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Fantastic Foodie Fun in Paris

Essential Sightings for the Serious Traveling Gourmand

By Deirdre Michalski

Of all the romantic elements that make a trip to Paris such a visceral, life-affirming experience, nothing captures the city's true essence like its culinary scene. Yes, compelling arguments can be made in favor that Paris' history serves as its backbone; however, it should be noted that the blood that was spilt at the food of the Revolution's infamous guillotine still glistens with the iconic food-centric phrase "let them eat cake." While the basic, somewhat clichéd images of sitting at a sidewalk cafe armed with a baguette, a plate of cheese, and a glass of Boudreaux has a measure of merit, such easily conjured up images only provide a partial glimpse of the true beauty of Parisian food. Indeed, the reason that eating and drinking serves as the City of Lights' on switch can be found at the roots of all of its great cuisine; in the streets and at the shops where the building blocks for unforgettable gastronomic bliss are first sequestered and assembled.

In the second installment of Deirdre Michalski's ongoing series on the delights of Paris, the adventurous traveler shares some of the best places within the city to capture the origins of French cuisine's well-deserved legend. As you will see from the following examples, these venues manage to sprinkle in a bit of history and culture along with their devotion to food, demonstrating just how integral the culinary arts are to the very soul of this beautiful city.

It goes without saying that Paris is noted for its incredible cuisine. Each time I visit I am tempted to secure an apartment so I can purchase all the delectable ingredients that I can find in my travels through the city, and cook up a few feasts in my own abode. But alas, I am always on the move, so it never quite works out that way. But just because I'm mobile doesn't mean you have to be when you arrive here. It is in that spirit that I present to you these "can't miss" culinary adventures when you find yourself in Paris; journeys that put you right at the source of French cuisine. Enjoy, my foodie friends!

Julia Child's Favorite Cooking Store In Paris-E. Dehillerin



A trip to Paris, France is not complete without a trip to E. Dehillerin. Tucked away on a quiet, shade tree-lined side street, it is the ultimate mecca of culinary tools and copperware. The store also contains a strong sense of historical merit, as it describes itself as being a "Specialists of Materials for Cuisine" since 1820.

The store is chock-full with equipment heavy and light, classic and new, stainless and copper. From upstairs racks to downstairs shelves, the place is brimming with cooking finery for catering, the home kitchen and hard-core culinary/chef professionals alike. Sometimes watching the patrons with their lists in-hand and serious stares on their faces is just as much fun as fishing for gadgets. I always bring some small bauble home from this place to remind me of my trip, and my last adventure was no exception. I found a spunky little tool that looks similar to a vegetable peeler and creates skinny little strips when applied to a fruit or veggie. [When I returned home, I used it on zucchini and then seared the strips lightly in olive oil. It resembled noodles when all was said and done; a treat that was healthy and colorful.]

Behind the check-out counter is a pathetic photo of Julia Child. She made the store famous in my modern world, and is deserving of a much worthier monument. I sent them a note to that affect after my return, but they have yet to reply. I know you are surprised to hear that. They are French, and it is complicated, as explained by a tour guide years ago. Another thing to note – the store is dusty, and in need of a very good spring cleaning. But if one can look past all that, the inventory is plentiful, and there is always something to touch, grab, discover, and figure out just how it might work! It is a "candy store" for culinary aficionados of any level. Copper, stainless steel, cast iron, bronze – it's all here. Tableware, silicon sheets, molds and tart pans, whisks, and other fun gizmos also do their part to keep the French kitchen culture alive and well. So what better place in France than this to explore and toast to Julia Child, despite its less than stellar homage? After all, she would have celebrated her 100th birthday this past August – August 15, to be exact. It's worth the effort to celebrate the Grande Dame of French cuisine by visiting this store and losing yourself in the many treasures of culinary tools and wonderment. 18 Rue Coquillere, Paris, France 75001; www.e-dehillerin.fr/en

Galleries LaFayette

Galleries Lafayette is a fantastic Art Nouveau department store that was founded in 1893. There are in fact two buildings that make up this venue; they are located on either side of the street with an elevated walkway joining the two (similar to how South Coast Plaza connects to the Building formerly known as Crystal Court). A breathtaking dome can be found in the structure's main Coupole building, complete with balconies on all four floors to complement the view skyward. And while some might arrive to shop for clothes, home furnishings or jewelry, we were there for the food! Guests will justifiably be in awe of the building's amazing architecture, but wowed by the incredible and seemingly endless international food market. Food from all corners of the globe is represented here, from the usual suspects to harder to find gourmet salts and exotic olive oils. There are also restaurants at every turn, offering food and wine bars to sample the excellent worldly goodness. Is there any other way to shop? I wanted to spend an entire day here hopping from one to the next! 40 Boulevard Haussmann, 9th Arrondissement, Paris, France, 75009 (Located near the Opera Garnier). <http://www2.galerielafayette.com/index.do>

Rue Cler

This posh, pedestrian-only enclave, located in the city's 7th arrondissement (aka district), is one long street of heavenly markets and culinary delights. The produce, seafood, cheeses, pastries, wine and flowers sold here are presented with an exquisite sense of flair and elegance. Each display and window design on this road frames the delicious wares that are showcased inside in a rather heavenly fashion, coaxing us to come inside when we stroll past slowly. Rue Cler is brilliant eye candy for any self-respecting foodie, and in the late afternoon, well dressed locals can be observed as they shop for their impromptu evening menu with lists in hand and a love in their hearts.





Farmers' Markets

If you are going to get up close and personal with the Parisian food scene, a trip to a Farmers Market while here is an absolute must. While Farmers Markets abound in Paris, their hours of operation are similar to what you would encounter here. You have to note which days they are open (typically 1 or 2 days a week), and plan that into your itinerary accordingly. On our last trip, my husband and I chose to pick one that was large in scale, but also right near our hotel.

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Marche at Avenue Du President Wilson

Located in the 16th arrondissement, and close to the 7th (where Rue Cler is located), this market is just across the Seine River on bridge Pont D L'Alma. The Eiffel Tower can also be viewed from here, albeit from a distance. The market, which is open Wednesdays and Saturdays from 7:00am to 2:30pm, was the highlight of my time in Paris. We were completely awestruck by the market's size and its wares as we walked through its space, which spanned some four city blocks. There were an abundance of colorful flower booths bursting with life. There was a sweet man selling foie gras in every imaginable type of container. There was a complete rotisserie filled with golden brown chickens, complete with cut potatoes cooking in the juicy drippings at its bottom. Cooking gadgets, adorable children's clothing, fresh produce, fruit stands, seafood, berries, pastries, breads, olive oils – the list truly goes on and on. It was a plethora of sheer goodness. My only regret here is that I did not have my own kitchen in the City of Lights, so I could scoop some of the beautiful ingredients up and take them back to cook!

As I mentioned earlier, there are many markets to explore when you get to Paris. However, here are three other very popular markets to consider if you don't want to take the march to The Marche. Ask your Hotel Concierge for the one nearest to your hotel, and double check to make sure they are open on the day you are set on visiting.

1) **Marche des Enfants Rouge**: Named after the orphans at a nearby hospital whose workers wore bright red uniforms, this market is open every day, opening at 8:30 and closing at 7:30pm Monday through Thursday, 8:00pm on Friday and Saturday, and 2:00pm on Sundays. History buffs should note that this is the oldest covered market in Paris as its roots can be traced back to 1615. There is a small iron-gate entrance to the festivities at 39 Rue de Bretagne in 3rd Arrondissement.

2) **Saxe-Breteuil Marche**: This market is open Thursdays and Saturdays from 7:00am to 2:30pm. This market arguably boasts the most beautiful surroundings of any market, as it is surrounded by the Eiffel Tower and the monument-laden Les Invalides. It is located between Avenue de Segur and Place de Breteil in the 7th androssment.

3) **Rue de Grenelle**: This is more of a flea market that contains a farmer's market, but the open-air venue has plenty of examples of beautiful food to keep you happy. It is open Wednesdays and Sundays from 7:00am to 2:30pm and is located between Motte-Pique and Duplex Metro under the metro bridge in the 15th androssment, although the 7th androssment and just a stone's throw away.

Deirdre Michalski is a travel and culinary writer who resides in Orange County when she is not exploring Paris. You can read more of her adventures near and far at her website www.TastesAndTravel.com.

All photos courtesy Deirdre Michalski.