

Food Trip

Breezing through

WINE COUNTRY

BY PATRICIA HARRIS

Paris dining is fabulous, but French food, like French wine, is a matter of *terroir*. Choucroute has a livelier tang when the restaurant overlooks Strasbourg's soaring cathedral. Charolais beef seems more succulent in Beaune. Champagne sparkles brighter after you emerge from the chalk caves beneath Reims.

You can speed to lunch in Alsace, Burgundy or Champagne and get back to the Champs-Élysée for a late dinner. The new TGV Est line cuts travel time to Strasbourg and Reims in half. And you travel in style — Christian Lacroix designed the car interiors. Along with the TGV Sud Est to Burgundy, these sleek trains turn the ABCs of French gastronomy into three easy day trips.

A IS FOR ALSACE

To welcome high-speed rail service, Strasbourg constructed a 21st-century glass façade over its 19th century carved-stone train station. Yet the most prominent landmark in this home of the European Parliament remains the 465-foot steeple of its Gothic cathedral. When the 16th-century astronomical clock inside strikes twelve, the apostles march before Christ, a cock crows three times, a rooster beats its wings. Just don't plan your lunch reservation by the timepiece. To avoid disturbing Sunday worship, the clock strikes "noon" at 12:30.

Fortunately, lunch is diagonally across the cobblestone plaza. Built in 1589, Maison Kammerzell is one of Strasbourg's most beautiful half-timbered buildings. A spiral stone staircase ascends to the dining rooms — ask for a table with a cathedral view. Chef Guy Pierre Baumann's updated Alsatian specialties include his celebrated three-fish choucroute (haddock, salmon and halibut) complemented by a bone-dry Alsatian riesling.

Strasbourg claims to have originated foie gras. As you explore the medieval quarter, visit the tiny shop of Georges Bruck, last of the city's artisanal foie gras producers. Goose is the traditional "fat liver" of



Wine & Cheese

Enjoy a nice burgundy with classics like Elice de Pommard (center) and other French cheeses.

