

Alsace, and Bruck's signature version seasons it with truffles. Can't get enough? Bruck will ship preserved cans to the U.S.

One aficionado of Bruck's product is Queen Elizabeth. We don't know if she has the tables at Windsor Castle spread with linens by Beauvillé, the nearly 250-year-old Alsatian firm that handprints its fabrics, but you can check out a fine selection at Nappes d'Alsace.

B IS FOR BURGUNDY

Bn route to Beaune, the regional train from Dijon (where the TGV arrives from Paris) chugs through fabled vineyards that

crowd the town gates. Inside town, you literally walk on wine — millions of bottles are stored in cellars dug by the monks who were Burgundy's first vintners. The tasting cellars of Marché aux Vins provide an overview of local wine-making styles, including rare century-old bottles.

The Beaunois do not live by wine alone. La Moutarderie Fallot began stone-grinding mustard seed in 1840. True to its roots, Fallot champions mustards made from local wine vinegar and local seed — instead of the Canadian seeds found in most "Dijon" mustard. Cheesemaker Alain Hess rolls a soft cow cheese in mustard bran to create his famed *Délice de Pommard*, available at his shop with a bounty of other local cheeses. Chocolatier Bouché fashions *Le Sénévé* by blending mustard seeds into chocolate ganache, then enrobing the pieces in dark chocolate for a complex sweetness with bitter and salty undertones.

The tastes of Burgundy converge at Clos de Cèdre, the

Good Eats

Bonito "hamburgers" on coarsely chopped tomatoes, eggplant "caviar" and baby artichokes at Clos du Cèdre. Car interiors on the new TGV Est line were designed by Christian Lacroix. Trains on the new TGV Est line operate at nearly 200 miles per hour.



polished restaurant of Hôtel Le Cèdre. Chef Daniel Lamaque selects four Burgundies to pair with his six-course sampling menu. His style is deceptively simple — Charolais beef with pinot noir jus, pain d'épices topped with roasted gorgonzola. To stay for breakfast on the terrace surrounded by beds of lavender, inquire about one of the 40 rooms in this former winegrower's villa.

C IS FOR CHAMPAGNE

More than 30 French kings were crowned in the Reims cathedral, and citizens of this historic capital of Champagne consider their bubbly the drink of royalty. It's also a religion. Stained glass windows inside the cathedral detail the steps of making champagne, from the hand harvest of the grapes to the riddling of the bottles.

Founded in 1729, Ruinart is the oldest champagne house. Tours descend into the eight-kilometer honeycomb of its Roman-era chalk cellars, where wines are stored at 88 percent humidity. The top cuvée for sale is Dom Ruinart Rosé from 1996, one of the best years of the 20th century. When in Reims, do as the Rémois do, and dunk rose champagne biscuits into your bubbly. The patina of age at Café du Palais, an Art Nouveau gem, speaks of thousands of glasses tossed back in celebration or consolation.

La Vigneraie is an intimate local favorite — where a businessman might bring clients for lunch but his mistress for dinner. She can enjoy perch with a champagne verjus while he tucks into the boneless quail stuffed with braised sweetbreads.

Before hopping your return train, stop at La Petite Friande to stock up on bouchons de champagne. One bite of these chocolate champagne corks filled with champagne marc will prolong the taste of Reims all the way back to Paris. ♦