character Howard Beale shouts on TV, "I'm as mad as hell and I'm not going to take this anymore"? Stéphane Hessel might very well play the part, were there to be a remake. The elegant gentleman has become, at 93, France's most notorious activist voice, since the sensational success of his short essay *Indignez-Vous!*, with more than 1.5 million copies sold so far. In the 29-page manifesto (roughly translated, *Get Angry!*), the former diplomat sums up his thoughts on today's politics and recalls a life rich with experience battling oppression and defending human rights.

Born in Berlin on October 20, 1917, the author is the son of Franz Hessel, a Jewish writer, and Helen Grund, a painter and journalist. These two brilliant figures formed an enduring love triangle with Franz's best friend, French journalist and writer Henri-Pierre Roché. Years later, Roché used their love story as a basis for his famous novel *Jules et Jim*—adapted for the screen in 1962 by François Truffaut, with Jeanne Moreau playing Stéphane's mother.

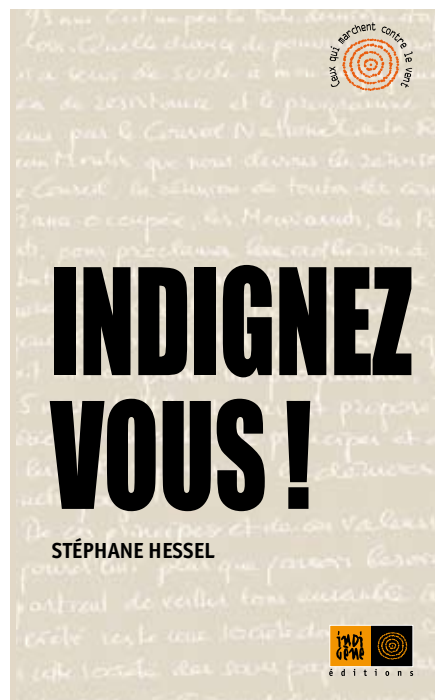
After emigrating to France in 1925 with his family, young Stéphane often met famous artists in his home, including Marc Chagall, Pablo Picasso and Marcel Duchamp. "My family was extremely nonconformist, which really shaped the man I would become," he says. Stéphane displayed a precocious intelligence, receiving his *baccalauréat* in philosophy at age 15 and winning admittance to the French Ecole Normale Supérieure in 1937. As he often explains in interviews, "I wanted to impress my mother!"

Hessel became a naturalized French citizen and was deeply immersed in French

intellectual thought. Jean-Paul Sartre's works on responsibility and commitment, especially, inspired his lifelong devotion to the causes he holds dear. He was mobilized by the French Army in 1939 and captured a year later, but escaped and joined De Gaulle in London in March 1941. Incorporated into the French Free Forces, he trained with the Royal Air Force as an observer but ended up being sent to France in 1944 to lead one of the underground Resistance networks. Captured again, on July 10, he was sentenced to death along with 36 others.

The group was transferred to Buchenwald, and 27 of them were quickly hanged. Stéphane Hessel was next up on death row. "I remember I was reciting poems to keep hope and survive," he relates. And he did, miraculously saved: With the help of the camp doctor, he assumed the identity of Michel Boitel, a prisoner who was not slated for execution, but had already died of typhus, unbeknownst to camp authorities. As Boitel, he was then sent to other concentration camps, including Mittelbau-Dora, near Nordhausen in Germany, where he was once again sentenced to hang after a failed escape attempt. He finally succeeded in eluding his captors by jumping from a train, managing to join US troops in Hanover, and he returned to Paris on May 8, 1945, the very day of victory in Europe.

After the war, Hessel embarked on a successful career as a diplomat. In 1946, he worked at the UN Commission on Human Rights and participated in drafting the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Close to Pierre Mendès-France, he held a succession of diplomatic positions and later represented France at the UN in Geneva. He founded the Association for Training in Africa and Madagascar, and throughout the years he fought for its principles and programs on behalf of the disadvantaged, even attacking President François Mitterrand for shady dealings with African dictators. Hessel was again in the spotlight in 1996, when he was appointed mediator for a group of desperate African immigrants facing deportation, who had taken shelter in Saint Ambroise and Saint Bernard churches in Paris. By then he was 79, and shortly thereafter he was honored with the Grand Cross of the Order of Merit and made a Grand Officer of the Légion d'Honneur. Others might have retired from public life at that point. Not Hessel.



In 2004, along with other former *résistants*, he signed the petition "For a Treaty of a Social Europe". Four years later, he denounced the French government for violation of human rights and noncompliance with Article 25 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, citing the government's failure to provide housing for the homeless. In 2009, the former Socialist ran for office in the European elections, on the slate of the environmental party Europe Ecologie. But

his latest achievement—at the age of 93—is probably his best known. With just 6,000 copies in its first press run, *Indignez-Vous!* captivated the nation, especially its youth. The numbers—1.5 million books snapped up in a matter of weeks—are too impressive to be explained solely by the book's low price of €3, or about \$5.

An idealist but not a utopian, Hessel has crossed paths with Nelson Mandela, the Dalai Lama and Yasser Arafat in the course of his life. Now he places his hope in Barack Obama, who, he says, "has explained his ideals through remarkable books, especially *The Audacity of Hope*". Hessel is a huge fan of poetry, able to recite from memory hundreds of lines of Apollinaire and Shakespeare. He is also a man who knows his last breath is near, but he remains serene, stating in a recent documentary for the television channel France 5, "Poetry is the first step toward comprehension of life and death."

An elder's formula that young rebels can take to heart: Poetry, activism, outrage. ■

#### WORKS BY STÉPHANE HESSEL

*Indignez-Vous!* Editions Indigènes, 29 pages, €3 (essay)

*Danse avec le Siècle* Grasset, 312 pages, €22 (autobiography)

#### THE 5 KEY PRECEPTS OF *INDIGNEZ-VOUS!*

**Outrage breeds resistance:** Everyone should have his own motives for outrage. For Hessel and his peers it was Nazism. The menace may not be as clear today as it was then, but there is injustice everywhere on the planet—including France's treatment of illegal immigrants. It's up to younger generations to take the lead now, and not fall into apathy. "When something outrages you, you become militant, tough, committed."

**The economy must change:** "The gap between the very rich and the very poor has never been so wide," says Hessel, reminding readers of the economic program of the National Council of Resistance. He calls for an immediate, wide-ranging debate on our economic system: "Political, economic, intellectual leaders and the rest of the population must not give up or become cowed by the current international dictatorship of financial markets, which threatens peace and democracy."

**Israel and Palestine must make peace:** Born to a Jewish father, Hessel nonetheless deplores Israeli military actions against Palestine, especially Gaza. "The fact that Jews are themselves perpetrating war crimes is unbearable to me," he says. "Alas, history gives too few examples of peoples learning from their own past."

**Nonviolence is the way:** Terrorist acts may be understood at times, but they cannot be accepted. "Violence turns its back on hope. We should always go for hope, the hope that resides in nonviolence," says Hessel, echoing Nelson Mandela and Martin Luther King, Jr.

**A new civilization must arise:** Although progress was made during the 20th century, the past decade has seen a step backward, with the 9/11 attacks, the war in Iraq and the financial crisis. There is need for "a peaceful insurrection against the mass media, which offer to the younger generation no future except consumerism, contempt for weaker people and for culture, general amnesia, and profligate competition of all against all."

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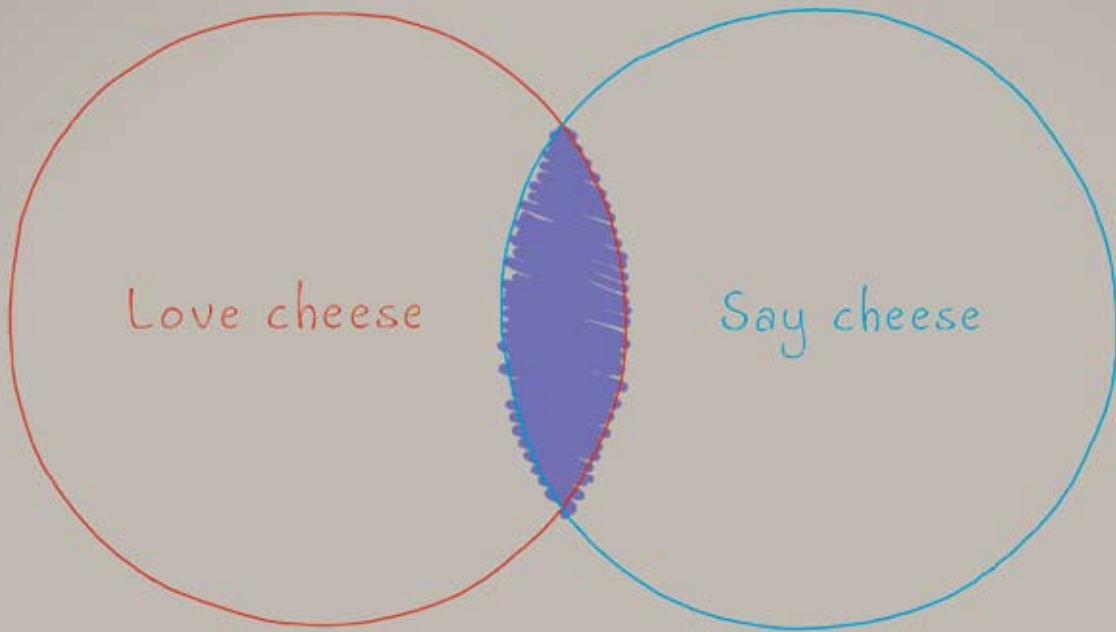
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