

Eating out



LOT-ET-GARONNE

After discovering the *département's* impressive sights, try some culinary specialities at these lively restaurants, says **Paola Westbeek**

Bistrot du Commerce, Miramont-de-Guyenne

Around lunchtime, this bastide town comes to life when the sounds of animated chatter and clinking glasses fill Place de l'Hôtel de Ville. Bistrot du Commerce is a typical French bistro serving an affordable three-course *menu du midi* that demands to be accompanied by a carafe of house wine.

Arriving promptly at noon, we were seated at our usual table. No need to say what I would like as an apéritif. "Kir pêche?" asks the waitress with a smile.

The à la carte menu features regional duck specialities (their



salade périgourdine happens to combine most), but the real charm is doing as the locals do and choosing from the dishes of the day, which never disappoint.

I started with sweet, juicy slices of local melon paired with dry-cured ham. A classic combination and blissfully refreshing on a hot afternoon. The main was succulent sautéed veal with a side of tomato rice to soak up the light, aromatic gravy. Stewed apples crowned with a scoop of caramel ice cream round off yet another excellent meal. I was quite sure we'd be back again the next day.

Open 7am-9pm, closed Sunday.
À la carte with mains from €11; lunchtime set menu on weekdays €13.
Tel: (Fr) 5 53 84 76 48

L'Escadron Volant, Nérac

After spending the morning discovering Nérac's impressive Château-Musée Henri IV, we stopped for lunch at L'Escadron Volant, a lively restaurant located at the foot of the historic monument. I scanned the menu while sipping a *Floc de Gascogne* (regional fortified wine) and was tempted by the foie gras infused with armagnac and the veal T-bone with *cagouilles* (snails). Ultimately, I chose the *formule bistrot*, which starts with warm goat's cheese wrapped in flaky pastry. A rustic and unapologetically garlicky beef stew marinated in a rich red wine sauce and served atop noodles was the main. The wine list offers plenty of choices, but I opted for a glass of their aromatic house Bordeaux. Firmly structured with ripe



tannins and an explosion of fruit, it is a sublime choice with the meat's hearty flavours.

Though I couldn't help but ogle my daughter's dessert plate (two towering *cannelés* served profiterole style with a drizzle of silky, dark chocolate sauce), the raspberry crême served with the menu was a light and satisfying end to the meal.

Open 9am-3pm and 6pm-1am, closed Sunday. À la carte with mains from €13.50; lunchtime set menu on weekdays €13.90. Tel: (Fr) 5 53 97 19 04

Le Don Camillo, Duras

One of the restaurants we keep returning to when we visit the endearing wine village of Duras is Le Don Camillo. Not only for the great kitchen, but also for the cosy terrace in the heart of the *centre-ville* and chats with owner Chantal, who always greets us with genuine warmth.

Although officially it's a pizzeria, regional classics such as crisp duck confit are on the menu and can be paired with a good selection of local wines. I rarely sink my teeth into a burger, but I gladly make an exception for their 'Burger Landais'. The combination of juicy, perfectly cooked *magret* topped with a wobbly, delicate slice of foie gras and served on a tender brioche bun with a zesty sauce of dried fruits demands to be savoured slowly, with fork,

knife and gusto. There's nothing 'fast food' at all about this culinary masterpiece.

A glass of the bold 2012 Château La Grave Béchade, bursting with ripe aromas of blackcurrants and cherries, made this a memorable gastronomic experience.

Open lunchtime (12-2pm) and evenings (7-9pm). Closed Tuesday in July and August, and Monday/Tuesday from September till June. À la carte with mains from €11.50 Tel: (Fr) 5 53 83 76 00



Eating in

Stock up on wine and artisanal jams before eating your way around a night market

WINE

Maison des Vins de Duras

Tel: (Fr) 5 53 94 13 48

cotesdeduras.com

The Côtes de Duras *appellation* produces affordable, quality wines crafted by approximately 200 passionate growers. To discover the *appellation* and a broad range of wines, visit the Maison des Vins, located down the road from the handsome 12th-century château.

JAMS AND JELLIES

La P'tite Confiote

Tel: (Fr) 5 53 83 77 51

confitures-gelees.com

Make your breakfast extra special with La P'tite Confiote's award-winning jams, jellies and nut spreads. More than 70 fragrant varieties are artisanally made by Vincent and Véronique Beylard using sun-drenched fruits, herbs and flowers. Their fig and rose jam is delightful on a warm tartine with grilled brie.

MARKET

Place du 11 Novembre, Place Jean Bousquet and surroundings

If visiting Duras during summer, don't forget to check out the Thursday night market (*marché nocturne*) held from late June until early September. This bustling culinary celebration invites you to feast on everything from mussels and oysters to sumptuous plates of paella and roasted chicken. There are picnic tables all around the centre of town, but the best spots are on Place du 11 Novembre, where you can enjoy live music.

FOIE GRAS

La Ferme de Souleilles

Tel: (Fr) 5 53 41 23 24

souleilles-foiegras.com

To learn more about foie gras head to the Musée du Foie Gras at La Ferme de Souleilles, a traditional duck farm in Frespech. Don't miss the annual Grande Fête du Foie Gras at the beginning of November.