

Town & Country

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AN INSIDER'S
GUIDE TO

**THE
MAGIC OF
PROVENCE**

COUNTRY
INNS

SUBLIME
FOOD

GREAT
SHOPPING



AUGUST 2001
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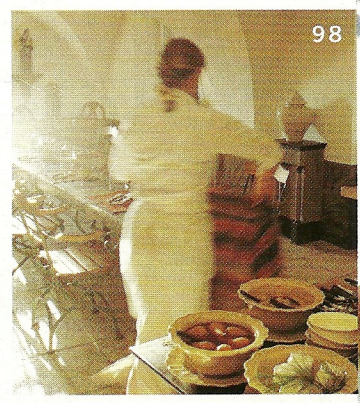
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AUGUST FEATURES

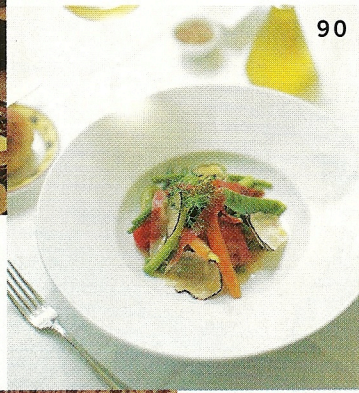
SPECIAL ISSUE: THE MAGIC OF PROVENCE



78 SPLENDOR ON THE GRASS
Nancy and Holcombe Green of Atlanta remake a French estate into their *ne plus ultra*.
By Jean Bond Rafferty.



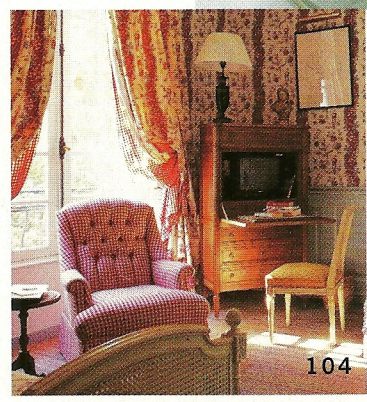
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Francophile and food critic Patricia Wells shares her picks for the region's best places to shop and dine.



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Catherine Calvert reaps the rewards of La Bastide de Marie, a thirteen-room pastoral retreat in the Lubéron.



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Surrounded by rolling hills and the scent of lavender, Jean Bond Rafferty falls for the fantasy that is Villa Gallici.



110 AN INSIDER'S PROVENCE
Lanie Goodman polls the mesdames and messieurs who know the region best.

ON OUR COVER: Els Hoppenbrouwers, photographed in Roussillon by Alexandre Bailhache. Styled by Tierney Gifford Horne. Hair and makeup by Isabel Ceci for Randal Walker Management. Els wears a Céline distressed peacoat (\$905), available at Neiman Marcus and at Céline in New York and Bal Harbour, FL, and a Céline ombré-striped wool pullover (\$415), available at Nordstrom and at Céline, as before.

Provence: A Food-Lover's Guide

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Provençal soaps, bunches of lavender, olive-wood utensils (from tiny spoons to salad sets), the huge variety of cured and seasoned black or green olives and, at the hardware stands (usually set up in back of giant trucks), items such as cherry and olive pitters, Opinel pocket knives and small kitchen knives. Here are some favorite markets:

Monday: **Aix-en-Provence**. Tuesday: **Vaison-la-Romaine**. Wednesday: **Arles**. Thursday: **Nyons**. Friday: **Carpentras**. Saturday: **Apt**. Sunday: **L'Isle-sur-la-Sorgue** and **Coustellet** (May to September only). Daily (except Sunday), 6:00–8:00 P.M.: **Velleron** (Vaucluse; outside L'Isle-sur-la-Sorgue). This evening market, in a large field just outside town, is lively and crowded, and the produce is first-rate. Get there early; the best farmers sell out instantly.

In addition to visiting the markets, you could spend weeks doing nothing but traveling from village to village in search of the most brilliant ocher pottery and giant platters, the best mortar and pestle, the ripest cheese, the crispiest bread or a really nice bottle of wine for that special picnic. Here are some of my favorite shops and people:

CHEESE Lou Canesteou (Vaison-la-Romaine). Certainly one of the top ten cheese shops in all of France, Lou Canesteou is run by outgoing, hard-working Josiane and Christian Deal. From the second you walk into this pristine, fragrant shop, you'll know that you've landed in cheese heaven! Neatly displayed are all the best cheeses of France and many regional cheeses you won't find anywhere else (or if you do, they won't be as perfect). Favorites include the creamy sheep's-milk Brique de Brebis, a firm, rich cheese from Lozère; the golf-ball-size goat's-milk Les Roves; and a creamy cow's-milk Saint-Marcellin. There is also a fine selection of wines, olive oils, vinegars and herbs and spices. 10 rue Raspail, Vaison-la-Romaine. 4-90-36-31-30. Closed Sunday afternoon. Open 8:30 A.M.–12:30 P.M. and 3:00–7:00 P.M.

WINE Domaine La Soumade (Rasteau). Winemaker André Romero's rich, sunny, concentrated reds have kept me flocking back for fifteen years or more. *Rasteau, just east of Vaison-la-Romaine*. 4-90-46-11-26; fax: 4-90-46-11-69. Open Monday–Saturday, 8:30–11:30 A.M. and 2:00–6:00 P.M.

POTTERY Jean Faucon Atelier Bernard (Apt). Every time I eat off Jean Faucon's ocher-toned plates, I smile. I love knowing the person who makes my pottery. Faucon continues his family tradition by creating beautifully glazed ceramics in hues of ocher and brown, green and blue, white and pale yellow. His offerings range from unadorned salad plates to highly ornate, marbled tureens and platters. 286 avenue de la Libération, Apt. 4-90-74-15-31. Open Monday–Saturday, 8:00 A.M.–12:00 P.M. and 2:00–6:30 P.M.

LINENS Atelier Du Presbytère (Vallabrègues). The village of Vallabrègues, just south of Avignon, is so small and quiet, you scarcely hear even a barking dog. But in the center of town, just behind the post office and church, you'll find a gem of a shop; you'd think you'd just walked in off Madison Avenue. Thierry and Françoise Méchin Pellet offer a small, ever-changing collection of antiques and a marvelous assortment of antique linens and objects made from antique fabric—everything from small bags filled with lavender (to use as sachets) to aprons, dishcloths and towels, and colorful laundry bags. 10 rue du Presbytère, Vallabrègues. 4-66-59-37-37; fax: 4-66-59-15-21. Open Monday–Saturday, 2:30–6:30 P.M.

OLIVES AND OLIVE OIL Over the past few years, the region's olive-oil makers have worked hard to improve the quality and image of Provence's liquid gold. Their work has paid off, for the region now has four AOC (*appellation d'origine contrôlée*) ratings, for the olives and oil of the Nyons in the Drôme region and of the Maussane region. Here are my favorite establishments: **Moulin Autrand-Dozol** (Nyons). The excellent Nyons

olive oil, made from the olive variety known as tanche, is pressed here from very ripe black olives picked from late November to February. Mild and delicate, it's a wonderful all-purpose oil you can depend on. While here, you can visit the olive oil and soap museum next door (see below). *Le Pont Roman, Nyons*. 4-75-26-02-52. Open Monday–Saturday, 9:00 A.M.–12:00 P.M.; 2:30–6:00 P.M. **Coopérative Oléicole de la Vallée des Baux** (Maussane-les-Alpilles). This is the incomparable first-pressed virgin oil I use on my own table every day. It is fragrant, well-balanced and assertive enough to make you sit up and take notice. *Maussane-les-Alpilles*. 4-90-54-32-37. Open Monday–Saturday, 9:00 A.M.–12:00 P.M.; 2:30–6:00 P.M. **Jean Martin Boutique** (Maussane-les-Alpilles). Jean Martin began his small olive-curing business in 1920, building his name with fragrant green olives cured with wild fennel from the nearby fields. Today the firm's burnished reputation rests on Martin's skill at transforming the region's best natural products into some of the finest packaged goods sold in France. High-quality ratatouille and tapenade, green-olive tapenade, red-pepper purées, couscous salad and the ever-famous green olives cured with wild fennel are top-selling items in the family shop in Maussane. 9–10 rue Charoun Rieu, Maussane-les-Alpilles. 4-90-54-30-04; fax: 4-90-54-40-79. Open Monday–Thursday, 8:00 A.M.–12:00 P.M.; 1:30–6:00 P.M. Open Friday, 8:00 A.M.–12:00 P.M.

MUSEUMS Les Vieux Moulins à l'Huile, Savonnerie XVIII (Nyons). Jean-Pierre and Geneviève Autrand have lovingly restored and offer tours of their wonderful olive oil and soap factory. (Traditionally, the two industries took place side by side, since many of the by-products from the olive-oil-pressing process were used to make soap.) 4 promenade de la Digue, Nyons. Telephone and fax: 4-75-26-11-00. Open daily in July and August, 10:00 A.M.–12:00 P.M.; 2:00–6:00 P.M. Open Tuesday–Saturday the rest of the year. ❖

