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FabriqueDélices French Artistry on the Shores of SF Bay





By James Mellgren

A charcuterie in Aurillac or Vic-sur-Cère or some other small but locally important town will possibly provide a pâté the like of which you never tasted before, or a locally cured ham, a few slices of which you will buy and carry away with a salad, a kilo of peaches, a bottle of Monbazillac and a baton of bread, and somewhere on a hillside amid the mile upon mile of golden broom or close to a splashing waterfall you will have, just for once, the ideal picnic.

~ Elizabeth David,
“An Omelette and a Glass of Wine”

Fabrique Délices

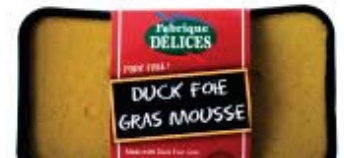
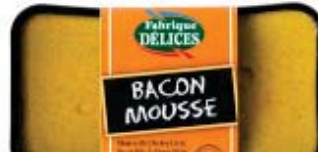
French Artistry on the Shores of SF Bay



Well-made charcuterie, whether it's for the ideal picnic described at left, a little something to accompany a glass of wine at the end of the day, or as an ingredient in your favorite dishes, is one of the great joys of modern living. Many cultures throughout the world make some form of cured meats and meat pastes, but it is to the traditions of France that we turn here. The word we use in our business most to describe this category of gourmet foods, charcuterie, comes from the French term *cuisinier de chair*, or “cooker of meats,” but today it also refers to a shop (or department within a store) that makes and/or sells such products. Charcuterie has been considered a culinary art form in France since at least the 15th century, and like the country's famously ungovernable number and variety of cheeses, France also produces the most diverse selection of cured meats, rillettes, pâtés, terrines, and sausages. But one needn't go to France to feast on an extraordinary

array of charcuterie. In fact, I recently had the great pleasure of visiting one of the best-known producers of authentic, artisan charcuterie in the United States, and lucky for me, they are a short drive away from my home, situated just south of Oakland, near the shores of the San Francisco Bay in Hayward, Calif.

Fabrique Délices began in 1985, set up originally as a subsidiary of SAPAR, the leading pâté producer in France whose acclaim extended throughout Europe. SAPAR's aim was to raise the quality and availability of charcuterie in the United States for a consumer that was getting increasingly savvy about gourmet foods, but whose choice in so-called “authentic” French charcuterie was sorely lacking in flavor, texture and consistency. To achieve this goal, SAPAR sent two young men over to run the





fledgling company, Marc Poinsignon and charcutier Antonio Pinheiro to serve as CEO and plant manager, respectively.

After successfully establishing Fabrique Délices as the leading source for authentic artisan charcuterie in the U.S., Poinsignon and Pinheiro purchased the company in 1996, and Sébastien Espinasse joined the company two years later to head up sales and marketing. The business has since relocated to the opposite side of the bay into a beautiful new office and production facility where I met with them, toured the plant, and enjoyed a delicious tasting of their marvelous products.

After meeting in their spacious, sunlit office, the walls of which are covered with awards, magazine articles and

various other laudatory press they have received over the years for outstanding products, I got to go on a tour of the factory itself. The first thing that struck me as I saw the large, spotlessly clean rooms in which the raw materials are transformed into all sorts of delicious charcuterie, was how small the machinery is. Of course, it's all larger than one would use at home, but I had expected huge industrial apparatus for chopping, blending, stuffing, and so on. Espinasse told me the reason is that everything is made in small batches to ensure quality and consistency, and that with the exception of a machine to chop the meats, the products are made entirely by hand.

They use tools, of course, like an extruder for stuffing sausages, basically a slightly larger version of one that attaches to a KitchenAid mixer for use at home. But the process of washing the casings, filling them and tying them off to the desired lengths is all done by human hands. All the herbs and spices are measured out and added by hand to the different products, whether it be pâtés, saucisson sec, rillettes, boudin blanc, or any of the other products. Teams of highly skilled workers were



The Key Players at Fabrique Délices

Antonio Pinheiro (above, left), chef charcutier-traiteur and co-owner of Fabrique Délices, was born in Portugal near Lisbon in 1961. In 1979, he graduated from L'école Lenotre, where he studied and learned "l'art de la charcuterie." He then worked for several artisanal charcuteries in France, joining SAPAR SA in 1982.

Marc Poinsignon, president and co-owner of Fabrique Délices, was born in Meaux near Paris, France, in 1963. In 1984, he graduated from L'école Hôtelière de Paris, where he studied and learned a great deal about hotel and restaurant management as well as traditional cuisine. He then worked for several 3-star restaurants in Paris and London.

Sébastien Espinasse (above, right) is originally from Brive la Gaillarde, a region in France well-known for its gastronomical talent. His passion is making traditional and authentic French cuisine. When he came to the San Francisco Bay Area for his studies (MBA), he immediately fell in love with the cosmopolitan ambiance of the city and the opportunities the area afforded him to pursue the culinary arts. After a yearlong internship at the San Francisco Marriott Hotel, he continued to take an interest in the products specific to his region in France. He took the position of director of sales and marketing for Fabrique Délices in 1998.





busy throughout the facility making product or packaging them in preparation for shipping them out into their distribution network. The entire operation was extremely efficient, minutely documented and carried out in a factory where one could literally eat off the floor, let alone any of the stainless steel surfaces. It was a wonder to behold.

My other surprise was in the size of the finished inventory, which was quite small. Very little product is stored. The small batch manufacturing system allows them to make product and send it out in very short order. In other words, when their products arrive at a store, they are very fresh and just recently made, guaranteeing great-tasting, quality products and a longer shelf life for the retailers.

The real treat came after we were back in the office as Espinasse laid out a smorgasbord of products for tasting, including a fabulous Cured & Dried Duck Salami and a sneak peek



at their newest addition, Bacon Mousse, which made its debut a couple of weeks later at the Summer Fancy Food Show in New York. Our banquet was accompanied by Fabrique Délices Cornichons (a must for any charcuterie selection), slices of baguette and a delicious chilled bottle of Sancerre provided by Poinsignon who came out to join us. I could have been in France.

Fabrique Délices today makes over 150 different products including Pâtés, Mousses, Saucisson Sec, Magret, Duck Confit, Rillettes, Garlic Sausage, Merguez, Saucisse de Toulouse, Boudin Noir, Boudin Blanc and a variety of other outstanding gourmet foods. Some of my personal favorites include the Whole Duck Foie Gras with Armagnac "Au Torchon" Style, Rillettes du Périgord,

Rillettes du Porc, Pâté de Campagne Forestier, Saucisson à l'ail (Garlic Sausage) and, of course, the aforementioned Bacon Mousse and the incredible Cured & Dried Duck Salami, as



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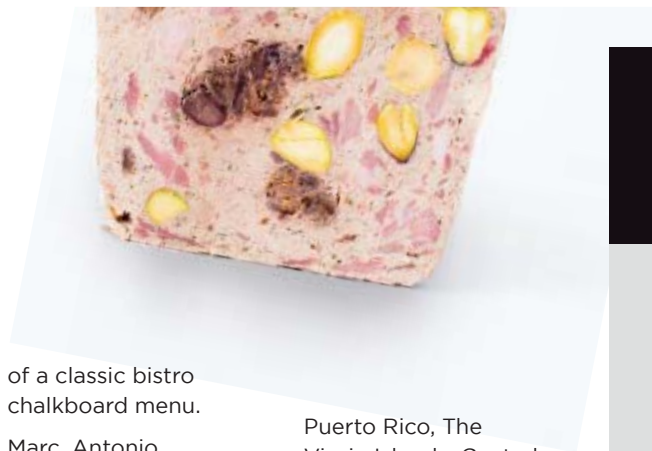
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well as their perfectly crisp and flavorful Cornichons.

The team has been busy adding seven new varieties to the line, and Sébastien has recently overseen the redesigning of the packaging for the entire line of pâtés and mousses, devising an eye-catching, color-coded series of labels that evoke the image



of a classic bistro chalkboard menu.

Marc, Antonio, Sébastien and the rest of the team have built and maintained for the past 30 years a company that is one of the crowning glories of the American gourmet business, founded on the principles of outstanding, consistent quality and unique, eye-catching presentations. Their stable of award-winning products are available throughout the United States,

Puerto Rico, The Virgin Islands, Central America, Indonesia and Asia. With their smartly designed new packaging, new products and a commitment to quality and artisan tradition in the entire product range, they are geared to dominate this business for another 30 years and beyond. □



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