

Most French living in the city center, rely on their butcher ( *boucherie*), their caterer ( *traiteur*), *charcuterie* ( cold cuts, *pâtés* etc..) *fromagerie* ( cheese shop), *boulangerie* ( bakery), *pâtisserie* ( pastry shop), *chocolatier*, the fresh fruit & vegetable market...It is not only to support the small vendors, it is also a social thing and a guarantee to get the best quality as well as help from the professionals that will pick up the most riped cantaloupe, ho will explain how to roast your lamb etc...

For our self or if we receive guests at home, we go and purchase most of our products in the most reputable places of Aix. Here are some that I know most locals will recommend to you and where I would go. They are of course many and taste varies from person to person..

I also have added some of the specialties of Provence,

many more are to be find but maybe this will get you started!

**Calissons d'Aix** – Made with equal parts blanched & ground almonds, sugar and candied fruit of orange peel & melons, they have a paper thin wafer at the bottom and are topped with royal icing. The legend it that these almond shaped sweets were first introduced in 1454 at King Rene's second wedding in order to sweeten up his much younger, and possibly reluctant, bride Jeanne for their marriage. They are the specialty of Aix and in every pastry window, candy shop, street market, everywhere



**Navettes** – A crunchy, barely sweet cookie, they are shaped like a boat to commemorate the arrival by boat of St. Lazarus, Mary Magdalene and Saint Martha to Provence over 2000 years ago. A specialty of Marseille, they come in three traditional forms. The ***navette traditionnelle*** uses fleur d'oranger; the ***navette Marseillaise*** leaves out the orange flower water, and the ***navette Provençale*** has the fleur d'oranger and is also a little softer. Nowadays you can find them with a variety of additions, like cinnamon, lavender, figs, etc.



**Tarte Tropézienne** – Actually a dessert of St. Tropez along the Côte d'Azur. I think I see more of this pastry in Provence than anywhere else outside of St. Tropez. As the story goes, the first Tarte Tropézienne was created by a Polish man, Alexandre Micka, who had a shop in St. Tropez. He made this dessert along with pizzas and sandwiches for the crew filming, "And God Created Woman," starring Brigitte Bardot. Brigitte liked the dessert so much that she urged Alexandre to name it. He did, the film was a success and is credited for making St. Tropez the popular resort town.

The tart is not really a tart but a big brioche bun. As Alexandre Micka's filling is a big secret, each pastry shop varies its version in an attempt to recreate his. Pastry cream and Kirsch liqueur are at the base of the filling. Some combination of butter, butter cream, meringue or whipped cream is added to the pastry cream and Kirsch. The top can vary, too: dusting of powdered sugar with berries, a crumble, and also a pearl sugar on top.



***Tartes Tropéziennes from Pâtisserie Bechard***

**Chocolate:** Puyricard chocolates, named after the village in Provence where a Belgian couple ( that lived a while in Africa at a Coco plantation) began their French chocolate making. Known as the chocolate company of Provence, Puyricard has now extended to 17 shops – 13 in southern France and 4 in Paris. Believe me it's hard to resist spending all your euros in the store. Along with delicious chocolates and calissons, they offer guided visits to their chocolate making facility in Puyricard and chocolate classes.



***Un des Meilleurs Ouvriers de France*** is a craftsmen competition in France, held every four years.

The title of *Un des Meilleurs Ouvriers de France* (shortened to MOF) is a unique and prestigious award in France according to category of trades in a contest among professionals. This contest is organized and recognized as a third-level degree by the French Ministry of Labor

The award isn't given out lightly. Phillipe Segond has the MOF title, and his pristine pastries are evidence of it. The pastry shop is right on the Cours Mirabeau and full of decadent chocolate!

The oldest pastry shop in Aix. Pâtisserie Bechard, opened since 1870.

It is packed with locals ordering their daily dose of French pastries. They have a big selection of classic French and regional pastries and the place had a homey vibe. Their Tarte Tropézienne, a house specialty is good, as well as their creation: the Almond tart " Alexandre..Since generations now, the shop is now in the recently passed away Madame Béchards granddaughter Margaux. Renowned to use the best quality butter and ingredience, their reputation last...

**The Tapenade:** Tapenade's base ingredient is olive. The olives (most commonly black olive but green tapenade can be found too) and capers are finely chopped, crushed or blended. Olive oil is then added until the mixture becomes a paste. Tapenade is often flavored differently in varying regions with other ingredients such as garlic, herbs, anchovies, lemon juice. Tapenade is usually part of an appetizer served as a topping on crackers, crusty bread or crudités. It can also be used as a condiment. You will discover that all the restaurant have their own recipe. Usually the best tapenades' will be found on the markets. Do not hesitate to ask to taste

**Brindade de Morue:** I is an emulsion of salt cod and olive oil eaten in winter with bread or potatoes. sometimes artichokes may be added as well as crushed garlic, lemon. Cream or milk are included in traditional recipes in Occitania. The name comes from the Provencal verb "brandar" meaning to stir.

The 13 desert at Christmas: The 13 desserts of Provence are a collection of fruits, nuts, biscuits, breads and pastries forming the end of a Christmas Eve feast or "Gros Souper" eaten before attending midnight mass. The 13 desserts represent Christ and the 12 apostles at the Last Supper. A table is set with 3

cloths and 3 candles to represent the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. The content of the 13 desserts of Provence varies regionally, but mostly it would be:

Dried fruits such as almonds, raisin, hazelnuts, fresh fruits such as tangerines, Calissons, dates, black and white nougat, quince paste, "The Olive Oil Pump" which is a pastry/bread made with olive oil such as Fougasse or a brioche made with orange flower water.

The bread should be broken as Jesus did at the Last Supper. Superstition dictates it should not be cut with a knife

### **Some cheeses from Provence:**

Unlike Northern and South-West France, Provence makes mainly cheeses from goat's milk rather than from the milk of sheep or cows. The reason is simple: the climate here, with its low rainfall, fierce sun and wind and cold winters, favors' thorny, scrubby vegetation

Thanks to its chestnut wrapping, it's a creamier color, than most white Provençal goat's cheeses, sometimes even dark bronze.

Its taste is very distinctive: earthy, woody and just a little tannic.

**Banon** is one of the oldest cheeses in the Provence region and originated from the need to preserve the cheeses for the winter. The early cheese makers took a normal goat's milk cheese and deliberately dried it out then wrapped it in chestnut leaves in the fall. They then put the cheeses in jars with an alcohol from the region, and then placed them near heat, and little by little they'd eat the cheese through the winter, which became their main source of protein.

Banon got their AOC ( appellation of controlled origin) in 2003. This is an official seal of quality that also imposes all sorts of strict bureaucratic conditions on producers:

Ex: The number of chestnut leaves used to wrap the cheese is strictly controlled and the natural raffia used to tie them must only be passed around the cheese a total of eight times. The end result should be something creamy with lots of mushroom notes and oaky, mossy and earthy overtones.

### **Picodon:**

Picodon is a well-known regional cheese made in the Roan river region that has links to both Banon and St Marcellin and dates back in written accounts to 1320. It is one of the oldest goat's cheeses in this part of France and its name comes from the French verb to prick or sting, a traditional reference to its piquant flavour. Picodon was granted AOC status in 1983.

### **Anchoïade:**

Anchoïade is an anchovy and garlic purée. It is usually served on toast or with raw vegetables. The recipe varies from region to region. The Anchoïade is very salty, be a bit decadent and and put a big piece of butter on the break, ad the Anchoïade, mmm...salty and soft!

### **Pissaladiere:**

A pissaladiere is the Provençal equivalent of an Italian pizza. The sweetness of the caramelized onions on the pissaladiere are balanced with the saltiness of the anchovies. Originates from Nice.

### **Red Mullet salad with Pastis:**

A colorful salad of fried, red Mediterranean mullet with peppers and cherry tomatoes.

### **Daube Provençale (Provençal stew):**

Classic French stew, perfect for cold weather. Pieces of beef slowly braised with red wine, onions, herbs and garlic, served with fresh pasta or rice from the Camargue area. Close to the Boeuf Bourguignon, but more stronger taste due to the meat ( bull) and the full bodies wine the meat has marinated in. Add black olives! Hmmm!

### **Petit farcis (Provençal stuffed vegetables):**

The vegetables typically 'farcied' (stuffed) in Provence are aubergines (eggplants), courgette ( zucchini), onion, peppers and tomatoes and sometimes potatoes, stuffed with seasoned minced meat and slowly oven-cooked.

Ratatouille is a hearty mixture of tomatoes, onions, zucchini, eggplant, and red and green bell peppers that is cooked with olive oil, thyme and garlic to create a sweet and chunky Provençal vegetable stew.

### **Aioli (garlic sauce/mayonnaise):**

A traditional garlic sauce. The garlic is crushed with a mortar and pestle, whilst slowly adding the olive oil which makes this typical garlic sauce. Used to accompany boiled eggs, fish and vegetables (potatoes, carrots, green beans and cauliflower)

### **We walk by:**

**1 Facetta Boucherie - 53 rue Espérial**

**2 Puyricard The "show case": 11 Cours Mirabeau**

**Puyricard Chocolate main shop: 7-9, rue Rifle-Rafle**

**3 Bechard Boulangerie / Patisserie - 12 Cours Mirabeau**

**4 Farinoman bread making -5 rue Mignet**

**5 Charcuterie Serge Bianco - 1 rue Mignet**

**6 Macarons de Caroline - 12 rue Montaigny**

**7 La Brûlerie ( coffee / tea / hot chocoate) Place Richelme**

**8 Première Pression Provence - Provençal specialities - 23 rue Bedarrides**

**9 Fromagerie Savelli - 9 rue des Marseillais**

**10 Cave Felibrige - wine shop - 8 rue des Cordeliers**

### **We also recommend:**

**Calisson Leonard Parli-** 35 Avenue Victor Hugo ( near train station of Aix) Same family since 1874, their Calissons have become the favorite for most Aixois, rich in Almond and a "Savoir Faire" ( read about the blessing of the Calissons in september).They have excellent Candies Fruits as well as Nougat

**Boulangerie:** Paul ( a chain) ou Gout du Pain on rue Espérial.Jacob's rue d'Italie.. La Fabrique à Pain a bit on the outskirts of Aix behind the Piscine - public pool Yves Blanc - This bakery do only organic ( BIO) bread, but they do it well !and won the TV show of best bakery in the region

Boucherie du Palais on place de Prêcheur ( next to La Mado restaurant) good value for the price which explains why it is busy and vibrant in a fun atmosphere.

Maison Brunet since 1876 - 4 rue Laurent Fauchier: Chocolatier - Confiseur-Clacier. Try their Macaron done in the Provençal way, with more almond. One of my favorite: Caramel- beurre salé or Speculos, soft and moist "une pure merveille"! as French would say: A pure marvel! Home made ice cream, chocolate, candies...

Maison Weibel - since 1954: 2 rue Chabrier ( corner of Richelme market) A real Institution will the Aixois say. If you can not resist waiting to eat the beautiful pastries once home, enjoy them in their tea salon, maybe for a break when shopping at the market?

Fromagerie Lemarié: 55 rue D' Italie: Benoît Lemarié is passionate about his cheese, he will gladly help you to choose the best ones for you ( avoid Saturday mornings). This is where the cheese comes from when we do the wine and cheese tasting. Lemarié is member of the Guild of Fromager

Artisan Charcutier Olivier:since 1959 / top of rue Jacques de Laroque, just after the Cathedrale. We ready to wait in line, here Madame serving at the desk will know all the good costumers last name by hart, and there are many. I bit far up for us to walk on our tour but do try their Brindade or daube or Museau...