



CULINARY DELIGHTS OF THE MIDI-PYRÉNÉES

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

NEW YORK, NY, February 3, 2013 — Known as the birthplace of “haute cuisine,” France is the ideal destination for foodies, and the Midi-Pyrénées is no exception. The region boasts 26 Michelin-starred restaurants serving food that proffers local ingredients and draws from a wide variety of influences. With specialties such as Quercy saffron and black truffles, the racy yet round and fruity Armagnac and the pungent and delicate Roquefort cheese, the region’s cuisine is among the most well-renowned in France.

Its famed culinary legacy has generated a significant number of Michelin starred chefs, most notably, Michel Bras. Bras’ restaurant which bears his surname is nestled in the green folds of a mountain just outside Laguiole in the Aveyron department. One of France’s top chefs, he has held three Michelin stars since 1999 and is a firm proponent of cultivating *terroir* – the idea that food should reflect the geography, geology and climate of a place. Bras’ strong affinity for the Midi-Pyrénées is reflected in his statement: “The great love I have long had for my homeland not only means that I know it inside out but it also gives me the ability to understand every minuscule, magnificent and peculiar part of it.”

Promoting *terroir* is a common local characteristic among the region’s top chefs. Michel Sarran is the two-starred chef behind Restaurant Michel Sarran, which has the warm, personal feel of a fine town house in Toulouse. He worked with many of the great culinary figures in France, including: Alain Ducasse at Le Juana, Michel Guérard at Les Prés d’Eugénie and Jean-Michel Lorain at La Côte Saint-Jacques. However, Sarran returned home to the Midi- Pyrénées thanks to the ease with which he could source quality produce. “A region’s gastronomy must reflect its produce and producers, farmers, wine growers and other talented local artisans,” states Sarran. Sarran is joined by two other two-starred chefs in the area: Yannick Delpech of Restaurant L’Amphitryon in Colomiers just outside Toulouse and Bernard Bach of Restaurant Le Puits Saint-Jacques.

For more information about the region’s Michelin-starred chefs, please click here:
<http://goo.gl/qUQhcb>

The region’s chefs count themselves lucky as they have a host of incredible local ingredients upon which to craft their culinary masterpieces. Foie gras is an icon of French gastronomy and the product reaches its apogee in the Midi-Pyrénées. Decadent with a velvety texture, the flavor is at once meaty, buttery yet delicate, and is the fruit of a highly sophisticated *savoir-faire* as it has been produced in the region for centuries. The *Marchés au Gras*, which are specialty foie gras markets, in Gascony are open from October to March and there are foie gras courses held throughout the region where visitors can learn how to make the product in a sociable setting.

Roquefort cheese is oft-considered a veritable part of France’s history and is the oldest French AOC product (Appellations d’Origine Contrôlée), which it acquired in 1925. Roquefort’s taste is a blend of delicacy and strength and a perfect match between nature’s genius and man’s intelligence. This prestigious cheese is prepared in the south of Aveyron, not far from Millau Viaduct, a Great Tourist Site in Midi-Pyrénées. Today, three companies (Caves Papillon, Caves Société and Caves Gabriel Coulet) share the natural cheese cellars around the village of Roquefort. The Roquefort cellars were



carved out in the 17th century from the cracks in the Combalou limestone cliff. The round blocks of cheese, made exclusively from milk produced by ewes of the Lacaune breed, are aged for about three months and acquire their emerald-colored veins. The Roquefort cheese then emerges from the 10-story underground *fromagerie* to be sold to markets all over the world.

The Midi-Pyrenees is also home to the rare and exquisite Quercy black truffle as well as the equally delicate and precious Quercy saffron, both of which are luxury products from the Lot department. Aficionados of these products can head to the *Marchés de la truffe* in the village of Lalbenque, a market dedicated to the black truffles every Tuesday during the winter and the annual saffron festival, entitled *Fête du safran du Quercy*, which takes place the third weekend in October. The region also hosts saffron plantation tours, which are organized by producers who provide a "saffron" lunch for visitors.

For more information about the region's local produce, please click here: <http://goo.gl/o6Uf4A>

For more information about the region's specialities, please click here: <http://goo.gl/7giv3l>

The Midi- Pyrénées also boasts some of the best wine terroirs in France, with the Cahors-Malbec, Gaillac, Fronton, Madiran and Marcillac AOCs. These fine wines date back to antiquity and critics never tire of describing their wide variety of aromas, colors and textures. The region is also celebrated for Armagnac, a distinctive brandy that is the oldest in France. Marked by a pungent aroma, the gold and copper-colored liquor is cultivated in Gascony.

For more information about the wine tourism in the region, please click here: <http://goo.gl/5tUyvn>

With incredible fresh food and delectable wines at affordable prices, the Midi-Pyrénées invites visitors to savor its rich, earthy flavors.

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