

Culinary Quebec

Canada's Francophone province offers a gourmet escape filled with farm-fresh dining experiences.

BY REBECCA L. RHOADES

For many people, Canadian cuisine is defined by one dish: poutine. The hearty combination of French fries, cheese curds, and brown gravy has been the country's unofficial national dish ever since it debuted in Quebec snack bars in the late 1950s.

But Canada's food scene is as diverse as its landscape, with chefs and restaurants showcasing local ingredients and time-honored traditions. And nowhere is that connection to the land more noticeable than in Canada's largest province: Quebec.

FRENCH TECHNIQUE MEETS INDIGENOUS ABUNDANCE

Whether you're craving traditional Québécois fare or something with a more modern twist, you're sure to find it in Vieux-Quebec, the historic heart of Quebec City. Meals here are slow — with dinner often lasting three or four hours — and meant to be savored.

A must for any gourmand is Légende, which offers modern boreal cuisine that honors Canada's First Nations heritage and is rooted in Quebec's terroirs.

"Everything we serve is grown locally in Quebec or within Canada," says chef Elliot Beaudoin. "We don't work with any exotic foods. Even behind the bar, we don't have any lime or lemon. In the kitchen, there's no olive oil, no cacao, no pepper. We use only things we can grow."

In 2025, Légende earned its first Michelin Star as part of the rating system's inaugural guide to the province.

"Becoming one of the first wave of chefs to have a Michelin star is something really big for us," Beaudoin adds. "We can finally show Quebec's food to everyone."

Each dish is thoughtfully composed. Cod from Gaspé is paired with a homemade maitake butter, fermented daikon, and white radish. Mussels and escabeche are served in a saffron broth with chorizo from Charlevoix. Boreal-spice-rubbed venison is accompanied by a fennel and radish salad tossed in a coniferous vinegar and topped with a condiment of hazelnut and spruce.

About a half-mile away is the Auberge Saint-Antoine, a Relais & Châteaux two Michelin Key boutique hotel. Tucked away in an 1822 maritime warehouse attached to the hotel, Chez Muffy — named in honor of Martha "Muffy" Bate Price, the matriarch of the hotel — is a cozy farm-to-table French-Canadian restaurant that serves produce from its own organic farm.

Traditional stalwarts, such as foie gras, caviar, Atlantic halibut, and Nova Scotia lobster, are joined by farm-harvested onions, local mushrooms, fish roe, and eggplant cannelloni with smoked tomato foam. The food menu is bested only by the restaurant's 700-label wine list.

AN ISLAND FOR EATING

About 15 minutes from Quebec City, in the middle of the St. Lawrence River, is Île d'Orléans. Here, agriculture thrives year-round, providing the restaurants of the province with fresh, seasonal ingredients. Visitors will find family-owned operations offering everything from Old World cheeses to black currant syrup, cider, and succulent fruit picked straight from the source. Poutine shacks, produce stands, and miles of pastoral farmlands, dense orchards, and lush vineyards line the singular road that circles the island.

"Île d'Orléans is well-known for its strawberries," says Frantz Noël, founder of La Conciergerie du Terroir, a tour company that offers private guided epicurean journeys across the island. "The rest is full of orchards, vineyards; we grow a lot of potatoes and corn, too."

At Cassis Monna & Filles, sisters Catherine and Anne Monna are fifth-generation makers of crème de cassis, a tart red liqueur made from black currants, which flourish on the island. "We have the perfect climate for growing black currants," Anne says. "There is a microclimate with the river, a lot of wind, and the soil is quite rich and well-drained. There's also quite a bit of snow, which the berries need."

The island is also home to Ferme du Coteau, the private farm of Auberge Saint-Antoine. Gardener Alex Faille oversees 60 acres of croplands and fruit orchards that supply Chez Muffy with fresh, organic ingredients.

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Gardener Alex Faille introduces guests to some of the produce grown at Chez Muffy's private farm, Ferme du Coteau.

"Alex is a very creative gardener," says Auberge Saint-Antoine owner Evan Price. "He's always thinking of different vegetables or fruits we can grow here. This started as a very small project, and we're working on building it bigger and bigger. During the peak season, virtually all of the vegetables and fruits served at Chez Muffy will come from here."

It's a concept that's repeated throughout the province.

A SENSE OF PLACE

Charlevoix, a verdant region about 90 minutes northeast along the St. Lawrence River, is filled with dramatic cliffs and deep valleys that boast a rich agricultural heritage dating back hundreds of years. Here, family farms craft artisanal delights such as cheeses, honey, wines, and more.

One of the best places to try the flavors of the region is Faux Bergers, located on the farm of Famille Migneron de Charlevoix, an award-winning artisan cheesemaker. During the hyper-local restaurant's nine-course dinner, revised daily to reflect the season and available ingredients, chef and co-owner Émile Tremblay serves up creative dishes featuring local ingredients such as whelk, capelin, arctic char, and beef short ribs, all while sharing stories about each item and its local purveyors.

To the south, about an hour southeast of Montreal near the Vermont border is the tiny village of Stanbridge East. Blink, and you'll miss the 1849 red-brick building that's home to celebrated gardener Jean-Martin Fortier's vegetable-forward eatery, Espace Old Mill. Executive Chef Éric Gendron offers a multicourse menu that celebrates the bounty from the property's half-acre garden.

"I started this restaurant because I wanted to have a space to show people that you can eat year-round in season here in Quebec," Fortier says. He grows more than 65 varieties of vegetables, herbs, and edible flowers in 50-foot-long beds and a carbon-neutral greenhouse located within steps of the restaurant's kitchen. And all of it ends up on guests' plates.

Mussels and escabeche in a saffron broth is a popular dish at Légende.



In spring 2025, the restaurant was honored by Michelin with a Green Star for its sustainable gastronomy, regenerative agriculture principles, and ultra-local sourcing.

"The Green Star means more to me than the regular star, because that's what the vision was," Fortier says. "Just to have the recognition that all the efforts we've put into building this place — we cook and sell everything we grow. There's no waste."