



Next stop, Provence:
Château Léoube's grand
winery. OPPOSITE: Pool time
at La Bastide de Gordes.
ABOVE: Spinach-and-Ricotta-
Stuffed Tomatoes with
Piquillo Peppers (p. 106).

Whether your tastes run to cozy cottages or
grand châteaux, beaches or hill towns,
long lunches or languid dinners, the south of France
delivers. Read on for our rosé-fueled guide.

BY JANE SIGAL PHOTOGRAPHS BY MARTIN MORRELL
FOOD PHOTOGRAPHS BY CON POULOS

Seeing Julia Child's Provence cottage for the first time in 30 years, I was rocked by the memory of a two-day cooking marathon.

Julia built La Pitchoune (The Little Thing) on the estate of her friend and co-author Simone "Simca" Beck. "Somewhere near Italy," is how Julia liked to describe the location. (It's west of Nice, in the hills close to Grasse.) In the early '80s, I spent a few weeks there assisting Simca with cooking classes. But mostly I remember deboning, stuffing and poaching chicken after chicken for a birthday dinner for her husband, Jean Fischbacher. Those birds, packed with pistachio-studded forcemeat, were the highlight of an epic feast for more than a dozen guests.

I arrived back at "La Peetch" halfway through a recent tour of Provence. The cottage is mostly unchanged—except now there's a pool. This epitomizes Provence today: reassuringly the same, yet in some respects even better. As I traveled from Cap d'Antibes on the southeast coast to Gordes in the hilly north, I found terrifically innovative chefs as well as unwaveringly traditional cooks. I was thrilled by the sheer deliciousness of the rosés. And I stayed at what might be France's dreamiest hotel, in a 12th-century castle built into a hill.

As for La Pitchoune, the new owners rent it out for short stays, offer yoga retreats and plan to launch cooking classes. I can't imagine they'll teach anything as haute as those pistachio-stuffed birds, but I'm available to help if they do.

*Jane Sigal is an F&W contributing editor and, most recently, the author of *Bistronomy: Recipes from the Best New Paris Bistros*.*

COOK AT JULIA CHILD'S COTTAGE

A 30-minute drive from Cannes, and just outside the medieval town of Grasse, Julia's three-bedroom home is now available to travelers who want to stay and cook in the place that inspired the culinary legend.

La Pitchoune

On the day I drove up the road to Julia's vine-covered cottage, renters had just finished preparing lunch in the near-mythical kitchen, its pegboard walls marked with the heavy black outlines of pots, lids, dough hooks and whisks for easy rehangng. One of the new American owners, life coach Makenna Johnston—a Smith College grad, just like Julia and I—has left the dinged tools and embossed ingredient labels intact. She also hasn't changed the unusually tall counters, which were built specially to accommodate Julia's six-foot,

two-inch frame. (Johnston is almost as tall.) I walked the steep terraced property, still planted with olive trees, cypresses and lavender bushes, trying to sync my recollections with what was in front of me. Shielding my eyes against the sun, I wistfully noted the swimming pool just below the wisteria-shaded terrace. I wish it had existed 30 years ago; I would have loved to float in it and soak up the Provençal sun after cooking all day. *From \$625 per night; Châteauneuf-Grasse; lapeetch.com.*



Julia's lovely wisteria-covered arbor is still intact, and so is her famed kitchen, BELOW.



EAT ON THE CÔTE D’AZUR

Stretching from the Italian border to St. Tropez, this glittering coast is the most glamorous part of Provence. I found an outstanding prix fixe menu from one of the world’s best chefs at Mirazur in Menton; had a masterful modern meal at the hotel restaurant Villa Fabulite in Cap d’Antibes; and rediscovered classics at Les Arcades, in the town of Biot.

Mirazur

While most of the top-tier chefs in Provence gravitate to big cities, Mauro Colagreco is the exception. Having trained with three of France’s (and the world’s) great cooks—Alain Passard, Alain Ducasse and Bernard Loiseau—the Argentina-born Colagreco established himself in the quiet town of Menton, half an hour east of Nice. In his decade there, he’s put Menton on the map with Mirazur, which this year rose to the No. 6 spot on the World’s 50 Best Restaurants list. The location, a multilevel glass-and-steel building, offers unbelievable harbor views and the occasional scent of citrus blossom wafting up from the terraced grove below. That’s fitting: The chef infuses modern dishes, like his crab and grapefruit with white rose petals and almond foam, with the region’s most fragrant plants and flowers. Yet his \$62 prix fixe lunch menu is one of the best deals in the south of France. 30 Ave. Aristide Briand, Menton; mirazur.fr.

Villa Fabulite

This 15-room design hotel is home to the friendliest restaurant in the swanky town of Cap d’Antibes. In his tiny open kitchen, Cyrille Chaussade constantly updates a short menu with what’s best at the local market; in the summer months he packs his citrusy squid salad with cherry tomatoes and shaved zucchini. A meal here feels like having your very own chef cook for you in a private garden. After dinner, be sure to take the three-minute walk to the beach, where dramatic coves are cradled by rock formations that jut out into the sea. Back at the hotel, snug, lovely guest rooms like my gold-and-aquamarine one promise a blissful night’s sleep. From \$120 per night; 150 Traverse des Nuelles, Cap d’Antibes; fabulite.com.

Les Arcades

I first visited this restaurant 25 years ago with my mother, when I was researching my second cookbook. Clearly, my return to La Pitchoune required another pilgrimage to Les Arcades for some quintessential southern French cooking. Opened in 1952, it sits under 15th-century arches in the tiny town of Biot, 15 miles from Nice. The walls are still hung with paintings by artists who bartered their work for food, including Vasarely, Braque and Folon. And there was the 91-year-old owner, Mimi Brothier. When I told her about my history with her restaurant, she wrapped me in a warm hug. I asked for more dishes than any normal person could consume—stuffed squash blossoms; rabbit with olives, garlic and mushrooms; fresh goat cheese marinated in chile oil—and a waiter jotted down my order in neat columns on the paper table cover that doubles as the check. Happily, some things never change. 14/16 Place des Arcades, Biot; hotel-restaurant-les-arcades.com.

Squid and Summer Vegetable Salad with Preserved Lemon Dressing

Total 1 hr; Serves 4

4 red radishes, sliced paper thin

½ small zucchini, sliced paper thin

½ small yellow squash, sliced paper thin

½ fennel bulb, halved lengthwise and sliced paper thin

3 Tbsp. white balsamic vinegar

1 Tbsp. minced preserved lemon rind

1 Tbsp. minced shallot

½ cup plus 1 Tbsp. extra-virgin olive oil

Kosher salt and pepper

12 oz. cleaned squid, bodies sliced crosswise ¼ inch thick and tentacles left whole

8 cherry tomatoes, halved or quartered if large

12 niçoise olives, pitted

¼ cup chopped mixed herbs, such as parsley, basil and chives

Piment d’Espelette and fleur de sel, for garnish

1. Soak the radishes, zucchini, squash and fennel slices in a bowl of ice water.

2. In a bowl, mix the vinegar with the preserved lemon and shallot. Slowly whisk in ½ cup of the olive oil. Season the vinaigrette with salt and pepper.

3. In a large skillet, combine the remaining 1 tablespoon of oil with 2 tablespoons of water and bring to a simmer. Add the squid and season with salt and pepper. Cover and cook over

moderate heat until just opaque throughout, about 1 minute. Add the poached squid to the vinaigrette.

4. Drain the iced vegetables and pat thoroughly dry. Add the vegetables, tomatoes, olives and herbs to the squid and mix well. Transfer the salad to plates and drizzle with any remaining vinaigrette. Garnish with piment d’Espelette and fleur de sel. —Cyrille Chaussade, Villa Fabulite

WINE A bright coastal white from Corsica: 2014 Yves Leccia Domaine d’E Croce Patrimonio Blanc.

Chile Oil–Marinated Goat Cheese

Active 10 min plus 3 days marinating; Serves 6

9 dried chiles de árbol

One semifirm 11-oz. log of goat cheese, cut into 6 pieces

3 to 4 cups extra-virgin olive oil

Toasted sliced baguette or sourdough bread, for serving

Scatter 3 of the chiles in the bottom of a small bowl at least 3 inches deep. Arrange the cheese in a single layer over the chiles; top with 3 more chiles. Pour in enough olive oil to submerge the cheese. Crumble the remaining 3 chiles into the oil. Cover and marinate in the refrigerator for at least 3 days. Bring to room temperature before serving. (Once the cheese is done, strain the chile oil and use in other dishes.) —Adapted from Les Arcades

MAKE AHEAD The cheese can be refrigerated for up to 1 week.

FOOD STYLIST: VIVIAN LUI; STYLE EDITOR: SUZIE MYERS



“A meal at Villa Fabulite feels like having your very own chef cook for you in a private garden.”

Fennel adds freshness to squid salad. RIGHT: Goat cheese marinated in chile oil at the art-filled Les Arcades restaurant in Biot. Plate from March.



DRINK ROSÉ ALL DAY

The south of France produces fantastic rosé. The Côtes de Provence west of St. Tropez is a great place to try both innovative versions (at Château Léoube) and ultraclassic ones (at Commanderie de Peyrassol and Domaines Ott). There are other sublime experiences at these properties, too—from laid-back beach cafés to contemporary art set along vineyard trails.

Château Léoube

Stretching out to the azure sea, Château Léoube is owned by an estimable British duo: Lord and Lady Barnford, the forces behind England’s Daylesford Organic Farmshops & Cafés. They purchased the property in order to restore the ancient vineyard using sustainable farming. At Léoube, Romain Ott, of the Domaines Ott family, produces a bottling he calls super-rosé, which gets its complexity from old vines. He also makes an array of more widely available wines, which you can try at the estate’s small café, in a sandy pine forest near the beach. 2387 Route de Léoube, Bormes-les-Mimosas; chateauléoube.com.

Commanderie de Peyrassol

This 800-year-old wine estate recently opened a farm-chic B&B outfitted with antique mirrors and galvanized steel tubs. The property’s contemporary art gallery and the sculpture park, with works by Frank Stella and Jean Dubuffet surrounded

by vines, are must-visits. Peyrassol’s tasting room is likewise distinctive, created from the rubble of one of the oldest buildings on the property. Those pale, mineral-inflected rosés pair beautifully with chef Guillaume Delauné’s modern Provençal dishes, like tomatoes stuffed with ricotta and spinach (p. 106). From \$146 per night; RN7, Flassans-sur-Issole; peyrassol.com.

Domaines Ott

Ott operates three estates across Provence, but visitors can sample all the wines at the palm-fringed seaside winery in La Londe-les-Maures. Co-director Jean-François Ott helped me taste my way through an array of bottlings. When I admired the Clos Mireille’s light color, he schooled me: “Dark rosés are just as refreshing.” Next up, a short drive to L’Estagnol (restaurant-lestagnol.fr), the beach shack of my dreams, where, from my director’s chair on the sand, I watched the cooks feed whole sea bass and ratatouille into a wood-burning oven. Route de Brégançon, La Londe-les-Maures; domaines-ott.com.

Grilled Fish with Tapenade and Smoky Ratatouille

🕒 Total 45 min; Serves 4

RATATOUILLE

½ cup extra-virgin olive oil

1 small red bell pepper, cut into ½-inch pieces

1 small zucchini, cut into ½-inch pieces

1 very small eggplant, cut into ½-inch pieces (1¼ cups)

1 medium onion, finely chopped

4 garlic cloves, minced

½ tsp. herbes de Provence

Kosher salt and pepper

Two 14-oz. cans fire-roasted diced tomatoes

Pinch of sugar

¼ cup chopped parsley

Smoked salt

TAPENADE

¼ cup pitted kalamata olives

¼ cup pitted oil-cured black olives

2 Tbsp. extra-virgin olive oil

2 garlic cloves, lightly crushed

2 oil-packed anchovies, drained

1 Tbsp. capers

1½ tsp. chopped thyme

1½ tsp. chopped rosemary

FISH

Canola oil, for brushing

Two 1½- to 2-lb. whole black bass, sea bass, porgy or dorade, cleaned

2 Tbsp. extra-virgin olive oil

Kosher salt and pepper

2 lemons, halved

1. Make the ratatouille In a large saucepan, heat 1½ tablespoons of the olive oil. Add the red pepper and cook over moderate heat, stirring occa-

sionally, until softened, about 8 minutes. Transfer to a bowl. Repeat the process with the chopped zucchini and then the eggplant, cooking each vegetable in 1½ tablespoons of the olive oil until tender, about 8 minutes each.

2. Heat 1½ tablespoons more of the olive oil in the saucepan. Add the onion, garlic and herbes de Provence, season with kosher salt and cook over low heat, stirring, until the onion is softened, about 10 minutes. Add the tomatoes and sugar and season with kosher salt and pepper. Cook, partially covered, until the sauce thickens, about 20 minutes. Stir in the remaining 2 tablespoons of the olive oil and all of the sautéed vegetables. Cover partially and cook

for 5 minutes. Stir in the parsley and season the ratatouille with smoked salt.

3. Make the tapenade In a food processor, combine all of the ingredients and pulse until the tapenade is chunky.

4. Prepare the fish Light a grill and oil the grate. Rub the fish all over with the olive oil and season with salt and pepper. Grill, covered, over moderately high heat, turning once, until just opaque, 5 to 7 minutes per side. Transfer the fish to a work surface and remove the fillets. Transfer to plates and serve with the smoky ratatouille, tapenade and lemon halves. —Adapted from *L’Estagnol*

MAKE AHEAD The ratatouille can be refrigerated for 3 days; the tapenade can be refrigerated for 2 days; serve both at room temperature.

WINE Racy, fruit-tinged rosé: 2015 Sulauze Côteaux d’Aix-en-Provence Pomponette.



Managing director Alban Cacaret at Commanderie de Peyrassol, where the art includes a Gavin Turk door sculpture, LEFT. Its chic B&B, RIGHT, opened in 2015.



Grilled fish and ratatouille inspired by L’Estagnol.



STAY IN A CASTLE

The insider’s Provence is up in the hills north of the coast, between the ancient cities of Arles and Avignon. That’s where you can find the stunning, newly renovated château-turned-hotel La Bastide de Gordes; shop a renowned flea market in L’Isle-sur-la-Sorgue with finds from all over France; and discover crisp-crust pizza at a charming little parlor that embodies the region’s small-town spirit.

La Bastide de Gordes

I’ve always had a secret dream of living in an 18th-century toile de Jouy scene, capering with the shepherdesses next to stone turrets. I came as close as I ever will at this sumptuously refurbished fortress-hotel, where bedrooms are swathed in the pastoral fabric. The historic details (antique bath tiles, intricate wood paneling) are balanced by modern comforts like a Sisley spa and four outdoor and indoor pools. The Bastide’s La Citadelle restaurant serves impeccable New Provençal dishes, like einkorn risotto with raw and cooked spring onions. L’Orangerie bistro hews closer to tradition: That’s where I fell for this outstanding salade niçoise (right), with the surprise of shaved local baby artichokes mixed in. *From \$220 per night; Rue de la Combe, Gordes; bastide-de-gordes.com.*

L’Isle-sur-la-Sorgue Flea Market

Sharp-eyed interior designers and antiques buyers can outfit entire homes with the French country furniture and housewares from the flea market that takes over the town center on Sundays. Within five minutes of rummaging through one of the stalls, I’d discovered a treasure I just had to buy: a shiny yellow mustard pot-salt cellar with an iridescent blue cicada, the iconic symbol of Provence. By 3 p.m. the stands were well picked over, so I happily sipped a citron pressé (in France, the DIY lemonade comes with a glass of fresh lemon juice, a water carafe and a small canister of sugar) at a café in the sun overlooking the rushing Sorgue River.

Pizza Brun

Bruno and Colette Brun’s marvelous pizza parlor in Maussane-les-Alpilles, outside Les Baux and not far from Arles, has a well-deserved cult following. It’s in a stone cottage with sky-blue shutters and colorful metal chairs, the kind of setting that exemplifies laid-back, small-town Provence. I lingered in the courtyard, sipping inexpensive but delicious rosé, waiting for the cowbell to ring, signaling that my order was ready. At last, the clang. My wood-fired pie topped with mozzarella, tomatoes and niçoise olives deserved the advance praise, with a crust that shattered when I touched it. I also loved the reinvention of a pissaladière, the classic tart, into a superb pizza topped with caramelized onions, olives, anchovies and a little melted Emmental. *Ave. de la Vallée des Baux, Maussane-les-Alpilles.*

Niçoise Salad with Baby Artichokes

Total **1 hr 15 min**; Serves **4 to 6**

- ½ cup plus 2 Tbsp. extra-virgin olive oil**
- ¼ cup balsamic vinegar**
- Kosher salt and pepper**
- 1 dozen quail eggs or 4 large eggs**
- 8 oz. green beans, trimmed**
- ½ lemon**
- 4 baby artichokes**
- 4 oz. mixed baby greens (8 cups)**
- 4 tomatoes (1½ lbs.), cut into wedges**
- 3 bell peppers, preferably a mix of colors, thinly sliced**
- Two 7-oz. cans good-quality tuna in olive oil, drained and flaked**
- 12 salted anchovy fillets, bones discarded, rinsed and patted dry**
- 12 niçoise olives**
- Chopped basil, for garnish**

1. In a small bowl, gradually whisk the olive oil into the vinegar until incorporated. Season with salt and pepper.
2. In a medium saucepan, cover the quail eggs with 2 inches of water and bring to a boil. Cover the pan, remove from the heat and let stand for 5 minutes. (If using large eggs, let stand off the heat for 10 minutes.) Transfer the eggs to a bowl of ice water and let cool completely. Peel and halve them.

3. Meanwhile, in a medium saucepan of salted boiling water, blanch the beans until crisp-tender, about 3 minutes. Drain and transfer to another ice bath to cool.
4. Squeeze the lemon half into a bowl of cold water. Snap off the outer leaves of 1 artichoke. Using a sharp knife, cut off its top half and trim the base and stem. Using a melon baller or a spoon, scoop out the furry choke. Add the artichoke to the lemon water. Repeat with the remaining artichokes. Very thinly slice the artichokes and return them to the lemon water.
5. Arrange the baby greens on a platter. Drain the artichokes and pat dry with paper towels. Arrange the artichokes, tomatoes, bell peppers, tuna, anchovies, olives, eggs and green beans on the greens in rows; alternatively, gently mix the salad. Drizzle half of the dressing over the salad and garnish with basil. Serve the remaining dressing on the side. —*L’Orangerie, La Bastide de Gordes*

MAKE AHEAD The dressing can be refrigerated for up to 3 days.

WINE Minerally Côtes de Provence rosé: 2015 Château de Roquefort Corail.

continued on p. 106



A short drive from La Bastide de Gordes, LEFT, is L’Isle-sur-la-Sorgue, ABOVE, and its flea market. Plate from March.



“The niçoise salad at La Bastide de Gordes has the surprise of shaved local baby artichokes mixed in.”



Spinach-and-Ricotta-Stuffed Tomatoes with Piquillo Peppers

78 PAGE 78

Active **1 hr**; Total **1 hr 50 min**; Serves **4**

At the exemplary winery Commanderie de Peyrassol, chef Guillaume Delauné makes dishes like these excellent stuffed tomatoes. He uses a melon baller to scoop out the insides of the tomatoes, leaving a sturdy shell to hold the spinach-and-cheese filling. The accompanying sauce is made from the scooped-out tomato seeds and juices.

- 2 slices of sourdough bread, cut into ¼-inch cubes**
- 9 Tbsp. extra-virgin olive oil, plus more for drizzling**
- 4 firm-ripe medium tomatoes, top ½ inch cut off and reserved**
- Kosher salt and pepper**
- ½ medium onion, halved and thinly sliced**
- ½ cup rosé**
- 8 oz. baby spinach**
- 4 oz. fresh ricotta cheese**
- 3 piquillo peppers, drained and diced**
- 1½ oz. freshly grated Parmigiano-Reggiano cheese**
- ¼ cup chopped basil**
- ¼ cup chopped parsley**
- 1 garlic clove, minced**
- ¼ tsp. minced thyme**
- ¼ tsp. minced rosemary**
- 7 pitted kalamata olives, quartered lengthwise**
- Pinch of piment d'Espelette**
- Baby arugula, for garnish**

- 1.** Preheat the oven to 350°. On a rimmed baking sheet, toss the bread cubes with 2 tablespoons of the olive oil. Bake until golden and crisp, 8 to 10 minutes. Let cool. Leave the oven on.
- 2.** Using a medium melon baller, scoop the inside of the tomatoes into a small gratin dish, leaving a ¼-inch wall on the sides. Lightly sprinkle the inside of the

tomato cups with salt and drain upside down on a paper towel-lined plate.

- 3.** In a large nonstick skillet, heat 2 tablespoons of the olive oil. Add the onion and cook over moderate heat, stirring occasionally, until softened, about 5 minutes. Add the rosé and cook until almost completely evaporated, about 5 minutes. Scrape the mixture into a medium bowl and wipe out the skillet.
- 4.** Heat 1 tablespoon of the olive oil in the skillet. Add the spinach and cook over moderately high heat, stirring, just until wilted; transfer to the bowl. Add the ricotta, piquillos, Parmigiano-Reggiano, basil, parsley, garlic, thyme, rosemary, olives and piment d'Espelette. Season with salt and pepper.
- 5.** Set the tomatoes in the gratin dish in their juices and stuff with the ricotta filling. Bake until the tomatoes are softened, about 20 minutes. Set the tops on the tomatoes and bake for 10 minutes longer.
- 6.** Using a slotted spoon, transfer the stuffed tomatoes to a plate; cover to keep warm. Transfer the cooking juices to a blender and add the remaining ¼ cup oil; puree until smooth. Strain the sauce into a small saucepan and season with salt and pepper. Simmer over moderately low heat, stirring occasionally, until slightly thickened, about 10 minutes.
- 7.** Spoon the sauce into shallow bowls and set a stuffed tomato in each one. Garnish with the croutons and arugula, drizzle with olive oil and serve.

MAKE AHEAD The filling can be refrigerated for 2 days.

WINE Herb-inflected Provence white: 2014 Domaine Le Galantin Bandol Blanc.

Pan-Roasted Chicken with Green Olives and Garlic

Active **40 min**; Total **1 hr 10 min**; Serves **4**

This terrific chicken, adapted from a recipe in Jane Sigal's book *Backroad Bistros*, *Farmhouse Fare*, is based on the rabbit sauté served at Les Arcades in Biot. Chef-owner Mimi Brothier has made the dish a part of her rustic Provençal menu for years.

- 3 Tbsp. extra-virgin olive oil**
- 4 oz. thinly sliced pancetta, cut into ½-inch-wide strips**
- One 3½- to 4-lb. chicken, cut into 8 pieces**
- Kosher salt and pepper**
- 12 unpeeled garlic cloves, crushed**
- 6 thyme sprigs, plus chopped thyme for garnish**
- 3 rosemary sprigs**

1 cup dry white wine

½ cup (3 oz.) pitted green olives, such as Cerignola

6 Tbsp. unsalted butter

Baby arugula and fleur de sel, for serving

- 1.** Preheat the oven to 450°. In a large enameled cast-iron casserole, heat 1 tablespoon of the olive oil. Add the pancetta and cook over moderate heat, stirring occasionally, until golden, about 5 minutes. Using a slotted spoon, transfer the pancetta to a paper towel-lined plate.
- 2.** Rub the chicken with the remaining 2 tablespoons of olive oil and season with salt and pepper. Add half of the chicken to the casserole, skin side down, along with half each of the garlic, thyme sprigs and rosemary. Cook over moderately high heat, turning, until golden brown all over, about 5 minutes. Transfer the chicken to a large plate. Repeat with the remaining chicken, garlic, thyme and rosemary. Return all of the chicken and aromatics to the casserole.
- 3.** Roast the chicken until the breasts are just cooked through, about 15 minutes. Transfer the breasts to a platter. Roast the chicken legs for 10 minutes longer, until cooked through. Add the chicken legs and garlic to the platter; discard the herb sprigs and garlic skins.
- 4.** Pour off all of the fat from the casserole. Add the white wine, olives and pancetta and cook over moderately high heat, scraping up the browned bits on the bottom, until the wine is reduced by half, 2 to 3 minutes. Whisk in the butter and season with salt and pepper. Spoon the sauce over the chicken and top with arugula, chopped thyme and fleur de sel.

WINE Spice-driven Côtes-du-Rhône: 2014 Château de Saint Cosme Les Deux Albion.