

Aux Saveurs du Coteau

BY ROCHELLE LASH, THE GAZETTE SEPTEMBER 7, 2010



Gîte Aux Saveurs du Côteau in Lanaudière, on La Route Verte, is a great stop for cyclists.

Photograph by: Gîte Aux Saveurs du Côteau

Editor's note: Some of the details might have changed since the original publication date. Please check with the establishment before heading out!

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Visitors to the Lanaudière region, a one-hour drive northeast of Montreal, can fashion their own wine and cheese party along an agricultural circuit called Les Chemins de campagne.

Use the B&B Aux Saveurs du Coteau in St. Cuthbert as your base. The bed-and-breakfast is located in the heart of the farmland near the St. Lawrence River and the picturesque Îles de Berthier. With their wetlands and birds, these islands, also called Îles de Sorel, are a

UNESCO World Biosphere Reserve. They are also a great place to cycle.

And once back on the mainland, the Route Verte cycling trail runs through the region, providing a convenient detour to the Aux Saveurs du Coteau.

Francine Pâquet and Louise Landry, two retired teachers, run the B&B in a refurbished Victorian house that dates from 1890. They have raised five children between them and are ready to nurture

their guests.

The B&B is a simple country getaway, whose allure is a quiet setting amid cedar and maple trees. Settle into a pink velvet settee, look out over the vegetable and flower gardens and farmers' fields. The guest rooms, two large and two small, are especially bright and done up in pastel colours. Pâquet and Landry lucked into a talented carpenter who kept the vintage look by using recycled pine for doors, trim, a library and some of the furniture.

When you head in for breakfast, you're in for fine country cooking. Pâquet is a passionate cook. During her travels to Italy, she developed an appreciation of farm-fresh ingredients.

Her breakfast feast starts with freshly squeezed orange juice, yogurt with chestnut cream, plates of fresh and dried fruit with nuts, freshly baked muffins and breads with blueberry or raspberry jam and homemade sausages or cretons. Then it's on to the cheeses, including Oka and choices from neighbouring farms in St. Cuthbert.

Her main-course speciality is her own creation - an omelette with scalloped potatoes and herbs, which is part frittata and part quiche, served with bacon drizzled with maple syrup. Her signature Quebec recipes include cramailotte, a dandelion honey that she serves with tisanes.

"With the B&B, our way of travelling is by staying home and meeting people," Landry said. "We have had guests from Europe and Africa, so we share stories."

Many of Aux Saveurs' clients arrive by bicycle, even from as far as Montreal, 80 kilometres away. "They're hungry if they come all the way from the city," Pâquet said. When requested in advance, she will cook one of her special four-course suppers with dishes like a summer vichychoisse, garden-fresh salad, filet of pork from the nearby Ferme Forget with nuts, dried fruit and maple sauce, and her traditional croquignoles - light, flaky pastries dusted with maple sugar.

One of the delicacies on the cheese platter at Aux Saveurs du Coteau is the tangy aged l'encendré from Chèvrerie Barrousse, makers of goat cheese. The farm is a

10-minute drive from the B&B, and visitors can play with the 150 or so goats. Barrousse's farm stand also sells goat milk and a creamy cheese made with herbs.

After experiencing Aux Saveurs and Chèvrerie Barrousse, the Vignoble Carone will seem like big business. The vineyard, on gently rolling farmland near the St. Lawrence River, produces reds, rosés and a semi-dry white dessert wine.

"We call it 'modern-style wine,' " winemaker Anthony Carone said of the reds. "That means we blend old and new world technologies, and we closely follow trends. If the marketplace wants big, fruity, woody wines, a modern winemaker will produce that." Right on the money, Carone's Cabernet Severnyi won a gold medal at the 2008 San Francisco International Wine Competition, a first for Quebec reds.

Wine runs in his family. Carone's father was a wine merchant in Rome, and his mother worked in vineyards in the Abruzzo region.

It's a treat and an education to stop by the vineyard and learn about the oak barrels, stainless steel vats and grape vines. Tastings are free, and the wines sell for \$12 to \$25. Carone wines are available in Montreal at Marché des saveurs du Québec at the Jean Talon Market.

Lanaudière celebrates Quebec's Fête Nationale with gusto. In St. Norbert, near St. Cuthbert, the action on June 23 takes place at the Parc École on rue Principale and will include afternoon events for children, a free hot-dog supper at 6 p.m., followed by musical shows and fireworks.

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If You Go:

St. Cuthbert is a one-hour drive from Montreal. Take Highway 40 east to Exit 151, then Route 138 to Rang St. Viateur and Rang York. For Lanoraie, take Highway 40 and Exit 130.

Aux Saveurs du Coteau: 1961 rang York, St. Cuthbert, www.bonjourquebec.com, www.gitescanada.com/9837.html and 450-885-1683, \$65 to \$75 for two, including breakfast; \$15 for additional person or \$10 for children over age 10.

Chèvrerie Barrousse, 3182 rang St. André, St. Cuthbert, www.barrousse.com, 450-836-1865.

Vignoble Carone: 75 Roy St., Lanoraie, www.carone.ca, 450-887-2728.

For a list and map of agro-tourism businesses in the Lanaudière, www.cheminsdecampagne.ca; for regional information: www.lanaudière.ca and 800-363-2788.

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