President Sarkozy’s Visits to the U.S. Foster International Cooperation

French President Nicolas Sarkozy recently visited the United States in March and April to discuss issues such as global financial architecture and international nuclear policy. During his first visit on March 29-30, the French president addressed an audience at the World Leaders Forum at Columbia University, met with UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-Moon and held a joint press conference with President Obama in which the two addressed nuclear sanctions on Iran and other matters concerning international security. President Sarkozy returned to the U.S. on April 12-13 for the Nuclear Security Summit in Washington, D.C., the largest international conference of world leaders on U.S. soil since the San Francisco convention, which established the United Nations in 1945. President Sarkozy’s visits and France’s policies are discussed in detail on page 4.

In addition to President Sarkozy’s high-level meetings with world leaders, he and French First Lady Carla Bruni-Sarkozy sampled various elements of American culture and heritage during the March visit. The French First Couple patronized Ben’s Chili Bowl, located in D.C.’s U Street corridor. Once known as the “black Broadway,” the corridor was a popular hangout for venerated performers such as Duke Ellington, Miles Davis and Ella Fitzgerald. A long-time supporter of the arts, Mrs. Bruni-Sarkozy also visited the performing arts institution the Juilliard School to announce her foundation’s initiative for a French-American exchange program for art students.

After a day of political discussions, President and Mrs. Obama invited President Sarkozy and his wife to a dinner at the White House, marking the first time that the Obamas have hosted another head of state in their private apartment. The French president presented his American counterpart with an 18th century document accrediting Benjamin Franklin as a honorary member of the French Academy of Sciences. Sarkozy gave Sasha and Malia Obama a collection of comic books of the famed French hero, Astérix, which chronicles the adventures of the Gaulish warrior and his friends.

Simone Veil Is Inducted to the Académie Française

French political icon and Holocaust survivor Simone Veil was inducted to the prestigious Académie Française in Paris on March 18. One of France’s most prominent voices in the fight for women’s rights, Veil served as the first female president of the European Parliament and twice as France’s Minister of Health as well as of Social Affairs. She is the sixth woman to join the Académie since the institution’s inception in 1635 by Cardinal Richelieu.

The Académie Française is the pre-eminent institution on matters pertaining to the French language, usage and vocabulary. It serves as the official authority on the language and is also charged with publishing an official dictionary that preserves and reflects the evolution of the language. The body consists of 40 members, known as immortals, who hold their office for life. Veil occupies seat No. 13, which once belonged to the esteemed playwright Racine in the 17th century. Other prominent members of the Académie have included Alexander Dumas, Victor Hugo, Louis Pasteur and Voltaire.

With her impressive personal and professional accomplishments, Veil’s addition to the Académie continues the renowned organization’s record for honoring some of the world’s most remarkable francophones. French president Nicolas Sarkozy attended the ceremony and paid homage to the stateswoman who has led a life of service to her country and has shown relentless courage in her pursuit of social justice.

France Prepares for the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty Review Conference

New York City will host the next Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) Review Conference at the world UN headquarters from May 3-28. The conference continues the tradition of reviewing the NPT at five-year intervals since the Treaty’s implementation in 1970 and will provide a forum for discussing pressing issues such as nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation, the advancement of nuclear civil energy, and measures to promote the Treaty’s universality. France will highlight its commitment to the NPT and encourage international consensus on nuclear non-proliferation. The conference aims to adopt a “concrete and realistic plan of action” to ensure nuclear security and creating “a new nuclear world” based on the NPT and the realities of the world. France has already taken irreversible action toward disarmament, such as reducing the airborne component of its nuclear deterrence force by a third, as well as eliminating its nuclear testing facilities. French Minister of Foreign and European Affairs Bernard Kouchner championed the push for disarmament, stating, “We hope that all the nuclear powers join us in promoting the NPT. We can only continue down the path of disarmament if the will to move forward is shared by all. Trust, transparency and reciprocity are the basis for disarmament.” For more information on France’s position, please turn to page 2 and visit www.francetmp2010.fr.
European Embassies in D.C. Host Open House in May

On May 8, the embassies of the 27 E.U. Member States in the United States will open their doors to the public, presenting a rare "behind-the-gates” opportunity to visit and explore the various embassies throughout Washington, D.C. Running from 10:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m., the event will showcase the many cultures of Europe, allowing the public to sample various foods, music and art of different countries.

This year, the participating embassies will underscore the notion of Green Europe: Good for the economy and the environment, demonstrating to audiences each country’s approach to tackling climate change and growing a clean energy economy. For example, at the Embassy of Spain, visitors can learn how high-tech windmills are combating climate change and then travel to the Embassy of Denmark, which boasts the first carbon-neutral embassy residence. Riding on the theme of environmental consciousness, a free shuttle departing from Dupont Circle will provide transportation to the various embassies.

The daylong event is part of a larger celebration, Passport D.C., hosted by the nonprofit organization Cultural Tourism D.C. celebrating international culture through the month of May. For more information on the Open House, please visit: www.europe-in-dc.com.

Interview with François Rivasseau, Deputy Chief of Mission at the Embassy of France in Washington, D.C.

What is France’s position on Nuclear Disarmament?

Article 6 of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty sets a very clear goal of nuclear disarmament and general and complete disarmament; therefore we are fully committed to disarmament and therefore to nuclear disarmament. We have proven that commitment. We have taken unique measures to fulfill this goal. Not only have we signed and ratified the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT), prohibiting all nuclear tests and nuclear explosions, but we have also — and France still is the only nuclear-weapon state to have done so — closed, dismantled completely and restored our nuclear test site in Mururoa, French Polynesia. Article 6 of the NPT has been completed by voluntary commitments taken in 1995, when the NPT was indefinitely extended and we have been faithful to our word. If the first of these commitments concerned CTBT, the second was about the cessation of the production of fissile material for nuclear weapons; a treaty which is to be named the Fissile Material Cut-off Treaty (FMCT). France has constantly maintained its commitments to the FMCT in the terms agreed in 1995, which are technically described as the Shannon mandate — France has always remained faithful to the Shannon mandate. As proof of our good faith, not only have we stopped the production of fissile material and observed a moratorium — and there are only four nuclear States which have done so — China has not accepted such a moratorium, but we have also taken one step more: France has dismantled the facility that produced fissile material, in Pierrelatte Marcoule, and rehabilitated the place in the Rhone Valley. And once again, France is the only nuclear-weapon State to have gone so far.

Then, in 2000, NPT countries discussed and elaborated on a kind of general roadmap that was described as the 13 steps leading to nuclear disarmament. As the next NPT Review Conference is approaching, France has reviewed all the measures taken to implement the 13 steps and is pretty convinced that its record is second to none. Let’s recall, finally, that President Sarkozy expressed France’s determination to actively contribute to disarmament in the very important speech of Cherbourg last year. As an example of the measures of transparency and reduction announced there, our airborne nuclear component will be reduced by a third. All in all, France defends a concrete approach that extends beyond words into action. There are countries which are happy with dropping nice words in favor of nuclear disarmament. But, as the New Start negotiation has most recently showed, action is more difficult. And action is what we seek.

Don’t we need to step up disarmament efforts to combat proliferation more effectively?

We have to advance on both fields as quickly as possible. Usually people talk about the three pillars of the NPT: nuclear disarmament, non-proliferation, and peaceful use. France is committed to make its best on every and any of these three pillars in a balanced way.

Presidents Obama and Medvedev signed a new agreement to reduce their strategic nuclear arsenals following from the Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty (START). What is France’s position?

We warmly welcome the ratification and new bilateral agreement between Presidents Obama and Medvedev. We advocate the continuation of a bilateral process of reducing nuclear arsenals, as foreseen in the European Action Plan on disarmament adopted about two years ago at the European Summit by all Heads of State and Government on the basis of a proposal made by France acting as Presidency of the E.U. This reduction is a priority, as the U.S. and Russia still hold nearly 95 percent of the global nuclear stockpiles.
Stirring American Zest for French Gastronomy

For the fourth consecutive year, the New York and Parisian offices of UBIFRANCE, in conjunction with the French Trade Office, organized a traveling gastronomy show throughout the United States. Comprised of nearly two dozen French food companies, the French Food Connection visited Los Angeles, Washington, D.C., and Miami from April 17-23 for a week-long roadshow. The companies presented their products to over 150 American companies — including local importers, distributors, restaurateurs, buyers, as well as the press — to boost the visibility of their food-stuffs. Incorporated into their visits were presentations on the local alimentary markets, briefings by American gastronomic professionals, excursions to distribution and sales centers, as well as food-tasting fairs.

According to Charles Duque, Food Division director at UBIFRANCE, "The last three editions have been very successful for the French. Ninety percent of companies who participated in past editions have increased their business in the U.S., and one-quarter of this year’s companies are repeat participants." The initiative aims to foster collaborative opportunities between French producers and their American counterparts.

For more information on next year’s French Food Connection, please visit: www.frenchfoodconnection.com.

American Photographers Capture France

If a picture is worth a thousand words, then the photographs taken by a group of eight graduate students selected from various American art and design institutions could write a novel about the cities they visited — and that was exactly their mission. The program Jeunes Talents (Young Talents) is a joint initiative by the French Government Tourist Office and the French Cultural Services in Los Angeles that seeks to promote cross-cultural educational exchanges. The initiative combines art, creativity and tourism to allow budding American photographers hailing from New York, Los Angeles and New Orleans to relay the history and culture of French life through the lens of a camera. From March 27 - April 11, each photographer traveled to French regions to uncover the character of one of the six participating areas (Aix-en-Provence, Arles, Lille, Marseille, Toulon and Tahiti). The purpose of the trip was to produce a series of photographs that capture the essence of French life and culture through fresh perspectives. Upon their return, eight photographs from each rising artist were displayed at Louis Stern Fine Arts Gallery in West Hollywood, California. The French Deputy Cultural Attaché at the Los Angeles consulate, Yann Perreau, observed that, "Jeunes Talents is a unique opportunity to open the boundaries of art, creativity and cultural exchanges," and called the result "one of the most exciting, subversive and challenging art concepts to date."

For more information on Jeunes Talents, and to see some of the photographs, please visit: www.franceguide.com/jeunestalents.

Richmond’s Feature Presentation

French cinephiles from all over the United States gathered at the 18th Annual French Film Festival in Richmond, Virginia, held between March 25-28. Presented by Virginia Commonwealth University (VCU) and the University of Richmond (UR), the film festival is the largest of its kind in the U.S. Each year, the festival showcases an array of French and francophone films, ranging from short films to full-length showings. The event not only presents the works of well-established directors, but also those of the next generation of filmmakers. Founded in 1993, the festival seeks to promote French language cinema and cross-cultural appreciation.

The 2010 edition of the festival introduced novel components. In partnership with Parisian film school La Fémis, this year’s "Master Class" explored the topic of "3-D Technology in Filmmaking." The class gave VCU and UR film students the opportunity to review 35mm shorts with both American and French film experts. Instructors included professors from the two Richmond-based universities, the French audiovisual media organization Commission Supérieure Technique de l’Image et du Son, and La Fémis. The festival not only celebrates French contemporary cinema, but also the growing transatlantic appreciation and enthusiasm for French film.

For more information on the film festival, please visit: www.frenchfilm.vcu.edu.
French President Nicolas Sarkozy recently visited the U.S. on two separate occasions, once in March and again in April, underscoring close Franco-American ties. During his first visit, President Sarkozy met with U.S. policymakers on March 30, including Speaker of the House Nancy Pelosi and Massachusetts Senator John Kerry, to discuss the importance of a united front in the global fight against climate change. French Finance Minister Christine Lagarde joined the French president in congressional meetings. Later that day, President Sarkozy met with President Obama in the Oval Office, after which the two heads of state held a joint press conference addressing issues such as cooperation in the global economy, climate change, and the Middle East peace process. This visit was not the first time that President Sarkozy met with U.S. representatives. He addressed a joint session of Congress in November of 2007 (see NFF 07.12), during which he highlighted the historic ties and elaborated on mutual areas of interest between the two nations. French First Lady Carla Bruni-Sarkozy joined her husband on his March visit, while the French president returned to Washington, D.C., in April to participate in the Nuclear Security Summit.

### In Depth

#### President Sarkozy Visits the United States

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#### Discussing the Economy

One of the main themes addressed in President Sarkozy’s first visit was the global economy. In his speech at the World Leaders Forum at Columbia University in New York City, President Sarkozy emphasized the importance of international cooperation to prevent future economic crises. The French president advocated for firm regulations of financial systems, stating, “We can no longer accept a capitalist system without rules, organization, regulation.”

In the months following the G20 Summit in London, President Sarkozy and Prime Minister of the United Kingdom Gordon Brown outlined new economic policies. Specifically, they call for control over credit rating agencies, stronger capital requirement on complex products such as securitization, and strengthened deposit guarantee schemes.

President Sarkozy also stressed the need for a unified effort between the U.S. and European nations to engender transatlantic cooperation and innovative economic policy. “Europe cannot impose its ideas alone; the United States cannot impose its ideas alone,” Mr. Sarkozy stated. The French president foreshadowed one such idea during the press conference at the White House in which the French-American alliance will work together, stating, “During the French presidency of the G20, Tim Geithner [and] Christine Lagarde are going to be working hand-in-glove in order to go even further in regulating world capitalism, and in particular, raising the issue of a new world international monetary order.” In addition, President Sarkozy called for innovation in the way states gauge the standard of living. “We must change the way we measure evolutions in our economy in the 21st century,” he asserted. “Well-being, education and environmental costs are all aspects that must be integrated into the measurement of our economy.”

#### Addressing Nuclear Security Issues

President Sarkozy’s second visit focused on international nuclear security policy. The French Head of State attended the two-day Nuclear Security Summit in Washington, D.C., alongside 46 other world leaders. The goal of the summit was to create alignment on reducing the world’s nuclear arsenal and ensure the security of nuclear materials, as well as to address the challenges nations face in complying with the Non-Proliferation Treaty. A recent step in the direction of disarmament is the signing of the Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty (START) by President Obama and Russian President Medvedev, which aims to significantly reduce the U.S. and Russian nuclear arsenals. START complements the goals of the nuclear summit as well as those of the European Action Plan on Disarmament adopted by the E.U. during the French presidency in 2008. The action plan stipulates that E.U. nations work against the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and aims to be implemented by the end of 2010.

The threat of nuclear terrorism was one of the most pressing issues on the summit agenda. In an interview with CBS journalist Katie Couric, President Sarkozy emphasized the importance of the summit in discussing the threat. “It is the entire international community that must react in order to combat this type of terrorism,” Mr. Sarkozy said, “which is one of the reasons why I, together with other heads of state, are here today in support of the summit organized by President Obama.” President Sarkozy also advocated for the creation of an international court that would pursue states that provide terrorist groups with nuclear technology or materials. Officials plan to work with the U.N. on the development of such a court. At the summit’s conclusion, world leaders expressed solidarity on the critical issue of preventing non-state actors from obtaining nuclear weapons, a goal that will require seemingly unprecedented international cooperation among the 47 nations involved in the talks.

Mr. Sarkozy evoked the peace process in the Middle East specifically relating to nuclear concerns surrounding Iran in his speech at Columbia University, stating that the world must take a unified and firm approach in preventing the country from obtaining nuclear weapons. The U.S. and France, along with Germany and the United Kingdom, have been pushing for new sanctions against Iran for its nuclear energy enrichment program. Prior to the Nuclear Security Summit, President Sarkozy discussed the implications of Iran’s nuclear ambitions with other world leaders, meeting first with UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon at the UN headquarters in New York, then with President Obama at the White House. Presidents Sarkozy and Obama expressed alignment on issue of Iran and the need to push for UN sanctions. “A conflict in the Middle East, as a consequence of Iran’s actions, could have a huge destabilizing effect,” President Obama stated in a joint press conference with President Sarkozy. The French president concurred, expressing that “I think that we can say that rarely… [in] the history of our two countries has the community of views been so identical between the United States of America and France.”
France Aims to Digitize Written Works

French President Nicolas Sarkozy recently pledged nearly $1.1 billion toward the digitization of French literary works, audiovisual archives and historical documents. The announcement underscores the government’s initiative to preserve France’s cultural history and make it more readily available in a new era.

The endeavor entails a public-private partnership that will digitize the nation’s cultural works. However, the question remains as to who the state will commission for the job. Bruno Racine, president of the French National Library, emphasized the “necessity of a partnership with the private sector” to secure the capital needed for the vast digitization project which will include over 14 million books and several million other documents.

In the meantime, the European company Safig is streamlining the process by beginning the digitization process of 300,000 literary pieces for the French National Library. Based in central France, the company is using both automatic and human page turners to complete the three-year contract project.

The $1.1 billion pledged by Sarkozy is part of a $51 billion stimulus package aimed primarily at French universities, researchers, manufacturers and telecommunications companies.

Mind-Boggling Event Encourages Europeans to Use Their Heads

Every year La Semaine du Cerveau, or Brain Awareness Week, gives curious minds around the globe an opportunity to learn about the complexities of the brain through a multitude of exhibitions, workshops and presentations organized by top scientists and researchers in the field of neurology. In France, the latest scientific neurological findings were presented to the public through the efforts of La Société des Neurosciences, a member of La Fédération européenne des neurosciences, which sponsored events in over 20 French cities from March 15-21.

At the Faculté de Médecine in Nantes, doctorate students gave eight lectures on neurodegenerative diseases such as Parkinson’s and Huntington’s, as well as on the potential of intracerebral transplantation of stem cells to reduce damaged brain function in animal models of neurodegenerative diseases.

In the southern port city of Marseille, Pierre Lemarquis, neurologist and member of the New York Academy of Sciences, discussed the role of music in cerebral development and its potentially therapeutic qualities in treating disorders such as dyslexia and Alzheimer’s, during a conference on March 16 and 17. The same day, high school students in Strasbourg watched a psychological thriller film and afterwards debated the possibility of addiction to video games, two pastimes thought to have significant impact on the brain.

Brainiacs from all over France were also called to “Come and play with your head” in a discovery workshop that took place in Paris on March 20 and 21. The two-day event catered to visitors of all ages, as youngsters could test their memory with games and quizzes, while older participants could analyze their brain activity during sleep with the help of professionals. Among the fun and games, leading researchers in the field shed light on puzzling subjects, such as the anatomy of the brain and the brain’s role at the head of the body. The annual thought-provoking events planned around Europe, and France in particular, are sure to keep inquisitive minds eager for more research and learning opportunities.

French Office Buildings Go Greener

The number of office buildings in France that meet High Environmental Quality standards will rise by 61 percent in 2010, according to a report by Savills, a London-based real estate organization that provides consulting and research services to governmental agencies and private companies. This year’s upsurge comes after similar increases of 27 percent in 2008 and 44 percent in 2009.

Savills asserts that investment in green-friendly property is not only environmentally responsible, but economical. "Corporate responsibility policies are encouraging many occupants to choose environmentally certified properties," stated Lydia Brissy, associate director of Savills European Research. "While there is no indication at present that rents for green buildings are higher than standard office properties, potential growth in capital values can be achieved through a decline in operating costs."

According to the French Ministry of Environment and Sustainable Development, office buildings account for 40 percent of total energy consumption in the country and 25 percent of all gas emissions. Further, the energy consumption of a new, green-friendly building averages 100-110 kilowatt-hours, while existing buildings average about 250 kilowatt-hours. The Savills report determined that the stock of green buildings in France currently comprises 233 offices, which include facilities operated by Microsoft, Fourcurn, and France Telecom, totaling 4.36 million square meters of space. A majority of the green-friendly French buildings exceed 5,000 square meters and are located in Paris and its suburbs.

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Agriculture Sprouts Interest in France

Each year, the Ministry of Food, Agriculture and Fisheries hosts the Salon International de l’Agriculture, an elaborate combination of conferences, workshops and tradeshows, aimed at providing a comprehensive education about French agriculture. This year’s Salon, held from February 27-March 7 in Paris, embodied the theme “produce to nourish,” catering particularly to young families. Children participated in workshops that chronicled the journey of food from the farm to their dinner plates. They learned how agricultural processes impact their daily lives and about the biology of fresh produce. In one interactive activity, children associated fruits and vegetables with their appropriate season and determined whether they came from soil or trees. Meanwhile, adults learned about the political initiatives relating to France’s agricultural economy as well as the economic weight of the food industry.

The Salon was not all studies, however, as visitors enjoyed myriad culinary delights. They refueled with “grab-and-go” bags filled with fresh fruit, milk and yogurt and also sampled various French regional cuisines. While the focus was predominantly French, visitors could get a taste of other cultures through the exhibit, A Thousand Facets of the Agricultures of the World. Presented at the international pavilion, the demonstration highlighted the cuisine and culture of Côte d’Ivoire, Senegal and Japan, among other nations.

In addition, this year’s fair served as a meeting place for French farmers and agricultural experts to discuss the environmental impact of farming. Forums devoted to research and development addressed questions such as, “Do cows pollute?” and “How do farmers contribute to the maintenance of the French countryside?” The conference demonstrated its dedication to sustainability when, for the first time during the animal exhibitions, the trade show showcased 12 different breeds of cattle threatened with extinction. The Ministry of Agriculture summed up the fair’s goals: “Conservation is important at an economic level, but also at a social and cultural level.”

Government initiatives to inform the population of the importance of healthy nutrition are not limited to France’s annual trade show. For example, a program initiated in 2008 by the Ministry of Agriculture distributes in-season fruits once a week to participating elementary schools throughout the country and aims to encourage the consumption of fruit among children. In 2009 alone, more than 300,000 children benefited from the program, and the Ministry hopes to reach over one million students with its fresh treats in 2010.
Casanova's Adventures Acquired by France

After two years of negotiations, the French National Library acquired the sole existing manuscript of Casanova’s illustrious work *Histoire de ma vie* (Story of My Life). The autobiographical manuscript was purchased from German publishing firm Brockhaus, which had owned it since 1821. French Minister of Culture Frédéric Mitterrand hailed the library’s latest acquisition as “one of the most spectacular acquisitions ever made by a French library.”

Casanova, the famous 18th-century libertine, spy, writer and adventurer, is recognized worldwide. The manuscript’s exploits depict the colorful life and adventures of the Venetian author against the backdrop of the Enlightenment Era. “Worthy or not, my life is my subject, and my subject is my life,” Casanova proclaimed of his work. The original book, hidden in German vaults, was thought to have been destroyed in the Dresden bombing during WWII. First published in French in 1960, only a handful of scholars have consulted the 3,700-page manuscript.

French Minister of Culture Frédéric Mitterrand presents Casanova’s famed autobiographical manuscript.

Exhibition Examines Crime and Punishment

A new exhibition at Paris’s Musée d’Orsay explores the theme of crime during a 200-year period. Aptly named Crime and Punishment after Fyodor Dostoevsky’s famous novel, the exhibit follows the subject from 1791, when Louis-Michel Le Peletier de Saint Fargeau advocated for the abolition of the death penalty, to 1981, when the practice was officially banned in France. The exhibition is headed by former French minister of Justice and former president of the French Constitutional Counsel Robert Badinter, who was a key player in France’s abolition of capital punishment in 1981. The sociological and political struggles surrounding the notion of appropriate punishment for crime spanning the period of the exhibition’s two-century focus were reflected in literature and art.

The exhibition features prominent artists such as Goya, Géricault, Picasso and Magritte, whose portfolios all challenge interpretations of crime and punishment. Among pieces with divinely inspired conceptions of the exhibition’s theme was Pierre-Paul Prud’hon’s *Justice and Divine Vengeance Pursuing Crime*, in which two angelic figures, symbolic of justice and vengeance, pursue a knife-wielding villain who has just committed murder. Representation of crime and punishment in Jean-Joseph Weerts’s *Marat Assassinated!* 13 July 1793, 8pm questions the notion of justice.

The pieces featured in the exhibition also reflect late 19th century theories that supposedly established a scientific approach to the criminal mind, which aimed to prove that common traits found in all criminals could be linked to their physiological features. Such theories had a great influence on painting, sculpture and photography. Crime and Punishment will be on display at the Musée d’Orsay until June 27, 2010.

For more information on the exhibition and to see a selection of the works, please visit: www.gallica.bnf.fr.

France Reaches for the (Michelin) Stars

The arbiter of fine dining, Michelin published its latest "Red Guide" in March and awarded the highest honor of three stars to a country restaurant in France. Located in Fontjoncouse, a southwestern town near the Mediterranean, *L’Auberge du Vieux Puits*, is best known for its red mullet, baby mutton and eggs served over a mushroom and truffle purée. “To be a great chef, you must be a cook, a cook in spirit, a cook in the heart,” stated chef Gilles Gougou in an interview with the Daily Telegraph.

Michelin releases a variety of guides each year that provide travelers with a wealth of vital information for their trips, including locations of gas stations, garages, restrooms and accommodations. The Red Guide, which focuses on ratings of restaurants and hotels, uses anonymous experts to rank a restaurant’s quality of food and service on a three-star scale. A two-star restaurant defined as “excellent cooking, worth a detour” can only receive a third star if the restaurant becomes “worth the trip.”

With less than 100 three-star restaurants in the world, France is home to 26 of them. In an interview with French news agency France24, director of Michelin guides Jean-Luc Naret commented, "Paris remains the world capital of gastronomy, thanks to its many young and brilliant chefs."
Blockbuster Spring Events Heat Up Nation’s Capital

Various events throughout the D.C. area this spring endeavor to showcase trends in contemporary French culture. Acclaimed French playwright Valère Novarina was warmly welcomed in Washington, D.C., this month for a festival in his name, organized by Georgetown University and the Alliance Française in D.C. Novarina’s new work, L’Acteur Sacrifiant (The Sacrificing Actor), was performed on April 12 and 13 by the Atlanta-based Théâtre du Rêve, the only French-speaking theater in the U.S. His contemporary style plays on French and English linguistic subtleties and uses body and breath to communicate to a wide audience.

Illuminated Prayer Book on Display in New York

The lavishly illustrated prayer book known as Les Belles heures (Beautiful Hours) was created in the 15th century by the Limbourg Brothers — three of the greatest illuminators in Europe — for one of the most famous art patrons of all time, Jean de France, Duc de Berry. The son, brother and uncle to three successive French kings, Jean de France commissioned luxury works — from chalices to castles — but is best remembered for his patronage of manuscripts.

The book has been temporarily unbound and conserved as it undergoes a digitization project, allowing for a special exhibition, The Art of Illumination: The Limbourg Brothers and the Belles Heures of Jean de France, Duc de Berry, at the Metropolitan Museum of Art from March 2 - June 13. The exhibit presents a rare opportunity to view the manuscript without turning a single page.

According to Director of the Metropolitan Museum of Art Thomas P. Campbell, “In Les Belles heures are many magnificent illustrations of scenes from Gospels and the lives of saints, as one would expect in a book of private prayer.” The exhibition is arranged by theme, following the sequence in which the sections appeared in the bound manuscript. Created over a three- to four-year period from 1405 to 1408/9, Les Belles heures is composed of 224 translucent folios of the highest-quality vellum, so that the text and decoration on one side can be seen from the reverse. Each page boasts a generous use of gold leaf in the border and a vibrant range of colors.