

THE BEST OF CULTURE, TRAVEL & ART DE VIVRE
Spring 2011

France

magazine

.....
No.97

Agnès Letestu
ÉTOILE of the PARIS OPERA BALLET

The Paris Opera BALLET :: Life & Luxury in 18th-Century PARIS :: GALLIMARD's Centennial

\$5.95 U.S. / \$6.95 Canada
francemagazine.org

By RENÉE SCHETTLER ROSSI

A Chat
with Wine's
Poster Boy

mille feuilles

• **A Gourmet Tour of France: The Most Beautiful Restaurants from Paris to the Côte d'Azur** by Gilles Pudlowski. The renowned food critic divulges the 39 culinary destinations he finds *les plus beaux* in these 224 captivating pages of tasting notes, historical background, exquisite photographs and, natch, chefs' recipes. *Flammarion*, \$45.

• **The Chef's Répertoire** by Chef Gui Alinat. Winner of the Cordon d'Or International Culinary Award, this savvy cheat sheet of more than 1,000 essential techniques, terms and recipes is the perfect pocket-size reference guide when you're worried that you may be confusing *pommes duchesses* with *pommes gaufrettes*...or was that *pommes parisiennes*? *American Technical Publishers*, \$30.

• **As Always, Julia: The Letters of Julia Child and Avis DeVoto** edited by Joan Reardon. What began as a query letter for a manuscript on how to prepare French cuisine evolved into an ongoing correspondence between Julia Child and the woman who became her confidante, supporter and unofficial literary agent. Their friendship endured for many years, enriched by the more than 200 letters featured in these pages. *Houghton Mifflin Harcourt*, \$26.

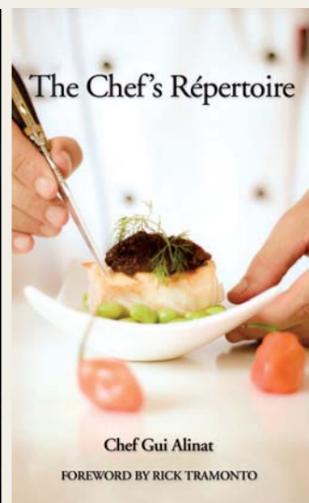
• **The French Menu Cookbook** by Richard Olney. This reissue of the veteran cookbook author's debut work, first published in 1970, loses nothing of the original's emphasis on seasonal menus—a practically unheard-of concept in the States at the time. There are also perfect wine pairings, whether for simple suppers or *soirées soignées*. *Ten Speed Press*, \$22.

• **Secrets of the Sommeliers: How to Think and Drink Like the World's Top Professionals** by Rajat Parr and Jordan Mackay. This primer imparts sensible, why-didn't-I-think-of-that insights, including tips on the best auctions, why it pays to know your *métayage* agreements and buying advice for various varietals. *Ten Speed Press*, \$32.50.

• **The Pearl of the Côte: The Great Wines of the Vosne-Romanée** by Allen D. Meadows. This scholarly examination of the area that is home to some of the world's most rarefied wines provides historical anecdotes, maps of villages and tasting notes from the various crus in this legendary terroir. *Burghound Books*, \$59.99, available at burghoundbooks.com.

• **A Tribute to the Great Wines of Burgundy** translated by James K. Finkel. Originally published in 1997, this slim work by wine writer Jacky Rigaux conveys what distinguished great wines from good for the much-missed *vigneron* Henri Mayer. Along with a wealth of insights into how to make fine Burgundy, readers are treated to a collection of quotes from the beloved Mayer. *Terre en vue*, \$42, available at burglit.com.

• From left: A page from Gilles Pudlowski's guide to the most beautiful French restaurants; Gui Allinat's award-winning new book.



SEEING GREEN

French olives take on an exotic lilt in Les Terroirs de Marrakech Extra-Virgin Olive Oil, a *cuvée* of Picholine du Languedoc infused with Moroccan Menara and Haouzia varieties. Fans of the complex blend include the discerning Joël Robuchon. \$26 for a 16.9-ounce bottle; deananddeluca.com.



THE POT CALLING THE KETTLE...LILAC?

Ever since Le Creuset introduced enameled cast-iron pots in flashy Volcanic Orange (known stateside as Flame) back in 1925, chic colors have been integral to its identity—and avidly collected by loyal customers. The company recently added a couple of new, nature-inspired hues to its extensive palette. With the introduction of deep-red cassis and fresh green fennel, aficionados can now stock their kitchens in every shade of the rainbow. lecreuset.com

MAURICE ROUGE-MONT; ATLAS OLIVE OIL; LE CREUSET

Jean-Pierre Got

BORDEAUX NATIVE, FORMER WINE PURVEYOR AND AFFICHISTE EXTRAORDINAIRE



You were exporting Bordeaux wine back in 1992 when you made your first poster for a client. How did you get started? I didn't go to art school, but I've loved drawing since I was a child. I studied business here in Bordeaux,

which included a year of wine-tasting classes, then I worked for Mähler-Besse, a Bordeaux *négociant* dealing in fine wines. After a few years, I started to make wine posters on the side for vineyards in France and in the U.S. Then one day an American client said to me, "We're not really interested in your wines, but we are interested in your posters." Since 2006, I've been making posters full time.

So you're self-taught? Yes. I studied posters from the Belle Epoque, Art Nouveau and Art Deco eras. The images are very simple, very easy to understand. If you look carefully, you'll see that the artists used a minimum of colors per poster, perhaps three. They relied on just one or two subjects. The text was always secondary to the image. And they always put some movement in the image because passersby typically see a poster as they're advancing toward it, so there must be something to captivate and surprise them. Jules Chéret was a master poster artist during the late-19th and early 20th centuries, and Robert Cami and Jean Dupas were two great Bordeaux *affichistes* of the 1930s. They all applied these principles.

Why do posters from these eras have such an enduring appeal? People love the images, the nostalgia, the *joie de vivre* they evoke. Posters can't simply be nice to look at, they must symbolize something, re-create a belief

or a dream. Chéret understood very well that a poster is not just an illustration, that it must convey some sort of message.

Your posters are very much in that style. Yes, so much so that when I recently learned that someone had reprinted one of my posters, and I contacted him to ask that he not use my work, he responded, "Oh, I thought you were dead."

That's quite the compliment! You've also been referred to as the "dernier affichiste français." I'm not the only poster artist, but it's true, there aren't many of us. Most of the others are young people in marketing who have a different sense of culture, one fashioned by movies and cartoons. I'll stick with the old art!

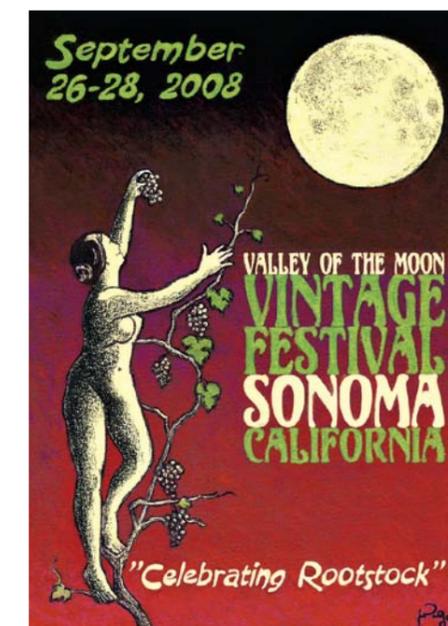
Tell me a bit about the history of poster printing in Bordeaux. Printing shops along the Quai des Chartrons—the old wine-merchant district—have specialized in wine labels and posters since the early 19th century. Even then, some wine labels were very sophisticated in design, color and typography, and they required an exacting technique for lithograph or copperplate engraving. Consequently, a printing expertise developed here. And it still exists. My own printer, BLF Impression, produces the famous Mouton Rothschild labels. Bordeaux also has a Musée de l'Imprimerie and the Musée Goupil, both of which chronicle the history of local printing.

Who are your clients? Wineries of course, but I also do work for related events such as marathons through different wine regions and wine festivals. I occasionally make posters for charity events—they are auctioned off—and various other clients.

How has your experience as a wine seller informed your *métier*? I'm fortunate to have quite a lot of experience in the art of wine selling and, if I may say so, the art of wine tasting.

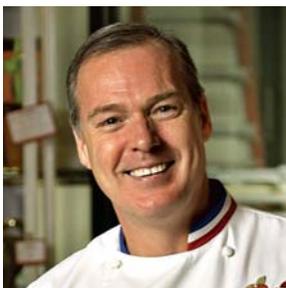
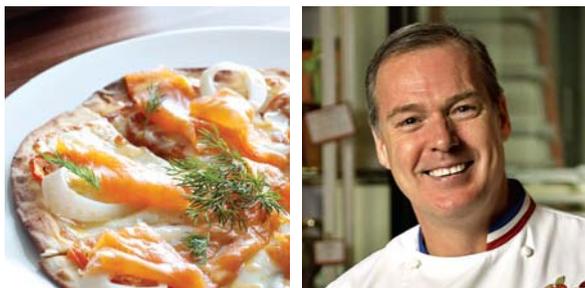
I think my 20 years in the business have given me a very good understanding of the spirit of the wine trade. Winemakers want to evoke a tradition of good living, of conviviality. I convey that message through the colors, subjects and designs of my posters. It's still about selling wine, but mostly it's about attracting people to an *art de vivre*. You'll notice that you never see someone drinking wine in a poster; instead you see the art of tasting wine, you see a way of life.

Is the secret to a successful poster to make something new seem old? There is no modern side to my posters, and people are not looking for something new or original in my work. They expect something that they think they've seen before. It's reassuring. It reminds them of that trip to France they took once upon a time. You see, wine lovers the world over are very traditional people who like the same thing: to sit around a table with wine and food and family and friends. It's quite simple. —RS



à la carte

French food & drink in America



● Clockwise from top left: Salmon pizza at Houston's Philippe Restaurant + Lounge; Jacques Torres, now at Rockefeller Center; colonial cocktails at New York's 1534; Dominique Crenn, melding French and California cuisine.

Philippe Restaurant + Lounge, which promises something of a collision between French and Texan, classic and not quite conventional. A fun extra: The chef's blog, "The French Cowboy," combines cooking expertise and personal exploits such as learning the Texas Two Step. 1800 Post Oak Boulevard; Tel. 713/439-1000; philippehouston.com.

NEW YORK Chef Thomas Keller of The French Laundry, Per Se and other restaurants was awarded France's highest honor, the Légion d'Honneur, at Per Se in late March in appreciation of his tireless work promoting French cuisine. He joins Julia Child and Alice Waters as only the third American citizen recognized by France for their culinary endeavors. ● Rockefeller Center has just welcomed two new tenants: **Bouchon Bakery**, whose menu comprises haute salads and sandwiches from Thomas Keller, and yet another Manhattan location of **Jacques Torres Chocolate**, purveyor of decadent hot cocoa and exquisite Taittinger truffles. 1 Rockefeller Center, bouchonbakery.com, mrchocolate.com. ● Juxtaposing an urban-chic aesthetic with classic brasserie fare, **Tartinery** turns out an array of yummy open-faced sandwiches along with a small but well-chosen lineup of other offerings. 209 Mulberry Street; Tel. 212/300-5838; tartinery.com.

● Named for the year Jacques Cartier set sail, the dimly lit **1534** lounge exudes a French colonial vibe with cocktails to match. Drinks both shaken and stirred draw their origins from Africa, Asia and the Caribbean. 20 Prince Street; Tel. 212/966-5073; jacquesnyc.com/1534.

SAN FRANCISCO From Michelin-starred Dominique Crenn of Luce comes **Atelier Crenn**, where the seasonally minded locavore chef re-creates the food of France, adding a distinct northern Californian accent. 3127 Fillmore Street; Tel. 415/440-0460; ateliercrenn.com.

LA GAZETTE

CHICAGO Don't let the pseudo dive-bar ambiance of **Maude's Liquor Bar** dissuade you. Turn-of-the-century concoctions including those elusive "smashes" as well as Champagne cocktails await, as does a menu broken down into "Traditional French" and "Almost French." 840 West Randolph; Tel. 312/243-9712; maudeliqorbar.com.

HOUSTON There's a swanky yet approachable sort of evening in store at

amuse bouches

● Dubbed "Perfect Pairings," Chef **Eric Ripert's** podcasts debunk fussy wine-pairing folklore masquerading as fact. Entertaining and informative, the three-minute clips dismiss common but misleading myths, including that dastardly rumor about vinaigrettes being unfriendly to the grape. *aveceric.com*



● You still have to travel to France for the entire *thalassothérapie* experience, but you can now enjoy healthy and delicious spa fare

close to home. Just in time for swimsuit season, **Sofitel** has introduced three-course "De-Light" menus created with input from dietitians at its spa property in Quiberon, Brittany. Only 500 svelte calories, these dishes are bursting with French flavor and flair (the recommended pairing? Dry Champagne—a mere 65 calories). Available at Sofitel hotels in Chicago, Los Angeles, New York, Philadelphia, Washington, DC, and Montreal; *sofitel.com*



A PROPOS...

You have to wait for The Pleasure Zone, which lasts about 90 seconds. ”

— JJ Goodman of the London Cocktail Club, referring to the period that occurs 45 seconds after sipping Cognac, when the alcohol has disappeared and the full flavors come through.