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CULINARY ADVENTURES IN PARIS D4

BY MARIE ELENA MARTINEZ

Special to Newsday

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When it comes to visiting Paris, most of us are in it for the food. Linger at outdoor cafes along the banks of the Seine, sipping wine with a view of the Eiffel Tower, wandering markets overflowing with farm-fresh vegetables — and then there's the boulangeries, patisseries, fromageries, chocolateries.

In November, UNESCO's World Heritage organization designated "the gastronomic meal of the French" an intangible part of cultural heritage, adding the country's cuisine to the long list of important world communities, monuments and natural wonders that deserve preservation and commemoration. It's easy to understand why. The French have elevated their culinary style to art form — to be a classically trained French chef is a distinction, to have spent time in a French kitchen is an honor.

Contrary to stereotype, culinary France isn't only about haughty restaurants, wine pairings and six-hour suppers; it's about quality of products, preparation of dishes, discussion of food, and the gathering of family and friends to share a meal.

### Planning a visit

Exploring Paris' culinary side can easily be the main objective of your trip. To that end, tour outfits like Purple Truffle ([purpletruffle.com](http://purpletruffle.com)) and Petite Peche & Co. ([petitepecheandco.com](http://petitepecheandco.com)) are helping travelers navigate the food communities of Paris like a pro. Both companies offer tailor-made itineraries that include everything from hotel arrangements to restaurant reservations, full- or partial-day guided or unguided walking tours and meetings with culinary masters. Rates begin around \$250 a day, depending on the number of people and activities, which could include anything from croissant-making to sommelier-guided wine pairings, truffle and macaroon-laced walking tours to private chef visits.

You also can map out your

# AT FRANCE'S TABLE

Touring the country's delectable cultural heritage



own food itinerary, combining stops at markets, cafes and shops with sightseeing.

### Best bets

**MARKETS** Energetic markets flourish every day of the week throughout Paris. A feast for the senses, they delight with

their ruby rainbow of meats, and contrasting aromas of salty fish and stinky blue cheese. The sheer abundance of cherries, strawberries, artichokes, eggplants and asparagus — not to mention bundles of baguettes, fresh whipped butters and displays of quiches and tarts — entices

shoppers of all walks. Saturday's **Marche Wilson** spans the length of Avenue du President Wilson in the museum-heavy 16th arrondissement and is populated by locals, while the **Organic Market** on Boulevard Raspail (Sundays only) is a bit more expensive and caters to a tourist crowd.

On any day except Monday, the **Marche d'Aligre** (Rue du Aligre) bears the title of the city's oldest covered market. All are worth a visit.

**CHEESE** Francois Robin, the winner of the 2010 Un des Meilleurs Ouvrier de France, an esteemed culinary title, is

the cheese (fauchon) tasting (al showcase French ch plate inclu goat chee chestnut l undertone blue chee



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**READER PICK**

My favorite food-oriented activity in Paris is a picnic by the Eiffel Tower. On Rue Cler (Metro École Militaire) there are numerous food shops and a street market that sells picnic fare. Pick up some French bread, cheese, wine, fruit and some pastries for dessert. Walk over a few blocks to the Eiffel Tower and find a quiet spot on the Champs de Mars, which is the park in the shadow of the tower. Enjoy your lunch gazing at the Paris landmark and think to yourself how wonderful to be in the City of Light! (Tip: Bring your own corkscrew).

**SUBMITTED BY**  
Claudia Fenner, Dix Hills



PHOTO BY CLAUDIA FENNER

The Fenner family of Dix Hills picnics near the Eiffel Tower. They advise bringing a corkscrew along.



AGE FOTOSTOCK PHOTO / PETER PHIPP

PHOTO BY MARIA ELENA MARTINEZ

Cafe customers enjoy a sunny day on the Champs-Élysées. Above, the famous cheese shop Fauchon displays its wares.

emonger at **Fauchon** (com). During a about \$140), Robin s the bounty of eese creatively. One d a Provençal se wrapped in leaves for an earthy e, one of the rarest ses in France, and a

Cheddar-like strain that Robin accurately described as “a slap in the face.” The most interesting was a Carré de Meuse with Fauchon’s plum Confit Mirabelle and gin (yes, liquor) spray. A punch to the palate, the spicy kick of gin played on the sweetness of the fruit and the milky cheese.

**Laurent Dubois** (2 Rue de Lourmel, 15th arrondissement, fromageslaurentdubois.fr), is a shop that sits over a decades-old cave d’affinage, or cheese cave, reached by descending a narrow flight of stairs. Ammonia smacks you on entry, but

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# At France's table: An eater's tour

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## FRANCE from D5

this extraordinary place is a temple to the fromager — at least until it closes in mid-August. In October, Laurent Dubois will offer cheese tastings in a new space.

**CHOCOLATE** For chocolate, Purple Truffle sent me directly to **Jacques Genin** (133 Rue de Turenne, 3rd arrondissement), the chocolate shop of note in Paris. In an immaculate second-floor kitchen, the man himself oversees the creation of every heavenly treat that comes out of his shop. Here, I learned that the cultivation of perfect chocolate is about color, shine, a lack of visible bubbles on the exterior and temperature. "Chocolate should never be crunched," Genin admonished as I devoured a bite. "Let it melt in your mouth, you'll enjoy it more."

**COOKING** Paule Caillat's **Promenades Gourmandes** cooking class meets in front of the oldest patisserie in Paris, Stohrer on Rue de Montorgueil, a street that has the spirit of the wholesale market streets of yesteryear. Navigating her preferred shops — Boucherie Davin for meat, Le Comptoir du Commerce for fish and Eric Kayser Boulangerie for bread — the very entertaining Caillat explains, "French moms would never buy bread at a patisserie. A boulangerie is in the business of yeast, a patisserie is in the business of sweets."

Such French wisdom is imparted throughout the day as the class moves to Caillat's cozy apartment in the Marais in the 3rd arrondissement. There, she bursts into frenzied action, showing groups of 10 how to create dishes like goat cheese wraps and baked lamb with eggplant and tomato. Everyone is engaged in a task, and when the class sits down to eat four hours later, it feels earned (about \$400, promenadesgourmandes.com).

**DINING** France celebrated the UNESCO designation with a dinner on the lawns of iconic Versailles. For my gastronomic meal, I visited the Shangri-La, a new palace hotel set in the former residence of Prince Roland



A cooking class run by Paule Caillat sits down to eat in her Paris apartment after preparing a typical French meal.



Chocolatier Jacques Genin in his shop



Bread for sale at the Marche Wilson



Caillat's tours stop at cheese shop La Fermette de Chloe et Gabriel.

Bonaparte, Napoleon's grandnephew. Overlooking the Eiffel Tower, the Shangri-La's **L'Abeille** restaurant brings all the elements of culinary Paris together in a regal dining room. Opt for the tasting menu highlighting classic French ingredients like foie gras and lamb, and relish the impeccable service of a kitchen and staff at its finest (about \$275 for tasting menu, shangri-la.com).

## Beyond Paris: Provence

It's hard to overdose on Paris, but if you're craving new food experiences, hop a train to the countryside. Taking a page from cookbook author Patricia Wells, *Petite Peche* and Purple Truffle both offer itineraries in idyllic Provence, a region of stone farmhouses, lush vineyards, olive groves, and meadows full of fragrant lavender and sage for about \$250 a day. *Petite Peche* also offers set dates for small Provence tours through the fall (\$4,500-\$6,500) and adds Brittany and Bordeaux tours next year.

If you're looking for a food-focused hotel package, Crillon Le Brave, a storybook property that dates back to the 16th and 17th centuries linked by bridges, cobblestone walkways and hidden courtyards, sets hungry bellies afire with its fall offerings. A six-night Provençal cooking program where guests visit markets, taste wines and meet with local purveyors costs about \$4,100 a person, and weekend truffle and wine programs start at about \$1,600 (crillonlebrave.com).