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Photo by CFP

Building a better tomorrow with hard work today

Axel Cruau
Consul general of France in Shanghai

Photo by Wang Rongjiang

Patsy Yang

As China and France celebrated the 50th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations in 2014, it marked the beginning of a new phase.

"2014 was an exceptional year in our relationship but it is, for us, only a step in our bilateral relationship," said Axel Cruau, the recently appointed French consul general. "The world has changed, our countries have changed, the challenges we face have changed. We must now envisage together this multipolar, more complex and sometimes more dangerous world."

Cruau took up his post in Shanghai only a month ago but he's no stranger to China. He worked at the French embassy in Beijing from 2009 to 2010 as counsellor for strategic affairs. The career diplomat joined the French foreign ministry in 1998 and previously worked in Paris, Beijing and Los Angeles before starting his new adventure in Shanghai.

The consul general said he is impressed by his residence on Huaihai Road M. built in the 1920s.

"It is here that in 1980 the French consulate was opened, as a living symbol of the French-Chinese friendship," he said. "And I love the openness and energy in Shanghai. This energy surrounds you, penetrates you and binds the whole city and its people together."

He said Shanghai is crucial for the relationships between France and China.

"Not only are our historical ties very tight, but Shanghai is one of the few cities in the world where the future is made: not only the future of China, but the future of our planet.

"It is an economic and financial decision-making center, a vibrant research and innovation hub, a nexus for the arts, fashion, design, art de vivre ... It is home to one of the most dynamic French communities in the world with about 11,000 registered French people living in Shanghai and the nearby region," Cruau said.

"Both of our countries have a long history and this long and rich history, deeply rooted in a territory, a country, has shaped our cultures, institutions and our world views," the consul general added.

"This long history makes us stick to very strong principles and values — such as respect of national sovereignty or respect of international laws — and at the same time makes us audacious and pragmatic for the greater good."

In France, after World War II, General Charles de Gaulle and others turned their backs to centuries of war and chose reconciliation with Germany, which led to reconstructing Europe, a gesture still very meaningful today and not only in Europe. In China, Deng Xiaoping chose reform and opening.

"Our two countries, in 1964, looked toward the future when they established diplomatic relations. I also believe that this long history, with all its brilliant moments but also its tragedies, gives us a sense that we have certain responsibilities in this world," Cruau said.

"Besides, there is another feature that unites us: our love of good food. Perhaps because our two societies have been agrarian for millennia, meals are the moment when we not only eat, but we also exchange, share and bond. Be it within the family circle, with friends, or with business partners, meals are a special and privileged moment. It is an essential part of our 'art de vivre'."

Cruau said much had been accomplished by his predecessors and he wishes to build on what they have already achieved.

CONTINUES ON B2

France continues to attract Chinese investments

FROM B1

Among the about 2,000 French companies operating in China, half have their headquarters in Shanghai and the nearby region. A total of 30 companies have opened R&D centers, which illustrates the desire to build a long-term, mutually beneficial presence in China in fields with high added-value.

"As for scientific and academic cooperation, we want to develop the multiple partnerships that already exist, be it in business, humanities, engineering, or other fields. We are facing global issues such as food safety, climate change or pandemics. Well, why not work concretely then on agriculture, health or sustainable cities?" Cruau said.

French wines, food products, luxury goods and cosmetics are well-known while less-known is that France is synonymous with high technology, from nuclear plants to aeronautics, automotive parts to connected products.

"A young generation of French entrepreneurs is revolutionizing and rejuvenating our economic landscape. This bottom-up movement, centered on very innovative start-ups, is called 'the French Tech,' a very promising area of growth," Cruau said.

He said he advises French companies wishing to enter the Chinese market to work as a team with the French institutions, be prepared to be steadfast, and be here for the long run. The French network includes the consulate, Business France, and the French Chamber of Commerce and Industry in China.

250,000

The number of visas are expected to be issued by the French consulate in Shanghai year end. A procedure to give visas in 48 hours has been put in place and it has proven successful.

While French companies have been doing business in the region for quite a long time, Cruau welcomed Chinese investments in France and said he wanted to develop this further.

"To the Chinese business in France, I would say: come and try us! As our Prime Minister, Manuel Valls, recently said: Chinese businesses and investment are welcome in France. Our structural assets are strong, such as a competitive and creative workforce, efficient infrastructure, plus we have a central geographical position in Europe," Cruau said.

Moreover, the government is conducting a series of reforms to make the environment more attractive for businesses and entrepreneurs.

The decrease in the value of the euro has created new business opportunities and the eurozone economy is rebounding.

"So it is the right time to seriously consider France and to invest. Chinese investments in France are only 1 percent of the foreign investment: 4 billion euros (US$4.41 billion) on a total of 400 billion euros. There is plenty of room for Chinese investments," he said.

On people-to-people relationships, so crucial to mutual understanding, Cruau wants to encourage more tourists to come and enjoy the country.

"Last year, our Foreign Minister, Laurent Fabius, decided to speed up the issuance of visas in order to concretely boost our people-to-people relationships," he said.

A procedure to give visas in 48 hours has been put in place and it has proven successful. In 2013, some 130,000 visas were issued in Shanghai and in 2015, more than 250,000 visas are expected to be issued by year end.

"France is so diverse and rich so I recommend tourists fly to Paris and explore another region for landscapes, the museums, wine roads, or jazz festivals. All of our regions in Europe or overseas (let us not forget la Reunion or Tahiti for instance) have their unique charm from the well-known regions like Provence or Normandy to less-known areas as Midi-Pyrenees or Bretagne," he said.

Visitors could also do various things. They could take a cruise on the Mediterranean Sea, or on rivers such as the Garonne near Bordeaux. There's also an option for wine tours in Bordeaux, Bourgogne, Champagne, and Alsace.

"As we are in the Shanghai region, why not discover sister cities? Shanghai is twined with Marseilles ... and Ningbo with Rouen," Cruau added.

As a newcomer to Shanghai, Cruau and his family just started discovering the city yet he's well informed of the French gastronomy presence here because "it is part and parcel of a tradition and an 'art de vivre,' which is more than a lifestyle," said Cruau.

Cruau said French food is based on one principle: the quality of ingredients.

He said that each wine — even every bottle of wine — is unique.

"They are like persons and every single one of them has its history and character," he said. "This is what makes them quality products, unmistakably French."

Cosmetics Giant Pierre Fabre boosts its development in China

Daniel Balazs

KLORANE, a novel plant-based hair care brand from Pierre Fabre Laboratories held a press conference of its entrance to the Chinese market on August 6 that attracted some 120 media. As a top brand in 64 countries and regions, Klorane is loved and trusted by consumers across the world. Respect for nature, environment preservation and the integration of nature and science have been the guiding principles of the brand for half a century.

Pierre Fabre Laboratories, the oldest European dermo-cosmetic enterprise and the second biggest independent pharmaceutical laboratory of France is engaged in a wide array of fields, including dermo-cosmetics and therapeutics. For Pierre Fabre, caring for the holistic needs of human beings, respecting the natural environment and collaborating with international healthcare professionals are cornerstones of the company's philosophy.

The continuously growing cosmetics consumer market of China is the second biggest after the US market, with a rising demand for luxury goods. The Chinese market is dynamic and characterized by changes which requires companies to be adaptive and flexible. Avène, a brand of the company entered the Chinese market in 2004 and has enjoyed the trust of the young, stylish Chinese consumers since that time. The 30 million individual Avène products sold last year is a testament to that trust.

"Today China is the most successful oversea market of the brand Avène from Pierre Fabre Laboratories," tells Francis Canet, general manager of Pierre Fabre who has occupied this position for more than a decade, "we are bringing more products to satisfy Chinese market needs, but always with the same ethical approach to Health," he adds.

The company aims to develop multiple presence in the country's market as its engagement has evolved from one product to multiple products and from skin care to hair care.

The 10-year development of Avène was followed by the introduction of René Furterer, another the brand of the company in the end of 2014, with a goal of becoming the top luxury hair care brand in China. René Furterer provides unique hair care according to the personal features of each and every customer. Utilizing high-end technology is an indispensable part of this procedure: Hair diagnostics are provided by highly advanced cameras and real 3D situation screening while in-depth examination with Capillis-cope lays down the basis for unique hair care advises. Luxury hair care is provided to the consumer by the three rituals of the René Furterer hair concept.

As the company aims to bolster its engagement in China, it added a new product to the Chinese market within a very short period of time, as the introduction of René Furterer was followed by the swift entrance of Klorane in the following year. In September, the products of Klorane will enter more than 700 Watsons stores in 99 cities, as the brand aims to promote the safe and reliable hair care of France all across the country to the largest extent possible.

World of wonders to discover in Midi-Pyrenees

Located in the southern part of France, the Midi-Pyrenees is bordered by Massif Central to the north and the Pyrenees to the south.

The region is a relatively novel creation as it was established during the "regionalization" process of the 20th century. It is the largest region of France encompassing an area of 45,000 square kilometers.

Most of the region is rural, characterized by different kinds of agricultural activities. The departments of Haute Garonne, Gers and Tarn are crop producers, while other parts of the region are famous for their vineyards, cattle and sheep farming, as well as the production of Roquefort cheese.

The numerous tourist attractions include historical towns, vineyards, UNESCO World Heritage sites, museums, art galleries and spectacular landscapes offer the possibility of an unforgettable adventure.

Shanghai Daily proposes a three-day tour of the region.

Day 1: Toulouse

Located on the shores of the river Garonne, the regional capital, Toulouse, also regarded as the "pink city" because of its red brick buildings, is the fourth largest city in France. The city is famous for its large university

Toulouse City Hall Capitolium

population and its notable achievements in the aviation, aeronautical, space and electronic industries.

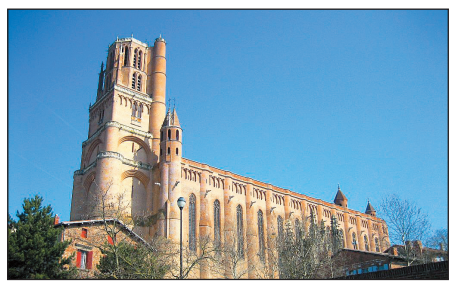
In the morning, check out the Capitolium (Town Hall) that lies in the center of the city. This scenic spot is well-known for its pink facade and its columns and statues made of marble. The Henry IV courtyard, where the king's godson, Duke of Montmorency, was killed is also located nearby.

After the visit, tourists can have a nice cup of coffee at one of the many cafes around Place du Capitole. A visit to the St Etienne cathedral is nice in the afternoon. The uniqueness of the cathedral lies in the asymmetry and mixture of architectural styles. This is not a surprise if one takes in account that it was built over about 600 years. During this time, the architecture was changed on several occasions, while the fire of 1609 also made repairs inevitable.

Day 2: Albi

The Tarn capital Albi is a remarkable tiny cityn. Visiting the Cathedral of Saint Cecilia and the Palais de la Berbie, the bishop's palace, is an appropriate choice as a morning program. Built during the period from 1282 to 1480, the brick-built and fortified cathedral is a magnificent piece of Gothic architecture that was built with the aim of pronouncing papal power in a region formerly dominated by heretics.

The building's western wall is decorated by the murals of the Last Judgment. The cathedral and the nearby Bishop's Palace compose the episcopal area of the city that was recognized as a UNESCO World Heritage site in 2009.



The Cathedral of Saint Cecilia in Albi

The Musem Soulages in Rodez

Day 3: Rodez

Called Segodonum during Roman times, today Rodez is the capital of the Aveyron Department. A visit to the Notre Dame Cathedral is a good choice to start the day. With its spectacularly carved tower, the building is an outstanding representative of southern France's Gothic cathedrals. Next up is a stop at Musee Fenaille and the Musee Puech, two museums in the city center.

In the afternoon stop at Soulages museum, which opened its gates to the public in 2014. Carrying the name of the Rodez-born Pierre Soulages, this museum showcases a collection of the famous artist's work while hosting temporary exhibitions as well.

(Article compiled by Daniel Balazs; photos provided by CRT Midi-Pyrénées/ Dominique VIET)

Carrefour online store+Carrefour easy store: new channel of Carrefour

Ding Yining

FRENCH retailer Carrefour is embracing advanced technology to bring shoppers closer to its services in the fast-changing retail landscape.

In June, the company launched its second Easy Carrefour store in Xuhui District. It's a new initiative to cater to changing consumer habits and demand for neighborhood services in locations near residential or commercial areas.

By the end of this year, Carrefour plans to open about 10 Easy Carrefour stores in Shanghai, Olivier Tollet, new format projects director of Carrefour China, told Shanghai Daily.

"We have a much bigger plan but currently we're still in the pilot phase," he said.

Regarding its e-commerce operations, Carrefour also launched its online shopping store www.carrefour.cn for its Shanghai customers in mid June and Tollet said he is pleased to see it working smoothly during the trial period.

Shopping online

"The basic idea of our website is to bring Carrefour products closer to consumers and all the products will be available for online shoppers," he said.

"Our intention is to duplicate the service wherever there's a Carrefour presence in China, but we'll go step by step for both formats," he added.

Carrefour launchs its online shopping store in Shanghai in mid June, with an aim to bring Carrefour products closer to customers.

Easy Carrefour is offering products in three categories — immediate consumption, take-away, and groceries.

By covering these categories, Easy Carrefour hopes consumers can find the right products and services when they need them.

The Easy Carrefour store on Chaling Road N. also provides mobile top-up and credit card reimbursement in an effort to link consumers with online-to-offline services.

Carrefour is looking for new locations for its Easy stores, and Tollet said they are targeting a combination of residential areas, transportation hubs and office areas.

People living around or people passing by are basically the key customers Easy Carrefour aims to serve. Easy Carrefour is a new format adapted for people who value their time and convenience while shopping. It's also adjusting the operations of the Easy Carrefour store step by step, with more services likely in the future.

Commenting on Carrefour China's e-commerce operations, Tollet said logistics is one of its key strengths as the chain can rely on its existing stores in more than 70 cities all over China.

Merchandise ordered by consumers will be delivered from stores to their doorsteps, while packages ordered from e-commerce websites have to go through several dispatch hubs before delivery.

Pick-up stations

Currently, three out of Carrefour's 29 outlets in Shanghai act as pick-up stops or stations for return of goods.

Earlier this year, Carrefour China restructured its merchandise department and set up six territory merchandise centers to streamline supply chain management and leverage the advantages of a centralized procurement model.

"The restructuring of the merchandise team is aimed at having new logistics capability to support the development of new formats such as our Easy stores and online shopping website," Tollet added.

Carrefour's e-commerce operation is expected to launch in Beijing at the end of this year and eventually will be available all over the country.

To check the products online, please go to **www.carrefour.cn**, or follow its public WeChat account: **jialefushangcheng**.

Super sweet treats at new French cafes

The seasonal tart

Zhu Jing

France makes the A-list in the world of desserts. The good news is you don't need to fly some 10 hours to indulge in an exquisite French dessert. Right here in Shanghai, people with a sweet tooth can easily spoil themselves at various French cafes. Shanghai Daily recommends three newcomers that might surprise you.

Mon Moment Cafe

Decked out in blue, Mom Moment Cafe has been open since May and has two separate sitting areas. The French-style decor is refreshing yet elegant. The back rest of each features prints of a "well-dressed" animal. Sugar, salt and pepper holders are made of white porcelain and in adorable animal shapes such as birds and rabbits.

The cafe is led by a pastry chef from Singapore who studied baking in France. All desserts are freshly prepared and made on site, only sold for the day as a measure for quality control. Its signature afternoon tea set for two is served in a white painted metal bird cage.

The presentation of each dessert here is quite different. For example, St Domingue (48 yuan, or US$7.50) is a mousse made with 70 percent dark chocolate. The mousse cake is coated with runny chocolate syrup topped with a blob of banana cream and a chocolate slice. Peanut crunch is scattered around at the bottom, which adds a playful taste to the layered texture and strong chocolate flavor. The combination may just make you savor every mouthful.

The seasonal tart menu is now serving up a strawberry creation (52 yuan). Six fresh strawberries on top are covered with icing sugar while the lightly baked tart has a filling of medium sweet vanilla custard.

There's not a wide selection of desserts, which is the only disappointment. But it's worth mentioning that the latte tastes surprisingly good for a cafe specialized in desserts.

Address: 3/F, Citic Square, 1168 Nanjing Rd W.
Tel: 5228-1185
Opening hours: 10am-10pm (delivery service available)

St Domingue

Bureau Veritas: Reducing Your Risks

CHINA, after 30 years' evolution, has become the world's second largest economy. Yet it continues to face severe challenges in the domain of quality, health, safety, and environment. As a global leader in testing, inspection and certification, Bureau Veritas, committed to the development in China, is seeking greater interaction with local companies to help them reducing risks, improving supply chain performance and entering global markets — their QHSE performance.

"Unfortunately safety accidents are observed everywhere and Bureau Veritas fully understands the damages of such risks on clients' brands and assets, as well as on their employees and on the communities. To support clients' mitigating those risks, Bureau Veritas's added value is to offer 'one-stop' solution for safety assessment, inspection & audit, technical consulting and testing services" said Romain Petit, executive vice-president of Bureau Veritas North Asia.

Bureau Veritas has a long history in China where it first started providing services in 1882. Today, Bureau Veritas has more than 66,500 employees located in 140 countries. Bureau Veritas China is present in 55 cities, with 100 offices and laboratories, and has more than 12,500 employees. Progressively, it has moved from a foreign company present in China to a large international group strongly and actively involved in the Chinese economy. Nowadays, Bureau Veritas is active in many sectors in China: marine, oil & gas, power & utilities, chemicals, construction, manufacturing of industrial goods, automotive, transport, aerospace & rail, food & agriculture, consumers goods & retail.

Romain Petit
Executive vice-president of Bureau Veritas, North Asia

Bureau Veritas China has participated in numerous landmark projects and is daily supporting foreign firms in their localization projects and domestic firms in their development. Bureau Veritas's global presence and its local embedment make Bureau Veritas the best partner enterprise serving the "One Belt, One Road" policy and it has been doing unremitting efforts to help Chinese enterprises to go abroad.

"Even in the 'new normal' economic environment, China will keep on bringing robust opportunities to Bureau Veritas. We keep on broadening our portfolio of locally compulsory services through organic initiatives and external growth projects. We keep on diversifying our footprint on even more market segments and on even more new technologies. Bureau Veritas China will be the partner of choice for any responsible enterprise in its journey to improve performance. With Bureau Veritas on your side, you can move forward with confidence," Romain Petit said.

Saveurd 'abricot

Pâtisserie Chantilly

Pâtisserie Chantilly's Wuding Road location offers a nice walk from the crowded business circle while its outdoor seats can make for a lovely afternoon tea break on a sunny day. The cafe has gradually gained fame for its desserts over the past few months.

Pâtisserie Chantilly offers desserts in unusual shapes such as pyramids and balls. Some desserts here also have a French name like Framboisier. As the owner's favorite, it has been on the menu since the cafe opened.

During strawberry season, Franisers is on the menu. The pastry chef replaces sponge cake slices with two layers of almond pastries, filled with a mixture of butter cream and custard with fresh raspberries and topped with frosting made by egg whites and sugar. A raspberry on top adds the final touch.

The chef sticks to the original recipe, meaning it's pretty close to what you would find in France. With a detectable layered texture, the almond pastry has a chewier texture than sponge cake. The acidity of the raspberries balances the sweetness from the topping.

Saveurd 'abricot is an apricot mousse with jasmine-flavored tea mousse in the center, wrapped by a spongy jelly made from apricot pulp and juice, finished with slices of chocolate on top. The cake has a strong but pleasant apricot flavor. The tea mousse is much lighter and makes for a nice balance. Small apricot chunks can be found in it as well.

The cheesecake isn't as sweet as most versions. If you want a dessert with less sugar, this is a solid option. The cafe has quite a few mousse desserts — a choice of various fruits and chocolate are available. Some popular items sell out quickly as all desserts are made fresh each day.

Address: 266 Wuding Rd
Tel: 5757-7266
Opening hours: 8am-8:30pm (delivery service available)

Le Gâteau

Still in trial operation, Le Gâteau has already attracted many customers with its exquisite desserts and attentive service. The space has been decorated in baby blue and white by the owner, who studied arts and crafts at university. Most tableware is sourced directly from Hong Kong, including floral teacups and saucers, as well as dessert forks with a bear handle.

The cafe offers a comparatively wide range of desserts from cake to Madeleines and macarons, but in limited servings until the official launch. Top selling items are usually sold out by early afternoon. The cafe has an off-site bakery with an on-site kitchen for cake decoration.

Its blueberry cheesecake has an unusual chocolate cake base. The cream cheese tastes thick but not too heavy, which combines well with the base and the blueberry jam. The chocolate tart is surprisingly tasty. The lightly salted crusty base contrasts with the soft sweet dark chocolate filling. The pastry chef uses Valrhona chocolate, one of the top 10 chocolate brands in the world.

Personalized orders for afternoon tea parties and cakes for special occasions are available at Le Gâteau. The café also has special offers in store such as the weekend only deal for afternoon tea, which includes a coffee/tea and a dessert of your choice for 58 yuan.

The cafe will officially open next month.

Address: N1-42, 528 Nanquan Rd N., Pudong
Tel: 139-0175-7099
Opening hours: 10am-9pm (closed on Mondays; delivery service available)

Cake assorties

ABCs about France

France can be divided into Metropolitan France and the overseas administrative divisions. Metropolitan France is comprised of 22 regions, while the overseas administrative divisions include a wide variety of administrative units, such as overseas regions and overseas collectivities.

Facts

Full name:
French Republic

Capital:
Paris

Seat of government:
Paris

National flag:

Coat of arms:

National Day:
July 14 (Bastille Day)

Area:
674,800km²

Population:
66,554,000

Major religion:
Christian (mostly Roman Catholic) 63-66%, followed by Muslim 7-9%

Major language:
French

Type of state:
Republic

President:
François Hollande

Monetary unit:
Euro (1 Euro = 100 Eurocent)

Major Cities

Paris

Paris is not only the capital of France, but also the educational, business, scientific and commercial hub of the country. It is one of the most visited cities of the planet.

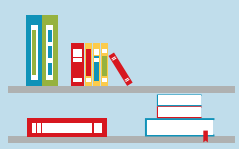
Lyon

Lyon is a popular travel destination for both foreigners and French. The city has a history of more than two millennia, and a large part of it is UNESCO World Heritage Site. The city hosts world-famous tourists spots such as Basilique Notre Dame de Fourviere and the Gallo Roman Museum.

Bordeaux

Situated in the southwest of France, Bordeaux is a favorable tourist destination that is home to wine-making, gothic-baroque style architecture, art exhibitions and so forth. The city also features a shopping strip that is longer than 1 kilometer, the Rue Saint Catherine.

Do you know?



Literature

The 18th and 20th centuries mark the peak period of French literature and poetry. "Sleeping Beauty," "The Count of Monte Cristo," "The Phantom of the Opera," and "The Three Musketeers" are only a few of the classic french works which are indispensable parts of the global body of literature. France has won numerous Noble Prizes for Literature.

Sports hub

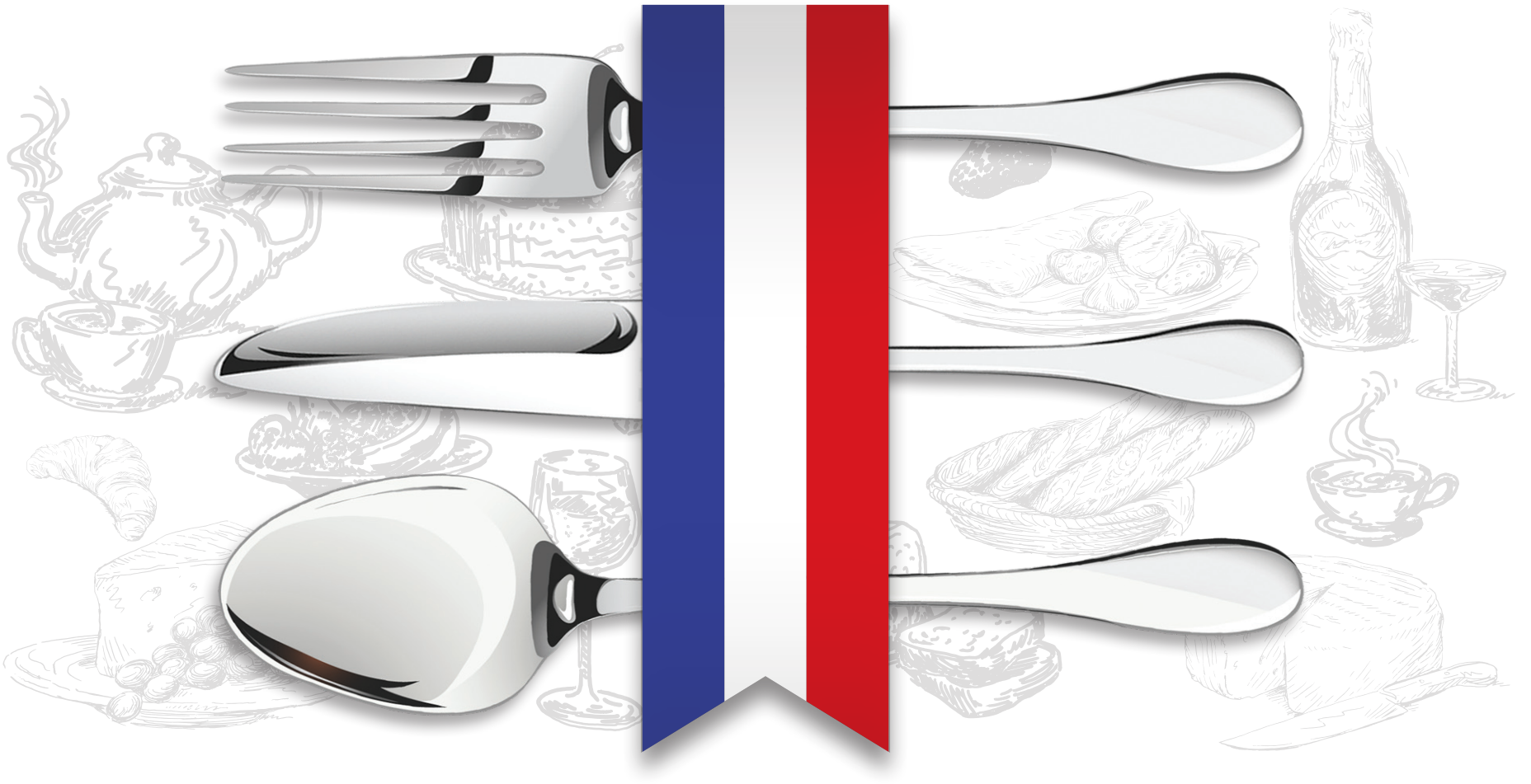
The most popular sports in the country are football and rugby. Additionally, France also hosts international events of other sports, such as the Tour de France, one of the best-known bicycle competitions and the French Open, which is among the Grand Slam contests of tennis players.

Top tourist destination

Fascinating architecture, unique culture and long-standing history are among the many characteristics which make France the most visited country in 2013, with more than 84 million foreign visitors. The list of scenic spots are endless: the Louvre, Georges Pompidou Center, the Latin Quarter and so forth. The Eiffel Tower is one of the most popular.

Source: mapsofworld.com, gouvernement.fr, france-pub.com

Graphics by Shen Xinyi/Shanghai Daily



Finding quality French food and wine is easy

Ruby Gao

Once known as "Paris of the East," Shanghai's links to France are plenty. There's the former French concession, a mutual love affair with cafes and a connection to food that goes way beyond mere sustenance.

French restaurants are well represented in the city.

According to dianping.com, there are 108 French restaurants in Shanghai, most of which are fine dining establishments in Xuhui, Huangpu and the Pudong New Area. The average price of the city's 10 most expensive French restaurants is 695 yuan (US$108) a person, according to the website.

Some of the restaurants feature world-class menus created by world-class chefs like Jean Georges Vongerichten, a three-star Michelin chef who opened Jean Georges a decade ago at Three on the Bund.

Etienne Dalancon, the general manager at Park Hyatt Shanghai who hails from France, says the attention to detail in a French restaurant is essential and a part of the culture, which respects artisans.

"Artisans are a big part of our cultural heritage," says Dalacon, the organizer of the annual "Park Hyatt Shanghai Masters of Food and Wine" events that promote a French lifestyle in Shanghai. "They are a source of creation and inspiration. Manual work is hard, requiring a tremendous amount of time, learning and attention to details."

While tradition is important, French cuisine most certainly allows for innovation and creativity. Culinary insiders say some big changes are occurring in Shanghai's French dining scene. They say some French chefs are no longer following classic recipes exactly, nor importing ingredients from France because they are trying to express Chinese terroir in a French way.

"We have seen a radical turn and change thanks to smart and talented French chefs such as Paul Pairet (the restaurateur of Mr and Mrs Bund and Ultra Violet) and Nicolas Le Bec (owner of Le Bec), who have started sourcing the best ingredients in China based on their understanding of the local market," Dalancon says.

Mei Ningbo, editor-in-chief at Vinehoo.com who studied wine in France, has seen the emergence of French bistros highlighted by Franck, which features affordable prices, a casual dining ambience and big portions ideal for sharing.

French dining culture is more versatile than ever and no longer limited to fancy restaurants. There are French bakeries, patisseries, wine shops with predominantly French vintages, cheese counters selling French cheese; and even a school teaching French cooking.

We explore some of the most impressive places in town, where guests can enjoy authentic French dining.

Cheese

An authentic French meal cannot end without a cheese plate. French cheese is known for its great variety and honestly reflecting terroir.

"How can you govern a country which has 246 varieties of cheese?" French general Charles De Gaulle in "Les Mots du General" said in jest back in 1962.

Famous Taiwan food and wine writer Lin Yu-Sen says that compared to wine, cheese expresses terroir more directly. For example, Roquefort cheese, which is made with sheep milk, has a distinctive taste that moves from mild to sweet before becoming a bit smoky and ending with a delicate salty flavor. The cheese is aged in large caves near Roquefort-sur-Soulzon.

Some cheese shops in Shanghai target expatriates. Such shops assume customers are knowledgeable about

cheese, which makes it difficult for many locals not accustomed to the dairy product to make a selection suitable for their tastes.

Try City Super, a gourmet shop known for sourcing food worldwide. A wide selection of cheese is displayed by country, and then specific regions within a country. The label includes a detailed flavor profile. Generally, the counter promotes a region each week with discounts on selected cheeses. Shop assistants allow customers to taste before buying and will also offer wine pairing suggestions. Around 78 French cheeses are sold including Roquefort and Comte, which is matured for six months.

According to City Super marketing manager Johnnie Huang, "Tome de Bordeaux," a goat cheese made in the Loire Valley and aged in the caves of Jean d'Alos, is one of its signature cheeses.

"The exterior of the cheese is coated with rosemary, thyme, pepper and other seasonings when matured, which gives the palate a unique sensation mixing rich aromas and a milky taste. It's even better if served with Syrah or Grenache wine," says Huang.

City Super
Address: LG2, IFC Mall, 8 Century Ave, Pudong
Tel: 5012-0998

Bistro

Some say the French word "bistro" dates back to 1815, when hungry Russian soldiers yelled "bystro" (a Russian expression meaning hurry up)" to French waiters after they occupied the city. Others say the word derives from an aperitif called bistrouille.

Regardless of the word's origins Franck is the hottest bistro in Shanghai, having opened eight years ago. Owned by chef Franck Pecol, whose grandfather owned a bistro near Marseille, this small eatery is in an old lane in the former French Concession housing boutique stores and art galleries.

It attracts many French expatriates, which is definitely a good sign. Red leather sofas, a wooden floor and boutique style lighting creates a cozy ambience with a Parisian touch.

A blackboard, written in French, lists the day's dishes that chef makes based on available ingredients. Waiters explain each dish, from sourcing the ingredients to cooking techniques.

Foie gras, beef tartar and the fish courses are highly recommended. Franck's hot chocolate cake and airy souffle make for a sweet ending to any meal. The wine list is highlighted by some small French wineries producing organic and biodynamic wines.

Franck Bistrot
Address: 376 Wukang Rd
Tel: 158-2167-6767

CONTINUES ON B8

Learn all the secrets of great French cooking

FROM B7

Wine

Although French wine is often criticized by Chinese wine insiders as over-priced, China imports more wine from France than any other country, according to a recent report by Vinexpo.

French wine is known for its expression of terroir, as well as its elegant style and balanced taste.

There used to be many wine shops in Shanghai featuring expensive French wines, but many closed after the central government launched its austerity campaign to cut down on wasteful spending by local governments and state-owned enterprises.

Casal is a two-story wine shop that opened in 2007 and is dedicated to selling affordable French wines.

"Casal comes from ancient Provence language, meaning cellar," says Huang Yangdong, the owner, who spent five years studying in Provence.

The first floor has the wines while the second is a cafe that can accommodate around 70 people. Diners can gaze out at the tree-lined street or into the open pastry kitchen.

Casal has 200 French wines covering Bordeaux, Champagne, Rhone, southwest France and, of course, Provence.

"Provence is known for producing quality rose wine. We probably sell the most diverse French roses in town," Huang says.

A highlighted wine includes Estandon, which is the oldest wine estate in Provence going back 800 years. A wine collection called "eight" is also popular. This fruit flavored wine has 8 percent alcohol content and is made with 70 percent dry white wine and 30 percent of fruit extracts such as cherry, peach, grapefruit and lychee.

Huang imports the wine himself so most of the wines range from 100 yuan to 500 yuan per bottle.

Casal
Address: 428 Taixing Rd
Tel: 5213-3291

Patisserie

French pastry is known for its layered structure, precision and complex flavors.

Le Reve, meaning the dream in French, imports most ingredients from France to ensure authenticity and quality. It's run by Pascal Molines, a winner of the prestigious artisan competition Meilleur Ouvrier de France.

Try the chef's signature cake named "subilite," a layered chocolate cake made from four different cocoa beans to balance sweetness, acidity and bitterness.

Molines also adds some seasonal Chinese ingredients into his pastries, for example, osmanthus flavored chocolate and hairy crab filled macaroons.

Le Reve
Address: 1/F, 88 Yuanmingyuan Rd
Tel: 6329-0161

Culinary school

France is known for exporting great chefs due to its world famous culinary schools represented by Le Cordon Blue, the world's largest hospitality education provider. Julia Child, an American chef and food writer, is probably its most famous graduate.

Courses offered by the school cover cuisine, pastry, culinary management, hospitality management, gastronomic tourism, cheese and wine, as well as food entrepreneurship.

Its first school in China was opened in April in the Pudong New Area. So far around 200 students have applied for the French cuisine and French patisserie majors. They are tutored by three French chefs, according to its Chinese partner Shanghai Business and Tourism School.

The school is recommended to both professional chefs and food lovers interested in French cooking.

Le Cordon Blue
Address: 2/F, Bldg 1, 1458 Pudong Rd S.
Tel: 400-118-1895