



Cassis

for great food

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Cassis for Great Food

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8 fishermen still work in Cassis. They have their own Fisheries Tribunal at the harbour's edge.

I. The sea

A. Fishermen

The village or, to be more precise the harbour, provide the backdrop for everyday life in Cassis. This is where people meet and have a chat.

The small fish market

The fishermen's presence in Cassis harbour every morning does much to preserve the soul of the village and its authentic atmosphere. They represent an ongoing tradition and maintain the lifestyle, as well as the quality and freshness of the products. Clients realised this long ago and they are very loyal.

Meanwhile, the inshore fishermen pass on their love of their job and talk up the fish of the day. The comments are racy and spicy - and gestures often accompany the chat.

I. The sea

Fishing and its techniques have changed over the centuries...

The smacks, made entirely of wood and painted in bright colours, are a symbol of times past and most of them now lie on the quayside, where they are greatly admired. Some fishermen, though, have remained faithful to the old craft.

The fishermen are simple men, proud of their job, happy to set out to sea every day and delighted to offer the very best of the Mediterranean when they get back again. They set up their stalls at the harbour every morning.

B. The Mediterranean, a generous sea

The Mediterranean is full of delicately-flavoured fish with fine flesh, not to mention seafood.

The main catches are as follows:

■ **From May to September**, when the sea is at a temperature of around 19°C: Sea bream, red mullet, John Dory, scorpion fish (large rockfish), gurnard (a sort of "flying fish"), conger eels and monkfish. The last two are traditional ingredients of the famous Bouillabaisse.



■ **From October to April** there are a few sole, turbot, burbot and red sea bream etc.

■ **And the remainder of the year**

There are also some superb "rock" fish, many of them sparkling and brightly-coloured. They like to slide into crevices in the rocks far from the hustle and bustle of the beaches. They include varieties of scorpion fish, sea perch, rainbow wrasse, pomfret and ballan wrasse (such a colourful fish that it looks like "a rainbow under the water").

Flavoured with a pinch of saffron or fennel and blitzed in the blender, they produce a mouthwatering fish soup that has all the taste of the South.

Sea urchins are collected in shallow water, subject to specific regulations. They can only be gathered from November to March and they must be more than 5 cm in size. Their red or orange coral is eaten with bread.



Shellfish. They include:

"Violets", also known as "sea potatoes".

They are bivalve molluscs, echinoderms (symmetrical around their axis and equipped with suckers). They are medium-sized (6 cm in diameter approx.) with a soft, irregularly-shaped shell and they "stick" perfectly to the rocks. They have pride of place in our seafood platters. The flesh is firm with a briny taste.

Cuttlefish (or small squid) :

They are found in large numbers in the Mediterranean and are undoubtedly the most popular cephalopods (along with squid) in the South of France. They are simply cooked in a dribble of olive oil with a little bit of garlic and a few tomatoes.

II. The vineyards of Cassis

The vineyards of Cassis produced some of the very first “registered designation of origin” wines (“appellations d’origine contrôlée”, AOC) in 1936 (with Sauternes and Chateauneuf-du-Pape). Remarkably, all the estates lie solely within the boundaries of Cassis, sheltered by Cape Canaille, the tallest coastal cliff in France, plunging down into the waters of the Mediterranean from a height of 400 metres.

The presence of determined, enthusiastic vigneron, who have not given in to the call of the property development Sirens, has ensured that the vineyards still cover relatively large areas. In fact, in its last urban development scheme, the town extended the vineyard area from 178 to 210 hectares for three reasons - the vineyards have a direct influence on the quality of the scenery, the wine is economically important to the community and the vineyards play an important part in protecting the area against fire.

■ A brief look at history...

The history of the vineyards is closely linked to the history of the region...

To begin with, in 600 B.C., it was the Greeks who introduced vine growing and winemaking techniques to Provence. For the next 300 years, a period of peace and prosperity, the vineyards lived through a golden age. They were then completely abandoned during the Barbarian invasions, when people had to seek refuge in the hills and were unable to care for their crops. Winemaking enjoyed a revival in the 17th century thanks to the development of maritime trade. Then, in 1865, the sector experienced its darkest hours. Phylloxera wiped out grape growing in Provence. The epidemic was eradicated,

mainly thanks to the provision of grafts from the USA. Winegrowers in Cassis then joined colleagues from Châteauneuf du Pape, Sauternes and Arbois to lobby for a quality system, the Appellation d’Origine Contrôlée. They succeeded in 1936.



■ AOC Cassis

The vineyards of Cassis all lie within the town’s boundaries, making them “urban vineyards” sheltered by Cape Canaille, in the heart of the Calanques national Park. The label Cassis is the only one in a Park. The wine producing area of the town is a “pocket handkerchief”, only 210 hectares with an output of approximately one million bottles a year, one bottle per vine.

By limiting the quantities produced and paying particular, constant attention to quality, Cassis wine has acquired a racy, elegant character.

It is a rare wine produced and sold by twelve vigneron. Although the dry fruity whites are the best-known, the reds and rosés also have a reputation for excellence.

Cassis for Great Food

■ Exceptional land and a favourable microclimate

The limestone soils, mainly formed into terraces, are drenched in sunlight (more than 3,000 hours a year) and cooled by the almost constant sea breeze (which maintains good healthy humidity levels for grapes). Moreover, there are two helpful periods of rain - at the beginning of spring, giving the plants an early start, and in autumn when it revives the parched earth.

The vines do not suffer too much from the mistral because, by the time the famous wind arrives here, it has been partly calmed by the rocky uplands and the pine trees growing along the hilltops.

Cassis' particular ecosystem and unique microclimate make this ideal wine-growing country:

- It is relatively little affected by the *mistral* because the wind drops as it crosses the pine-topped hills surrounding Cassis.
- The sea provides an almost constant sea breeze. This is beneficial for the grapes, especially when they are ripening.
- The sun shines for 3,000 hours a year, helping the bunches of grapes to develop and acquire a high sugar content and plenty of flavour.
- The rain (less than 500 mm a year) falls mainly in two particularly favourable periods of the year - at the start of spring, giving the plants an early start, and in autumn, reviving the parched earth.



THE CASSIS WINE FESTIVAL

The Cassis Wine Festival brings the vigneron together in the centre of the village **on the 14th May 2017 (80 years of the label)**. **At the church, a vine is blessed before Mass. This is followed by the "danse de la souche" (literally, "dance of the vinestock") and some wine tasting during the morning.** The wine costs 6 € a glass and the festival is a great chance to taste the wines from different vineyards.

Syndicat des Vignerons de Cassis
Clos Ste Magdeleine
Avenue du Revestel - 13260 CASSIS
Tel. 04 42 01 70 28
www.clossaintemagdeleine.fr
M. Jonathan Sack, President.

■ Matching Cassis wine with food

In addition to bouillabaisse, white wines from Cassis with their notes of citrus, white flowers and honey are well-balanced with a touch of crispness and a final light briny note, making them the ideal accompaniment for seafood, shellfish, sea urchins, bass with fennel and fish grilled or baked in a salt crust. Cassis wines also go very well with goat's cheese, as well as spicy food, anchoïade (anchovy paste), aioli (garlic-flavoured mayonnaise) and all convivial well-flavoured exotic foods.

■ A few figures

1 million bottles leave the wine cellars of Cassis every year.

12 vineyards have joined forces to create a syndicate. Their areas vary from 6 to 40 hectares.

8 to 10°C, no more, no less - the ideal temperature at which a Cassis Blanc de Blancs develops its most elegant bouquets.

1 bottle of Cassis = 1 vine

500 hectares of vines covered the hillsides above the Calanques before the outbreak of phylloxera; today, the vineyards cover only **210** hectares.

11/12 euros, is the average price of a bottle of Cassis wine bought at the cellar door.

A. Grape varieties

WHITE VARIETALS

Since the AOC concept was introduced, Cassis has built its reputation on white wines, which account for 67% of production. They are recognised as being among the best whites in Provence.

Whites are made from 5 grape varieties:

Since a decree in 2005, Marsanne and Clairette make up 60% of the wine's composition, with Marsanne alone constituting at least 30% of the ingredients.

1. **Marsanne blanc** gives a green juice that provides alcohol and bouquet. It also supplies the elegance and gives the wine length.
2. **Clairette blanc** brings freshness, crispness, alcoholic content and persistence, to produce a lean, tight and smooth wine.
3. **Ugni blanc**, one of the oldest varieties in Provence (it was imported by the Greeks 2,600 years ago) brings elegance but more importantly provides the delicate crispness required for the subtle balance noticeable in Cassis whites. It supports the full-bodied alcoholic notes of Clairette.
4. **Sauvignon** is very "floral". It provides the wine with its notes of almond flower and hyacinth.
5. **Bourboulenc blanc** (or Doucillon), is a robust, productive, rustic grape that adds a certain "softness" typical of Southern French wines. It gives the wine structure and balance, elegance and warmth.
6. **Pascal Blanc** is a variety that has almost disappeared from Cassis. Domaine St Louis is the only vineyard to have retained its qualities, using it to make its Fonfon wine. It is a fine, elegant, powerful variety that adds stability to the aromatic complexity.



RED AND ROSES VARIETIES

There are three main varieties used in the reds and rosés:

Cinsault gives the wines their rich redness and a bouquet of ripe red fruits, adding softness and elegance.

It gives rosés their freshness, lightness and their floral, fruity bouquet.

Mourvèdre, a late-ripening variety, gives the wine its alcoholic, colourful and aromatic qualities (violet, apricot, cherry etc.). It helps to balance the tannin, bringing the wine smoothness and "body", ensuring that it will be good for cellaring.

Grenache adds vigour, alcoholic strength, character and a beautiful iridescent ruby red colour. It helps to give Cassis reds their alcoholic qualities.

Carignan is little used, and then only for reds. It produces a deep colour and a full-bodied, generous wine with tannin and an aroma of ripe bananas. To allow it to express itself fully, it should be used only on the hillsides for very limited outputs.

B. Winemaking techniques

Winemaking and aging

Cassis wines are the result of traditional techniques and the very latest winemaking processes.

The grapes are harvested by hand, allowing better selection of the fruit. The grapes are transported in small bins to avoid crushing them. The stems are then removed and the grapes are processed as follows:

For whites:

The grapes are crushed, drained and quickly pressed. The stalks are removed and the grapes are subjected to alcoholic fermentation at a controlled temperature (between 18 and 20°) until all the sugars have been obtained, without allowing the solid parts of the fruit to macerate. The wine is stored in metal tanks to avoid oxidation.

For rosés:

The winemaking process is the same as for whites. Only the colour of the must and certain grape varieties allow for the production of Rosés, by saignée and pressing.

For reds:

The red varieties are partly crushed then removed from the stalks. The next part of the process takes place in tanks where the grapes are macerated for some time. During this period, alcoholic fermentation will take place under carefully controlled heat (between 28 and 30°C). It will take 8 to 10 days before the wine is ready to be drawn off then it is patiently aged in tanks. Bottling takes place 18 months later.

A few wine terms:

Destemming: separation of the grapes from the stalks.

Crushing: very light bursting of the grapes.

Pressing: extraction of the grape juice.

Drawing off: to prevent fermentation from starting, the liquid is decanted. This generally takes a whole night.

Alcoholic fermentation: the process that turns sugars into alcohol.

Blanc de Blancs: a white wine made with white grapes.

N.B.: It is the grape skin that gives the wine its colour. This means that white wine can be produced from red grapes.

C. Pairing food and wine

Wine is an integral part of any get-together and convivial event. Cassis wines symbolise a lifestyle. They can be drunk at any time, as a pre-dinner drink or at table where they are a wonderful accompaniment for dishes from Southern climes.

The whites, with their green-gold reflections, are mouthwatering and generous with a nose of citrus, white flowers, almonds and honey. They are fat, well-balanced wines. The closeness of the sea gives them their character. Ozone is present and they are lively, slightly briny. In addition to the famous bouillabaisse, anchoïade and aïoli, bass grilled with fennel or sea bream in a salt crust, white wine from Cassis, "born in a marine vineyard", is a great drink with shellfish. It is also delightful when drunk with dishes made with garlic, saffron or spices. It should be drunk at a temperature of between 8 and 10°C.

The rosés have a slightly salmon-pink colour and a delicate bouquet of cherry and strawberry. They are ideal with white meat and dishes such as vegetable terrines, fish and ratatouilles. In fact, they are great for barbecues.

The reds are beefy and full-bodied, with a bouquet of raspberry and, if cellared, some leather notes. They go well with meat served with a sauce, small game, and cheeses with character.

In his poem "Calendal", Frédéric Mistral wrote about Cassis wines in the following terms, "Bees have no sweeter honey. It gleams like a limpid diamond, filled with the scents of the rosemary, heather and myrtle that carpet our hillsides..."

A bottle of Cassis white wine costs about 11/12 €.

D. An enchanting landscape

Although Cassis' wines are a delight when drunk at a meal with family or friends, true connoisseurs know that it is important to go for a walk through the magnificent vineyards and meet the 12 wine producers. The countryside is pleasant and the vigneron are skilled in teaching wine lovers the art of wine tasting.

Cassis' vineyards climb up the hillsides in a series of terraces or nestle in the depths of small valleys. Marked out by dry stone walls and dotted with age-old olive trees, they lie beside stony, fragrant paths. The scents of the scrub (thyme, rosemary and myrtle) are present at every step. The light here, filtering through the pine trees, is softer and the strident song of the crickets has a magical quality. It's an enchantment for all the senses...

As you wend your way along the paths, stop and have a chat with the vigneron.

Wine may tell a tale of the landscape and soil but it also requires hard work and expertise on the part of men. They are the ones responsible for the success of Cassis wines.



E. The 12 vineyards

The men behind the success story - the grape growers.

It has to be admitted that Cassis' grape growers have great strength of character and their commitment is admirable.

It takes courage to withstand the lure of property developers.

It takes enthusiasm to monitor the quality of the wine day by day, upholding traditions but keeping an open mind about new techniques, creating links between past and future.

Meeting the enthusiasts...

Although, when talking about vigneron, people often refer to men, it has to be remembered that, in Cassis, some of the vigneron are **women...**

One such is Jérôme Paret, who runs the Domaine de la Ferme Blanche with her father and oenologist/cellarer Philippe Garnier; another is Sophie Cerciello-Simonini, who runs Le Clos Val Bruyère with her husband, an oenologist.

2 dynamic, strong and, of course, enthusiastic women...

In this male-dominated sector, it takes a lot of conviction, enthusiasm and a good dose of humour to show the value of one's "feminine side".

What does a woman bring to a wine?

"A different way of seeing it, curiosity, preferences and new ideas..."



Famille Paret
RD 559
Tel. 04 42 01 00 74

Domaine de la Ferme Blanche

The estate was founded by a famous ship owner from Marseille, Count François de Garnier, in 1714. It was then passed down through the generations to the present day. The Paret family defends its new planting and winemaking methods that are very high-tech to produce wines that are increasingly elegant.

- Some 30 hectares
- The vineyard produces 2 whites including "Excellence", as well as reds and rosés.

The white: citrus and white flowers on the nose.

Excellence develops a bouquet of rustic apples, quince and dried fruit. In the mouth, there are also hints of honey and almonds.



Famille Cerciello-Simonini
Château de Barbanau
Hameau de Roquefort
la Bédoule
Tel. 04 42 73 14 60
www.closvalbruyere.com

Le Clos Val Bruyère

Sophie is the great-granddaughter of Emile Bodin (cf. Château de Fontblanche).

- 7 hectares.
- Bio, The Clos Val Bruyère have been the first wine producer, who decided to enter the approach of the bio label.
- The vineyard produces only:

La Cuvée Val Bruyère, which has a hint of aniseed, scents of camomile, lime and pineapple. This is a silky, mineral wine.

La Cuvée Kalahari, obtained after years of research. This is a wine born of "passion". It is a white that is fermented for longer than usual and aged in barrels. It is a wine to be cellared, with a bouquet of honey, vanilla and tropical fruit.



Château de Fontblanche

Emile Bodin, the great grandfather of the present owner, was a member of the Félibrige movement, a friend of Mistral and an ardent defendant of Provençal culture. He was one of the first to replant after the phylloxera epidemic.

- Approximately 45 hectares
- It produces 3 white, one rosé and one red.

The Blanc de Blancs is dry, mineral, with a characteristic flinty taste.

The Blanc, pur jus de goutte, is fruitier, with a bouquet of white flowers, honey and almond.

The Cuvée Bodin or **Cuvée Notre Dame des Lumières** is a very aromatic wine with a dominant fruity bouquet (a "peach nose") followed by a floral note ("white flowers"). To taste, it is tangy with a final note of "pink grapefruit". The wine combines tradition with new research into aging and it has been developed with the chef and wine waiters of the Villa Madie. An amazing and elegant wine.

Nicolas Bontoux
Route de Carnoux
Tel. 04 42 01 00 11
www.vins-cassis-bodin.fr



Château de Fontcreuse

Built in 1687, it was not until 1922, with Colonel Teed, that the estate stopped mixed farming and devoted itself solely to winegrowing. The vineyard is close to the "cabin" where Virginia Woolf stayed between 1925 and 1929.

- Approximately 28 hectares
- Whites and rosés

The white is voluptuous and "fat". On the palate, it develops grapefruit, bitter almonds, peaches, golden delicious apples and a final crisp nose.

Jean-François Brando
13 route de la Ciotat
Tel. 04 42 01 71 09
www.fontcreuse.com



Clos d'Albizzi

The Albizzi, a powerful family of Florentine noblemen, created the estate in the 16th century. In 1730 it passed to the Dumon family by marriage.

- 14 hectares
- Whites and rosés

The white is clear and gleaming with a nose of fennel and quince, and a certain mineral quality. On the palate, it is full-bodied with notes of honey and a hint of ozone, enlivened by its subtle crispness.

La Cuvée Vermeil is aged in barrels for 12 months. It has a richer bouquet of quince, honey, apricot and a discreet touch of vanilla. This is an opulent, very rich, powerful and ethereal wine with length, expressing itself on the nose with honey, pear and a slightly woody final note.

François Dumon
Avenue des Albizzi
Tel. 04 42 01 11 43
www.albizzi.fr



Domaine du Bagnol

The Domaine du Bagnol, which was founded in 1867 by the Marquis de Fesque, nestles in the shelter of Cape Canaille.

- Approximately 15 hectares
- Whites and rosés.

The Blanc de Blancs has a refined honeyed bouquet. On the palate, it develops pear and citrus.

Jean-Louis Génovesi
12 avenue de Provence
Tel. 04 42 01 78 05
www.domainedubagnol.fr



Domaine St Louis

The vineyard has belonged to the Jayne family since 1893 and is now run by Laurent, the grandson. He graduated from the Ecole d'Avignon and decided, in 1996, to use a very wide variety of grapes including Pascal Blanc to make his Fonfon. He is passionate about wine and he shares his enthusiasm without giving way to gravitas.

- Approximately 8 hectares
- Whites, rosés and reds.

The white Cuvée Casus Belli.

The Blanc de Blancs, cuvée Fonfon (the grandfather's nickname) has a bouquet of pear, apricot, toast, aniseed and, on the palate, a hint of pear and tea on a long, silky final note.

New "Cuvée la Grande Question", a white wine with 3 months of fermentation. It develops a bouquet of banana...

Le Blanc (tradition) has a bouquet of quince, lime blossom and flint.

Laurent Jayne
Chemin de la Dona
Tel. 04 42 01 07 26



Domaine Couronne de Charlemagne

Founded in 1988 by Bernard Piche, an enthusiastic local, the vines grow on terraces at the foot of the Couronne de Charlemagne. He developps his wines with the Domaine du Paternel.

- 7 hectares
- Whites and rosés

The white is a frank dry white with a floral note. It is well-rounded, developing a bouquet of quince and ripe fruit. Its main features are its freshness and delicate crispness.

Bernard Piche
Chemin des Cuëttes
www.couronnedecharlemagne.com



Le Clos Ste Magdeleine

The estate was founded in the 19th century by Joseph Savon and taken over as a farm in 1920, but it was in 1976 that it was enthusiastically developed and reorganised by Mr. and Mrs. Sack, turning it into a vineyard with its current "structure". It extends below Cape Canaille, stretching out above the sea.

- 12 hectares
- Whites and rosés.
- Bio

The white has a bouquet of white flowers and citrus. On the palate, it is a soft, velvety wine with a hint of honey and almonds.

François Sack
Avenue du Revestel
Tel. 04 42 01 70 28
www.clossaintemagdeleine.fr



Domaine du Paternel

3 generations have succeeded each other at the head of this hillside vineyard.

- 50 hectares
- Whites, rosés and reds

The Blanc de Blancs is an expressive wine with citrus and white flowers on the nose. It is balanced, mineral and fresh with a hint of honey in the glass.

Cuvée Gabrielle, a well-rounded white wine with a bouquet of honey.

Famille Santini
11 route Pierre Imbert
Route de la Ciotat
Tel. 04 42 01 77 03
www.domainedupaternel.com



Les 4 Vents

The vineyard has belonged to the same family since the early 20th century.

- 12 hectares
- Whites and rosés

The white is crystal clear. It is a complex wine with a bouquet of citrus, white flowers and the Provencal hinterland. On the palate, it is sensual and balanced with a hint of crispness.

M. De Montillet
7 avenue des Albizzi
Tel. 04 42 01 88 10



Domaine de la Dona

Founded in 1999 by Jean Tigana, the famous footballer and connoisseur of good wine. The vineyard is not open to the public.

- Whites and rosés.

The white is mineral and flinty.

Jean Tigana

www.ladonatigana.com

Cassis for great food

The 12 AOC Cassis vineyards are open to wine lovers (some of them require advanced booking) and they present their wines to visitors in their tasting cellars.

Each vineyard has its own character.

Each vigneron has a great story to tell.

Cassis vineyards, the Wine Trail...

Cassis also has several wine merchants, who are only to pleased to share their knowledge of Cassis wines, authentic wine bars in which to have a drink with friends and delicatessens in which to buy some of the best products from Provence:

■ La Maison des vins

30 avenue de la Marne

Tel. 04 42 01 15 61

www.maisondesvinscassis.com

Guillaume Macheras de MONTILLET has always been passionate about wine. As he says, "I was born into it" and he is particularly knowledgeable about Cassis wines, which he wanted to promote...

Almost 15 years ago, he opened an unusual modern retail outlet displaying more than 300 wines, some of them treasures from France's greatest wine regions. He also sells champagnes and spirits.

When he sells a bottle of Cassis wine, he sells an image, a location, sunshine and the sea. He explains and passes on his love of wine, describing each vineyard and explaining the technical side of winemaking. His clients never go away with "just" a bottle of wine; they take with them a whole story to pass on to others. "The wine shop also sells its love of the local production".

■ Le Chai Cassidain

6 rue S. Icard
Tel. 04 42 01 99 80
www.lechaicassidain.com

*At lunchtime and in the evening, at aperitif time, the **wine cellar** is turned into a very pleasant **wine bar**.*

Cassis wines by the glass (5 € the day's special Cassis), selections of wines from small vineyards, wines from great names and wines from all over the world are served with unlimited "home-made" nibbles. This is the story of a family, the grandmother, mother and son who welcome people as if this was their home, so that everybody can discover the world of wine.

Open daily.

■ Chez César la Suite

Port

A lovely place, dedicated to Mediterranean flavors, offering a lounge space with rattan armchairs, where sit and have a glass of wine, on the terrace. Lux, calm and serenity... by watching passing people.

■ Le Divino

3 rue A. Rossat
Tel. 04 42 98 83 68

Cave et bar à vins de sommelier. Philippe Bellec proposes more than to 200 types of wines, a selection of great famous wines from the « Southern France ». Assorted pork meat, cheese, Patanegra ham, truffles... to order, for a « bistro » lunch or diner.

There are also delicatessens selling wines from Cassis, beer from Marseille (la Cagole), pastis from Aubagne and other mouthwatering specialities from Provence.

III. Cookery

A. Provençal cooking

Provençal cooking is full of colour. It's traditional and full of wonderful aromas. And it's based on the freshness and quality of the ingredients.

It turns the spotlight on produce from a fertile countryside and from a sea full of fish... Each dish is a delight for the eye. Its aromas should be breathed in deeply. Then the dish is tasted before being eaten and enjoyed.

Cooking here is full of sunshine and warmth.

Colours

Southern French cookery makes extensive use of the sundrenched fruit and vegetables that are so enchanting on the outdoor market stalls - strawberries, peaches, melons, figs, tomatoes, courgettes, peppers, aubergines, purple artichokes etc. Skilfully combined they are transformed, on our plates, into mouthwatering tastes filled with the local accent.

Aromas and flavours

Local produce ripens in the sun and is picked at just the right moment, ensuring that it's full of flavour.

Add to that a few of the wonderful herbs that only the people of Provence really know how to use and you've got - magic!

In the South of France, the dishes play with the scents of our gentle hillsides and scrubland, scents like thyme, rosemary, myrtle and even lavender....

Food may be simply prepared with a drizzle of olive oil, a touch of garlic, a pinch of basil or some aniseed but it's always subtle, sometimes daring, mixed and blended to reveal the richness and delicacy of natural tastes without ever overpowering the product itself.

Health

A few words about this Mediterranean diet and its benefits.

Our diet consists of a wide variety of healthy natural products, fruit and vegetables, superb fish, and some meat (especially lamb). It contains very little fat.

Because of this, it is nutritional and has proven to be beneficial for our health.

People in the Mediterranean area suffer less from cardiovascular disease and certain cancers and have fewer problems with excess weight. "Let your food be your medicine", said Hippocrates.

Simplicity and tradition

Most of the dishes are uncomplicated. This is generous, family cooking making extensive use of local vegetables served simply with aioli or anchoïade. In fact these selections of vegetables, most of them uncooked, are typically served with a garlic or anchovy-based garnish.

There are also slowly braised dishes such as beef stew ("daube"), "lovingly simmered" as the locals like to say.

Not forgetting the crispy-topped fruit or vegetables baked in the oven, and the famous "tians" named after the dish in which they are cooked.

And the stuffed vegetables.

Soups such as pistou soup, fish soup etc.

Explore all these recipes in the excellent restaurants in Cassis...

B. A few restaurants and good addresses

How could you not succumb to the charms of sunny pavement cafes beside the harbour in winter; or the cool alleyways and tiny shady squares in the old town centre in summer; or the beauty of the deep blue sea and Cape Canaille?

The restaurateurs have chosen their locations very well. All of them are breathtaking and all of them provide a wonderful choice of Mediterranean tastes...

And if it's local specialities you're after, there are plenty of addresses to choose from. Whether you want to try simple family fare and the casseroles braised every day or look for new flavours and more sophisticated cuisine, you'll find all types of Southern French cookery in Cassis.

Cassis' restaurateurs have learnt to work with the produce available to them - and they're very talented!

■ An unusual concept: "Restaurant la Poissonnerie"

A restaurant that summarises the history of a family which has worked with the sea for the past 5 generations (the family settled in Cassis in 1850!).

It is a traditional fishmonger's shop but, although you can always buy your fish there in the morning, the "shop" is turned into a restaurant at lunchtime and dinnertime. Family photographs decorate the walls and Eric, the owner, welcomes clients and tells them about his return to the family nest. Yes, the "kid" went up to Paris for a few years but he missed the village and his family.

"Thus from fisherman, brother Laurent, to fishmonger and then restaurateur, it's heartfelt tradition that has given the place its value and authenticity". The fish is always fresh and good humour always de rigueur.

No need to hesitate - step inside and ask for advice. Avoid preconceived ideas and listen to the suggestions for the day. And remember that this is a fish shop so the menu depends on the day's catch.

The restaurant places the emphasis on food full of old-fashioned flavours, the best of Provençal tradition, "granny's recipes" without any need for frills or fancies. The main ingredient is the freshness of the product. Then all you need is a few herbs and a drizzle of olive oil to delight the palate. A few fish "in sauce" are on the menu and, again, the food is light, made with garlic, parsley, olive oil and a few sundrenched tomatoes. Real taste. Simple, delicious food.

Among the specialities are cuttlefish with garlic, fish tartar, rock fish soup etc. No need for moderation - just enjoy the meal!

La Poissonnerie, Eric Gianettini, 6, quai Barthélemy 04 42 01 71 56

■ An institution: Chez Gilbert

Rare are the restaurants that can boast of being part of the very select circle of members of the "Charte de la Bouillabaisse Marseillaise" but such is the case for "Chez Gilbert". A family business set up in 1946, "Chez Gilbert" has made a commitment to uphold the standards of the "Charter" and make the emblematic dish as it should be made.

The real Bouillabaisse

A bouillabaisse is a fish course and a soup, served as a single dish. Originally, it was a family dish cooked simply, following the rule of "when it boils, turn it down" (in French "quand ça bout on baisse" which is where the name comes from). The Charter guarantees a selection of at least 6 fish - John Dory, red scorpion fish, gurnard, conger eel and monkfish as well as rock fish such as weever, scorpion fish etc. And a few crab for taste and decoration.

Preparation begins with the making of stock from a selection of finely chopped vegetables such as leeks, onions and tomatoes and flavourings such as garlic, fennel leaves, parsley and olive oil, all brought to the boil. When the stock is ready, add the potatoes then the fish, and leave it all to simmer gently.

Eating bouillabaisse is always a great experience enjoyed in 2 obligatory stages. The clear broth is served with rouille, a garlic mayonnaise to which chilli and saffron have been added, and croûtons rubbed with garlic or left au naturel. The fish is cut at the table in front of the guests and presented separately.

Today, it is a wonderful dish but fairly expensive. Because of this, it has found its way onto the menus in top restaurants. Advanced booking required.

Chez Gilbert, 19 quai des Baux 04 42 01 71 36

The restaurant also has a number of other mouthwatering signature fish dishes.

The Bouillabaisse Charter

It was created in 1980 to define the ingredients of a high-quality bouillabaisse without impinging on the artistry of professional chefs.

It has been signed by some fifteen restaurateurs working mainly between Marseille and Cassis.

Cassis

■ Angelina

Jean Marchal, a young and passionate chef, took over in 2013 and immediately set the tone. He opens up for us the doors of his restaurant, which has been completely redecorated and rethought during the winter and is now organized around an open kitchen and a patio.

With the beauty and charms of its setting, this stylishly designed restaurant offers in the first place a beautiful terrace and a bar, then opens up on two cosy rooms nestling under a glass roof, with at their heart a superb olive tree connecting you to the eternal Provence.

The restaurant is the place where you can taste some outstanding Mediterranean cuisine thanks to the quality of their products, the tailored cooking times and the elegance and harmony in their choice of flavours.

Jean Marchal, a great name for some artfully prepared food in all simplicity. Each dish is an obvious delight, based on what the market offers. Shoulder of lamb confit, braised knuckle of veal, mashed potatoes with truffle await you there along with other delicious traditional dishes revisited by Jean Marchal.

Angelina, rue Victor Hugo 04 42 01 89 27

■ A gourmet address: La Villa Madie 2** and New La Brasserie du Corton

In these restaurants where the sea murmurs, the chef Dimitri Droisneau offers a spontaneous, authentic and generous cuisine that changes along with the seasons. His dishes, made of local products, are well thought out and show the most beautiful Provencal colors. The views can be admired all year long thanks to large bay windows, while the terraces above the seafront are the perfect place for summer dinners.

La Villa Madie, avenue du Revestel, Anse du Corton 04 96 18 00 00
www.lavillamadie.com

■ La Presqu'île

The gourmet restaurant, La Presqu'île, has a seasonal menu to tempt guests and it's a perfect reflection of the setting. The cuisine is inventive and filled with the flavours of Provence and the Mediterranean. Spend a unique moment between Cape Canaille and the inlets. You'll get the impression of being on a cruise, with the sea stretching to the horizon and beyond.

The large panoramic terrace overlooking the sea, is an invitation to relaxation, where our chef, Ringo Schulz, will accompany you.

Some specialties :

The Berlin egg, on a velvety mustard, creamy beet and Aquitaine caviar.

The Tuna, cooked with cashew nuts, baby spinach walnut oils and Espelette pepper.

The Veal, flavored with pink garlic from Lautrec to a fine puree of peas, piquillo peppers to the Aix en Provence "brousse" (cheese).

La Presqu'île, Quartier de Port Miou,
route des Calanques 04 42 01 03 77
www.restaurant-la-presquile.com

Cassis for great food

■ Nino

A magnificent location on the quayside with a panoramic view of the harbour and Cape Canaille. Traditional gourmet cuisine based on high-quality ingredients, with pride of place given to fish and seafood. Don't miss the succulent simplicity of the grilled fish with a drizzle of olive oil.

Nino, direction Bruno Brezzo
1 quai Barthélémy 04 42 01 74 32
www.nino-cassis.com

■ La Vieille Auberge

This is the place for real country cooking, a "real" touch of Provence. In some ways, it is the "locals' canteen". People are always happy to meet up here to share a seafood platter, fish soup or a grilled sea bream. Patrick Puyal, the owner, is one of Cassis' characters and when he's front of house he puts on quite a show. Happiness and good humour is part of the menu here!

La Vieille Auberge, 14 Quai Barthélémy 04 42 01 73 54

■ Le Clos des Arômes

A delightful Provencal address where you can rediscover the flavours of the Mediterranean, having lunch or dinner in the garden in summer and in a warm Provencal dining room with an open fire in winter. This is also a small hotel.

Le Clos des Arômes, Rue Agostini 04 42 01 71 84

Sea urchins and shellfish

From October to March, restaurateurs offer clients a chance to enjoy some "extraordinary" food simply served on their sunny terraces. So, go on, a short break is always welcome when it's time for lunch!

- Sea urchins

Their creamy iodine-rich coral is accompanied by slices of country loaf, butter and, of course, a glass of Cassis white. It's a marriage made in heaven.

- Shellfish platters

There are, of course, the conventional shellfish such as oysters, mussels, shrimps, whelks and crab but the platters are given a Mediterranean touch with the addition of "violets".

Numerous addresses,

On the seafront, you can enjoy these delights, for example, at:

The restaurant **le Grand Large**,
At the harbour de la Grande Mer, Tel. 04 42 01 81 00

At the **bar Canaille**,
22 Quai des Baux, Tel. 04 42 01 72 36

Desserts and cakes

A little trip into the world of desserts and cakes is a “must” because, although people often know more about the savoury dishes here, it should be remembered that Provence is also a land of sweet delights such as biscuits flavoured with aniseed and orange flower water, marzipan, candied fruits and nougats, dried fruit, nougat, “mendiants” biscuits, croissants with pine kernels etc. These delicious specialities are to be found in the best cakeshops in the village. Some of them are eaten more particularly to mark special events. One such is the “pompe à l’huile d’olive” that is one of the 13 desserts served at a real Provençal Christmas.

B. Provençal markets

Producers market

Every saturday morning, from 8 to 1 p.m.

Place Clémenceau (heart of town)

And also :

■ Provençal food market

Wednesday and friday mornings, on and around Place Baragnon.

■ Small fish market

Every morning on quayside.