

A GUIDE TO DINING

EATING

L O S A N G E L E S

EATaway

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The "E" List

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Pasadena
Santa Monica
Third Street
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West Los Angeles

\$4.95 US
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www.eatingmagazine.com



french * provençal
bastide



Hours: Tue-Sat 6pm-9:30pm
Parking: Complimentary Valet
Cross Street: La Cienega Blvd.

8475 Melrose Place
Los Angeles, CA 90069
Phone: (323) 651-5950

This intimate Provençal garden oasis, complete with olive trees and lavender bushes, is where sophisticated Angelenos flock to worship award-winning Alain Giraud, whose exclusively French menu has LA's cognoscenti wheeling and dealing just for a reservation.



Price: \$\$\$\$
Attire: Upscale
Reservations: Accepted
Smoking: No Smoking
Alcohol: Full Bar
Vegetarian: Limited
Acoustics: Quiet
Insider Tip: Don't miss out on the dreamy Lavender Vacherin for dessert.

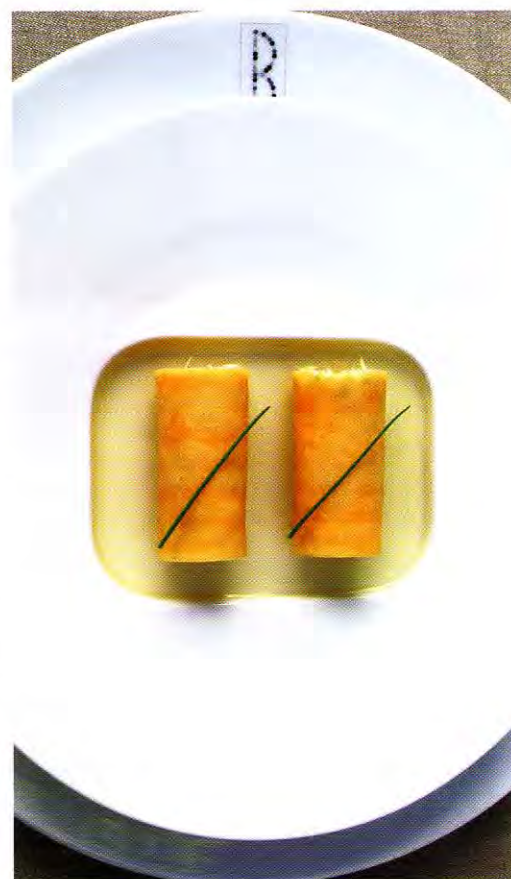
"Bastide," which means country farmhouse, has been a life-long dream of Chef Alain Giraud. Born in Paris, Giraud grew up in the restaurant business and regularly visited his grandmother in the countryside. Her delicious home-cooked meals inspired him to become a great chef and to never forget his roots. Giraud's grandmother would be proud; from his days at the legendary Hôtel de Crillon and Le Grand Vefour in Paris, to LA's Citrus and Lavande, Giraud has outdone himself with this outstanding new restaurant. Bastide involves one of the most unusual partnerships in the business between Giraud and veteran commercial television director, Joe Pytko. Famous for being one of the city's biggest spenders, Pytko reputedly paid \$35,000 for a 2.2 pound Italian truffle at a charity auction for underprivileged children. He gave it to Giraud, who whipped it into a magical treat, which graced Bastide's menu for a two-week truffle extravaganza. Needless to say, no expense has been spared since.

Going to Bastide is a bit like going to restaurant heaven. You arrive on the quiet tree-lined street, are greeted by smiling valets, then escorted through a golden archway into a secluded sun-dappled pebble courtyard, surrounded by sprays of lavender and knotted olive trees, straight from the gardens of the Greek Gods. Inside, Parisian queen of style, Andrée Putman, has created a serenely elegant

space with alternating pastel colored walls that contrast the dark and glossy parquet wood floors. Soft blue window sheers gently billow in the breeze on summer days. Tables are covered in thick monogrammed linens and set with Ms. Putman's own Taupe and Tressage dinnerware made from Bernardaud *Limoges* china, as well as Riedel and Spiegelau crystal, Laguiole knives with polished maple handles, and Christofle silverware. And all this before you've even tasted the food!

Eating at Bastide is not for the faint-hearted; it is a full-on affair for serious foodies with time and money to burn. There are three prix-fixe menus each evening. Do not be deceived by the small portions, as these menus run between six and nine courses. All begin with wonderfully poetic amuse-bouche, which could be a slice of lobster wrapped in shredded phyllo, lightly fried, and sprinkled with a red spice presented as "lobster dust." This treat, followed by Crab and Melon Cannelloni in a light Muscat Aspic and then, as an entrée, Monkfish served with Herb Gnocchi, Pancetta and dripping in Marjolaine Jus, might comprise the Traditional Menu.

As an alternative, there is the seven-course Seasonal Menu, which offers something fresh from the daily farmer's market, like asparagus, used in every course, whether it be White Asparagus Soup chilled with a delicate Asparagus Mousse or the Tart with Lemon and a sweet Asparagus Ice Cream. The ultimate



HOLLYWOOD



indulgence—a nine-course Bastide Menu with to-die-for delicacies such as the Foie Gras Torchon complemented with a Pear Napoleon and Brioche, Oxtail Consommé peppered with Fresh Black Truffles and Duck Filet, and a Grapefruit Sorbet spiked with Noilly Pratt Vermouth to clear the way for the Rack of Lamb with Panisse, Garlic Confit and Black Olive Sauce.

The highly experienced sommelier, Christophe Rolland, guides guests through the wine list, whose several hundred French-only labels have been lovingly and carefully collected. There are also 30 different wines by the glass. Keep this man close when the French cheese trolley arrives, as picking the right wine to go with the right cheese is an art that most mortals have yet to master. The service at Bastide is flawless; crisp and professional with just the right mix of familiarity and distance.

Guests should pace themselves and dine *à la France*, allowing plenty of time to enjoy and digest this unique culinary experience. Linger over the dessert menu as each is as tempting as the next. Chocolate Hazelnut Crunch Tartlette with Thyme Ice Cream, Meyer Lemon Meringue Tart with Citrus Confit Ice Cream and Almond Financier with Blanc Manger and Dried Apricot Sorbet are good bets, but a personal favorite is the Lavender Vacherin Glacé. Imagine a red and white water lily made of lavender ice cream and lavender-scented whipped cream, surrounded by petals of meringue teardrops and cut strawberries, floating on a pool of raspberry coulis with a sprig of lavender in the center as its stamen. Not only does it look good, it tastes incredible; the subtle flavors and textures burst on the tongue like a blossoming flower. No wonder the little hummingbird they've nicknamed Josie, after Joe Pytka, hasn't left yet!

Bastide is pitch-perfect and captures an old world elegance that makes you grateful that in the midst of this ever-changing city at least one person has not forgotten his roots and has mercifully put them down for all of us to enjoy.

review by kate ayrton
photographs by karen harley