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Close to Heaven:
Val d'Isère

The *Artist* Star
Jean Dujardin

Pale and Mellow:
Very Rare Cognac

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2012 Travel Study Guide





Kuzina



Vegetable-stuffed tomato at Kuzina

a charming bistro specializing in southwestern French farmhouse cooking—but also gave this beautiful but forlorn and rather forgotten district a major boost. Today, Xiridakis's restaurants line nearly a whole street in what's become a thriving and fashionable neighborhood. The newest of them is **Kuzina**, a seafood restaurant with a menu inspired by the island of Crete, recalling his Greek ancestry. The mosaic-clad interior features an ice-filled counter displaying the catch of the day, just as often found in Greece, and the wood-topped tables are set with sheets of Greek fishmonger's wrapping paper. For starters at a recent lunch, marinated swordfish was served with a yellow-beet "gazpacho", and a velouté of red cabbage came with scallops and a spinach-filled blini. Next came beautifully prepared fresh cod steak with lentils, and sea bream cooked in a salt crust and garnished with shiitake mushrooms. Desserts were terrific too—caramelized clementine with chestnut sabayon, and lime-spiked cheesecake. 22 rue Porte de la Monnaie, 05.56.74.32.92. Lunch menu €18, à la carte €50

MONTPELLIER Château Lunch

When seeking winter sun in France, Montpellier, in Languedoc-Roussillon, is a wonderful destination. Not only is it one of the most popular holiday cities among the French themselves, it's also young, lively, endowed with some excellent museums, and the local restaurant scene just keeps getting better and better. The latest find is **Folia**, at the Château de Flaugergues, a charming 18th-century château and wine estate run by Count Henri de Colbert and his family. Open for lunch only from Monday to Friday, the relaxed, good-value restaurant features the delicious market-driven cooking of young chef Thierry Alix, who formerly had his own restaurant in Sète. Alix's menus change almost daily, but a few recent offerings included *brandade de morue* made with artichoke mouseline instead of potatoes; leek velouté sparked up with an Espelette pepper cream quenelle; sautéed lamb with olives garnished with creamy polenta and beet mousse; and poached orange with white-chocolate ganache—all original and delicious. Plan to visit the château's spectacular gardens for a post-prandial stroll, too. 1744 ave Albert Einstein, 04.99.52.66.35. Three-course prix-fixe lunch menu €19.50

Prices are approximate, per person without wine.

Alexander Lobrano's book *Hungry for Paris* is published by Random House. www.hungryforparis.com. Find it in the France Today Bookstore: www.francetoday.com/store

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Folia at the Château de Flaugergues