



Chez Muffy at Auberge Saint-Antoine in Quebec City offers casual fine dining at more accessible prices in rustic style in a 1600s shipping warehouse. *AUBERGE SAINT-ANTOINE*

AUBERGE SAINT-ANTOINE MELTS THE OLD AND NEW

Enjoy fine food, Quebec-inspired events amid historic and sophisticated charm



ROCHELLE LASH

The irresistible allure of Auberge Saint-Antoine in Quebec City is that it continues to reinvent its fine hospitality and upbeat contemporary design.

The Auberge's new managers, Guy and Dagmar Lombard, are from France and bring experience from several Relais & Châteaux in Europe and the Caribbean, as well as such top-drawer large hotels as the Plaza Athénée in Paris.

Since its opening 14 years ago, Auberge Saint-Antoine has been an exceptional destination, one of the few urban Relais & Châteaux and a boutique hotel with impeccable service, fine cuisine and decor that simply glows with warmth and style.

Still, the Lombards have made their mark in a matter of months.

"We are launching Quebec-inspired activities as well as exciting new food and drink," co-manager Dagmar Lombard said. "And our signature attraction is our museum concept — historic treasures in a contem-

porary design setting."

The news: The big bulletin is the Auberge Saint-Antoine's transformation in dining and drinking in Artefact, the lobby bar, and Chez Muffy, the restaurant, both reimagined in 2017.

The hotel gradually is refining its guest rooms with hardwood floors and new fabrics.

The bathrooms have dreamy new toiletries made with goat's milk, and some have heated floors, double vanities, TVs and walk-in showers.

The health club has expanded its beauty and body services to include collagen facials, massages and mani-pedis by appointment, as well as yoga (at no charge) on Saturday mornings. A new calendar of events starting in October will celebrate the creativity of Quebec City, including an artisans market, fashion shows by local designers and happenings in cuisine, music and art.

Children will have workshops such as pumpkin carving for Halloween and cookie baking for Christmas.

There are movies in the screening room, take-home gifts such as a teddy bear and a storybook, and for use in the hotel, adorable kid-sized bathrobes.

Then and now: The contrast between vintage and venerable and

IF YOU GO...

Auberge Saint-Antoine: 888-692-2211, saint-antoine.com; 8 rue St-Antoine, Quebec City. Pet friendly, \$35 a day.

Price: rates fluctuate and are approximate; October to April, rooms \$229 to \$579 for two; suites \$530-\$1,450 (rates are higher May to September), including Wi-Fi, newspapers, yoga on Saturday morning, in-room Nespresso, CD selection, Clefs d'Or concierge, screening room, guest computer, jazz evenings. Extra: valet parking \$30 overnight, free for lunch or dinner guests.

Chez Muffy: breakfast, lunch and dinner daily, Sunday brunch. Artefact: 2 p.m. to closing. Jazz on Thursdays, 8 p.m. to 11 p.m., and on Sundays, 5 p.m. to 8 p.m., subject to change.

Quebec City: 877-783-1608, quebecregion.com

bold and avant-garde is strong throughout the hotel. Auberge Saint-Antoine was built on an

archeological site and it is home to a museum-quality display of artifacts from the 1600s to the 1800s.

The hotel gives historical tours that tell the story of life in New France through its collection of 300-year-old pottery and tools (free, reservations mandatory).

The Clefs d'Or concierge desk can organize a jaunt up the 137-year-old Funiculaire du Vieux Québec, a cable car that mounts a steep cliff to the Musée du Fort.

Here, costumed animators and a sound and light show portray the city's military exploits.

Eat and drink: You also can drink and dine your way through history.

Artefact was transformed this summer and now sports a high-topped white marble bar, vivid velvet benches and leather chairs topped with sexy white fur pillows. There is live jazz on Thursdays and Sundays.

Artefact launched an oyster bar and a menu of upscale comfort food such as lobster rolls, crab fritters, burgers, mac-and-cheese and smoked salmon, plus home-spun desserts such as rhubarb rice pudding.

The new crop of cocktails features premium spirits and local wines spiked with fresh flavours, like strawberries, blueberries, lime, grapefruit, lychee and ginger.

New bistro: The reimagined-in-2017 Chez Muffy is named for Martha Bate Price, co-

owner of Auberge Saint-Antoine and matriarch of the prominent Price family. Also an interior designer, she has decorated the restaurant — a 1600s shipping warehouse — with handsome fabrics and rich textures to complement the vintage ceiling beams and rugged stone walls.

Chez Muffy introduced what it calls bistrology this summer, featuring casual fine dining at more accessible prices than haute gastronomy. Executive chef Julien Ouellet focuses on farm-to-table fare, with lots of herbs, berries and vegetables from the Price family's La Ferme du Côteau on Île d'Orléans.

Dinner might start with grilled quail, a caramelized onion tart or a tasting of tomato and buffalo mozzarella, and follow with main courses of Gaspé lobster, sweetbreads, Atlantic halibut, hangar steak, tagliatelle in mushroom broth or the pièce de résistance, a grass-fed rib-eye steak for two.

Still, Auberge Saint-Antoine is a sophisticated stop. The wine list includes labels from 14 countries and the cellar stocks many vins de garde (well-aged wines), but the new aspect is that there are more affordable choices.

Breakfast now is buffet style, but the spread still will offer many sumptuous house specialties, including eggs Benedict with duck and health-conscious egg-white omelettes with roasted tomatoes and arugula, plus pastries, scones and homemade jams.

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