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# Celebrate Bastille Day with local goodies

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Photo credit: Yana Paskova | The Nicoise salad at Chez Noelle restaurant in Port Washington. (February 09, 2011)

Long Island's own French Revolution takes in restaurants and bakeries, wine shops and cheese departments, north shore and south.

So, start Bastille Day with a croissant, break up the afternoon with a bit of Roquefort and think ahead to steak frites at dinner. And be sure to leave room for something sweet.

Here's a brief, selective tour of some French culinary highlights in [Nassau](#) and [Suffolk](#).

Vive la différence.

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Bright as a sunflower and just as evocative of the South of France, salade Niçoise is the quintessential French summer dish. At Chez Noelle, chef-partner Christian Bregnard makes it in the classic style, starting with the tuna, which he poaches to silky tenderness in olive oil. This, along with hard-cooked eggs, baby string beans, fingerling potatoes and olives (and occasionally, daringly, radishes) are all arranged atop lightly dressed greens. The salad is available as an appetizer in the \$27 summer prix fixe, or as a main course for \$26.

## ISLAND'S TOP ISLAND

"Île flottante," or "floating island," is a delightful dessert. The 1961 edition of the cookbook Larousse Gastronomique advises, "In former times, this sweet was very much in favour. It is rather less commonly seen today." James Peterson, author of "Glorious French Food," writes, "For me it holds the same bittersweet nostalgia as an Edith Piaf song ..." A delectable version of the retrosweet comes alive at Le Soir in Bayport, where a fluffy, fragile "island" of meringue capped with a praline of almonds drifts by on a little sea of thin custard sauce, or crème anglaise. Le Soir, 825 Montauk Hwy., Bayport; 631-472-9090. lesoirbayport.com

## STEAK FRITES


The classic bistro dish of steak and French fries pops up in almost every French restaurant on Long Island. There's an especially tasty version at Aperitif, the colorful eatery in Rockville Centre. Choose either sirloin, filet mignon or the grainy hanger steak. You may gild it with either peppercorn sauce or shallot-red-wine sauce. The beef arrives with crisp fries and seasonal vegetables. Aperitif, 242 Sunrise Hwy., Rockville Centre; 516-597-3404, aperitifbistro.com

## UN BON MARCHÉ

French specialties are commonplace in gourmet markets; French chefs are rare. Mathieu Frey, who opened Village Market in Great Neck in late 2010, is a native of Alsace and a veteran of three-star restaurants in France and Daniel Boulud's culinary empire in New York. His insistence on quality ingredients and impeccable technique are evident in everything he makes -- from ratatouille to quiche, French lentil salad, croissants and palmiers (elephant ears) and, in honor of Bastille Day, an individual thin-crust Alsatian onion tart (\$5). Village Market is at 17 Middle Neck Rd., 516-773-2406, villagemarketonline.com

## LORD OF THE LOAVES

There are a lot of forgettable baguettes out there. At Blue Duck Bakery, proprietor Keith Kouris brings all his skill and experience to bear on this most classic French loaf. Aside from flour, water, salt and yeast, Kouris adds hints of poolish and levain (two varieties of old-dough "starters") to give the bread a nuttier flavor, chewier texture and a longer shelf life. \$2.75 at Blue Duck Bakery, 56275 Rte. 25 Southold, 631-629-4123; 30 Hampton Rd., Southampton 631-204-1701; blueduckbakerycafe.com.

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## THE EMPEROR OF PASTRIES

Known in France as "mille-feuille" (thousand-layer), Americans refer to this pastry by the name of France's greatest conqueror. At Jean Marie, the Napoleon is compromised by neither chocolate nor nuts, fruit nor caramel. Between layers of incomparably crisp, buttery puff pastry, the ethereal crème patisserie tastes faintly of vanilla. The pastry gets most of its sweetness from a blanket of confectioners' sugar -- which will inevitably wind up on your sweater. \$3.25 to go, or \$5.25 in the dining room at Jean Marie Patisserie, 66 Middle Neck Rd., [Great Neck](#), 516-304-5439, [jmpb66.com](#).

## SAY "FROMAGE"

No one has a better selection of French cheeses than Whole Foods, and there's usually a cheesemonger on hand to advise you as to which fromage fits the bill du jour. Whole Foods has an arrangement with the French cheese-ager Hervé Mons to bring in M. Mons' excellent artisanal cheeses, plus you'll always find stalwarts such as Roquefort, Morbier and Comté on hand. [Whole Foods Market](#) is at 429 N. [Broadway, Jericho](#), 516-932-1733; 2101 Northern Blvd., [Manhasset](#), 516-869-8900; 120 New [Moriches Rd., Lake Grove](#), 631-588-1466; [wholefoodsmarket.com](#).

## CROWNING CRESCENT

A great croissant is all these things at once: crisp and tender, light and rich, and intensely buttery. That's what you'll get at Fiorello Dolce, where baker-co-owner Gerard Fioravanti plies his craft. The plain (\$1.90) is unbeatable, but you could mix it up with chocolate (\$1.95), almond (\$2.45) or chocolate-almond (\$2.75). These usually sell out before noon. Fiorello Dolce is at 57 Wall St., [Huntington](#), 631-424-0803, [fiorello dolce.com](#).

## CRÊPES WITH CACHET

Leave it to the French to come up with the crêpe, a thin, delicate pancake enfolding a filling, sweet or savory. At Fresco Crêperie (with locations in [Long Beach](#) and [Williston Park](#)), the crêpe batter gets a nutty boost from a touch of buckwheat flour. Filling favorites include seafood (baby bay scallops, shrimp, roasted red peppers and peas in a light cream sauce) as well as a country-style combo of ground sausage, sliced potatoes, caramelized onions and Cheddar. On the sweet side, there's an apple-cinnamon crêpe served with vanilla ice cream. Fresco Crêperie, 150 E. Park Ave., [Long Beach](#), 516-897-8097 and 72 Hillside Ave., [Williston Park](#), 516-280-6630, [frescocreperie.com](#).

## GRANDS VINS

Post Wines & Spirits in [Syosset](#) is an ideal place to browse -- and to get an instant education in red, white and rosé from co-owner Michael Douglass. Whites from the [Loire](#) and from Burgundy, such as [Sancerre](#) and [Chablis](#), are perfect summery choices. There also are very good buys on Alsatian whites, including [riesling](#) and [pinot gris](#), plus solid Rhône reds and whites on the racks. Excellent

prices for red Burgundy and Bordeaux. And [Beaujolais](#) always is a versatile, more modest option. Post Wines & Spirits, 510 [Jericho Tpke.](#), [Syosset](#); 516-921-1820. [postwines.com](#)

## ALL-STAR FRENCH CHEFS

In the constellation of French chefs, [Long Island](#) contributes, at minimum, three very bright stars, whose heritage informs their cooking but never limits it. The result is some terrific food.

**Christian Mir**, of Stone Creek Inn in [East Quogue](#), is a native of southwest France. His fare at the handsome restaurant brings in Mediterranean flavors with New American touches, too. Standout dishes range from rack of lamb with mustard sauce to butter-poached lobster, Pekin duck meatballs with [Napa Valley](#) verjus to grilled octopus with fingerling potatoes, Taggiasca olives and Espelette pepper.

**Guy Peuch**, of Stonewalls restaurant in [Riverhead](#), is from the Lot Valley in the southwest. At Stonewalls, he includes classic regional French fare such as cassoulet and confit. Peuch also prepares an outstanding crab cake with red-pepper coulis and braised fennel, Dover sole amandine with hazelnut butter, chicken Basquaise, duck a l'orange and sirloin steak au poivre.

**Guy Reuge**, of Mirabelle Restaurant and Mirabelle Tavern at the Three Village Inn in [Stony Brook](#), comes from Normandy and the [Loire Valley](#). He oversees both the stylish restaurant, where his specialties include duck two ways, with seared breast and confit of leg; and foie gras stuffed quail; and the more casual tavern, a destination for a croque monsieur sandwich, and vegetable ravioli in beurre blanc. At both: the ginger-almond tart. -- **PETER M. GIANOTTI**

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