

A town for a weekend

## *The truth is in SAULIEU*

Burgundy is the place where the gourmets from all over the world come not only for tourism and new impressions but for tasting of wines and dishes.

Despite the widespread opinion the élite of the French gastronomy gather in Burgundy, not in Paris. It is a historical region located in the eastern part of France, beside the Morvan massif. The region is famous for its cheeses, crayfish, frogs, truffles and Moutarde de Dijon made with wine, grape vodka, Madeira or Sherry, with adding of spices and forest berries. Local snails, found right in the vineyards, are cooked with butter, garlic, onion, lemon juice and aromatic herbs. One eats the snails directly from the shells and drinks with them young wines, blackcurrant liqueur or Vittel water produced in the mountainous massif. Saulieu is considered to be the gastronomic capital of Burgundy where the best world cooking chiefs learn and got their training. The culinary traditions of the old market town go back to the Middle Ages which in fact may be proved by regular wine fairs held here as well as “Charolais” culinary festival. The main course of that August festival is beef served with different sauces. Still the main reason for coming to Saulieu is the Bernard Loiseau restaurant that has three “Michelin” stars and has been holding the top twentieth place in the French restaurant guide “Gault Millau” for several years already. Bernard Loiseau, the founder of that iconic place for the French people and the Order of the Legion of Honour holder, was among the first French restaurateurs who introduced his empire at the stock exchange. Specialty frog legs with garlic purée, crispy-skin pike with shallot marmalade, and wines of more than thousand kinds from one of the biggest cellars of Burgundy are served in the Museum Hall designed in the style of 1930<sup>th</sup> or at the garden terrace beside the swimming pool. The food is cooked from the local products and contains almost no fat, starch or cholesterol, which is also true for the desserts: the famous “Sand Rose” ice-cream is made from the pure chocolate and served with orange coulis.

### **Eric Goettelman**

*Is the leading sommelier of the Bernard Loiseau Gourmet restaurant group.*

Being a sommelier I work with wine in the first place, but once I was offered to take part in the conference devoted to water and I thought of one thing – why do we never talk about water, this important component of every meal? I recollected that a sommelier is not only a wine expert but a specialist in all liquids served. It is important that taste, quality and composition of water correspond to the wine. The wine has a “terroir” – a set of soil and climatic factors and characteristics of an area that determine its type and specialties. The same may be referred to the water as well. One gets it from different depths and the water passes through different rocks. If one tastes the water in the right way it is possible to feel its richness, enveloping quality, central note, acidity and delicacy, in the same way as with wine. And after swallowing to feel what I call “tannins” in the mouth – the mineral aftertaste.

1. The Hotel Relais Bernard is located in the renovated mansion of the XVIII century.
2. The breakfast at the Bernard Loiseau restaurant is served in the hall named after famous cooking chief Alexandre Dumaine.
3. The frog legs with garlic purée is the Bernard Loiseau's house specialty.
4. Hospices de Beaune has the tiled roof made of ceramics of different colors.

5. Bernard Loiseau is the founder of the restaurant with the same name, which became the symbol of gastronomic France.
6. One can buy liqueurs, mustard and strong alcoholic drinks made according to the Bernard Loiseau recipes in the shop near the restaurant.

### **Where to stay**

The building of Relais Bernard Loiseau was erected in the centre of Saulieu on the place of the former post station in 1700. In 1998 the cooking chief Alexandre Dumaine completely renovated the building and turned it into the restaurant La Cote d'Or which later has grown to the hotel complex. The interior still preserves the XVI century motifs: oak doors, stone walls and wooden ceiling beams. The rooms are decorated with antiques, canvases and large mirrors while the window has the view of the English garden with a rosarium, fruit trees, a waterfall and a pond. The mansion is located half the way from Paris to Lyons, beside the Basilica of Saint Andoche, The Morvan Regional Park and the city of Flavigny.

### **What to see**

It is considered that the best Burgundy wines are produced in the town of Beaune named after the goddess of running water, Bellona. The local wine-makers got their help from dry and sunny climate. Every year in the hospital and asylum grounded in 1443 by the Chancellor of the Duke of Burgundy, Nicolas Rolin, and his wife, Salins, a charity auction of wines from the hospital's cellars and one of the biggest international baroque music festivals are held. For two centuries the former defensive constructions of the town have been preserving millions of bottles, as well as the XIII century cellars that can offer the wine kinds from neighborhood of Gevrey-Chambertin, Côte de Beaune, Nuits-Saint-Georges, Vosne-Romanee.

### **What to drink**

The Vittel thermal springs in the mountainous regions of Vosges were opened in 1854. The natural mineral water which is served in the restaurants immediately after the guests have taken their places at table allows to prepare the receptors and to feel wine bouquet and dishes better. The bottles are stored in the dark, well-aired rooms at the temperature of 12-15°C. The water is usually served in wide glasses in order to open its taste to the full extent and without the ice as it distorts the taste and prevents the right perception. Too warm water becomes extremely rich and enveloping which also makes it difficult to feel the taste.