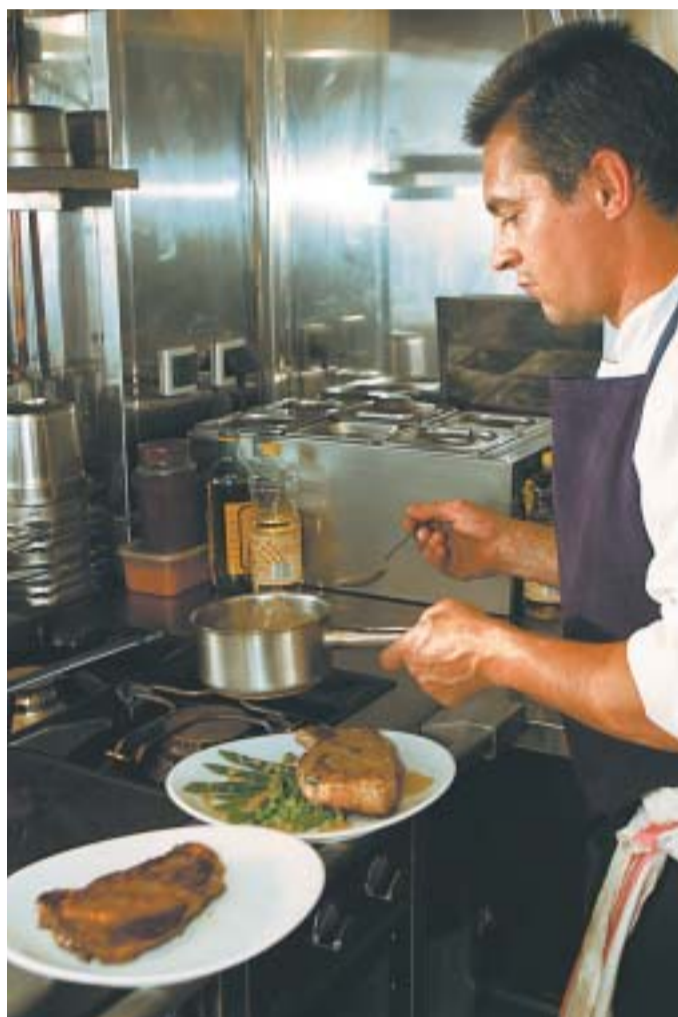


HOT SPOT

||||||| PARIS |||||

COOKS, BOOKS, AND A WINE SELLER
 HAVE PUT AN OUT-OF-THE-WAY
 NEIGHBORHOOD BACK ON THE MAP

RUE GASTRONOMIE



PHOTOS BY JOE RAY FOR THE BOSTON GLOBE

Bistrot Paul Bert chef Thierry Laurent's prized menu includes gems like strawberry-whipped cream macaroons. Customer-friendly wine store Crus et Découvertes is down the block.

BY JOE RAY ||| GLOBE CORRESPONDENT

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HE HEART OF THE 11TH ARRONDISSEMENT IS BIG AND BEAUTIFUL, BUT until recently, the only reason Parisians came here was to visit a friend or to go home to bed. • Here in the City of Light's version of the middle of nowhere, however, everything is changing in the space of just a few blocks, revealing a new gastronomic sleeper area and a neighborhood reborn. • This being France, the renaissance naturally began with food. • The one-block stretch of Rue Paul Bert hosts two perfect bistros and a tiny, customer-focused wine seller. Stretch your legs for another half block up Rue Chanzy and you'll come across the cafe that glues it all together. • With those successes, more restaurants, cafes, and other shops — such as a new, food-focused bookstore — have popped up like champignons. • “Twenty years ago, this was a bustling

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||||||| ITALY |||||

DAYS THAT MAKE HEARTS RACE



ALESSANDRO BIANCHI/REUTERS

CONTEST GIVES RISE TO FLAGS, FUN, AND DELICATE ART

By Kimberly Blanton
GLOBE STAFF

SIENA — My love for this medieval city's Palio horse race started with a few plates and bowls.

In the mid-1990s, as I planned an extended trip to Europe, two friends asked me to pick up a few pieces of Siena's unique pottery for them. Once here, I found pottery stores on many of the cobblestone streets, which wind around the town center and flash an occasional view of the Tuscan hills beyond.

The pottery proved extraordinary. Each plate, bowl, pitcher, and cup is hand-painted with one of 17 animals or symbols representing Siena's 17 districts, or “contrade.” Each dish is

trimmed in the official colors of that contrada: The plate with the “valdimontone,” or ram, for example, has a vibrant yellow and rose rim; the “pantera,” or panther, is surrounded by a bold red and blue border; the colors of the delicately painted “bruco,” the caterpillar, are a lively blue, yellow, and green; and the “oca,” or goose, with its red and green border, is especially suited to Christmas dinners.

This summer, I learned the meaning and traditions attached to these striking dishes.

The horse race, Il Palio di Siena, has been traced to 1310 and probably started earlier. Each year, 10 of Siena's 17 contrade are in the

race, either by winning the right to compete — last year's winner, for example — or by lottery. While it originally was held once a year, a second Palio was approved in 1656, according to one city history. Every year, races take place July 2, which is both the date of the Feast of the Visitation and a festival honoring the Madonna of Provenzano, and Aug. 16, the day after the Feast of the Assumption.

I arrived in Siena, a city of about 56,000, early on a Friday after a six-hour flight from Boston to Milan, and a train ride. The Palio was scheduled for Monday. To my delight, throngs of people were gathering in the Piazza

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Giovanni Atzeni aboard Fedora Saura won Siena's Palio horse race last month.

10 THINGS TO DO IN AUGUST SAVOR IT ALL, NEWPORT TO NORTH END, LOBSTERS AND EAGLES, BEACHES AND BIKES, FAIRS AND A SAINT'S FEAST. M7