



Le Domaine aux Quat Saisons

www.southoffrancehotel.com

Winter 2011 Newsletter

February, 2011

It may be winter in Northern Europe and in North America, but last month I was working in the garden in shirt sleeves and occasionally 'topless'! Our thoughts are towards spring and already the garden has colour with new planting areas taking shape. Why not halt the chill of winter and book your holiday with us now? The warmth of these pictures should excite you, but the reality is so much better ...

A round-up of key information:

- **2011 opening dates:** 8th May to 13th October;
- **our Cookery Course is being launched; this will be an unforgettable experience** More details in the attached newsletter;
- **Email address info@auxquatsaisons.com no longer works;** please use info@southoffrancehotel.com;
- **room tariffs have not been increased for the 7th consecutive season;**
- **dinner prices remain at €39 pp;** amazing value for 4 courses, aperos and wine. Everything is cooked in-house and you dine in either the fine old paneled dining room or under the stars on our terrace.
- We have taken the decision to no longer accept any children under the age of 14;
- deposit payments can now be made on our website;

For those of you interested in food and gardening we have launched 2 exciting new websites:

- www.french-recipe.co.uk
- www.themediterraneangardener.co.uk

See our New Alistair Sawday's Review (page footer below)

These are very popular and constantly updated with new information, recipes, tips and advice; we hope that you enjoy them.



Mediterranean beds, spring 2010



Lavender, Linum and Californian poppies

Spring tariffs are from €89 per room per night, including breakfast and taxes.

'Behind white wrought-iron gates in a lively wine-producing village is a little corner of paradise. The moment you enter this old *maison de maître*, elegantly furnished and charmingly run, you know you are in for a treat. The immaculately restored rooms, the beautiful antiques, the leisurely breakfasts taken on the terrace, the exceptional dinners produced from seasonal produce, the divine pool and the garden that is David's delight – all will inspire you to return. David and his team run an enchanting small hotel to which a trio of dachshunds – 'les Girls' – add the final delightful note' – Alistair Sawday's New Review 2011/12

Cookery Courses

Intermediate: 23rd -28th May 2011 (5 nights, 4 whole days)

Advanced: 10th – 14th Oct 2011 (5 nights, 4 whole days)

The **intermediate course** will cover most of the techniques of French cookery: sautés, stocks, French pastry, quiches and tarts, eggs, cooking poultry, fish and meat salads, flour based sauces, slow cooked dishes and using utensils.

The **advanced course** will also include making choux pastry, soufflés, French roulades and gateaux, cooking and butchering poultry, fish and meat, making flour and butter based sauces.

- Exceptional opportunities to be taught hands-on by David, our experienced chef.
- No more than six per course.
- French cooking with a Mediterranean accent.
- Plenty of opportunity to ask questions and learn tips from the best of restaurant and home cooking.
- Trips to local markets and pick-up from Carcassonne airport are included.
- Lots of techniques for taking the pressure off dinner party cooking.

You will leave not only having had a great time but being able to prepare a large range of dishes with confidence and with your own copy of our recipe selection.



Goats' cheese frittata, red pepper salsa

Intermediate: Price per person based on sharing a room €995.

Advanced: Price per person based on sharing a room €1,175.

Single room supplement: €150

Price for non-participating partner: €345

Breakfasts, 4 evening meals, lunches and wine included in the price (Wednesday evening meal at restaurant of your choice is not included.)

If you have stayed with us before, you probably have eaten with us too. Did you know that David has written a cookery book?

Extracts are being published on www.french-recipe.co.uk

Creating a Tropical Look Whilst Conserving Water



Swimming Pool, May 2010

Many local gardens are brown, scorched and lifeless in the summer; brown and grey are not our favourite colours and the dried-out look is unattractive so we work hard to have as much summer interest as possible. Surprisingly, this is achievable without a Dubai-style watering regime - selecting the right plants and the right care. Nowhere is this more important than around the swimming pool where a lush tropical feel is a key element.

Colourful drought tolerant climbers adorn the walls; trumpet vine and perennial morning glory, drought tolerant roses and jasmine. Oleanders, Marvel of Peru, *Eucomis*, *Felicia*, *Euryops* and *Canna edulis* are key plants here, as well as painted containers, grouped to conserve water – begonias and alstroemerias are very tough plants. Grasses, palms and *Cordyline* complete the tropical look.

‘Les Belges’

One morning in the summer of 2010 a fast-talking French lady rang the doorbell and was very insistent to see our back door; with cries of “*C’est magnifique!*” and finally “*Quelle Bijou de l’Histoire du Minervois*”, she waved an old black and white photo. Bernadette, the chair of the local historical society, had been sent this by the son of a Belgian officer, Mr Willocx, who had been billeted in the house with a garrison of Belgian officers during the defence of France in WWII. She had been searching all over the Minervois to find out where the photo had been taken.

Mr Willocx, then 6, remembers staying in the house during the summer of 1940; this picture taken in June 1940 shows the now famous back door with the garrison of ‘Les Belges’.



Rear of the House, June 1940

www.french-recipe.co.uk – French cooking, tips and advice

www.themediterraneangardener.co.uk – Drought tolerant and Mediterranean gardening

Local Tourism Feature

Aigne

You will enjoy a visit to Aigne with its marvellously preserved 'circulade'. The village church is right in the centre of the circle of houses that served to protect its inhabitants. 'Lo Cagarol', Occitan for snail, is an authentic restaurant with excellent local food. Aigne is close to Minerve, another key tourist destination and can be combined for a visit on the same day.

*Lo Cagarol
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