

CANADA



WHERE ON EARTH

# Tasting TERROIR

## in Quebec City

by SUSIE ELLISON

PHOTOS THIS SPREAD  
FROM TOP LEFT

Quebec's boreal  
terroir provides  
inspiration for  
chefs; Château  
Frontenac;  
Quartier Petit  
Champlain in  
Quebec City.





*OF COURSE* you're in Quebec City for the history and culture, for the magnificent architecture and unmistakable Gallic flair. After all, this city — set on a high bluff above the mighty Saint Lawrence River — is like no other, as the flocks of tourists who tread its cobblestone streets year-round attest. But the city isn't stuck in the past; it's the hub of a culinary movement that is rediscovering the gastronomic riches of the boreal forests, lakes and rivers that have sustained the settlement for centuries.»



## ...Culinary artisans draw on the region's gastronomic riches...

«The main route to Quebec City from the northeast is a multi-lane highway that hugs the shoreline of the St Lawrence River, but one block back from the water is the Royal Road — the ancient byway that linked the French settlement with trading posts up country. Follow this narrow, winding road and the clock turns back as you pass stone cottages with pitched roofs and gable windows, rough timber barns and old farmhouses, some with lands extending down to the river. These properties (*rangs* in French) date from the very founding of Quebec province, when each holding granted under the seigneurial system was an oblong plot of land with river frontage on one end.

Auberge Baker, a rustic inn and restaurant that specializes in regional cuisine and traditional Québécois hospitality, is housed in one of these early dwellings. Built in the 1840s, the farmhouse oozes atmosphere, from its thick stone walls and wide floorboards, to the vintage photographs lining its walls. On the menu are elegant interpretations of Québécois fare, and a *table d'hôte* option “From Grandma’s Kitchen” that caught my eye. It began with a vegetable soup that owner and host Gaston Clouthier (a spritely *bon vivant* of 73) cheerfully described as “yesterday’s leftovers” (it was fresh and delicious), then came a plate loaded with *tourtière* (meat pie) with homemade ketchup and pickles, *ragôut de porc* (pork hock and meatball stew), whipped potatoes and garden veggies. Clouthier uncorked a selection of wines from nearby Île d’Orleans. And there was sugar pie for dessert.

Île d’Orleans is an island in the middle of the St Lawrence, whose unique soils and microclimate are ideal for farming and orcharding. One of the first parts of Quebec to be colonized by the French, it is now a centre of agritourism and source of many ingredients that grace the tables of Quebec City restaurants.

Sisters Anne and Catherine Monna operate Cassis Monna & Filles, a winery and restaurant based on the blackcurrants planted by their father in the 1970s. The Monna family has been in the liqueur business in France since 1872 and that generations-old expertise has been translated into an award-winning crème de cassis. The sisters also produce blackcurrant wines, jams, vinaigrettes, mustards and preserves made with the fruit they grow. Their terrace overlooking the St Lawrence is a lovely place to enjoy a glass of blackcurrant sangria and a local charcuterie board, or to stop in for blackcurrant gelato.

Also on the island is La Ferme du Coteau, which supplies organic produce to Chez Muffy, the elegant restaurant of the Relais & Châteaux lodging Auberge Saint-Antoine Executive Chef Romain in Quebec City. Chez Muffy is extraordinary, not only for its superb farm-to-table cuisine, but also for the collection of antiquities and archaeological objects (including one of only two cannons dating from the founding of Quebec City) that are displayed in the hotel’s public spaces.»

**PHOTOS THIS SPREAD CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT** Anne Monna; Blackcurrant sangria at Cassis Monna & Filles; Auberge Baker sign; Charcuterie board at Cassis Monna & Filles; Chef Elliott Beaudoin in the kitchen at Légende; Gaston Clouthier from Auberge Baker.





CANADA

Cook

SERVES 4

## Venison Stew with Cassis

*THE BOREAL FORESTS OF Charlevoix provide many culinary ingredients, including venison and other game meats. Cassis Monna, on Île d'Orleans, produces a particularly fine blackcurrant liqueur, which adds a wonderful depth of flavour to this stew.*

**Venison**  
500 g, cubed

**Salt and Freshly Ground Pepper**  
to taste

**All-Purpose Flour**  
3 Tbs

**Bacon Fat or Vegetable Oil**  
3 Tbs

**Yellow Onion**  
1 medium,  
finely chopped

**Celery** 1 stalk,  
finely chopped

**Garlic**  
2 cloves, minced

**Red Wine** 1 cup

**Cassis** ¼ cup

**Dried Thyme** 1 tsp

**Dried Sage** 1 tsp

**Nutmeg** ½ tsp

- 1 SEASON** the venison liberally with salt and pepper. Toss the meat in the flour to coat.
- 2 HEAT** the bacon fat or vegetable oil in a Dutch oven or heavy bottomed saucepan. Sauté the onion and celery until softened and translucent. Add the garlic and sauté for 30 seconds more. Add the venison and stir to combine.
- 3 ADD** the red wine and use a wooden spoon to scrape up any browned bits from the base of the pot. Add the cassis and the herbs.
- 4 COVER** the pot and adjust the heat to a simmer. Simmer for an hour, checking from time to time to see if more liquid is needed. Add stock or water if the stew is becoming too dry.
- 5 COOK** for another 30 minutes, or until the meat is very tender. Check for seasoning and add salt and pepper as needed.





SERVES 4

## Mushroom Salad

*THIS SALAD IS ONE of the many healthy dishes offered at Le Monastère des Augustines in Quebec City. The key to success is allowing the mushrooms to stand for at least a few hours in order to soak up the marinade and soften in texture.*

**Button Mushrooms** 250 g

**Sun Dried Tomatoes** ¼ cup

**Shallot**<sup>1</sup> 1, minced

**Extra Virgin Olive Oil**  
¼ cup, more for serving

**Fresh Parsley** chopped,  
½ cup

**Pecans** or **Walnuts**  
chopped, ¼ cup

**Garlic Powder** 1 tsp

**Salt** and **Freshly Ground Black Pepper** to taste

<sup>1</sup> Or the white part of a green onion.

- WIPE** the mushrooms clean with paper towel. Cut off the stems and discard (or save for stock). Quarter the mushrooms, or cut in eighths if large.
- COMBINE** the mushrooms with the remaining ingredients and allow to stand for at least four hours, or overnight, in the fridge.
- BRING** to room temperature before serving. Taste for seasoning and add salt and pepper if needed.
- DRIZZLE** with some additional olive oil and serve.

«My dinner at Chez Muffy was superb. Tiny mussels arrived on a slender tranche of focaccia napped with a delicate leek and garlic foam. A fillet of arctic char from Gaspésie, with silky flesh and crisp skin, rested on a bed of wild chanterelles, with charred, pencil-thin leeks and a teeny carrot completing a beautiful and delicate plate. Dessert resembled a garland of wildflowers, composed of Île d'Orleans strawberries and cubes of strawberry gel, interspersed with dabs of marzipan and (*quelle extraordinaire!*) sweet green peas. In the centre of the posy, a quenelle of almond-scented ice cream. To drink, a beautiful pinot gris from Vignoble Camy, an award-winning winery belonging to a branch of the ancestral Charlevoix family, Tremblay.»



**THIS PHOTO** Fresh herbs at Le Grand Marché de Québec.





ANNE DESBRISAY

# Chez Muffy

BY ANNE DESBRISAY

**WHERE:** Auberge Saint-Antoine, Quebec City

**WHEN:** A snowy November 2019

A NEW APPRECIATION for beets — that's what my last dinner at Chez Muffy handed me. For all the cunning ways a humble root vegetable can be mined to produce layers of flavour, contrasting textures, and unexpected pleasures in the hands of a chef with obvious skill and resourcefulness.

The farm-to-plate dining room of the Auberge Saint-Antoine in Quebec Lower Town is a splendid restaurant. It's attached to the Relais et Châteaux hotel, housed in an historic maritime warehouse on the shores of the St Lawrence River. I return to Chez Muffy whenever I find myself in Quebec. And when winter announces herself in early November, as she did in 2019, you can't beat a Chez Muffy table by the fire.

Chef Romain Devanneaux is now in charge of the kitchen. From his autumn menu, my starter featured delicate morsels of scallop, cooked very lightly in a citron bath spiked with espelette. But it was the beets that stole the show, some cooked and marinated in cassis, others juiced and turned into a wobbly gelée scented with jasmine, the skins dehydrated and spun into a lightly crunchy dust perked with lemon zest. There were

jasmine pearls on the plate and dime-sized petals of scallop fashioned into crunchy chips. Every bit of the beet was used, and to marvelous affect. I could have had three more plates of it, but was forced to move on: to an open raviolo with an embarrassment of wild mushrooms, piqued with a horseradish foam and porcini dust; then to a hunk of perfectly cooked halibut, sided with sea buckthorn and a small flood of cauliflower cream, and with the sweet joy of deeply caramelized cippolinis. Dessert was one perfect baba, not 'au rhum,' as is its wont, but bathed in a clementine syrup sloshed with Scotch. Beneath the yeasty, boozy cake was a clementine sabayon and on top was a deeply flavoured sorbet. A memorable meal, exceptionally well executed, beautifully plated and with a level of creativity that ticked every box for me.

And did I mention the beets? I had the chance to speak with new (to me) chef Devanneaux the next morning. He arranged for coffee to be brought to one of the two coveted library nooks of the Auberge Saint Antoine's Bar Artéfact where I grilled him with questions. Starting with those beets. Grown, as I suspected, in the extensive gardens of

the hotel's organic farm on Île d'Orléans.

Vegetables matter to Devanneaux. He tells me he grew up in the northern French region of Picardy in a village where cows outnumbered people. "My grandparents had a huge garden. As a young child, it was exactly where I wanted to be, picking the first spears of asparagus in spring, shelling petit pois, pulling carrots from the warm rich earth."

Devanneaux admits his grandparents' garden had a longer growing season than the one he draws upon for Chez Muffy. Still, extending that season through every cunning means possible — pickling, fermenting, freezing, preserving vegetables in confit — is the plan, such that the cuisine he offers at Auberge Saint-Antoine will one day soon be entirely farm-sourced, his kitchen scraps returned to the garden for compost. "We're not there yet, but we're very close, and we're working toward the goal of being one hundred percent from our garden. For now, we will always put the garden first, keep it at the front of mind when designing menus, wasting nothing, experimenting with new textures, new flavours, new techniques." 



ANNE DESBRISAY



PHOTOS THIS PAGE FROM LEFT Chez Muffy Executive Chef Romain Devanneaux; Chez Muffy.

CANADA



PHOTOS THIS  
SPREAD CLOCKWISE  
FROM TOP LEFT

Auberge  
Saint-Antoine;  
Chez Muffy;  
A funicular  
connects  
Quebec City's  
Upper and  
Lower Towns;  
Edible art at  
Restaurant  
Légende.





AUBERGE ST ANTOINE

«*Terroir* is taken even further at Restaurant Légende, a trendy spot in Quebec City's Lower Town. Talented young chef Elliot Beaudoin uses only foods grown or sourced in Quebec. Year-round, he manages to turn ingredients foraged, caught, hunted or grown in the region into highly creative, exquisitely plated dishes inspired by the region's boreal forest, land and rivers. My late summer tasting menu featured shrimp, sturgeon, halibut, duck, and highland beef, prepared with ingredients such as rhubarb, sea buckthorn, fiddleheads, salicornia (a succulent that grows in salt marshes) and seaweed, some transformed into intriguing pickles and ferments. Global touches included housemade Chinese bao, herbal chimichurri, tzatziki and 'Quebec miso.'

The culinary riches of the region are on display at Le Grand Marché de Québec, the spanking new, Eataly-style market and food hall located in the gentrifying Limoulou neighbourhood. A free shuttle bus runs between the Château Frontenac and the former working-class suburb, encouraging tourists to venture beyond the busy streets of the Old City. The market is a showcase for the region's fabulous gastronomy — cheese and charcuterie, duck, foraged foods»





## PHOTOS THIS SPREAD

Tourists enjoy the cobblestone charm of Quebec City; Fresh local berries.



«and fruits, maple products, farm eggs, vegetables, craft beers and local wines — all arrayed in tempting displays (with much available for tasting!).

For a gobsmacking view of Quebec City, I'd recommend an early evening reservation at the revolving restaurant Ciel! Bistro-Bar. As dusk turns to night, the city of ancient spires and turrets transforms into a playground of twinkling lights. If you can tear your eyes away long enough to study the menu, you will find seasonal ingredients handled with elegant restraint. A carpaccio of celery root and Brussels sprouts with dried jalapeno peppers and a blue cheese emulsion was a standout. There is some good cooking going on in this sky-high kitchen.

If you are heading to Quebec City, you must visit Le Monastère des Augustines. The Augustinian nuns arrived in New France in 1639 and established the first hospital in North America. The Hôtel-Dieu de Québec is now a renowned teaching hospital affiliated with Laval University but as the nun's numbers dwindled over time, the future of the adjoining convent was threatened. In

2015, after a massive, 45-million-dollar restoration project funded jointly by the Quebec government and the Vatican, the historic complex reopened as a boutique hotel and wellness centre, with a museum, archives and research library incorporated. It's a brilliant reinvention that preserves the Augustinian order's traditional vocation of caring for body and soul while bringing new purpose to the beautiful, contemplative spaces that the sisters called home for more than 400 years. Even if you don't stay in the hotel (the rooms are former nun's cells, minimalist and charming) you can enjoy the restaurant where a daily lunch menu features local, organic, artisanal ingredients and healthy dishes made from scratch, many employing medicinal plants, flowers and herbs grown in the convent gardens. 

**SUSIE ELLISON** is TASTE & TRAVEL's Travel Editor.  
**ANNE DESBRISAY** is an award-winning Canadian food writer.





CANADA

MAKES 10

## Babas a la Clémentine

*I HAD ASKED CHEF Romain Devanneaux for a recipe for his stunning beet starter, which he kindly provided. Pages long, it required equipment (and technique) most of us simply do not have. So I recommend you book a Chez Muffy table to experience it! As an alternative I asked for the beautiful and boozy baba dessert — 'cause everyone needs a good baba recipe! This comes from Chez Muffy pastry chef Clément Duteil, who suggests berries could be used in lieu of clementines, when our berry season arrives. AD*

### Babas

**All-Purpose Flour**  
600 g

**Sugar** 150 g

**Yeast** 36 g, dissolved in  
100 ml **Warm Water**

**Eggs** 6

**Butter** 250 g, softened

**1** **IN** a standing mixer beat the flour, sugar, yeast and eggs until the mixture forms a ball. Add the butter and continue to beat until the dough no longer sticks to the sides of the bowl. Cover the dough and let it rise for 30 minutes.

**2** **DIVIDE** the dough into 10 pieces, place in well-buttered baba molds or muffin pans and bake for 30 minutes at 375°F.

### Soaking Syrup

**Orange Juice** 100 ml

**Sugar** 500 g

**Vanilla Bean** 1, split

**3** **BRING** all ingredients to a boil in a heavy saucepan, stirring to dissolve. Allow the syrup to cool to 95°F. Pour over the babas and allow the cakes to soak up the syrup.

### Sabayon

**Fresh Mandarin Juice** 100 ml

**Scotch Whiskey** 50 ml

**Egg Yolks** 30 g

**Sugar** 25 g

**Butter** 50 g, melted

**4** **IN** a heavy bottomed saucepan, whisk vigorously the juices, Scotch, sugar and egg yolks until the sabayon is thick, forms a ribbon and is at least doubled in volume. The temperature should reach about 150°F.

**5** **ADD** melted butter. When cool, transfer to a whipped cream dispenser.

**6** **SERVE** the babas with the warm sabayon.

**Auberge Baker**  
[www.aubergebaker.com](http://www.aubergebaker.com)

**Cassis Monna & Filles**  
[www.cassimonna.com](http://www.cassimonna.com)

**Restaurant Légende**  
[www.restaurantlegende.com](http://www.restaurantlegende.com)

**Chez Muffy**  
[www.saint-antoine.com/chez-muffy](http://www.saint-antoine.com/chez-muffy)

**Ciel! Bistro-Bar**  
[www.cielbistrobar.com](http://www.cielbistrobar.com)

**Le Grand Marché de Québec**  
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**Le Monastère des Augustines**  
[www.monastere.ca](http://www.monastere.ca)

