

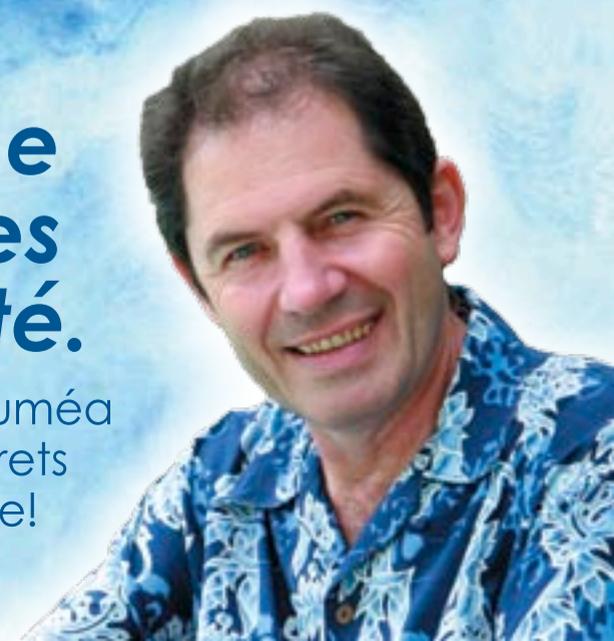
Bon Appétit!

Gourmet Guide to New Caledonia



'New Caledonia is one of the best French gourmet experiences outside France' – Gabriel Gaté.

- » Gabriel's Gourmet Trail of Nouméa
- » 2 of New Caledonia's finest Chefs tell their secrets
- » Guide to French regions, wines, cheeses ... and so much more!



Bienvenue en Nouvelle-Calédonie

Welcome to New Caledonia Jean-Pierre Cuenet - Président du Syndicat des Restaurateurs



New Caledonia is a bountiful archipelago. The surrounding lagoon and ocean teem with fish and seafood, and the astonishingly fertile soil of the islands produces a huge variety of exotic fruits and superb vegetables.

It's a unique melting pot of shared culinary traditions – a mix of Pacific, European and Asian influences, creating an array of original New Caledonian cuisine.

Today this richness is characterised by

a fusion of cuisines on the one hand, and a preserving of authentic traditions on the other, and the talented local chefs have been able to take advantage of their unique situation. In Nouméa itself, further inland and on the other islands, food lovers will not only find a large number of authentic restaurants where they will be able to savour French, Chinese, Vietnamese, Italian and Indonesian cuisine, but they will also discover the unique local

New Caledonian cuisine.

From fine dining to popular brasserie-style eating, from the alfresco experience of a seaside terrace to a small family-run place in the bush, New Caledonia offers the traveller a warm welcome. Visitors can choose between a type of cuisine they already know or venture out to discover exciting and unusual flavours. 'Bon Appétit' and welcome to New Caledonia.



Welcome to the Paris end of the South Pacific!

Bonjour, Messieurs et Mesdames!

Welcome to New Caledonia, the Paris end of the South Pacific. And welcome also to the first edition of 'Bon Appétit', a gourmet guide to New Caledonia.

It is a real pleasure and honour to be the Gourmet Ambassador in Australia for New Caledonia – one of the most beautiful island groups in the world and a special place to enjoy a gourmet holiday.

Oui, New Caledonia is tropical France, and naturellement, French is the spoken language and French food is the dominant gourmet cuisine of the islands, which also offer many other types of international cuisine.

You will find wonderful French breads, cheeses, wines, pâtisseries, pâtes and, of course, excellent French restaurants.

Many of the top chefs have trained in France's most highly rated establishments

and are now sharing their knowledge with younger chefs. We have also featured some of these fine chefs in this edition of 'Bon Appétit'.

During your stay make sure you try some of these exquisite restaurants and savour the best of the French Pacific experience.

When I first visited Nouméa 15 years ago, I went straight to the market to discover what the locals were cooking and was not disappointed. Today, the colourful food stalls, managed for the most part by Melanesian, Vietnamese and Indonesian locals, display a huge variety of fresh tropical fruits and superb vegetables, as well as fish, seafood (local prawns and oysters), and a good delicatessen and takeaway section. And it's a great place to enjoy a delicious French-style breakfast. However I suggest you get there early to ensure you don't miss anything.



If you are picnicking in Nouméa or preparing a meal in your apartment, I urge you to visit the closest supermarket, as the fresh food section of French supermarkets is quite astounding. You'll find many easy meal ideas, as well as wonderful French cheeses, smallgoods, such as French pâtes, terrines and foie gras, excellent pre-prepared French meals and salads, and great value French wines.

On the way back from the supermarket, don't forget to pick up a baguette in one of the many boulangeries dotted round the suburbs.

Nouméa also offers many specialised gourmet stores, including butchers selling good meat and prepared meals, chocolate shops, cake shops where you'll find wonderful croissants, take-away shops and specialised liquor stores.

New Caledonia offers a great selection of beer, and the locally brewed Number

One beer is obviously very popular. Another great bonus is the top quality of Nouméa's drinking water, and there is a local mineral water called Mont Dore.

Most importantly, this guide provides a list of recommended restaurants put together by our team. Some are French regional restaurants, some are places for a quick meal, and some are top class, modern restaurants.

I'm amazed at the number of good eateries and I consider New Caledonia to be the most exciting gourmet destination of the Pacific region. I have no doubt you will also discover great eating places that we have not listed, and I would really love to hear about your own gourmet discoveries in New Caledonia. Please email me at: g.gate@ncnps.com

Enjoy your stay and bathe in the wonderful hospitality of New Caledonia. Bon Appétit!

Gabriel Gaté



A taste of France is oh so close!

You don't have to travel all the way to Europe to enjoy some of the very finest French regional cuisine and wines. In fact, it is only 2 hours from Brisbane and 2.5 hours from Sydney and Auckland.

French regional cuisine is characterised by its extreme diversity and style. Traditionally, each region of France has its own distinctive cuisine that is accepted by both the general population of these regions ... and the whole world.

Restaurants in New Caledonia offer you a delicious cross-section of French foods and recipes, representing most of the French regions. Baguettes and brioche from Paris. Quiche from Lorraine. Carbonnade and Potjeviesch from the north. World-famous Camembert and Pont l'Evêque cheeses from Normandy. Crêperies from Brittany. Tarte Tatin from the Loire Valley. Raclette and Tartiflette from Rhone-Alpes. The Catalan

influence in Languedoc. The wonderful flavours of Provence. Coq au vin and bœuf à la bourguignonne from Burgundy. Seafood dishes from Bordeaux. Goat cheeses from Poitou-Charentes. And Basque cuisine from the Mediterranean Pyrenees.

The restaurants also offer an excellent choice of French wines to suit all tastes and budgets. France has many wine producing regions, the most famous and important include: Alsace, Bordeaux, Burgundy, Champagne, Loire and Rhone. You can also buy a fantastic range of wines and champagnes from the specialist wine stores and supermarkets in New Caledonia. One thing worth remembering is that the French also drink some of their red wines chilled during the summer, which you will also find in New Caledonia – quite refreshing and tasty in a warm tropical climate.

You'll discover a lot more on page 10.



There is so much to see and do

As well as a fantastic gourmet experience, New Caledonia also has so much to offer tourists, especially the cosmopolitan capital Nouméa.

The spectacular Tjibaou Cultural Centre features a stunning design created by the famous Pritzker Prize winning architect Renzo Piano, who brilliantly merged Kanak design with modern architecture. It is the cultural reference point for the entire South Pacific and offers the visitor a unique collection of contemporary art from the region ... and it's only 10 minutes from the centre of the city.

The Aquarium des Lagons has recently re-opened and is a true world-class facility. Discover the magnificent water world of New Caldeonia, including some of the hidden treasures from the world's largest lagoon and the mysterious Nautilus – a living fossil from the deep.

The popular "Place des Cocotiers" is an attractive garden square in the centre of the city of Nouméa and shaded by magnificent flame trees. Surrounding this are numerous streets full of interesting shops.

Discover the market, by the Baie de la Moselle, which is open every day (except the third Monday of every month), where you can taste local fruits and vegetables, buy fresh fish, as well as arts and crafts (see page 16).

The Territorial Museum houses some superb examples of Melanesian architecture, and features an excellent collection of utensils and artifacts from all over the Pacific. The City of Nouméa Museum, housed in a building dating back to 1864, retraces the history of the city and the country from 1854 to 1954. Or visit the interesting Bernheim Library or Maritime Museum.

The "Parc Forestier" nature reserve offers both botanical and zoological treats. Especially worth viewing is the Cagou – New Caledonia's flightless national symbol bird, plus parrots, bats and deer.

One of the best views of the city of Nouméa, and the Pacific Ocean, can be seen high on the hill from St Joseph's beautiful gothic cathedral, which was built by convicts in 1887.

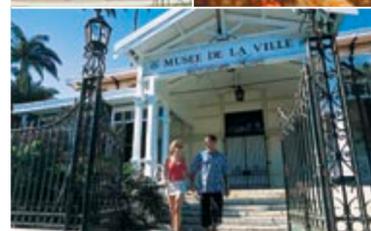
Explore downtown, do the shops and check out the wide variety of European products available, have lunch in an outdoor café and watch the sights, sounds and people as they pass by. Or enjoy a Nouméa historic site tour with the Guide du Patrimoine association.

The beaches at Anse Vata, Baie des Citrons and at Pointe Magnin are focal points for a lot of activities. Certain hotels offer a range of activities for guests at Anse Vata through the "Plages Loisirs" centre. These activities include windsurfing, snorkelling and pedal boats, plus deck chairs to assist with sunbathing.

Go walking or jogging along the beautiful Pierre Vernier promenade at Anse Vata and the Baie des Citrons. Enjoy an ice cream from the quaint mobile vendor.

There's so much to do day by day ... and at night.

And all of this is just a taste of what Nouméa has to offer. There is even more when you venture north and south of the capital, to the superb Isle of Pines and the idyllic Loyalty Islands – more of those destinations in future issues of Bon Appétit!



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The information contained in this publication is intended for general use as a guide only. Where prices are quoted, they have been checked for accuracy at the time of printing, and are subject to change without notice. Whilst reasonable care has been exercised to ensure the contents are correct, accurate and up-to-date at the time of printing, based on information supplied, circumstances can and inevitably do change, and therefore no liability can be accepted. Printed April 2008.
For more information please visit:
www.newcaledonia.com.au
www.newcaledonia.co.nz
www.newcaledoniatourism-south.com



A diverse & delicious dining experience



While Paris is home to some of the world's best restaurants, Nouméa is definitely the haute cuisine hub of the Pacific with over 150 restaurants catering to all tastes and budgets.

Gastronomy finds a perennial welcome here, thanks to the luxuriant nature of traditional French food and the freshness of the local Melanesian fare. Nouméa's innovative chefs fuse contemporary tastes to perfection, marrying these unique cuisines in a seamless fusion of flavour.

Superlative ingredients – including imported French wines and cheeses – enrich the menus of local restaurants, which run awash with foie gras and such traditional dishes as Bouillabaisse and Cassoulet. With New Caledonia situated in the world's largest lagoon, naturally seafood is a constant menu item with over 1,000 species of fish thriving in the tropical waters.

New Caledonia is a diverse and delicious experience, where you can enjoy food from all parts of the world. As well as French and Melanesian cuisine, your international menu

includes Italian, Indonesian, Chinese, Vietnamese, Japanese, Mediterranean and Middle Eastern style restaurants.

If you're after something different there is a restaurant built around an old-style French brewery and one even run by an order of singing nuns. Nouméa now also boasts a unique revolving restaurant with magnificent views, as well as two superb overwater restaurants. As a food lovers' retreat it pays to be prepared to enjoy what New Caledonia has to offer in terms of high quality cuisine.

To suit all tastes and budgets

While there are plenty of budget options available – see our DIY section on page 17 – fine dining in New Caledonia is equivalent to visiting some of the best restaurants in France and while it can be a little on the expensive side you can expect value for money in enjoying cuisine from expertly trained international chefs using some of the finest produce available in the South Pacific. After all what's a holiday if you can't treat yourself with a meal you'll never forget and be talking about for years to come. For a first class three course dining experience you could spend around AU\$75 – \$100 per head with a bottle of French wine for about AU\$30. A meal at a mid-range brasserie-style restaurant starts at about 1,600-3,000 XPF (AU\$22.50-\$42) and if you

want to take it easy one night to splurge the next you can get a satisfying cheap eat such as fresh baguette, pastry, crêpe, pizza or salad at any of the popular snack bars or cafés around town for around 250-950 XPF (A\$3.50-\$13.40). Most restaurants offer a menu 'carte' outside so you can have a chance to review the menu and pricing. For good value many restaurants offer a set menu 'menu du jour', some for lunch and dinner, others for dinner only. These usually offer three courses and some include wine or coffee. You can find details on some of Nouméa's leading restaurants, including their actual location and contact details, on page 12.

Prices quoted at April 2008.

Dining with a difference!

New Caledonia gives you the chance to enjoy some very rare dining experiences, as well as the unique revolving restaurant and superb overwater restaurants... there are also several that are quite out of the ordinary.

THE 3 BREWERS



Les 3 Brasseurs is a fine restaurant that is actually built around an in-house brewery, with traditional old-style decor. A range of beers is brewed right at the heart of the restaurant for you to see, and one of the highlights is to try the 4 Sisters - a tray that features four of the distinctive beers that are brewed on the premises.

The range of beers includes the Blonde lager, a light golden beer with a subtle, fruity character; the Amber, a denser beer with a delicate bitterness; the Scotch, an ebony coloured brown ale; the Blanche, a light brew that is very thirst quenching; and the Bière de Noël (Christmas Beer), the pride of the beer master and a vintage beer that will delight connoisseurs.



A varied menu includes simple 'brasserie' fare, bistro dishes and local favourites that make the most of New Caledonia's fresh produce, as well as imported specialities from France.

The house specialty, in keeping with traditions from France, is the flammekueche, or Flamm for short. It is an Alsatian-style open-faced style of pizza that has its origins as the country lunch par excellence in the 18th and 19th centuries. Originally the flammekueche was always topped with cottage cheese, fresh cream, onions and cubed bacon, but at Les 3 Brasseurs it is served with a variety of toppings.



THE SINGING NUNS



The restaurant L'Eau Vive (the Water of Life) is also called the Singing Nuns Restaurant because it is actually run by an order of nuns. They are a truly international group, with some 30 nuns coming from New Caledonia, Vanuatu, Wallis Island, France, Africa and Latin America, with the objective to not only serve great food and wine, but to also raise money to help the needy of New Caledonia, and to train young Melanesian aspirants for the hospitality industry. The delicious menu is constantly changing, offering a wonderful diversity of international dishes, local New Caledonia fare, and unique specialities of the countries from which the nuns originally come. And some say they have the finest cellars in Nouméa.

"The restaurant L'Eau Vive is also called the Singing Nuns Restaurant."



They only use their first names and do not take the title 'sister'. They dress in their island 'Mother Hubbard' dresses rather than the traditional nun's habits, and their heads are often adorned with tropical leaves and flowers. They also wear anklets made from local nuts to stamp in tune to the rhythm of the guitar. At any time of the evening the nuns may suddenly break into song, and at around 9pm they will always perform their emotional version of Ave Maria.



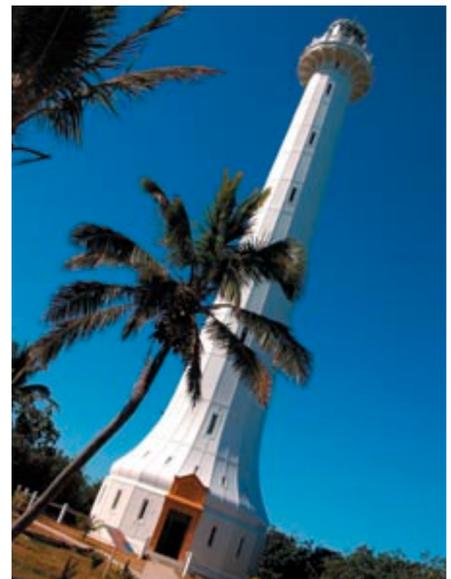
AMÉDÉE ISLAND



One of New Caledonia's 'must do' day trips, Amédée is a tiny islet on the barrier reef, dominated by its 1865 lighthouse which was constructed in Paris and sent to New Caledonia by Napoleon. It takes about 45 minutes by a fast modern cruiser to reach the island and enjoy its white beaches, excellent snorkelling, swaying palms and castaway atmosphere. The day excursion includes lunch and cultural entertainment, barrier reef cruise and glass-bottom boat to view the island's spectacular marine reserve.



There are many other small islands very close to Nouméa, some totally deserted, that make the perfect location to charter a boat and enjoy a gourmet picnic.



In future issues of Bon Appétit, we will introduce you to some of the other fantastic different dining experiences to be discovered in New Caledonia.

Meet two of Nouméa's best chefs

In this edition of Bon Appétit you will meet two of Nouméa's best chefs, learn a little about their amazing backgrounds and discover some of their favourite recipes.



Broux, and his team serve a delicate French cuisine using the freshest local ingredients, and the wine list is one of the best in Nouméa. See page 6.



La Coupole is an excellent restaurant located close to many of the major hotels. Wine buffs will be delighted with the extensive list of excellent French wines, especially the Bordeaux inclusions. Try one of the foie gras (goose liver pâté) dishes prepared by Fabrice Louyat, the excellent chef de cuisine. See page 7.



One of Nouméa's best chefs

Restaurant 360 is a revolving restaurant set on top of one of the twin towers of the Ramada Plaza Nouméa Hotel in Anse Vata, offering the best 360° view of Nouméa. The chef, Didier Broux, and his team serve a delicate French cuisine using the freshest local ingredients, and the wine list is one of the best in Nouméa.



Lemon and Vanilla Shortbread with Blackcurrant Sorbet

This dessert is an absolute winner. The contrast between the lemon and blackcurrant flavours is really beautiful. It's quite a complex recipe for the home cook as you need professional equipment, such as an ice-cream maker and special moulds. But here is a description: At the base it's a tartlet made with sweet pastry and lemon cream – a bit like lemon butter. Then it's topped with a vanilla crème brûlée that's been cooked in a flexipan savarin mould and frozen for easy unmoulding. The dessert is then topped with a superb blackcurrant sorbet and garnished with the thinnest of tuile biscuits. Delicious!



Gabriel's Comments

"The 360 is a great restaurant with top food, top wine and top views. Didier Broux is a meticulous and dedicated chef, and the desserts prepared by his pâtissier are indeed world-class. There are many outstanding wines by the glass. The view from the dining room is the most complete in Nouméa and the service is very professional". For reservations call (687) 23 90 90.

Didier Broux

Didier was born in 1969 in Tourcoing next to Lille in the north of France. He was fortunate to have started his career at 'Au Carré des Feuillants', a Parisian restaurant run by one of France's most popular chefs, Alain Dutournier. The talented Didier continued to improve his skills with the three Michelin star chefs, Marc Meneau in Burgundy and Antoine Westermann in Alsace, then with Jean Bardet, another brilliant chef from the Loire Valley. Didier commenced his position as Executive Chef at the Ramada Hotel 360 Restaurant in July 2007 and has acquired the reputation as one of Nouméa's best chefs. His dishes are a delight, both visually and in terms of flavour. Didier is lucky to have a talented team around him, including his second chef, Ludovic Lehallais as well as his chef pâtissier, Lucien Battarel.

Tuna Steak with a Spice Crust and Sweet and Sour Broth

Serves 4
Spice Crust
 10 coriander seeds
 1 tbsp sesame seeds
 1 tsp black peppercorns
 1 tbsp roasted hazelnuts, skinned after roasting
 1 tbsp roasted almonds
 Place coriander seeds, sesame seeds and black peppercorns in a pan on medium heat and roast spices until the sesame seeds are brown. Allow to cool, then place in a mortar and pestle with the hazelnuts and almonds and pound to a powder.



Sweet and Sour Broth

200 g mushrooms, finely sliced
 1 tbsp honey
 1 tbsp soy sauce
 1/2 tbsp port
 1 tsp sherry vinegar
 juice of 1/2 lemon
 200 ml water
 100 g butter

Place mushrooms in a hot non-stick fry pan. Add honey, soy sauce, port, vinegar and lemon juice. Bring to a simmer and cook for 5 minutes. Add water and simmer for a further 30 minutes. Strain into a saucepan and then discard the mushrooms. Place butter in a frypan and melt until it reaches a golden colour. Strain the butter into the mushroom broth and mix well. Season with salt and pepper.

Vegetable Garnish

12 cherry tomatoes
 1/2 carrot, cut into small sticks
 1 small green zucchini which is cut into small sticks
 1 small yellow zucchini which is cut into small sticks
 about 2 tbsp shelled broad beans
 1/2 red onion, cut into small pieces
 1/2 cup snow peas
 Cook all the vegetables in boiling water until just done.

To Finish

4 tuna steaks, each about 170 g
 2 tbsp cream
 4 sprigs of coriander
 Dip one side of the tuna steaks in cream, then in the spice crust mixture. Cook tuna on the spicy side in a non-stick frypan for about 3 minutes. Place cooked vegetables on 4 deep plates. Make a hollow in the centre and place the tuna in the hollow, spice side up. Pour the very hot broth over the vegetables – it will cook the base of the tuna. Garnish with coriander sprigs and serve.



Chef to the French PM

La Coupole is an excellent restaurant located between the delightful Anse Vata and picturesque Baie des Citrons, and is close to many of the major hotels. It's a great place for groups with a large, open, modern dining room offering views of Anse Vata. Wine buffs will be delighted with the extensive list of excellent French wines, especially the Bordeaux inclusions. Try one of the foie gras (goose liver pâté) dishes prepared by Fabrice Louyot, the excellent chef de cuisine, while the pastry cook produces some absolutely beautiful desserts.

Fabrice Louyot

Fabrice was born in the stunning region of Alsace on the border with Germany in eastern France. During his four years of study at the Strasbourg catering college he had the opportunity to do work experience at the Auberge de L'III, one of France's best restaurants. He then worked in a number of great Alsatian restaurants before doing his National Service in Paris as chef to the Prime Minister of France at the time, Lionel Jospin. After his National Service Fabrice returned to Alsace to further his skills in other superb restaurants, including the three Michelin-starred restaurant 'Au Crocodile' in Strasbourg. He arrived in New Caledonia in 2004 and since then has held the position of Executive Chef at La Coupole restaurant.



Fine Banana Tart with Almond Cream

Serves 4
 about 350 g puff pastry
 60 g butter
 60 g caster sugar
 1 egg
 60 g almond meal
 10 g custard powder
 1/4 tsp vanilla essence
 2 large bananas

Preheat oven to 200°C. Roll the puff pastry out to a thickness of about 3 mm. Cut 4 discs of pastry about 15 cm diameter and place them on a baking tray lined with baking paper. Place in the fridge.

Place the butter and sugar in a blender and blend until well combined and creamy. Add the egg, almond meal, custard powder and vanilla essence and blend again until smooth. Spread this creamy preparation on top of the puff pastry discs, leaving a little margin round the edges without cream.

Cut bananas into thin slices. Place banana slices, overlapping them a bit, on top of the almond cream. Cook the banana tart in pre-heated oven until the pastry is browned underneath. It takes 15-20 minutes.



Gabriel's Comments

"Fabrice is an excellent chef, preparing a wonderful French-style cuisine adapted to Nouméa. He also has an outstanding pastry cook producing beautiful desserts, and a most professional and attentive dining staff. The wine list is one of Nouméa's best". For reservations call (687) 26 44 11.

Crab Cannelloni with Soy Sauce and Basil

Serves 4 Entrées
 3 tomatoes
 4 tbsp extra virgin olive oil
 1 small onion, chopped
 1/2 small chilli, finely chopped
 about 12 basil leaves
 about 200 g crab meat (without bones)
 1 tbsp soy sauce
 3 medium zucchini
 juice of 1 lemon
 salt and freshly ground pepper
 1 cup finely sliced green salad leaves

Quarter the tomatoes. Remove the seeds using a small knife then cut the tomato flesh into small squares.

Heat 1 tbsp of olive oil in a non-stick pan and stir-fry onion without browning. Add the tomatoes and cook for a few minutes. Remove the pan from heat and add finely chopped chilli, finely sliced basil, crab meat and soy sauce. Then allow to cool.

Cut zucchini into thin slices lengthwise – it's easier if you use a mandolin. (You will need 36 slices). Heat 1 tbsp of olive oil in a frying pan and cook the zucchini slices briefly – it is important that they remain al dente.

On a plate place 3 slices of zucchini, slightly overlapping one another. Place 1 tbsp crab mix at one end then carefully roll the zucchini to wrap the crab. Make 12 rolls in this way.

In a small bowl mix lemon juice with remaining 2 tbsp olive oil and a little salt and pepper. Toss the salad leaves in this dressing. Place a few dressed salad leaves in the centre of 4 plates. Carefully arrange 3 crab rolls on top and serve.



Seasonal Vegetable Millefeuille with Stuffed Prawns

Serves 4 - You can vary the selection of vegetables according to your preference and availability.

Vegetable Millefeuille

2 tomatoes
1 medium eggplant
2 zucchini
1 yellow sweet potato
3 tbsp extra virgin olive oil
salt and freshly ground pepper
Preheat oven to 180°C. Cut all the vegetables into long 3 mm thick slices. Heat olive oil in a large frying pan and briefly cook the vegetable slices (except for the tomatoes). The vegetables must not be cooked through, so 30 seconds on each side is enough.
Line a bread tin with baking paper. Layer the vegetables in the tin (don't start with the tomato slices) seasoning each layer with salt and pepper as you go. Cover with foil and bake in preheated oven at 180°C for about 30 minutes or until the vegetables are cooked through.
Remove from oven and lift the foil. Gently press down on the vegetables and discard excess water on the surface. Allow to cool and refrigerate until required.

Prawn and Stuffing Preparation

1 tbsp olive oil
1/2 onion, finely chopped
1 small zucchini, finely diced
1 small carrot, finely diced
2 tbsp cream
1/2 cup coriander leaves
4 semi-dried tomatoes, cut into pieces about 100 g chicken breast meat
1 egg
salt and freshly ground pepper
20 green prawns, shelled and de-veined
Heat olive oil in a pan and cook onion, zucchini and carrot until cooked through. Drain to remove excess fat and allow to cool.
When cool, place cooked onion, zucchini and carrot in a blender with the cream, coriander leaves, sun-dried tomatoes, chicken meat and egg. Blend to a purée and season with a little salt and pepper. Transfer preparation to a bowl and refrigerate until required.
Lay prawns flat on an oven tray lined with baking paper. Spoon (or pipe) a little stuffing on each prawn.



Mustard Sauce

3 tbsp cream
2 tbsp Dijon-style mustard
juice of 1/2 lemon
salt and freshly ground black pepper
Warm the cream in a bowl—it must not boil. Add mustard, lemon juice and a little salt and pepper and whip together for 1 minute.

To Finish Dish

Bake prawns for 5 minutes in an oven pre-heated to 200°C. Unmould vegetable millefeuille and using a sharp knife cut into 4 rectangles about 10 cm x 2 cm. Spoon (or pipe) a few lines of mustard sauce onto 4 plates. Top with vegetable millefeuille and 5 prawns for each plate. Serve immediately.



A restaurant with a long history

Restaurant 1881 is a seaside restaurant that enjoys a rich history, as it is located in the grounds of the former penal settlement, as the name suggests dating back to the late 19th century. It is one of Nouméa's most exciting restaurants situated in a truly romantic setting. It is also quite unique in that it offers two quite different dining experiences. You have the choice of the picturesque over-water dining room on a deck facing the bay with a superb sea view. Or you can select the main dining room which is set in the historic Colonial-style building featuring an enchanting décor. The menu features a delicious, modern French-Pacific cuisine and, as you can expect in New Caledonia's finest restaurants, the choice of French wines is superb. Restaurant 1881 is situated on a historical site at 98 Avenue James Cook in Nouville, just 5 minutes from the city centre.



Gabriel's Comments

"A meal at 1881 is a great escape. 1881 is a very romantic restaurant with one of the best views in New Caledonia. The delicious food served by Melanesian staff dressed in their colourful clothing makes it a charming venue for lunch or dinner".
For reservations call (687) 24 00 42.

Roast Duck Fillets with Figs and Sweet Potato Rolls



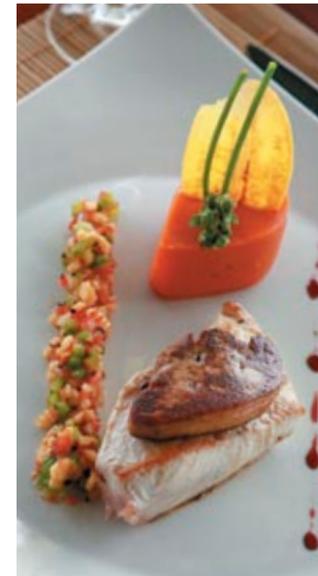
about 60 g butter
1 onion, finely chopped
1 orange sweet potato, cut into small cubes
salt and freshly ground pepper
1 egg
1 pack of spring roll pastry (you need 8 sheets)
about 40 g melted butter
2 tbsp sesame seeds
6 figs
2 tbsp honey
2 tbsp white vinegar
50 g caster sugar
1 tbsp cream
4 duck fillets

Pre-heat oven to 200°C. Heat 1 tbsp butter in a pan and gently fry onion for a few minutes. Add sweet potato cubes, season with salt and pepper and cook until potato is soft. Mash potato and leave to cool. When cold, mix egg into mashed potato and place in a piping bag without a nozzle. Lay 8 sheets of spring roll pastry on a bench. Pipe a length of sweet potato on one side of each sheet then roll the pastry up to trap the filling. Brush pastry with a little melted butter and sprinkle with sesame seeds.

Cut a cross at the top of 4 figs. Then drizzle 1/2 tbsp of honey over each fig and top with a small knob of the remaining butter.

Meanwhile, cook vinegar and sugar in a saucepan until it starts to caramelise. Cut the remaining 2 figs into small pieces, add to the pan and cook for about 10 minutes. After 10 minutes stir in the cream, boil briefly, then blend figs to a purée. Cook spring rolls and figs in the preheated oven for about 15 minutes. Cook duck fillets in a frying pan, skin side down for about 5 minutes. Then finish duck in the oven by baking for about 10 minutes at 200°C. Rest duck for 10 minutes before serving.

Place 2 potato rolls on each plate. Top each with thin slices of duck then with a roast fig. Serve the fig sauce either on the side of the plate or it can be drizzled over the duck meat.



Mahi-Mahi Steak with Foie Gras, Saffron and Sweet Potato Mousseline

Serves 4
Mahi-Mahi is a very delicate fish caught in the waters around Nouméa.

2 large tomatoes
1 capsicum
1 large shallot, finely chopped
4 tbsp extra virgin olive oil
salt of guérande
freshly ground black pepper
a pinch of saffron threads
about 1 kg sweet potatoes
1/2 cup hot milk
4 pieces of mahi-mahi fillet, each about 160 g
4 slices of foie gras, each 50 g

Slice tomatoes in half and squeeze out the seeds. Cut tomato flesh into small dice, about 3 mm. Halve capsicum and remove seeds. Cut capsicum into small dice about 3 mm. Place chopped shallot and diced tomato and capsicum in a bowl with 3 tbsp olive oil, a little salt and pepper and the saffron. Mix well then refrigerate for about 4 hours.

Steam or boil peeled sweet potatoes until soft. Drain potatoes then pass them through a mouli or blend to a purée. Mix in hot milk and season well with salt and pepper. Keep potato mousseline warm.

Heat remaining oil in a non-stick pan. Cook fish for 3-4 minutes on each side. Transfer fish to 4 warm plates.

Remove excess fat from the pan and cook foie gras for 20 seconds on each side. Place foie gras on top of fish. Serve sweet potato (it can be moulded in a ring) and diced vegetables next to the fish and serve.

Gabriel's Comments

"A visit to 'Le Roof' is always a special treat. The food and wine are excellent, but there's the huge bonus of the wonderful sea view, and occasionally, to the delight of diners, a glimpse of a dolphin or turtle swimming in the waters next to the restaurant. It's a memorable place for lunch or dinner". For reservation call (687) 25 07 00.



Croustillant Prawn Rolls with Basil and a Mango Sauce

Serves 4
Nouméa produces very sweet prawns.

100 ml balsamic vinegar
50 ml mayonnaise
50 ml mango purée
6 sheets of brick pastry (available from Middle Eastern speciality stores)
24 medium prawns, shelled and deveined
24 small basil leaves
1 egg white
oil for frying

Place vinegar in a small pan, bring it to the boil and reduce by half. Allow reduced vinegar to cool. Mix mayonnaise with mango purée. Cut each brick pastry sheet into 4 pieces.

Place a prawn on each piece of pastry. Top each with a basil leaf, then roll the pastry around the prawn. Seal pastry using a little egg white.

Bring oil to 160°C. Carefully place the prawn rolls into the hot oil and leave for about 30 seconds or until lightly golden. Drain rolls on kitchen paper.

Decorate 4 plates with lines of balsamic vinegar and lines of mango mayonnaise. Place 6 prawn rolls on each plate. Serve extra mango mayonnaise on the side.

The finest dining over le water

Le Roof is an excellent restaurant that is actually built over the water, some 100 metres from the shore. From Anse Vata you walk along the long pier, high above the water, until you arrive at the restaurant. You suddenly emerge into an open, spacious dining area with a high roof area representing a traditional Melanesian tribal hut. You have the choice of sitting on the balconies that offer some of the best views in Nouméa, overlooking either bustling Anse Vata or out towards the edge of the world's largest lagoon. Or you can sit at a table around the large central viewing atrium which looks directly down onto the water, where you can see fish feeding as well as the occasional passing dolphin or turtle. **Le Roof** serves a fine, creative cuisine, which is regarded as some of the best on the main island of New Caledonia, and features an excellent wine list. It is located at the end of Anse Vata close to the Nouvata Park, Ramada Plaza and Le Méridien Hotels.





A gourmet tour de France is right on your doorstep

A Delicious Taste of Regional France can be found in New Caledonia.

Wherever you go in Nouméa you get a taste of one or several of the wonderful regions of France through the food - French bread and cheeses, wine, mineral water and smallgoods.

- 1 Paris**
The taste of Paris, which is where the baguette and the brioche were created, is everywhere in Nouméa, especially in the boulangeries (bakeries). The king of French cheeses, the creamy brie, was created just outside Paris on the way to the region of Champagne.
- 2 Champagne**
The taste of this region comes from a bottle, producing the finest sparkling wine in the world, and in Nouméa you'll find dozens of varieties of the bubbly stuff, from affordable, non-vintage champagne at the supermarket to the most exquisite and rare vintages in the many fine wine shops or at the top restaurants.
- 3 Alsace**
Many of the early French migrants who came to New Caledonia originated from Alsace, and the wines from this region are unique and well appreciated by connoisseurs world over. You'll find such wines in Nouméa's wine shops and supermarkets - try a dry, fruity riesling, a spicy, floral gewürztraminer, or an exotic tokay, silvaner or pinot gris.

You'll be able to try Alsace cuisine at 'Les 3 Brasseurs' restaurant, where they serve Flammekeuche, a sort of flat pizza with a delicious choice of toppings, and the famous choucroute (sauerkraut), a dish of cured cabbage with sausages, smoked pork loin and other smallgoods. As in Alsace, 'Les 3 Brasseurs', make a range of beers to suit all tastes. Many food outlets also serve Quiche Lorraine which originates from the region just north of Alsace.

- The two chefs featured in this issue of Bon Appétit come from this region.
- 4 Burgundy**
South-west of Alsace is the celebrated wine and food region of Burgundy where the best chardonnay and pinot noir wines in the world are made. These wines are available in Nouméa's best wine stores and restaurants, and on the menu of Nouméa's restaurants you'll see wonderful Burgundian specialities, such as garlic snails, coq au vin and boeuf bourguignon.
- 5 Beaujolais**
South of Burgundy is the Beaujolais region, the home of the easy-drinking, young, light red called beaujolais. The French love to chill their beaujolais slightly before drinking it, and you'll find this fruity wine in every wine store in Nouméa. It's a great wine to enjoy on the balcony of your hotel while watching the sun set.
- 6 Côte Du Rhône**
The Rhône area is famous for its flavoursome red wines called Côte du Rhône, which is often made with shiraz grapes and, therefore, popular amongst Australians. These wines are found in most wine stores and the cheaper ones are usually lighter than the more expensive ones.
- 7 Provence**
The cuisine of Provence in the south of France is well-suited to New Caledonia's climate. It's a cuisine of the sun with strong flavours and colours and wonderful fish dishes, such as

- bouillabaisse and tuna. The beautiful olive oils and olives from Provence are available in gourmet stores, and the wines of the region are lovely, especially the delicate rosés.
- 8 The Pyrenees and Basque Regions**
Travelling west from Provence, and just north of the Pyrenees and Basque regions. Nouméa's supermarkets offer outstanding ewe's milk cheeses and hams from this part of France and they're delicious in a sandwich made with a baguette and a little French butter. Miam-Miam!
- 9 The South-West**
North of the Basque regions is the south-west - a region that takes its gastronomy very seriously. The great speciality here is duck, especially foie gras, the flavoursome, fine duck liver pâté. Nouméa has its own foie gras maker, and it's available in gourmet shops, butchers and supermarkets. Foie gras is delicious eaten with bread or toast, but make sure you keep it refrigerated and out of the heat. With your foie gras enjoy a glass of sweet sauterne wine which is also from the south-west region.
- Many of the regional specialities can be found in the two super gourmet stores of Nouméa, 'La Comtesse du Barry' and 'Maison Balandé'.
- More than anything else, the region is famous for the wines of Bordeaux (claret) which can vary from ordinary wines to absolutely extraordinary wines costing a small fortune, and all are

- available in Nouméa. Just north of Bordeaux the local vigneron make the famous cognac spirit.
- 10 The Massif Central**
East of the south-west region is where many of the tastiest French cheeses are made. Saint Nectaire, a washed rind, Fourme d'Ambert, an outstanding blue, and Cantal, a cheddar-style cheese, are all available at the best supermarkets. South of the Massif Central is the home of Armagnac, and Roquefort blue cheese which is very much loved by French people living in Nouméa.
- 11 The Loire**
North of the Massif Central is Gabriel's native region, which makes some of the best goat cheeses in the world, and some of the best value French white wines, like saucerre, a sauvignon blanc, and muscadet, the preferred wine of many oyster fanatics.
- 12 Brittany and Normandy**
North-west of the Loire Valley are these very genteel regions, home of the best butter in France, as well as of cider and calvados. It's here that some of France's best creamy cheeses, like camembert and Pont L'Évêque are made. There are a few native Bretons who've opened crêperies in Nouméa where they prepare delicious, large, savoury pancakes called 'galettes', which are filled with a variety of ingredients, like cheese, eggs, ham, mushrooms.
- This short Tour de France gives you a soupçon of the taste of regional France in Nouméa. Bon Appétit!

Vin rouge ou blanc? A Simple Guide to French Wines

With all of the restaurants, specialist wine and gourmet shops and the supermarkets, there are hundreds of excellent French wines available in New Caledonia. The difficulty for the tourist is that French wine labels are not written in English and generally don't indicate the grape variety. They are often labelled according to region, such as Burgundy, Bordeaux, Alsace, Champagne, Provence, Loire etc., so it's handy to know which grapes are used to make the different French wines. Use the guide below to find some of your favourites:

Cabernet Sauvignon is the main constituent of the fine red wines of Bordeaux. The top Bordeaux wines

are considered to be amongst the best in the world and are priced accordingly.

Pinot Noir is the main grape used in the fine reds of Burgundy (Bourgogne). The best red Burgundy wines are extraordinary, but in the same token also quite expensive. Alsace wine uses pinot noir for its delicious light reds and rosés whilst the grape is also widely used to make champagne.

Chardonnay is an essential ingredient in making champagne and is used to make most of the white wines of Burgundy and of Chablis. French

white burgundy wines are often regarded as the best white wine in the world, with Chablis wines delicious and good value - try a 'petit chablis'. There are also a few wines from the south of France which are labelled as 'chardonnay', and are often quite good and reasonably priced.

Sauvignon Blanc is used to make the excellent and affordable Sancerre and Pouilly Blanc Fumé wines, both of which originate from the Loire region. Sauvignon Blanc is also one of the main grapes of the outstanding white wines of Bordeaux.

Riesling is used in the excellent white wines of Alsace and has a flowery perfume. It is used to

make mostly dry, sweet and sparkling wines. Gamay is the grape used to make the light red wine of Beaujolais.

Chenin Blanc is used to make the sparkling wine of Saumur, as well as some fine dry white wines, such as Vouvray and Savennières, all of which are from the Loire region.

Semillon is used in the dry, sweet white wines of Bordeaux.

Santé (Cheers)!

A fromage affair

A Guide to French Cheeses

"Cheese is probably the best of all foods, as wine is the best of all beverages" - Patience Gray, 1957
The reputation of French cheeses is second to none, and according to recent estimates there are about 500 different cheeses produced in France today. Although we get the chance to taste only a few of these wonderful cheeses in Australia and New Zealand due to customs restrictions, there are a plethora of delectable delicacies in Nouméa to fulfil your inner connoisseur. Add these French favourites to your shopping list:

White soft-ripened cheeses

The most celebrated members of the soft-ripened family of French cheeses are camembert and brie.

Camembert is the most copied cheese in the world with many imposters claiming the name. Those in the know will tell you that genuine camembert is made using cow's milk in Normandy. Generally this cheese is about 11cm in diameter and 3cm high. The rind should be covered in white mould with darker strips and stains, with the inside a creamy yellow. The cheese ripens from under the rind to the centre, so when the centre is really soft the cheese is very ripe.



Brie is a mild, delicately flavoured cow's milk cheese that is made in the shape of a wheel. When brie reaches its prime the skin becomes more golden in colour and the inside is creamy. The finest brie cheeses are named after the town or village from which they originate, e.g. brie de Meaux, brie de Melun, brie de Nangis. French brie has a fuller flavour than an Australian brie-style cheese.

there are several regions in France which make chèvre cheese, particularly the Loire, Provence, Burgundy and the Alps.

Some chèvre cheeses are dusted with ash, some are wrapped in leaves to keep them moist and some are rolled in herbs. Most, however, come as a white fresh cream cheese and there are many shapes - small cylinders, cones, pyramids, logs, ovals, shallow disks and even in small bowls. The texture of chèvre cheese varies from soft to firm and the taste from delicately creamy to strong and acidic.

Most goat cheeses are sold under the generic name of 'chèvre' but many have an individual name, such as Saint-Marcellin (made from goat and cow's milk), Pyramide and Sainte-Maure from the Loire region and Banon from Provence.

Semi-Soft Cheeses

Many of the finest semi-soft cheeses were first made in monasteries during the Middle Ages. They have washed rinds, often with an orange tinge, and are creamy with a velvety texture and mild to strong aroma - sometimes they smell stronger than they taste. Enjoy these tasty morsels with some good bread, wine or beer.



Port Salut developed by monks in Brittany in the early 19th Century, has an elastic, creamy texture and a mild flavour. When young, Port Salut has a mild and delicate aroma and with a bit of age it develops an overpoweringly strong smell.

Goat cheeses (Chèvre) - The French produce about two-thirds of the world's goat cheeses and



Livarot is named after a village in Normandy, and is one of the oldest cheeses in France. A strong-tasting cow's milk cheese from Normandy, Livarot has a spicy flavour yet upon consumption it melts in the mouth.

Saint Nectaire, from the Auvergne region in the centre of France, is a delicious cow's milk cheese with a supple, silky texture. Like Port Salut, it is an ancient cheese with a nutty flavour that melts easily in the mouth.



Blue-Veined Cheeses are the aristocrat of the cheese world and France has made 'bleu' for about 2000 years. There are many delicious French 'bleu' cheeses - some are soft and creamy, while others are harder and crumbly. They're all a bit piquant, with that distinctively strong flavour.

Roquefort the king of blue cheeses, is a favourite with those who love their blue strongly flavoured. Interestingly, it is made from sheep's milk and matured for two to three months in cool, damp and breezy limestone caves. One of the most popular blue varieties, Roquefort is creamy with a strong, sharp flavour and is delicious in salads.

Fourme d'Ambert is one of the mildest of the blue cheeses, and has a creamy texture with a nutty flavour. This cheese is one of France's oldest and dates back to Roman times. During the aging process, the cheese is injected with a sweet white wine weekly. For this reason, it is best had with sweet wine, like sauternes.

Semi-Hard and Hard Cheeses

The myriad of delicious French hard cheeses are made in the mountainous regions of the country, such as the Alps and the Pyrenees. Most of the cheeses are formed as large wheels and some have 'holes' or 'eyes'.

Cantal is thought to be France's oldest cheese, and is believed to have been the model for English cheddar. It has a firm, smooth texture and mild nutty flavour and is sold in slices which come from a large cylinder weighing about 40 kg.

Gruyère is the generic name for large firm cheeses with eyes or holes such as Emmental, Beaufort and Comté. These cheeses are delicious and are particularly popular with children.

Meet the French Cheese Master

The award-winning French Cheese Ambassadors Gérard Poulard and his son Olivier will be visiting New Caledonia in May 2008 to share their wealth of knowledge on the amazing variety of French cheeses. Their entertaining and informative program includes the presentation of a variety of superb cheeses, tastings, composing presentation, suggested orders of tasting, proposing gustative associations (breads, wine, salt meats, "foie gras", fruits, teas, etc..) and,

naturally, answering any questions you may have. The Poulards travel the world with their exclusive program, and usually visit New Caledonia every year around May. They will be at Le Méridien Nouméa (the closest they will get to Australia) from 13 to 24 May 2008, but seats are strictly limited. To make a reservation for Le Méridien Sextant Restaurant seaside buffet and cheese degustation please call (687) 26 50 00 or email le.meridien@meridien.nc



A Menu of Recommended Restaurants

There are many wonderful restaurants to choose from in New Caledonia. Here is a selection of the finest to be found in Nouméa.



1 Le Relais de la Vallée is a very small, quaint restaurant, behind the Géant supermarket located between the city and Baie de Ste Marie. It is owned by a couple from France, who offer an excellent menu and wine list. It is located approximately 5 to 7 minutes by car or taxi from most major hotels. Make sure you book to ensure you get a table. Located at 39 rue Charleroi at Valee des Colons - Telephone (687) 25 28 39.



2 L'Eau Vive (the Water of Life) is also known as the 'Singing Nuns Restaurant' as it is run by a religious order. It was established many years ago and serves traditional French cuisine. The ever-changing menu offers a wonderful diversity of international dishes, local New Caledonia fare and unique specialities of the countries from which the nuns come. Some say it has the best wine list in Nouméa. At any time of the evening the nuns may suddenly break into song. It is located near Baie Ste Marie and about 5 minutes from most major hotels by car or taxi. Telephone (687) 28 61 23.



3 Le Miretti-Gascon is the oldest French restaurant in New Caledonia, situated in a warm and inviting Mediterranean style country house. They serve traditional French regional cuisine from the south-west, especially foie gras, a range of duck dishes, fresh meat dishes and also specialise in fresh seafood including lobsters, prawns, fish salad, crab salad and succulent oysters. The restaurant is located at 24 rue Gabriel Laroque at Anse Vata, walking distance from the Ramada Plaza and Nouvata Park Hotels - Telephone (687) 26 40 41.



4 L'Hippocampe or 'The Seahorse' is the gourmet restaurant of Le Méridien Nouméa hotel. It is a very sophisticated establishment, combining the elegance and 'plaisir de vivre' for which Le Méridien is synonymous. Talented chef, Claude Ségard, heads up the kitchen, and his wife, Shona, is the pastry chef. Their modern contemporary cuisine uses the best available local ingredients. It offers a creative and imaginative cuisine as well as traditional French specialities, accompanied by a large selection of wines. It is situated in the beautiful gardens of the 5 Star Le Méridien Hotel and reservations are recommended - Telephone (687) 26 50 00.

5 Le Roof is a very good restaurant, that is actually built over the water, some 100 metres from the shore. It serves a fine, creative cuisine in a superb setting overlooking the water at Anse Vata offering some of the best views in Nouméa, as well as a viewing atrium in the middle, where you can see fish feeding as well as the occasional passing dolphin or turtle. It is located at the end of Anse Vata close to the Nouvata Park, Ramada Plaza and Le Méridien Hotels - Telephone (687) 25 07 00 - See restaurant profile on page 9.

6 Le Bilboquet Plage is a popular French brasserie-style restaurant situated in a tropical garden facing the sea, providing a lunch and evening service. In addition to the 'fraîcheur du jour' dishes of the day, and New Caledonian specialities, the menu offers you a very wide choice: mixed salads, seafood and fish from the lagoon, fresh pasta dishes and grills. The atmosphere is warm and friendly. Locals often meet here for a meal after a show as the restaurant remains open until midnight and later on weekends. It is located in Anse Vata just up from the Nouvata Park Hotel and near the Ramada Plaza Hotel - Telephone (687) 26 46 60.



7 Restaurant 360 is a revolving restaurant set on top of one of the twin towers of the Ramada Plaza Nouméa Hotel in Anse Vata, offering the best 360 view of Nouméa. The Chef, Didier Broux (See his profile on page 6), and his team serve a delicate French cuisine using the freshest local ingredients, and the wine list is one of the best in Nouméa. Telephone (687) 23 90 90.



8 La Coupole is an excellent restaurant located between the delightful Anse Vata and Baie des Citrons, which is close to many of the major hotels. It's a great place for groups, and wine buffs will be delighted with the extensive list of excellent French wines, especially the Bordeaux inclusions. Try one of the foie gras (goose liver pâté) dishes prepared by Fabrice Louyot, the excellent chef de cuisine (see his profile on page 7), while the pastry cook produces some absolutely beautiful desserts. Located at Rocher à la Voile at Anse Vata next to the Le Surf Hotel - Telephone (687) 26 44 11.



9 Les 3 Brasseurs (The 3 Brewers) is a truly unique dining experience, where the beer is actually made on the premises. Originating in the north of France, a region with great brewing traditions, they wanted to recreate the atmosphere of traditional breweries from the past. It offers specialities of the north and east of France, with an extensive menu. Try the flammekueche, a delicious style of thin pizza from



Alsace. It's lovely to sit outside on the balcony overlooking the Baie des Citrons. Telephone (687) 24 15 16.

10 La Fiesta is a great place for a good time. A Basque restaurant with a quaint country inn atmosphere in Baie des Citrons, a lively



establishment that is reasonably priced and great for a casual night out. Alban and his team offer a menu of highly original cuisine full of the warmth of sunny south-west France and Spain. La Fiesta is true to its name and turns into a popular nightclub after dinner. It is open daily. Telephone (687) 26 21 33.

11 Côté Sud is a superb establishment with a great hillside view of the beautiful Baie des Citrons. It has been described as 'like walking into a restaurant in the middle of Paris' with formal white table cloths down to the floor. It offers a very large menu and serves a modern, creative French cuisine. Telephone (687) 26 28 11.

Gabriel's Gourmet Trail de Nouméa.

One of the best ways to discover the Nouméa Gourmet Experience is to explore the many different precincts individually.

Anse Vata

This attractive tourist area features most of the major hotels in Nouméa including the 5 Star Le Méridien, Ramada Plaza, Nouvata Park, Le Pacifique, La Promenade and Le Surf. Featured restaurants in this issue of Bon Appétit include La Coupole, Le Bilboquet Plage, Le Miretti Gascon, Le Roof, L'Hippocampe and Restaurant 360. The Singing Nuns is a few minutes away along the coast road. There is also a range of other restaurants and cafés including Chinese, Italian and pizza, seafood, coffee, and a choice of snack and ice cream bars, as well as an excellent butcher and several small supermarkets.

Baie des Citrons

Next door to Anse Vata you will find Baie des Citrons (Lemon Bay) which is fast becoming the most popular restaurant and bar area with the locals. Featured restaurants in this issue include Côte Sud, La Fiesta and Les 3 Brasseurs. On any weeknight, and especially on weekends, this area is buzzing with casual bars and restaurants to suit all tastes and budgets. Le Sorbetier is a popular place during the day, serving a delicious choice of ice creams and sorbets, as well as light meals and drinks. Le Rocher crêperie and snack bar sits high on a hill offering superb views of the bay. There is even an internet café. And during the day you will often find the traditional French ice cream man as he wheels his colourful trolley along the bay.

on page 14). There is even a large supermarket that displays products in Australian dollars and even accepts Australian dollars.

Port Moselle

Not far from the city centre is Baie de la Moselle which is home to the main marina and the colourful Nouméa Market. The market is a must for a traditional French breakfast at the vibrant central café, and you can then stroll at your leisure to take in the sights, sounds and smells of the wide choice of foods, fruits and vegetables and flowers for sale (see story on page 16). It is from this marina that the boats leave for Amédée Island and Coral Palms Island Resort, and is home to many yacht charters. At night the car park of the market area is transformed with a small fun park and a number of vans that serve a delicious selection of international foods.

Dumbéa

Just a few minutes from Nouméa you will discover a nature lover's paradise. Dumbéa has much to offer: wild gorges and the lush valley, the river and its many places to swim, forest walks on the slopes of the Koghi mountains, the wide open spaces of the Dzumac mountains accessible by four-wheel drive, mountain bike or on foot, family outings to the Parc Fayard, the 18 hole golf course... the list goes on. There are also some excellent restaurants, including the Auberge du Mt Koghi, featuring sweeping panoramic views of Nouméa and the lagoon, the Auberge de la Rhumerie in a historic building with its distinctive hunting lodge décor and the restaurant at the golf course.

Nouméa City and Latin Quarter

The city of Nouméa is built around the Place des Cocotiers (Coconut Square), which is a large and very pleasant area bordered by palm and flame trees. Surrounding this square is a vibrant shopping district, which includes a wide variety of cafés and restaurants. Featured restaurants in this issue include La Chaumière and Le Zanzibar, while Restaurant 1881 is just a few minutes from the city centre. Near the Square you will find the famous Comtesse du Barry with its excellent choice of French food and wines. There is an excellent range of classic French boulangeries (bakeries) and pâtisseries with a superb choice of breads, baguettes, cakes and pastries. There are two superb chocolate shops, including Chocolats Morand (see the story



Sarraméa and La Foa

You should also consider a Drive'n'Dine to these regions that are a short drive on good roads north of Nouméa. The village of La Foa is famous for its homely meals, crab and other seafoods. A little further north-east, Sarraméa is situated within the mountain range and for a long time concentrated on coffee cultivation. In fact, there is a 100 year old coffee plantation that produced coffee which was flown to France specially for President Chirac. Here you will also find some great dining experiences, including some excellent country restaurants such as Chez Mamie and L'Evasion mountain resort.



12 La Chaumière is one of the most established French restaurants in Nouméa, a favourite with the locals due to its exciting menu and creative French cuisine. Located in the Latin Quarter at 13 rue du Duc Gueguan - Telephone (687) 27 24 62.

13 Le Zanzibar is a popular place with the locals and serves dishes from around the world. It is known for the inspired touch and originality of its cuisine with the flavour of the south of France. It is located in the Nouméa town centre, in a renovated French Colonial house, dating back to the 19th century, at the top of the Place des Cocotiers offering a stunning view over the city from a balcony. Telephone (687) 25 28 00.



14 Restaurant 1881 is a seaside restaurant that enjoys a rich history, as it is located in the grounds of the former penal settlement. It is one of Nouméa's most exciting restaurants with a romantic setting. It has one picturesque over-water dining room on a deck facing the bay with a superb sea view, and the main dining room set in a Colonial-style building with an enchanting décor. It is situated on an historical site at 98 Avenue James Cook in Nouville, just 5 minutes from the city centre - Telephone (687) 24 00 42 - See restaurant profile on page 8.

A Master Chocolatier

When you enter the enticing shop of master chocolatier Patrick Morand, you are in a very special place. Close your eyes, take in all of the wonderful aromas and you could easily be in one of the finest chocolate outlets in Paris. Or you can stand outside and watch talented Mr Morand make his delicious products through the large viewing window.

He produces a stunning range of chocolates and cakes, including exquisite pralinés, ganaches, mendiants, orangettes and truffles. He also uses only the very finest ingredients, including chocolate from Val Rhona in France, which is widely regarded as the very finest chocolate in the world.

Mr Morand trained as a pâtissier in the French region of Normandy and then spent three years in Switzerland. He then worked as pastry chef in Oregon in the USA, where he met his wife. They returned to Toulouse in France, and Patrick worked for six years at the internationally

renowned Maison Pillon, winning a major international award during his time in Paris.

Not one to rest on his laurels, Patrick continued to perfect his craft, studying with the famous pastry chef at the Le Notre School near Paris. They were then drawn to New Caledonia, moving to Nouméa in 1998 and opening Chocolats Morand two years later. He returns to France every year to study new techniques and recipes and undertakes master classes with famous French pastry chef Pierre Hermé.

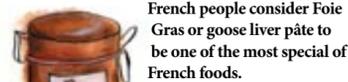
Chocolats Morand is located near the Nouméa City Centre at 9 rue Porcheron in the Latin Quarter. Telephone (687) 27 31 77. There is also another excellent chocolate shop on the other side of the Place des Cocotiers. Tonton Jules features a spectacular chocolate fountain in their window, and is located at 7 bis rue de General Mangin. Telephone (687) 27 39 49.



Gourmet Foie Gras with a delicious twist

Learn a lot from the French Wine Master

Le Rocher – a classic Brittany-style Crêperie



French people consider Foie Gras or goose liver pâté to be one of the most special of French foods.

Many of the foie gras are naturally made in France, but there is one brand, called 'Nouméa Gourmet' which is actually prepared in Nouméa by creative, French-trained chef, Gerald Ittah, who for many years has developed a unique approach to the production of foie gras using his own special recipes.

Chef Ittah, a prizewinner at the Hotel School of Paris, started in France with famous chefs such as Pierre Gagnaire. He decided to settle in Nouméa several years ago. Using his strong knowledge of traditional French cooking, he was inspired to enhance the flavour using the finest and freshest local fruits and spices. Mixing in the delicate flavours from the Pacific Islands, such as vanilla, mango, lychee, fig and orange. The subtle blend of quality foie gras and natural perfumes extracted from tropical fresh fruits results in a truly unique and delicious product.

Make sure you store the foie gras in the refrigerator soon after buying it and remove it just before serving. Cut it into slices between 5 mm to 1 cm, using a knife with a thin blade. Foie gras is used in cooking by chefs but it's best enjoyed with toasted sourdough bread and a glass of wine.

Chef Ittah will soon be opening a shop in La Vallée des Colons suburb, near the Géant Supermarket at 30 rue Charleroi. However, you can buy Nouméa Gourmet Foie Gras at supermarkets or gourmet shops and it is also served in selected restaurants.

If you love your wines, we strongly suggest that you make a trip into Nouméa to the specialty gourmet providore Comtesse du Barry (Rue d'Austerlitz) and get some advice from the resident Master of Wines, Emilie Buton.

Originating from Bordeaux, Emilie has worked and studied extensively across France's major wine-growing regions and is charged with stocking Comtesse Du Barry and its sister shop Maison Ballande with an impressive wine cellar.

Emilie conducts regular wine tastings on the cellar floor (the original cobbled street of Nouméa) and can make suggestions to fit any budget or taste.

Those more confident, should take a trip to any of the local supermarkets where you can pick up a good French white or red wine for under A\$10 and a bottle of quality French champagne for around A\$50.

A world first - don't miss the Beaujolais Launch
True wine lovers would be wise to book a trip to New Caledonia in November in time for the annual Beaujolais launch – the official tasting of the latest release wines from the world famous Beaujolais region.

Typically held on the third Thursday in November, New Caledonia has the unique position of being 10 hours ahead of mainland France and therefore the first official French territory to taste the new crop of wines. The wine is typically tasted in conjunction with a feast and several special events take place as part of the celebration.



Relaxing in the atmosphere of Le Rocher crêperie at the end of Anse Vata, you could easily be sitting in a traditional French crêperie in the Brittany region of western France. However, you are actually in cosmopolitan tropical Nouméa, high on a hill offering superb views of neighbouring Baie des Citrons.

Julien, a Breton and the crêperie owner, is totally dedicated to keeping the tradition of delicious savoury and sweet crêpes as in his native Brittany.

The savoury crêpes are called 'galettes' and are made with buckwheat flour and cooked on a traditional large, metal plate. The result is a very thin, crisp crêpe with a nutty flavour. A galette is always garnished with something and is a meal in itself – great for lunch with a glass of apple cider from Brittany.

The most popular galette filling is made with cheese, ham and egg, but you can also have sausage and potato, smoked salmon or scallops with leeks, and there are more than twenty different choices. A sweet crêpe can be garnished with poached pears, chocolate sauce and ice-cream or perhaps orange with Grand Marnier.

If French crêpes are not your thing, but you still want to enjoy the magnificent view, the menu extends to a variety of gourmet salads and entrées. But really, the galettes are outstanding and very popular with kids so Le Rocher also offers a menu enfant.

Le Rocher crêperie and snack bar is located at 55 Promenade Roger Laroque, Anse Vata on the hill behind Le Surf hotel. Tel (687) 25 35 75.



The Sweet Local Prawn

The delicious local seafood is one of the real delicacies of New Caledonia, reflecting the quality of the beautiful and bountiful tropical waters found in the world's largest lagoon.

New Caledonian prawns are smaller than many of the varieties we have in Australia and New Zealand, but their flesh is much more flavoursome and sweeter. The most

common local variety is the 'blue prawn' (stylirostris prawn) which is a rarity by world standards; making up less than one per cent of the world's production.

New Caledonia has several commercial prawn farms in Dumbéa, Païta, La Foa, Moindou, Koné and Voh, which support local demand and export. The quality of the prawns is strictly controlled and farms

practice sustainable aqua farming. Prawns are free from antibiotics and artificial flavouring and regulations prevent overfeeding and overcrowding in ponds to ensure a quality end product.

One of the larger farms is Aquamon near Tontouta Airport, which covers an area of 40 hectares and produces up to 160 tonnes of prawns annually.



Shucks, the oysters are superb!

About a half hour drive north of Nouméa you will discover a burgeoning enterprise - Huîtres de Dumbéa (Oysters from Dumbéa).

Here a very talented young marine biologist, Anthony Lavergne, and his father, who comes from the famous oyster region of the Atlantic coast just west of Cognac, are developing one of the largest and finest oyster farms in the South Pacific. The farm has an amazing 50,000 hectares of oysters under water, producing around 100,000

dozen or 100 tonnes of quality oysters a year ... and growing.

They produce a range of different varieties of oysters, and Anthony is continually experimenting with new varieties as he searches for the perfect oyster for the region.

The product is of such high quality that around 80% is sold to the leading restaurants in Nouméa, with the remainder sold at the Nouméa market and through supermarkets. The French

are very fond of oysters and local chefs are extremely creative in the way they serve them.

Their ambitious plans now include a major tourist development at the farm, which is under design, complete with overwater walkways over the oyster beds and oyster tastings with a glass of French wine organised along the way.

With such commitment to their trade and to quality, it is no surprise that the world is their oyster!



The water is eau so good!

Unlike many of its Pacific Island neighbours, New Caledonia has excellent quality drinking water from the tap on the main island and most of the outlying islands. While Evian and Perrier are typically popular French mineral water brands available on the island, New Caledonia also has its own excellent quality pure spring water, Mont-Dore which takes its name from New Caledonia's highest peak and from where the water is bottled at the mountain's nearby spring.



Are you a Coffee Connoisseur?

The French are serious coffee connoisseurs, and coffee is an established way of life for the French and New Caledonians. So it's no great surprise that in addition to serving a vast array of coffee varieties, New Caledonia also grows coffee locally, with the most famous variety produced in the perfectly suited mountainous forest area of Sarraméa, north of Nouméa.

Coffee cherries were cultivated as part of the country's early development and

were already famous by the time the first colonists arrived to the region over 100 years ago. In fact, coffee was introduced to New Caledonia in 1874 by Governor Feillet who brought over some settlers to cultivate the crop.

Today, New Caledonia is moving towards the production of 'special varieties' such as the Arabica, le Kouliou on the west coast and the Robusta on the east coast. The high quality of Sarraméa's coffee is well known and it was favoured by

both Winston Churchill and French President Jacques Chirac. Special excursions are available to tour the coffee plantation and learn the coffee process from 'bean to cup'. The tour takes visitors on an easy walking trek through the deep valleys of the plantation showing different varieties, the growing process and its influence on the final product. The tour takes around 2 hours and costs 400 XPF per person (A\$5.60). Contact the Sarraméa Tourist Office on (687) 44 39 55.

Price calculated at April 2008



Growth of Vanilla and Avocado

Among the most celebrated of New Caledonia's local produce is the excellent vanilla and avocados. Grown in the pristine environments present in the Loyalty Islands, you can sample both at the local markets, on the menu of the top restaurants and if you're well timed at the Agricultural Fairs held on the island of Mare during the year.

The annual Avocado Fair is held in Mare in May (1-4 May 2008) and Agricultural Island Fair is held during September, also in Mare (12-14 September 2008) where vanilla is sold by the Loyalty Island's Vanilla Association.

New Caledonia's vanilla is among the best in the world for its quality and preferred by the island's top chefs who use it creatively in

both sweet and savoury dishes – if you have the opportunity to taste it paired with fish or seafood it's unconventional but delicious. Vanilla is grown on the island of Lifou, the largest of the Loyalty Islands, and you can take an informative tour of the plantation within the forest at Macaweng. For more information contact the Loyalty Islands Tourist Office on (687) 28 93 60.



Nouméa's Market – Le Marché de Nouméa



Regional Markets

While the biggest and most accessible local market is in Nouméa, if you are spreading your wings it is worth visiting many of the other fresh food markets to enjoy the variety of produce on offer.

The Isle of Pines Market features fruits, vegetables and fresh seafood including lobsters. It is open every Wednesday and Saturday from 6:00 am to 11:00 am in Vao.

Monte-Dore Market, just south of Nouméa, offers fruit and vegetables, fresh flowers, plants and deli items. Open every Saturday 6:30 am to 12 noon at the Casino Shopping Centre.

Sarraméa Market in the mountains has a variety of produce including those from the local highlands. Open on the last Sunday of each month from 8.30 am to 12 noon.

Be sure to keep your eye out for some of the delicious local country offerings such as creamy local (Niaouli) honey, jams, crystallized tropical fruits, nuts – candlenut or pandanus nuts – Niaouli flower or Blackwood liqueurs, venison sausages or the popular local pickles called 'achards'.

True culinary explorers may be tempted to try unusual local delicacies which include fruit bat (rousette) on the Loyalty Islands, wood grubs (ver de bancoule) in Faro and snails (escargots) on the Isle of Pines.

Each time I visit Nouméa, I can't resist the market, situated in Port Moselle at the border of the town centre and the Quartier Latin. My favourite time of the day to venture there is around 8 am before the warmth of the day tells you it's time for a swim.

After a quick walk through the three open market halls and before any shopping's been accomplished, it's time for breakfast at La Buvette du Marché, the market's café. Here they serve 'café' like in France – petit noir (short black), noisette (short macchiato) and café au lait (flat white) in a large porcelain bowl that gives you the chance to dunk your croissant or jam baguette. They serve fresh fruit juice, exotic jams, such as papaya and banana, and you can also order a croque monsieur (toasted ham and cheese sandwich), croque madame (toasted ham and cheese sandwich with an egg), toasted bread, panini with ham or chicken ... and much more.



At La Buvette you can sit back and relax, while observing the colourful locals in their flowery clothes shopping for the family meal, and all around the café are souvenir and fabric shops tended by vendors of mostly Melanesian, Vietnamese or Indonesian origin. The largest section sells tropical fruits, vegetables, spices and herbs of all shapes, sizes and colours. The next largest section offers fresh fish and seafood, and although much of the fish is different from what we see in Australia, you'll recognise tuna, varieties of snapper, coral trout, crayfish, locally farmed prawns and oysters.

There are also several smaller shops selling pâtes and terrines, and all kinds of take-away food - French-style, Vietnamese and Indonesian. The market is the perfect place to shop for a picnic or a meal to take back to your room. The market (Marché Municipal) opens daily from about 5 am to midday.

— Gabriel Gaté



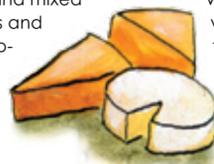
The Supermarkets – Les Supermarchés



New Caledonian supermarkets are quite an experience, and it's really worthwhile to visit one of the larger ones to see the array of French-style food and wine.

Most supermarkets have a take-away section where you can buy crudités and mixed salads, quiche Lorraine, pizzas and all kinds of interesting ready-to-reheat meals, such as vol au vents, duck confit and cooked dishes.

It's particularly interesting to examine the smallgoods section, referred to as 'la charcuterie' - the French salamis, pâtes, terrines and all sorts of other preparations are unique and delicious, especially when paired with French bread.



The highlight is, of course, the cheese section. French cheeses are out of this world and I can never resist buying two or three varieties to enjoy a special treat under a coconut tree.

And, of course, when you say cheese, you say wine! All the supermarkets in Nouméa sell a very good selection of wine, ranging from the affordable to the very special more extravagant bottles.

On a recent trip I particularly enjoyed a visit to the Casino Johnston supermarché, next to the cruise ship terminal near the city centre, which actually lists some prices in both French Pacific Franc and displays the equivalent price in Australian dollars ... and even accepts Australian dollars (giving you change in the local currency).

Gourmet and specialty stores in Nouméa



As in the streets of Paris, gourmet shops can be found around Nouméa specialising in different produce sourced both locally and brought in from France or nearby countries. It's good to have a working knowledge of store

names in French to know where to go. For example, a pâtisserie is a cake/pastry shop; boulangerie is a bakery; épicerie is a delicatessen; boucherie is a butcher; supermarché is a supermarket; and roulette is a food van.

Comtesse Du Barry

Recommendations are many but no shopping expedition would be complete without a visit to Comtesse Du Barry (Rue d'Austerlitz near the city centre). A prominent gourmet store in France – their catalogues are well sought after – Comtesse du Barry has an outlet in downtown Nouméa where you can stock up on a range of excellent pâtes, terrines, foie gras, rillettes, prepared duck cassoulets and desserts including soufflé, poached fruits and jellies. Comtesse du Barry also stocks an excellent selection of spirits and wines from its cellar that cater to any budget and the staff can help you to match wine with your food purchases. For example a sweet white wine goes very well with foie gras. You'll find a helpful French wine guide on page 11.

Maison Ballande

Comtesse du Barry's sister shop Maison Ballande (located at Baie de l'Orphelinat) stocks an excellent range of gourmet products and has regular tastings. The shop is also well stocked with fresh local produce and shares the equally impressive wine selection with Comtesse du Barry.

Another outlet in Anse Vata is Millésime which has a good range of gourmet produce and wines. You can also try the nearby Le Pavillon des Vins (pictured above) and La Vinothèque for both French and other imported wines.

Local shops and markets

Even if you're short on time, it's worth ducking into the small general shops dotted along the main

roads between the resorts and Nouméa as many offer a selection of fresh baguettes, cheeses, pâtes and drinks that make a tasty meal on the go.

Boucheries (butchers) in Nouméa are skilled in French specialities, cuts and delicacies so you can find everything from duck (canard) to pigeon to the locally reared beef and venison. There is an excellent boucherie at Anse Vata near the Ramada Plaza which offers a superb range of smallgoods, sliced meats for your baguettes and delicious pre-prepared meals. Once again, the markets also have butchers stands that have bacon, cured meats, freshly made pâtes, sausages and cooked meats.

Fresh bread is abundant in the many boulangeries (bakers) and pâtisseries (pastry shops) around town, and you'll find the decadent pastries very hard to

resist - La Vieille France near the city centre is one indulgent super. You'll also find great selections at the local supermarkets such as Casino which has a bakery on site and daily produces slices, flans, filled croissants, tarts and éclairs.

For a typical French experience, another 'cheat' is to pick up a snack from the many food vans (roulettes) and snack bars around the seafont. You'll find a cheap and delicious selection of treats from fresh stuffed baguettes, paninis, crêpes, pizza slices, springs rolls, waffles (gaufres) and ice creams. La Bretonne on Anse Vata Bay is one of the most popular crêperies, where you can have a made to order sweet or savoury snack.



Gourmet DIY

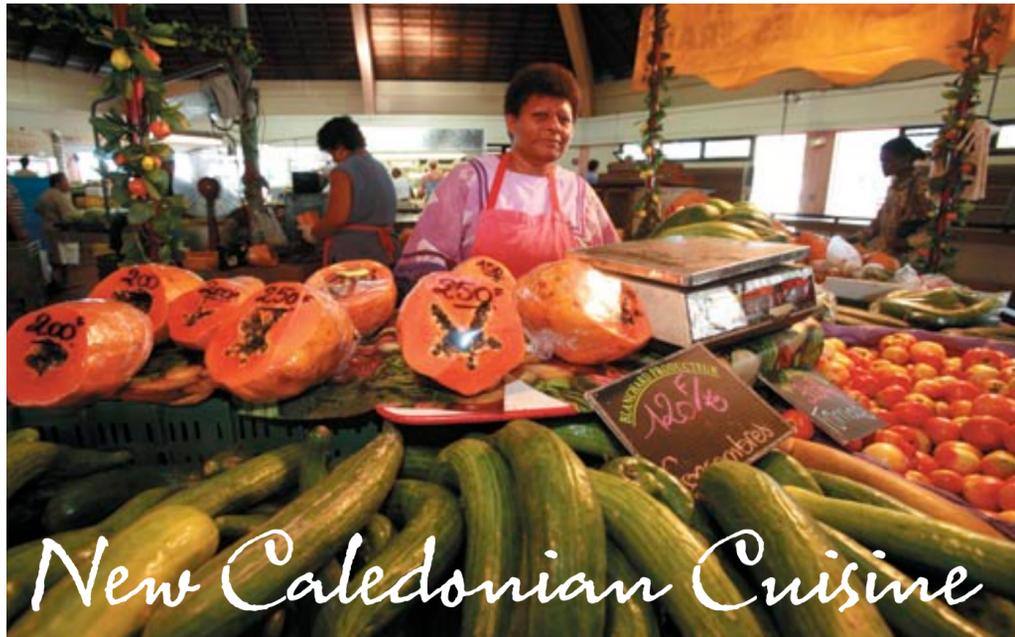
While the clear prerequisite for a true gourmet holiday is enjoying the local cuisine in top eateries prepared by first class local chefs, Nouméa makes it so easy to take a more immersive approach to the experience by preparing your own gourmet feast. After all, there's nothing better than enjoying your local 'catch' of the day from the fresh produce markets, supermarkets or excellent specialty stores.

Nouméa now has a range of apartment-style accommodation for those serious about preparing their own à la carte menus, but for those staying at the excellent hotels and resorts there are also plenty of opportunities to enjoy your own informal meal without the use of an oven or microwave.



An experience not to be missed for any foodie is to jump in a taxi or on the public bus and head to Nouméa to spend a morning visiting the markets and shops, picking up goodies for a meal, snack or an afternoon picnic on the beach, on the nearby islands or the beautiful botanic gardens.

As in the French way of life, most food shopping is done daily rather than weekly, with locals purchasing their supplies for breakfast lunch and dinner during the day and improvising based on what's in season or looks good in the market. In fact, it's common for bread to be purchased three times a day so it's fresh for each meal. The result is a continued focus on the best and freshest produce wherever possible.



New Caledonian Cuisine

Fruit and Vegetables

New Caledonia has an enviable array of fresh, delicious local produce cultivated by its tropical climate and diverse terrain incorporating islands, mountain regions, rainforest and pristine waters.

A trip to the local markets is a must to enjoy trying the many mouth-watering fruits and vegetables available from the region. Staples such as coconuts, bananas, pineapples, papayas, mangos, passion fruits, citrus fruits - oranges, lemons, limes, grapefruit and mandarins - are plentiful but often smaller and sweeter than varieties found in Australia.



The influence of Asian cuisine is alive with the abundance of fruits such as lychees, guava, star fruit, custard apples, pomegranates and dragon fruit - a spectacular bright pink fruit with white flesh sprinkled with poppy-seed like seeds that tastes similar to kiwi fruit. Locally grown strawberries are a prized delicacy. Full of flavour and delicately sweet, when in season they are popular menu items in many of the top restaurants and used liberally in the sweet treats available at many of the local pâtisseries.

Root vegetable staples such as yams, taros, sweet potato and cassava are found in most local Melanesian dishes and in good supply at local markets and supermarkets. Yams are to Pacific Islanders what potatoes are to Australians and an excellent source of carbohydrates and vitamins B and C. Taro is also widely used and enjoyed in a variety of dishes as an excellent source of fibre, calcium and iron.

You can also find a good range of vegetables and herbs which are common in French and Asian cuisines including onions, cabbage, capsicum, squash, carrots, broccoli, zucchini, tomatoes, Asian greens, garlic, chilli, potatoes, pumpkin and so much more!



Seafood

Because New Caledonia is surrounded by the largest lagoon in the world, seafood is of the highest quality and also very varied. There is something for everyone, from fish and shellfish, to crabs and crayfish.



There is a great variety of fish in New Caledonian waters. Raw or cooked, the consumer has the choice between fish such as mahi mahi, dawas, rougets, picots and parrotfish. Oysters are of excellent quality, served in most leading restaurants and available from the main market and supermarkets.

The prawn produced in New Caledonia is a top of the range prawn of the *Styirostris* type or the 'blue prawn', they are sweet and full of flavour. Crayfish is also a highly sought after delicacy. The freshwater crayfish from the Boulouparis region is starting to make its appearance on New Caledonian tables. Mangrove or coconut crabs are crustaceans which can be found on many New Caledonian menus. The former are usually stuffed or served with a vinaigrette and the latter, quite simply with a mayonnaise.

Meats and Regional Produce

New Caledonian beef and venison is very good quality meat and one of the favourite foods on the Mainland. On the savoury side, venison sausage, terrines, pâtés, 'sachards de trocas' bamboo, lemons and vegetables will delight lovers of fine food. On the sweet side, papaya jams, guava or liana apple jellies, 'corosso' cordial and fruit pâtes ensure that farm produce is a sheer pleasure to the taste.

The Isle of Pines snail, also known as the 'Bulime' is an endemic land snail which is a delicacy. They are traditionally collected and cooked in soups, bougna and à la bourguignonne. Le ver de bancoule or bancoule worm is very similar to a witchetty grub. It is a speciality of the commune of Farino (West Coast) which organises an annual market in its honour on the first Sunday in September.



The richness and diversity of New Caledonian cuisine stems from the mix of people who prepare it. However, there is no specific New Caledonian gastronomy. All tastes are catered for - from the Melanesian method of braising food, steaming it for Asians, accompanied by a sauce for European dishes or raw in the Tahitian manner.



Bougna - a buried treasure!

No gourmet trip to New Caledonia would be complete without tasting the traditional Melanesian dish, 'bougna'. As a 'barbie' is to Aussies, a 'bougna' consists of a tantalising array of local vegetables, meat and seafood, marinated in coconut milk, wrapped in young banana leaves and cooked in a Kanak oven, which is prepared with hot stones placed at the bottom of a sand or earth hole and then covered with hot stones and leaves.

Far from a quick meal, the bougna can take up to two hours to cook - but is worth the wait. It is traditionally served directly in the banana leaves, which have been delicately opened and decorated with flowers.

You can try a bougna at local Melanesian-run eateries (you will need to book 24 hours in advance) or if you're on the road in the country areas they are often offered at homestays. Some tours include a bougna meal - check with your hotel concierge - and if you're staying in Nouméa venture to Kuendu Beach in Nouville on a Sunday. Bring your appetite too as the portions are generous and second or even third helpings are more than likely.



So many perfect picnic spots

So, you're loaded up with a decadent basket of gourmet goodies and wines all waiting to be enjoyed, it's only fitting you now find a venue that is as spectacular as the food you are about to enjoy. Here are some great suggestions.



Sail away

Nouméans love their boats. In fact New Caledonia has one of the highest boat-to-resident ratios in the world. They know too well that one of the best things to do on the weekend is pack up your boat and visit the nearby islands for some relaxation in the sun. There is a wide selection of lovely small islets within easy sailing range of Nouméa.

While you can hire a boat or take one of the boat tours, an easy option is to take a water taxi out to Duck Island (L'île aux Canards).

Just a very short distance from Anse Vata, the island is a favourite location for picnics and water sports such as windsurfing. You can hire deck chairs and snorkel gear to explore and swim off lunch.

The many beaches around Nouméa make great spots to soak in the tropical atmosphere. To venture beyond the popular Anse Vata and Baie des Citrons, take the local bus or a taxi to Kuendu Beach in Nouville. A favourite with the locals, it's a popular spot for picnics and a game of beach boules on the sand.

It's a natural

For a more natural setting, the wonderful botanical gardens at the Michel-Corbasson Zoological and Forest Park are just a short drive or stop by bus or the Le Petit Train.



Perched on the heights of Montravel, the Park has magnificent views, and a pleasant walking track that allows you to see some of the local plant life and birdlife including the rare flightless Cagou - New Caledonia's national emblem. There is also an array of parrots, geese and peacocks that roam freely in the gardens.

If you want views, then why not head to nearby Ouen Toro, the peak adjacent to Anse Vata that offers sprawling views across Nouméa and out to the islands. Or if you have the luxury of more time, take an excursion south to Mont Dore, New Caledonia's highest peak at 800 metres high with outstanding views of Nouméa's lagoon.



Life's a beach

For a decadent meal in a breathtaking setting not to be forgotten, visit the Restaurant Le Kou-gny on the Isle of Pines. Set on a stunning secluded beach you can dine on fresh grilled lobster and fish, bread and chilled French wine with your toes in the lagoon sand. But be warned - booking the day before is essential as the restaurant only catches the produce required on that day.



Food for thought!

So many markets and festivals ... and much more!

New Caledonia celebrates its plentiful bounty in so many wonderful and colourful ways. There are markets and festivals happening throughout the country, during the year. Some on a regular basis, and others to celebrate some special events.



The Giant Omelette Festival - Dumbéa every year in April. This is held during the second weekend after Easter, and features the making of a truly giant omelette which is then shared with those attending. Around a dozen chefs make a huge 3.5 metre diameter omelette using some 7,000 eggs. The festival dates back to the time when Napoleon and his army were travelling in the south of France. Napoleon stopped the night in a town where the local inn keeper made him an omelette. He liked it so much, the next day, he ordered the townspeople to gather all the eggs in the village and create a giant omelette for his soldiers.

The Avocado Festival - Mare (Loyalty Islands) in May. Avocados from Mare, the second largest of the Loyalty Islands, are renowned for their high quality which is celebrated during the annual Avocado Festival.



The Coffee Festival - Sarraméa in August. The coffee plantation in Sarraméa, just north of Nouméa, is worth a visit. The 670 acre farm is located at the foot of the Dogny Plateau, a massif which is part of the impressive Central New Caledonian Range. The coffee is of such high quality, that former French President Jacques Chirac insisted on having it flown to Paris for his personal use.



A world first - the Beaujolais Launch in November. New Caledonia has the unique position of being 10 hours ahead of mainland France and therefore the first official French territory to taste the new crop of wines for the annual Beaujolais launch. True wine lovers would be wise to book a trip to New Caledonia to be the first to celebrate the latest release wines from this world famous region - normally on the third Thursday in November. The wine is typically tasted in conjunction with a feast and several special events take place as part of the celebration.

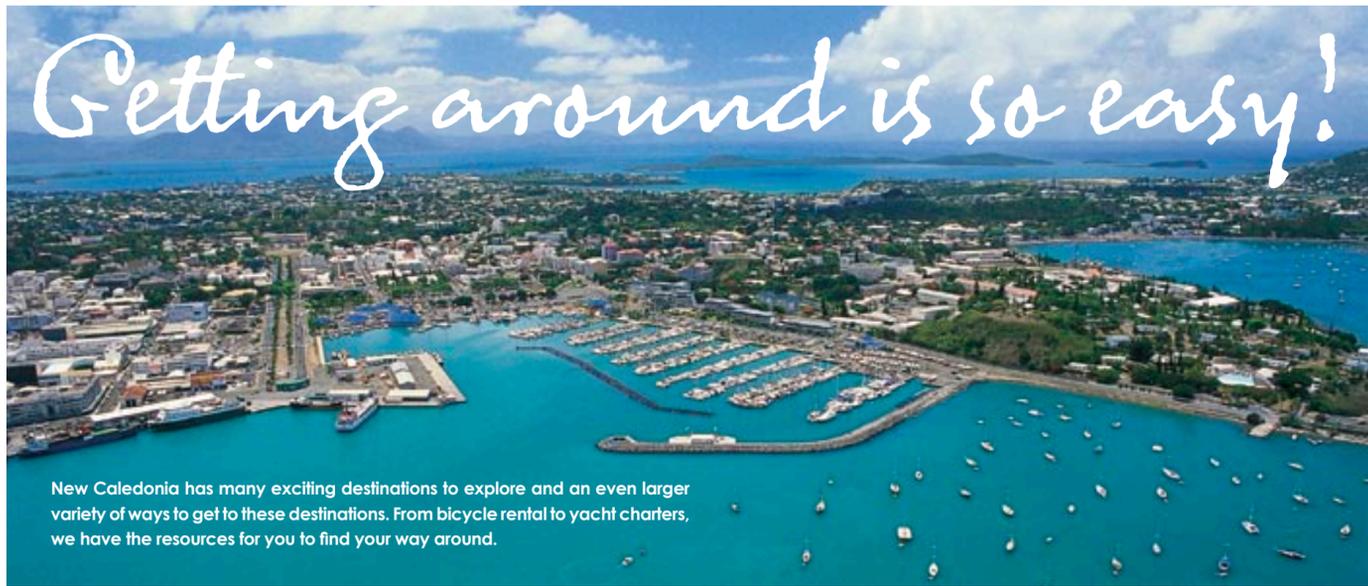
The Vanilla Festival - Lifou (Loyalty Islands) in November. Lifou is world renowned for the quality of product from its Vanilla plantations, which is used widely in New Caledonian cooking.



Festival of the Yam. The sacred Festival of the Yam marks the beginning of the yam harvest, and is the most important event in the Kanak calendar. Usually held around mid-March, the yam is treated with the respect usually saved for an ancestor. When the yams are declared ready by the elders, they are pulled up and presented to the older clansmen and the chief, signalling the beginning of the harvest. The yams are blessed the following day by the priest, then distributed among the villagers.

Various agricultural fairs are organised each year such as the famous Bourail Fair, the Venison & Prawn Festival in Boulouparis, the Beef Festival in Païta ... where visitors can admire the animals, see a rodeo and of course sample and buy some of the local produce.





Getting around is so easy!

New Caledonia has many exciting destinations to explore and an even larger variety of ways to get to these destinations. From bicycle rental to yacht charters, we have the resources for you to find your way around.

Drive yourself

If you're staying in New Caledonia for longer than an extended weekend, renting a car can be handy to explore the surrounds outside Nouméa, providing driving European-style on the right hand side of the road doesn't deter you. Holding an international driving licence is not a necessity, as long as you have a current driving licence, are over 21 years old and have minimum of one to two years experience. There are plenty of options for car rental either at Tontouta Airport or in Nouméa.

For those taking a shorter break you can easily explore Nouméa using local transport. Apart from being much cheaper it also presents an opportunity to rub shoulders with the locals, and spend more time soaking in the tropical atmosphere.

Take a Taxi

Taxis are a convenient way to get around. You can request a taxi with an English-speaking driver, however most drivers have a command of English that will enable you to easily get around. If you do find a driver with limited English a handy tip is to ask your hotel concierge to write down your destination in French before you set

out. The main taxi rank in Nouméa is located on the corner of Austerlitz and Anatole France Streets in the city centre. There is also another at Anse Vata. Your hotel can naturally arrange for a taxi to come and pick you up. Taxis can take a maximum of four people and, as in Australia, prices are charged at fixed rates. Prices vary depending on the traffic, as a guide from Anse Vata to the city centre is approximately 1,200 XFP (AU\$16.80).

On the Buses

Nouméa has an excellent and reliable public bus system, which operates from near all major hotels

to the city and major tourist destinations. Operating from 5am to 7pm weekdays, buses run every 15-20 minutes. On weekends the schedule starts a little later and finishes a little earlier, with up to 30 minutes between departures. There are eight routes which are numbered and colour-coded for convenience.

The green bus goes through the city centre to the main beaches and through to Kuendu beach in Nouville, while the blue bus goes north to the Magenta Airport and the Tjibaou Centre. Tickets can be purchased on board or at the main bus stations for around 170 XFP (AU\$2.40) one way.

Prices quoted at April 2008.



Le Petit Train

No trip to Nouméa is complete without a trip on the colourful Le Petit Train (The Little Train) which brings out the inner child in even the most seasoned of travellers. Winding its way around Nouméa, it's the original 'hop-on'-hop-off' mode of transport to get you around to all the major sites, or just to orientate yourself with the city.

There are two train circuits: the popular city tour (1.5 hours on the purple and red train) which operates five times daily from Anse Vata, stopping at many of the major hotels and travelling around the bays to the local market, city centre and up to the Parc Forestier Botanical Gardens; and the cultural tour (4 hours on the green and gold train) which departs Anse Vata and major hotels on Wednesday and Thursday afternoons and takes the trip north to the Tjibaou Cultural Centre via some of Nouméa's beautiful colonial houses.

Costs vary from 1,100-1,300 XFP for adults (A\$ 15.40-\$18.20) and 550-700 XFP for children aged 2-12 years (A\$7.70-\$9.80). Timetables and tickets can be purchased at the Palm Beach shopping arcade in Anse Vata or see your hotel concierge.

Prices quoted at April 2008.



Taste of France Tour

This is a great way to sample all that the French do best! Visit a French bakery and learn how famous baguettes and other breads are made. Visit a Crêperie and sample some delectable delights before some shopping at the colourful markets! Then it's onto a wine cellar to learn all about the art of French wine making before enjoying some wine tasting and French gourmet specialities - just perfect.

The 3 hour tour is organised by the Nouméa Explorer company with departures every Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday and Friday at 8am, at a cost of around \$155 per adult and \$80 for a child under 11. To book telephone (687) 27 19 80 or visit: www.arcenciel.nc

Prices quoted at April 2008



Explore Nouméa on the Nouméa Explorer

The Nouméa Explorer bus is a cheap and easy way to discover Nouméa. You can hop on and off all day at any stops, at a cost of around only AU\$18 per adult and AU\$9 for a child under 11 for the Daily Pass. It runs every day, except Monday, between 8am and 4pm, with stops at nearly all major hotels. Tickets can be purchased on board or ask your hotel for tickets as well.

The Explorer bus visits all major tourist attractions in Nouméa, so it is a great and convenient way to get around ... at your own pace. Stops include the Maritime Museum, Handicraft Market, Port Moselle Market, Museum of New Caledonia, Baie des Citrons, Anse Vata, Zoo and Botanical Garden, City Centre, Town Museum, Coconut Square, Le Méridien Hotel and the famous Tjibaou Cultural Centre. Entry fees are not included.

To book telephone (687) 27 19 80 or visit: www.arcenciel-voyages.nc

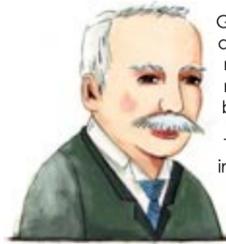


Save with a Nature & Culture Pass

Here is a unique and convenient way to see six of Nouméa's 'must see' tourist attractions, discover New Caledonia's rich cultural and natural diversity ... and save money at the same time. The Pass gives you entry to the Aquarium, Tjibaou Culture Centre, City of Nouméa Museum, Museum of New Caledonia, Maritime Museum and Parc Forestier Nature Reserve - see page 3 for more information on each. The Le Petit Train and Nouméa Explorer Bus described on this page visit all of these venues, and you can purchase your pass at any one of them. The Nature & Culture Pass costs only 1700XFP (AU\$24) per person, a saving of 1000XFP (AU\$14), and it is valid for six months from the first visit.

Prices quoted at April 2008

Le Famous Escoffier



Georges Auguste Escoffier (1846 – 1935) was a chef, restaurateur and culinary writer who revolutionised traditional French cooking methods. He is widely acknowledged as the key figure in the modernisation of haute cuisine, and creating what would become the national cuisine of France.

Today, the name Escoffier is associated with some of the best internationally renowned schools in the world for the French gourmet and culinary arts. One is in Paris, of course, and another is in Nouméa.

How Escoffier changed the face of modern cuisine.

Escoffier's influence began with the rise of some of the great hotels in Europe and America during the 1880s and 1890s. The Savoy Hotel owned by César Ritz was an early hotel where Escoffier worked, but much of his influence was realised during his management of the kitchens in the Carlton from 1898 until 1921.

Escoffier simplified and organised the modern menu and structure of 'the meal', and also created simple recipes using the freshest in-season produce. He published a series of articles in professional journals which outlined the sequence and then finally published his *Livre des menus* in 1912. This type of service embraced the *service à la russe*, serving meals in separate courses on individual plates - classically from entrée to main to dessert. He also developed the first *à la carte menu*.



1903, which established the fundamentals of French cookery. He created a system of parties called the 'brigade system', which separated the professional kitchen into five separate stations. These five stations included the *garde manger* that prepared cold dishes; the *entremetier* that prepared soups, vegetables and desserts; the *rôtisseur* that prepared roasts, grilled and fried dishes; the *saucier* that prepared sauces; and the *pâtissier* that prepared all pastry items. This system meant that instead of one person preparing a dish on their own, now multiple cooks would combine to prepare the different components for the dish.

An example used is *oeufs sur le plat Meyerbeer*, the prior system would take up to fifteen minutes to prepare the dish, while in the Escoffier system, the eggs would be prepared by the *entremetier*, kidney grilled by the *rôtisseur*, truffle sauce made by the *saucier* and thus the dish could be prepared in a much shorter time and served quickly in the popular restaurants. As his career took French cuisine to a new level, so too did Escoffier's leadership elevate the status of the Chef of today.

Le Guide Culinaire.

Escoffier's most significant contribution was the publication of *Le Guide Culinaire* in



The Escoffier School of Cooking is one of the best kept secrets in Nouméa

The Escoffier Hotel Catering and Business School in Nouméa is best known for its restaurant 'Auguste Escoffier', which is used as a training ground for its students, who spend three hours each week working in this professional kitchen. As well as providing a

training ground for students, the profits of the restaurants work to further support the school.

It's one of Nouméa's best kept secrets that you can enjoy a first class classic French meal at the restaurant at a fraction of the cost you'd pay at a noted establishment. The school publishes its monthly menus for lunch and dinner each month - you can pick up a copy at the school reception. However, be warned due to popularity bookings can be hard to secure.

For the first time Australians can now attend cooking classes at Escoffier in Nouméa through Superb Food and Wine Tours as part of a fantastic gourmet experience. The itinerary includes French cooking classes over two days from reputable teachers at the Escoffier School.

You can even visit the colourful market to purchase ingredients with help from Escoffier School chefs to be used in preparing meals at the school that same day - and then enjoy your own dinner in the Escoffier School's own restaurant.

The Escoffier School is located a few minutes from the centre of the city, on the way to Baie des Citrons and Anse Vata, at 4 rue Georges Baudoux. For bookings call (687) 27 63 88.



Le Superb Guided Gourmet Tour

If you find yourself craving the gourmet treats of Paris, the glittering French Riviera and the finer things in life, but are short on time, then the good news is you can have all this and more just a short flight away.

The incomparable French food and wine experience once found only in France is now in easy, less expensive reach - only 2 hours from Brisbane and 2.5 hours from Sydney and Auckland.

Superb French Food and Wine Tours offer the first specialist gourmet tours of New Caledonia taking you on an insider's tour of the best gourmet experiences in 'the Paris of the Pacific'. And you stay in 5 Star luxury.

With a focus on the favourite French degustation. Superb take their travelling foodies on a carefully planned five day appreciation tour to savour delicious French foods, wines and gastronomic experiences. The program offers the finest dining in Nouméa's best restaurants and the opportunity to meet with highly qualified chefs and sommeliers.

Currently exclusive to Superb, you also have the opportunity to take French cooking classes at the famed Escoffier School, including guided tours of produce markets.

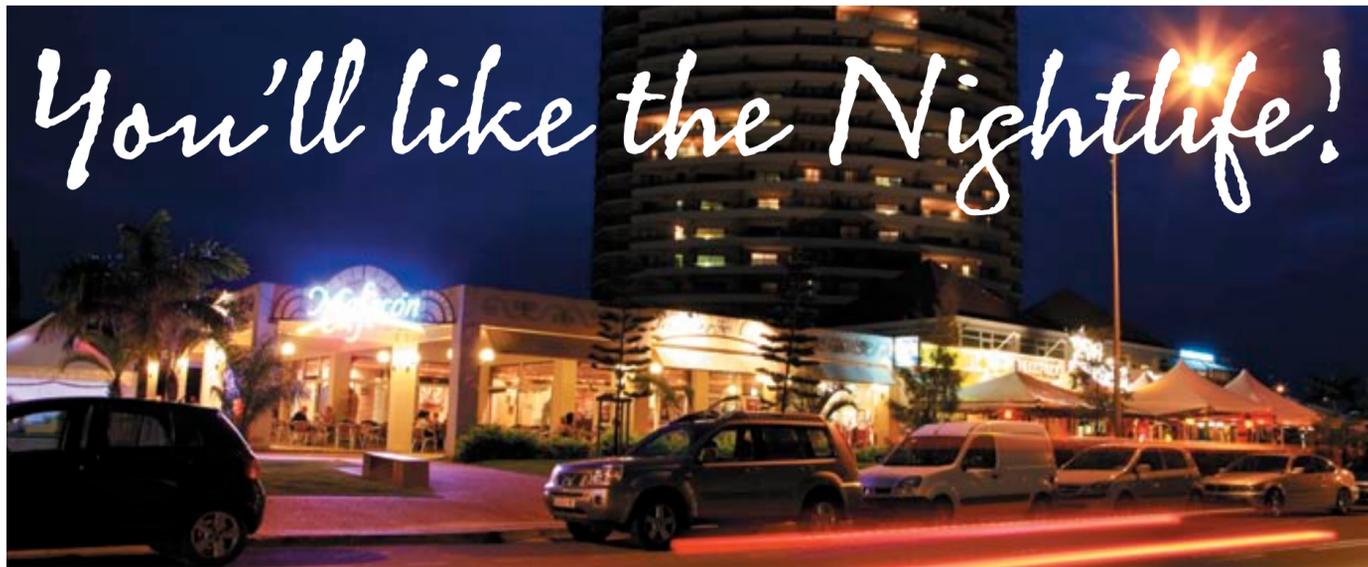
Another highlight is a visit to Europe's famed providore

Comtesse du Barry in Nouméa where visitors can experience sophisticated French food, presentations by a French Master of Wine and wine tasting at the cellar door.

Not ignoring the fantastic French Pacific setting, the itinerary also includes tours of Nouméa's most scenic and historic sites, as well as the opportunity to enjoy trips to the picturesque outer islands.

Superb French Food and Wine Tours offer tour dates starting on 25 March 2008 through to late October 2008. For more information call (612) 9904 4806 or visit www.lesuperb.com.au





When the sun sets, the sea breeze lowers the warmth of the day and the promenades light up with neon as Nouméa's nightlife awakes with that distinctive island holiday atmosphere. Nouméa at night is very much like the warm heady nights on the Côte d'Azur (French Riviera) with locals and visitors mixing in local restaurants, bars, casinos and discotheques around town.

The main night spots centre around the beach areas of Anse Vata and Baie des Citrons, where the locals gather to see and be seen.

Along Anse Vata, a visit to Bodega Del Mar is the perfect way to unwind from a day of sailing, swimming or trekking and the perfect spot to watch the sun set over New Caledonia's radiant turquoise waters. It comes alive at night with glittering fairy lights, chilled-out sounds and an open balcony overlooking the ocean.

The bar offers an excellent tapas menu that can be ordered at the bar or by the friendly and attentive wait staff. The lightly fried squid rings and chorizo sausage are morish and go down well with the local sangria which you can buy by the half or full carafe.



For cocktails and dancing head to Baie des Citrons where a number of clubs thrive on Friday and Saturday nights to pulsating euro beats. L'Ethnick, Le Mystik and Jet 7 are all popular spots after 11pm. Many



have cover charges or require you to purchase a drink for entry. If you're up for Karaoke try MV Lounge. At Baie de l'Orphelinat try Piano Bar Paillard and Europa nightclub. In the town centre,

Le New Caledo is popular or Karma Land in the Quartier Latin.

For a touch of Monte Carlo, you can try a night at one of the city's popular Casinos. The biggest of these is Grand Casino adjacent to Le Méridien. If you're staying at the hotel look inside your check-in pack for some credits to get you started. Alternatively make like Bond and head over to the Casino Royal at Le Surf Hotel where you can expect all your favourite casino games. Dress code is smart casual, no jeans or sandals.

There are often a number of local and visiting acts to Nouméa playing a wide variety of music from jazz to rock, latin to DJ beats. Keep an eye out for the handy monthly 'Sortir' pocket guide (www.sortir.nc) in your hotel lobby or at information centres which update you on who's in town and where to catch an interesting gig.

All of the major resorts and hotels also have excellent bars that offer you a more chilled-out night experience to unwind and reminisce about the day's activities over your favourite cocktail, a glass of French wine or why not try the refreshing local beer, Number One. Happy hours are also popular between 5-7pm – check with your hotel reception.

Parlez-vous Francais?

Here are some handy French phrases and pronunciations:

Hello (good morning/afternoon)	bonjour	bonzhoor
Good evening	bonsoir	bonswar
Goodbye	au revoir	oh ruhvwar
Please	s'il vous plait	seel voo pleh
Thank you (very much)	merci (beaucoup)	Mehrsee bohkoo
Yes	oui	wee
No	non	non
Excuse me	excusez moi (pardon)	ekskuzay mwa (pardohn)
How much is it?	combien ça coûte?	Kombyehn sa koot
I would like	je voudrais	zhuh voodray
Bread (some)	du pain	du pehn
Coffee	un café	urn kafay
Coffee with milk	un café au lait	urn kafay oh lay
Tea	un thé	urn tay
Sugar (some)	du sucre	du sukr
Milk (some)	du lait	du lay
Beer	une bière	un byehr
Water (some)	l'eau	de low
Red Wine	vin rouge	von rhooj
White Wine	vin blanc	von blonk
A carafe	un pichet	ang peesheh
A bottle	une bouteille	ewn bootehy
A half bottle	une demi-bouteille	ewn demee bootehy
A glass	un verre	eun vehr
A litre	un litre	eun leetr
Cheese	fromage	frommazh
Fish	poisson	pwhssawng
Seafood	fruits de mer	frwee der mehr
Beef	boeuf	berf
Chicken	poulet	pooleh
Ham	jambon	zhamban
Eggs	oeufs	erf
Bacon	lard	lahr
Butter	du beurre	du beur
Knife	couteau	kootoa
Fork	fourchette	foorsheht
Spoon	cuiller	kweeyay
Napkin	serviette	sehrvyeht
One	un	eun
Two	deux	der
Three	trois	twah
Four	quatre	katr
Five	cinq	sehnh
Six	six	sees
Seven	sept	seht
Eight	huit	hweet
Nine	neuf	nehf
Ten	dix	dees

Customs Information

Important facts you need to know before you leave New Caledonia

It only takes a few days in New Caledonia to acclimatise to the finer things in life, and if you've made the most of your stay you'll already be thinking of how to manage your withdrawal from daily feasts of foie gras, cassoulet and Bordeaux vin. Stocking up on some of your favourite French fare to take home is the obvious solution - after all, it's the closest you can get to visiting France without the jet lag.

But to avoid any problems with customs it pays to take some time to understand what you can and can't bring back into Australia.

All wine and alcohol is acceptable - each passenger over 18 years old has 2.25 litres duty free allowance which is equivalent to a couple of bottles of wine or spirits. You can of course bring more, but you'll have to declare this, have your receipts and be prepared to pay the tax on the entire amount. With new cabin luggage restrictions no liquids can be carried on board, so wine or spirits will need to be packed in your checked-in luggage.

For foodstuffs, all purchases must be declared as part of your customs declaration

including any tinned or dried foods. Not declaring carries swift and expensive penalties. Prohibited products are those including more than 10 per cent whole, dried or powdered eggs, fresh and powdered dairy products, pork, any raw, dried, smoked or uncanned meat, sausages, salami and sliced meats from animal species, fish and seafood, seeds, nuts and grains and fresh or frozen fruit and vegetables.

If you're planning to bring home some food stuffs, only bring tinned or vacuum-packed products and check the ingredients to ensure none of the above is contained (as a handy tip oeuf = eggs; porc = pork; lait = milk; fromage = cheese).

Most tinned pâtes, foie gras, package meals and preserves are fine providing they do not include egg, pork, seeds (mustards and jams) or dairy products.

For more information, it's highly recommended you visit the Australian Quarantine and Inspection Service (AQIS) website at www.aqis.gov.au/ airports or free call 1800 020 504.

New Caledonia is Good Value

How much things cost in Australian Dollars:

Number One lager beer	1 x 33ml can	115XPF	\$1.60
Number One lager beer	24 x 33ml cans	2700xpf	\$37.60
Orange juice	2 litres	310xpf	\$4.30
Baguette	1 x Large	90XPF	\$1.25
Croissants	Pack of 6	520XPF	\$7.25
Apples	per kg	295XPF	\$4.10
Natural yoghurt	Pack of 16	1340XPF	\$18.70
Butter	2 x 250g packs	470XPF	\$6.50
Cheese - Emmental	250g	295XPF	\$4.10
Cheese - Roquefort	100g	330XPF	\$4.60
Chicken liver terrine	128g	350XPF	\$4.85
Shoulder ham	per kg	1395XPF	\$19.35
Salads	per kg	516XPF	\$7.15
Dried pasta	450g	245XPF	\$3.40
Jam	450g	300XPF	\$4.15
New Caledonia Coffee	500g	700XPF	\$9.70
Biscuits - plain (Sao)	250g	160XPF	\$2.25
Biscuits - fancy	120g	230XPF	\$3.20
Milk	1 litre	100XPF	\$1.25
French wine - red/white	750ml bottle	870XPF	\$11.80
French Champagne	750ml bottle	3395XPF	\$47.15

Prices as of April 2008



We would love to hear from you

Like all great destinations, the food and gourmet scene in New Caledonia is continually changing. New restaurants open, new chefs arrive, stores change hands and what's nouvelle now is not so nouvelle after time. All good foodies know the best information and recommendations come from your peers and as your resident foodie guide, Bon Appétit would be delighted to hear from you on your New Caledonia Gourmet Experience, your own restaurant reviews or finds and maybe even a photo and caption on your gourmet highlight.

So why not drop a line to our Editor in Chief Gabriel Gaté via email: g.gate@nctps.com or write to us at: New Caledonia Tourism, Level 5, 140 William Street, East Sydney, NSW, 2011. We'll publish the best of your letters in our next edition and via our website at: <http://www.newcaledonia.com.au/gourmet>.

Bon Appétit!

Savour Somewhere NEW



*"New Caledonia is one of the best French
gourmet experiences outside of France".
Gabriel Gaté*



New Caledonia is a gourmet Paradise. Savour a dinner prepared by a Michelin-trained Chef. Freshly baked croissants, baguettes and pâtisseries. French cheeses, wines and pâtes. Delicious fresh tropical fruits and seafoods. Or a picnic on a secluded beach, surrounded by the world's largest lagoon. And the Paris end of the South Pacific is right on your doorstep - only 2 hours from Brisbane and 2.5 hours from Sydney and Auckland. For more information visit our websites. Bon Appétit!

New Caledonia... Who Knew!

 **New Caledonia**
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