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FOR PEOPLE WHO LOVE TO *read*, LOVE TO *eat*, AND LOVE TO *travel*

TAKE A
BITE OF

Normandy's
APPLE

FUTURILLA



France

WHERE ON EARTH

FRANCE

NORMANDY — ‘the land of butter, cheese and apples’ — is notorious for its calorie-rich gastronomic scene. But the region made famous by the D-Day landings during World War II is also known for the unique architecture of its houses and its numerous historic monuments.»

by BRIGITTE HASBRON



MARKO KONJESKI

PHOTOS THIS SPREAD
Apple trees in blossom;
Fishing boats and pleasure
craft in Honfleur harbour.



...*Honfleur* is a place that everyone should experience at least once...

« **NORMANDY WAS HISTORICALLY DIVIDED INTO** two geographical regions — Upper and Lower Normandy. Effective January 2016, however, these two areas merged to form the single region, Normandy.

I had the pleasure of staying at the beautiful Domaine d'Ablon country estate, located near the Honfleur Port in the Auge region. Inspired by the charms of the past, Le Domaine d'Ablon redefines the notion of chic, rustic sophistication. Its luxurious suites and half-timbered, thatch-roofed cottages nestle in the ever-so-green, lush landscape that Normandy generously provides. Situated only an hour and a half from Paris, the estate, which had its grand opening last September, is the perfect place to enjoy what Normandy has to offer. Everything is close by, but at Domaine d'Ablon you'll never feel the hustle and bustle of a big city.

The estate offers guests an idyllic, pastoral break in the Normandy countryside and a culinary voyage of discovery featuring the fresh bounty of a spectacular vegetable and herb garden harvested by an acclaimed chef inspired by the seasonal food of the land. Every detail at this first-class estate has been thought through and nothing is left to chance. From the exceptional room service and decadent meals to the elegant and spa-like accommodations, everything is truly first rate.

Knowing that I wanted to experience as much as I could during my precious time in Normandy, the owners of Domaine d'Ablon thoughtfully arranged for me to visit several of the area's historic and monumental landmarks.

One cannot visit Normandy and not make time to see the magical and mythical Mont Saint-Michel, a UNESCO

World Heritage Site. Words cannot do justice to this spectacular gothic abbey-turned-fortress. As Victor Hugo said of the famous island topped by a gravity-defying medieval monastery, "Mont Saint-Michel is to the ocean what the Pyramid of Cheops is to the desert."


For food lovers, visiting Mont Saint-Michel also means a stop at La Mère Poulard restaurant, renowned worldwide for its oven-baked omelettes. These omelettes are a force to be reckoned with! Made from the same recipe since 1888, they are massive in size and delicious in flavour.

The commune of Honfleur, a picturesque port surrounded by charming slate-fronted houses and with pastry and bakery shops found on every corner, is an both an artist's and food lover's dream in terms of inspiration and indulgence. I was enraptured by the bounty on offer from land and sea — fishermen unloading their boats and selling their catch of the day, vendors and producers displaying local cheeses and cider, and award-winning restaurants that beautifully showcase the foods of the region. Honfleur is a place that everyone should experience at least once.

And the excursions into Norman food continued. Sipping a glass of rosé and Ricard while I enjoyed duck confit and lamb at an outdoor bistro in Giverny, just steps away from Claude Monet's House and Garden, is something that you only see in movies... and this movie was all mine.

Normandy is synonymous with all things apple and cider-related, as field upon field flourishes with apple orchards. A visit to a Calvados House to learn how this delicious apple brandy comes to be is a must. And what better to accompany this apple aperitif but a gourmet staple — Normandy *cassoulet* (meat and potatoes swimming in a rich Camembert sauce)... such a life!

A final treat at Le Domaine d'Ablon — a private pastry class with in-house chef, Jérôme Billochon. Chef Billochon's chocolate and pastry creations are very well known throughout France and to be taught by such an expert was truly an honour, especially since I've always found pastry tricky to master. Paying homage to Normandy's cultural roots and taking advantage of Mother Nature's seasonal bounty, Chef Billochon taught me the intricacies involved in making pastry and more importantly, how to really savour and appreciate the food that we taste.

With its rich heritage, monumental sites that have stood the test of time, and picture-postcard countryside, Normandy is truly a gem to be discovered. Food, wine and the perfect locale can transport us, mind, body and soul. To that I say, *Bon appétit* and *santé!* 



PHOTOS THIS SPREAD Fish for sale on the waterfront in Honfleur; Lunch in Giverny.



Visit
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www.domainedablon.com

Note
✂

DON'T make the same mistake that I did, ordering a supper tasting menu at lunchtime. French Canadian terms do not have the same meaning in France, especially when it comes to mealtimes. Take note in order to avoid some embarrassment!

FRENCH CANADIAN TERM	FRENCH TERM	MEANING
Déjeuner	Petit Déjeuner	Breakfast
Diner	Déjeuner	Lunch
Souper	Diner	Dinner

Click
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BRIGITTE HASBRON is a Cordon Bleu graduate based in Ottawa. She is also a food and travel writer who blogs at www.thefoodtease.com

Cook
✂



FRANCE

SERVES 4

Apple Sablé Breton with Almond Cream

SABLÉ BRETON, a crumbly, buttery shortbread, forms the base for these elegant apple tarts. You will need four cylindrical food moulds to form the tarts, or you can use well-washed tuna cans with both ends removed.

SABLÉ BRETON

Butter 160 g

Icing Sugar 160 g

Egg Yolks 4

Flour 240 g

- CUT** the butter in cubes and beat until smooth in a stand mixer. Add 2 egg yolks and half the flour and beat until well mixed. Repeat with the remaining egg yolks and flour.
- ROLL** the dough into a log shape and place in the fridge to chill for an hour.
- ROLL** the dough out just enough to cut four circles with the food moulds or tuna cans. Return the bases in their moulds to the fridge while you make the almond cream.

ALMOND CREAM

Butter 150 g

Sugar 200 g

Almond Flour 200 g

Eggs 4 large

- BEAT** the butter with the sugar in a stand mixer. Add the almond flour and eggs a bit at a time and beat until very smooth.

- SCRAPE** the mixture into a piping bag and pipe it onto the dough bases in a circular motion, working from the centre to the edge.

TO FINISH

Apples

4 large, peeled, cored, halved and thinly sliced

- LAYER** the apple slices on top of the almond cream, starting with the outside layer and working towards the middle, overlapping each slice as you build a mound of apple. Sprinkle with brown sugar and little dollops of butter. Place on a cookie sheet and bake at 340°F for approximately 25 minutes. Allow to rest for 30 minutes and then carefully remove the moulds. Serve warm or at room temperature.