

MEALS COME from traditional shops (Anjou-Québec), caterers (Denise Cornellier) and a rising number of big-name chefs

The top 12: our critic's favourites

LESLEY CHESTERMAN
GAZETTE FINE-DINING CRITIC

Ready-made is on the rise, and with dozens of outlets to choose from, Montrealeers are turning on to the charms of gourmet take-out. Here is my list of favourite prêts-à-manger destinations:

Anjou-Québec, 1025 Laurier Ave. W., 514-272-4065. Open: Tuesday to Wednesday, 9 a.m. to 6 p.m., Thursday and Friday, 9 a.m. to 7 p.m., Saturday, 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. For more than 50 years, this Outremont institution has been offering ready-made gourmet meals as well as a large selection of frozen and preserved dishes. You can also pick up ready-to-cook roasts, vegetables, cold cuts and cheese. **Don't miss:** the gratin Dauphinois.

Denise Cornellier Traiteur et Boutique, 5354 St. Laurent Blvd., 514-272-8428. Open: Monday to Friday, 9 a.m. to 6 p.m., Saturday, 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. www.cornellierboutique.com/boutiques. Arguably the city's top caterer, Cornellier also runs a small boutique in the front of her catering enterprise, where you can pick up canapés, soups, appetizers (amazing foie gras), main courses and desserts as well as jars of pesto, fruit ketchup, chocolate sauce and much more. **Don't miss:** the Thai specialties.

Gastronomie Le Naked Lunch, 4816 Wellington St., Verdun, 514-849-7418. Open: Tuesday to Sunday, 11 a.m. to 9 p.m., www.lenakedlunch.com. This pint-sized bistro does a brisk take-away business. Just choose from the menu, take a seat and watch chef-owner Dominic Lamontagne spoon your supper into take-out cartons. You'll also find a good selection of canned food, ideal for your next camping or boating adventure. **Don't miss:** the duck "smoked meat" sandwich and the coconut milk soup.

Ian Perreault Prêts-à-Manger, 1248 Bernard St. W., 514-948-1248. Open: Tuesday to Saturday, 11 a.m. to 8 p.m., www.ianperreault.com. One of the city's top chefs is now focused on take-out. Head here for a simple dinner for one or a feast, and choose every dish from Perreault's refrigerated display case. **Don't miss:** the shrimp sautéed with paprika, preserved garlic and citrus.

Le Cartet, 106 McGill St., 514-871-8887. Open: weekdays, 7 a.m. to 10 p.m., weekends, 9 a.m. to 10 p.m. Yet another popular Old Montreal casual eatery that offers customers plenty of fresh food to go as well as a dazzling array of gourmet foodstuffs. Especially strong in single-portion servings. **Don't miss:** the salade Niçoise.

Le Maitre Boucher, 5917 Monkland Ave., 514-487-1437. Monday to Wednesday, 8:30 a.m. to 7 p.m., Thursday and Friday, 8:30 a.m. to 9 p.m., Saturday, 8:30 a.m. to 5 p.m., Sunday, 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. N.D.G. foodies have long flocked to this swish gourmet shop, which has recently moved across the street and expanded. You'll find plenty here, either fresh or frozen, as well as an excellent selection of gourmet condiments and gorgeous fruits and vegetables. **Don't miss:** the Chinese-style roast duck.

Le P'tit Plateau, 330 Marie-Anne St. E., 514-282-6342 (dining room) or 514-282-9909 (kitchen). Open noon to 10 p.m. (for take-out, use the kitchen door). Chef-owner Alain Loivel is famous for his Southwestern French fare, much of which is sold vacuum-packed at his little Plateau resto. Take-out items include duck confit, foie gras, smoked salmon, braised lamb shanks, cassoulet, fish soup and more. **Don't miss:** the fantastic duck confit!

Les Cons Servent, 5064 Papineau St., 514-523-8999. Open: Monday to Saturday, 6 p.m. to 10 p.m., www.lescons.com/restaurant.html. A first-rate casual restaurant with an ever-growing line of homemade takeout goods - all sold in jars. **Don't miss:** the cassoulet.

Mangia Boutique de Prêt-à-Manger, 1101 de Maisonneuve Blvd. W., 514-848-7001. Open: Monday to Friday, 7:30 a.m. to 7



Chef Dominic Lamontagne's duck "smoked-meat" sandwich at Gastronomie Le Naked Lunch in Verdun.

VINCENZO D'ALTO THE GAZETTE



At Naked Lunch, takeout comes frozen or vacuum-packed...

VINCENZO D'ALTO THE GAZETTE



... and then there are the preserves in cans.

VINCENZO D'ALTO THE GAZETTE



At the Pâtisserie de Gascogne on Laurier Ave., the lineup of takeout food is strong. Behind the counter is Luce Skelling.

PHIL CARPENTER THE GAZETTE



Frozen food at Gascogne: pricey but delicious.

PHIL CARPENTER THE GAZETTE

p.m., Saturday, 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. Located in the heart of the city, this elegant take-out emporium offers a large selection of salads, paninis, sandwiches, pastas, quiches and desserts. **Don't miss:** the salmon croquettes and curried chicken pasta.

Olive et Gourmando, 351 St. Paul St. W., 514-350-1083. Open: Tuesday to Saturday, 8 a.m. to 6 p.m., www.oliveetgourmando.com. Always jam-packed with Old Montreal hipsters and business types, this bakery's strength is actually its savoury foods - the scrumptious salads and sandwiches for take-out. Show up early to beat the crowds. **Don't miss:** the Cuban sandwich.

Pasta Casareccia, 5849 Sherbrooke St. W., 514-483-1588. Open: Monday to Wednesday, 10 a.m. to 9 p.m., Thursday to Sat-

urday, 10 a.m. to 10 p.m., Sunday, 11 a.m. to 9 p.m. There are many pasta take-out restaurants in the city and most of them are very good. But this one, open since 1985, offers just that many more varieties of fresh pasta as well as 15 sauces including spe-

cialty pestos, lasagna and stuffed vegetables. While you're choosing dinner, you can also pick up a bottle of fine olive oil or balsamic vinegar. **Don't miss:** the homemade sausages.

Le Pâtisserie de Gascogne, 1950 Marcel Laurin Blvd.; 4825

Sherbrooke St. W., Westmount; 237 Laurier Ave. W., Outremont; and 940 St. John's Blvd., Pointe Claire. See website for store hours at www.degascogne.com. This power-house patisserie has long offered Montrealeers a strong lineup of take-out foods that range from sausage rolls to braised quails. Though pricey, the take-out fare here is delicious. **Don't miss:** the frozen boeuf bourguignon.

Sapori Pronto, 4894 Sherbrooke St. W., 514-487-9666. Open: Monday to Saturday, 10 a.m. to 10 p.m., Sunday, 4 p.m. to 10 p.m. Head to the back of this trattoria and you'll find a take-out counter filled with Italian dishes straight from the restaurant's menu prepared by Pronto's chef, Peppino Perri. **Don't miss:** the lasagna and meat balls.

For the last four years, Dominic Lamontagne has been working the takeout angle at Le Bistro Naked Lunch in Verdun.

The tiny eatery on Wellington St. sells some of the best fresh takeout food I've tasted including canned goods and vacuum-packed dishes.

For \$45 I picked up single servings of coq-au-vin (\$16), a can of Thai coconut soup (\$3.75, sold with cellophane noodles and jumbo shrimp on the side), a fantastic duck-breast sandwich served on a bed of salad with goat's cheese and walnuts (\$12), and a delicate salmon filet (\$12, including fresh vegetables and celery root purée). The salmon was sold vacuum-packed and I had only to immerse the marinated filet in hot water for eight minutes while I reheated the vegetables. Easy Twelve of Lamontagne's top-selling dishes are sold canned, and the chef plans on marketing this line to the camping and boating crowd, as well as select supermarkets.

How 'bout a bottle of wine with that ...

Dial 514-385-5555 and you'll reach St-Hubert barbecue. Order a chicken dinner, and if you're up for it, you can include a bottle of wine in your delivery. So if this big chain is selling wine with its takeout, can a funky, 30-seat bistro do the same?

Yes. But not always.

Quebecers can cart away a bottle of privately imported vino with their jar of cassoulet or their pouch of duck confit if the restaurant:

- has a liquor license;
- a dining room;
- sells the bottle for the price it is listed for on the wine list.

Customers must also be buying a full meal (a box of crackers won't do) and no wine or beer can be sold before 8 a.m. or after 11 p.m.

Picking up takeout lasagna at an Italian restaurant, I enquired whether I could buy a bottle of Barolo to enjoy with dinner at home. The waiter nodded yet wondered why I would bother with a \$90 bottle that would cost me three times less at the SAQ across the street. True, yet there are restaurants where I might be tempted to buy something I might not find at the SAQ.

Les Cons Servent has a selection of privately imported bottles chosen by co-owner and sommelier Frédéric Simon. Displayed next to the takeout area in the dining room, they are priced \$5 above cost, yet at between \$17 to \$29 per bottle, are affordable enough to make for a reasonable wine choice.

Le Naked Lunch in Verdun also features a selection of fairly priced (\$20 to \$60) privately imported bottles for takeout customers. "We choose these bottles ourselves," says chef-owner Dominic Lamontagne. "We often meet the producers who might not produce enough to be eligible for sale at the SAQ. So we carry them here and know the story behind every bottle. And since we know them so well, we can help customers choose the right one to pair with their meal."

One last thing to keep in mind: Tempting though it might be to pick up some takeout to finish up your bottle at home, it is illegal to leave a restaurant with an open bottle of wine.

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