

## Feast on the Beauty of

## ALSACE



*The Maison Katz, home of good dining in Alsace*

**Barbara Ann Rosenberg**  
Special to the Jewish Exponent

Say "Alsace" to most people and the comeback is likely to be "You mean, Alsace-Lorraine?" — as if it were one location. It's not.

Alsace and Lorraine are two discrete provinces in the northeast of France, bound only by the common thread that over the years they were shuttled back and forth between the governments of France and Germany, picking up a bit of culture and culinary influence from each nation.

But, make no mistake about it — although some of the people in Alsace speak German in addition to French, and some speak Alsacien (an ancient dialect, unfathomable to anyone except the people who live there, or, perhaps, to our own Amish from Lancaster County who speak a similar hodgepodge) — these people are fiercely French in their sentiments!

When you arrive in Alsace, it's a good idea to head



*The square in front of the Strasbourg Cathedral*

to the capital city of Strasbourg for an overview of life in the area — a little bit of what you see more of as you drive around the beautiful countryside — featuring 17th-century half-timber houses galore, with an almost Hansel-and-Gretel look.

But there are also plenty of other things, including more than 1,000 years of history and sophisticated shops aplenty, many featuring the names of the leaders of French fashion.

And, as befitting a major French city, there are restaurants of every genre all through the town, many within walking distance of the center, several with signs boasting of one of the specialties of the area: *flam-merkuche*, sort of an open-faced pie with an ethereal crust and a pizza-looking topping that tastes altogether different from the Italian version.

And, of course, the most famous dish of all: choucroute, which is a concoction of sauerkraut with all the salt washed out and cooked for hours in beer or white Alsacien wine, preferably the crisp Reisling of the region.

Then, when the kraut achieves a life of its own with an almost buttery texture, a variety of eight or more cured meats (or, less frequently, fish) are added and served in daunting quantity on a huge platter. And that's a portion for one!

The 400-year-old Maison Kammerzell, next to the stunning, ancient, lace-like cathedral, is a traditional and beautiful place to indulge in this classic dish that contains many wursts but in no way resembles the platters that come from Murray's or Hymie's or other delis around Philadelphia.

And for people who would rather feed their inner being than their bodies, there's even a charming regional museum with a fascinating collection of colorfully decorated pieces of household goods — looking for all the world like they came from Pennsylvania-Dutch souvenir shops.

There is also an important, although not very large collection, of



*Another dining spot — the 400-year-old Maison Kammerzell*



# Travel

artistically displayed ancient and not-so-ancient Jewish artifacts. One of the more interesting is the 19th-century proclamation from Napoleon freeing Jews from ghetto life in the areas under his control.

Step outside the museum and you're practically on the Pont des Supplices (Torture Bridge), where people were punished by being placed in a cage and lowered into the Ill River for various infractions of the law, such as infidelity, infanticide or — important at the time — watering the wine.

Wine to sell, that is. No one cared about what people did for

for the wonderful, crisp, white wines of the area are produced.

There's only one unusual red wine that comes from this area, a light *pinot noir* that is not wildly distinguished but serves the purpose when one wants to drink "red."

The towns of Obernai and Colmar are particularly fetching. And everywhere you turn, there's a *weinstub* or a *bierstub* (loosely translated as a "watering hole" for wine or beer, respectively — and, in keeping with French custom, always with food, of course).

One of the outstanding examples is Katz in the small market city of Saverne, only a few miles from Strasbourg — no relation to the Katz Deli on the Lower East Side of New York. This Katz eatery greets its clientele with an ideal example of a *zweibelkuchen*, an onion pie with an exquisitely short crust to nibble with an aperitif wine. And so it goes on through course after course of delicacies, such as chicken cooked in Reisling and wild mushrooms, plus even some of that "fat liver" the region is famous for.

There's a town called Kirschberg where many of the vineyards grow acres of grapes for



On display in the Strasbourg regional museum is Napoleon's proclamation freeing Jews from the ghettos in areas that were under his control.

golden sun that brings out the flavor of the grapes.

The intense flavor of the Gwurtztraminer is often paired with another of the outstanding specialties of Alsace — duck *foie gras* (literally, "fat liver" — not too appetizing a term but sublime to taste).

While none of the livers produced in Alsace is, as far as I know, kosher, there is plenty of *foie gras* raised in Israel that can be prepared in the same wonderfully simple exquisite-on-the-

A small price to pay, they thought, for messing with one of the area's major sources of income and pride. These Alsaciens took their wine seriously — and still do, although there have been no "dunkings" in recent years.

After all, wine is and has been, for many, many years, a major source of income for the provinces: seven varieties, including Reisling, Gwurtztraminer, Tokay Pinot Gros and others — all good, some great!

Strasbourg's cathedral is not just a gorgeous, lacy, religious landmark, it houses one of the world's most fascinating mechanical clocks. Promptly at 12:30 p.m. every day, a section of the clock opens to the sound of bells as a parade of fanciful, carved figures emerges. Many tourists to Alsace detour to Strasbourg just to watch these appealing clock figures perform.

But everything in Alsace is not centered in Strasbourg. In fact, once out of the city and off the main roads the fun really begins. There's a well-marked map at tourist offices and many hotels for the *Route des Vins*, the little wine towns, one prettier than the next, where the grapes

the spicy, flowery Gwurtztraminer that is one of the area's premium wines.

Kirschberg translates literally as "Cherry Hill," but otherwise in no way resembles our neighbor city in New Jersey. Kirschberg has steep hills of vineyards sharply angled to catch the

tongue way. For further information, stay tuned.

But even without a feast of *foie gras*, there are plenty of reasons to visit Alsace: Among them beauty, beauty and more beauty. Add charm and more than 1,000 years of history and what do you have? Alsace at its best! ■

**Kirschberg has steep hills of vineyards sharply angled to catch the golden sun that brings out the flavor of the grapes.**

personal consumption. But watering the wine sold to the public was seen as a particularly heinous crime. Some of the culprits were held under water until they nearly drowned — and, once in a while, some of them did.

## Golden Acres Farm & Ranch

Wake Up High In The Catskill Mountains!

- \* NURSERY, CHILD & TEEN CAMP
- \* FARM & BABY ANIMALS
- \* PONY & HORSEBACK RIDING
- \* HAYRIDES & BONFIRES
- \* INDOOR ARENA & TRAIL RIDING
- \* 3 HEATED POOLS-KIDDIE, IN & OUT
- \* 2 JACUZZIS/SAUNA
- \* LAKE FISHING & BOATING
- \* VERY CASUAL/ONE LOW PRICE
- \* GLATT-SHUL-ERUV
- \* VAAD OF ALBANY SUPERVISION

FAMILY AND SEPARATE SWIMMING  
Near Howe Caverns,  
Cooperstown, Catskill Game Farm.  
Gilboa, NY 12076

Keeping Families, Schools, Scouts & Camps Happy for over 50 years!



SAVE EVEN MORE W/ "SAVER COUPONS"

4 DAYS/3 NIGHTS—SAVES 15%
5 DAYS/4 NIGHTS—SAVES 18%
8 DAYS/7 NIGHTS—SAVES 25%
YOU-COOK APTS—SAVES 35%

MORE SAVINGS

6/15 to 6/29—SAVES 10%
7/4 to 7/26—SAVES 10%
7/28 to 8/10—SAVES 10%
8/11 to 9/4—SAVES 10%

TOLL FREE 800-252-7787  
Visit us on the web: [www.goldenacres.com](http://www.goldenacres.com)  
Or E-mail us at: [FarmResort@aol.com](mailto:FarmResort@aol.com)