



Chez Truchon, a gourmet inn in La Malbaie, Charlevoix, has undergone an extensive update. The changes are so successful that the inn was awarded a Trip Advisor Certificate of Excellence in 2015. RENÉ BOUCHARD, COURTESY CHEZ TRUCHON

CHECKING IN

CHEZ TRUCHON ATTRACTS FOODIES TO CHARLEVOIX



ROCHELLE LASH

Dominique Truchon, one of the most prominent chefs in the terroir-rich region of Charlevoix, now is an innkeeper as well.

Chez Truchon is a wildly popular fine-dining restaurant known for rich and flavourful French-Quebec cuisine made with local ingredients and served fireside in charming surroundings.

The inn's latest attraction is its accommodations — the nine gorgeous guest rooms on the second and third floor of a stately Victorian manor house built in 1904 of Scottish brick. If you are lodged in the front of the house, you will have a partial view of the St-Lawrence River through the trees.

(Quebec's forestry industry was started centuries ago, with ships leaving Quebec's Charlevoix and Saguenay regions carrying lumber across the Atlantic to build the British Armada. On the

return voyages, the massive sailing vessels used oatmeal-hued Scottish brick as ballast.)

Within the past year, Truchon and his wife, Annie Dufour, completed a huge renovation and transformed the inn (formerly Auberge LaRochelle) into a contemporary-chic getaway. The changes are so successful that Chez Truchon was awarded a Trip Advisor Certificate of Excellence in 2015.

"We host Quebecers and Montrealers all year round because they know Dominique's cuisine, and we have skiers in winter, Americans who sightsee and cruise in summer and Europeans in autumn for the colours."

The sleep: The rooms are lovely contemporary hideaways done in Charlevoix' colours of earth, water and sky — aquamarine, dove grey, cloud and seafoam. The beds are draped in fine white sheets and piled high with pillows. The bathrooms are ultra-modern, with walk-in glass showers sporting top-of-the-line fixtures by Grohe and Maax (and some with standalone tubs).

Chez Truchon really wants the best for its guests and has mod-

ernized to the max. The rooms — they vary in size — have flat-screen TVs, large mirrors, good lighting, pod-coffee machines, individual climate control and outlets for charging mobile devices.

Charlevoix cuisine: Truchon calls his cuisine "bistro actualisée et gastronomisée," which translates as bistro updated and refined with gourmet accents.

He was born in La Malbaie surrounded by farms, and has worked with some of Quebec City's greats, including Serge Bruyère of À la Table de Serge Bruyère and Jean-Luc Boulay of Restaurant St-Amour, as well as with Normand Laprise at Citrus in Montreal, a pre-Toqué! venture.

Then, for more than 20 years, Truchon ran the show at the prominent Auberge des Peupliers in La Malbaie. In 2011 he fulfilled his dream of running his own inn.

Chez Truchon's specialties include foie gras poêlé and magret de canard, from the elite duck producer, La Ferme Basque in St-Urbain. Among traditional Quebec dishes are velouté de gourganes (a bean soup), organic

meat from Viandes Biologiques in St-Urbain, guinea fowl from Volière Baie-St-Paul, and French onion soup spiked with Dominus Beer from Microbrasserie Charlevoix in Baie-St-Paul.

Dessert is a must. Truchon prepares pudding chômeur with maple cream, blackberry creme brûlée and extra-rich chocolate cake. Even breakfast is delectable. All of Truchon's bread comes from the Boulangerie Pains d'Exclamation! in La Malbaie.

The morning chefs create French toast gently sweetened with vanilla; as well as croissants with cretons, bacon, sausage and ham from Boucherie Lyn Tremblay; and omelettes with Charlevoix cheeses such as the Migneron, the 1608 or St-Fidèle cheddar.

One of the founders of the gourmet trail, La Route des Saveurs de Charlevoix (the Flavour Trail), Truchon has been awarded Quebec's Grand Prix du Tourisme in gastronomy as well as the Prix Renaud-Cyr for his artisanal use of regional products.

The cuisine scene will peak at an annual Charlevoix celebration, La Fête des Saveurs, April 22, at Fairmont Le Manoir

IF YOU GO

La Malbaie is a four-hour, 30-minute drive from Montreal. Take Highway 40 past Quebec City and continue on Route 138 east.

Chez Truchon: 888-662-4622, 418-665-4622, aubergecheztruchon.com; La Malbaie.

Price: Until June 20, \$95-\$145 for two without meals; or with breakfast, \$123-\$173; or with breakfast and table d'hôte dinner, \$223 to \$273. Holidays cost more.

From June 2 to Oct. 11, it's \$129-\$165 for two without meals; or with breakfast, \$155-\$190 for two; or with breakfast and dinner, \$255 to \$290.

Various packages feature the Train du Charlevoix, the Casino de Charlevoix, whale-watching with Croisières AML, and Domaine Forget, an international music festival (June 5 to Aug. 21) in nearby Saint-Iréné.

Chez Truchon (dining): Dinner served nightly. Non-guests, evening table d'hôte, \$56 for four courses, plus sorbet and coffee; Children's menu, \$9 to \$12.

Charlevoix Tourism: 800-667-2276, tourisme-charlevoix.com

Richelieu in La Malbaie. Twenty-one food producers and 12 chefs will create an evening of cocktail-style taste treats at food stations, all set to music (\$90 p.p., includes two glasses of wine; routedesaveurs.com).

Charlevoix outdoors: Charlevoix is known for its great natural beauty. It's a land of cliffs, forests and mountains that soar above the St-Lawrence River. The activities range from tame to thrilling. Auberge Truchon packages visits with the scenic Train du Charlevoix from Baie-St-Paul to La Malbaie and sightseeing cruises in the Hautes-Gorges-de-la-Rivière-Malbaie Parc National.

In summer, adventurers can go sea kayaking, rock climbing, mountain biking, fishing or hiking in Grands-Jardins Parc National, a UNESCO flora and fauna conservation site. The thrill factor spikes sharply with mountaineering at Les Palisades, which has a suspension bridge, cliff rappelling and Via Ferrata courses.

Winter features kayaking, snowshoeing, dogsledding, snowmobiling and ice fishing. Mont Grand-Fonds is a slide-sports centre with downhill skiing and exceptional cross-country skiing on 140 kilometres of trails.

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