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The Grape News

Volume XIV – Fall, 2008

In this issue you can read about:

- **The Grape Journal blog:** The place to go for frequent updates on my life in Burgundy with four vacation rentals, three daughters, and one very French husband.
- **And What About Paris?:** Most of our guests also visit Paris during their time in France. Here are our recommendations for a wonderful place to stay, a wonderful tour guide, and lots of other useful tidbits.
- **Villers-la-Faye's Very Own, Very Vieux Château:** Did you realize that our own little village of Villers-la-Faye boasts the remains of a medieval castle?
- **French Activities and Burgundy on a Plate:** Franck's activities planning is now up and running. We've also found a wonderful tour guide to help you make the most of your time in Burgundy.
- **Winemaker in Residence:** Read up on Marc-Olivier Buffet's, from the Domaine Buffet in Volnay, take on the 2007 vintage.
- **Hautes-Côtes Goats:** Check out this amazing spot in nearby Echevonne. Where else could you possibly combine a goat cheese tasting, a wine tasting, and a visit to the goat barn? Highly recommended by Camille!
- **Wine and Running – A Very Burgundian Combination:** Franck recently participated in a 10km run in Nuits-Saint Georges that was all about celebrating wine. In Burgundy, wine and running make a perfectly logical pairing.
- **Restaurant Review:** While we are still mourning the passing of Jacky's bistro (that has just been sold by the way!), here are three replacements that should go part way in easing the grief.
- **French Favorites:** Reviews of one wonderful French novel (translated into English), two French movies, and my favorite French CD at the moment.
- **La Maison des Chaumes:** The latest news on our forth vacation rental which will be available full time from August 1, 2009.
- **Grape Seeds:** Useful stuff & tidbits
- **Availability and 2008 Booking:** The latest update on availability for all four properties, plus contact information if you'd like further information or to make a booking.



For a printer friendly version of The Grape News [click here](#).

Bonjour tout le monde,

Looking back, our track record of getting "The Grape News" out for publication doesn't seem too stellar on the surface. We seem to be averaging about one edition per year, but on the bright side at least we're not cluttering up your in-box! When I looked at the date of the last one – March 2007 - I couldn't help but think to myself my god, I wasn't even pregnant yet...Yes, that's right, in our defense we happened to have completed another very nice production over the past year.

Her name is Clémentine Agathe Germain and she was born at the Beaune Hospital in one of their lovely new OR's with huge bay windows overlooking the vineyards. As she was born on January 23rd, 2008 at 9:13am the sun was rising like an orange ball over Beaune's Premiers Crus. Now that I think about it, one very healthy Burgundian-born daughter + one Grape News isn't too shabby for a year's work...



I. The Grape Journal Blog

One of the reasons I haven't been too speedy in getting out a new edition of The Grape News is that I have started posting to my "Grape Journal" blog with rather impressive frequency if I do say so myself.



Colic, teething, stomach flu, and other acts of God permitting, I try to post at least four times a week, on topics that loosely have to do with our life in Burgundy, but which can range as far and wide as giving my husband a disastrous home haircut,

<http://grapejournal.blogspot.com/2008/04/live-long-and-prosper.html>

The hell of trying to get a decent birth announcement photo of my bevy of beauties,

<http://grapejournal.blogspot.com/2008/03/faire-part-photo-shoot-from-hell.html>

And a very effective April Fool's prank.

<http://grapejournal.blogspot.com/2008/04/french-baby-boom.html>

This September I also launched two new bi-weekly columns. They are:

Authentic France Travel Tip Tuesdays – Every Tuesday I pass on a tip for experiencing the authentic side of France. This is a great resource for anyone who is planning on a trip to France and wants to break away from the tourist track.

Frenchitude Fridays – Every Friday I come up with an idea for injecting a bit of French attitude into your life whether you live in Paris or in Timbuktu.

My blog also contains lots of random but very useful information about Burgundy, such as recipes like my friend Charlotte's madeleines (I will be beefing up my recipe section quite a bit this Fall),

<http://grapejournal.blogspot.com/2008/04/charlotte-buffets-madeleines.html>

Antique tours of our vacation properties,

<http://grapejournal.blogspot.com/2008/04/antique-tour-la-maison-de-la-vieille.html>

Photos of the Beaune market,

<http://grapejournal.blogspot.com/2008/03/more-spring-at-beaunes-saturday-market.html>

Updates on the ongoing renovation of our wine cellar in Beaune,

<http://grapejournal.blogspot.com/2008/02/tasting-table-trials-and-tribulations.html>

And of course restaurant reviews.

<http://grapejournal.blogspot.com/2007/11/until-jackys-is-ressurrected.html>

I have also enabled comments, which I always love reading. I'm not always able to find time to respond, but it is wonderful to be reminded that there are actually people reading it!

Just click [here](#) to go to my blog. I'd love you to drop by some time and join in the fun!

II. And what about Paris?

Your very own Atelier

Many of our guests combine their time in Burgundy with a foray in Paris, anything from one night to one week or more. Often I am asked to recommend a place to stay. Frankly, up until recently I didn't have much to suggest. Accommodation in Paris tends to be poky, expensive, and more often than not, disappointing.

However, my friend Joëlle has now finished renovating and equipping their beautiful studio apartment located smack in the heart of the dynamic Montparnasse district, just steps away from the Jardin du Luxembourg. Joëlle looked after our big girls while Franck, Clem in utero, and I stayed there for a few days in late October of this year.

We absolutely adored everything about it, and can warmly recommend staying there. However, like all top notch vacation rentals here in France, Joëlle's studio, called "L'Atelier des Beaux-Arts" books up early and fast, so don't delay.

Here is her website:

<http://www.latelierdesbeauxarts.com/ehome.html>

And here is the link to the "Germain's Paris Guide" that I posted on my blog after our week in Paris in the summer of 2006:

<http://grapejournal.blogspot.com/2006/09/germain-paris-guide.html>

Nuits Blanches Tours



Feel like a real Parisien in your very own Atelier.

Two of our guests at Le Relais du Vieux Beaune recently took a one day Paris tour with my fellow West-Coaster Karen Henrich who hails from Vancouver and runs Nuits Blanches Tours in the City of Lights.

My guests raved about their day with Karen, who arrived in Paris for the first time in 2004 and simply decided she couldn't live anywhere else. They felt she showed them many hidden jewels of the city and taught them how to make their way around Paris like true Parisiennes, including using the metro and familiarizing themselves with the diversity of the various arrondissements.

Paris is a very easy day trip from Beaune - only 2 hours on the TGV whisks you from the Beaune train station to the Gare de Lyon in the centre of Paris. This is a relaxing and stress-free way to travel (barring strikes, this is France after all!). You can leave early in the morning, make a full day of it, and come back in the evening. This eliminates all of the stresses and cost of parking. It sounds like Karen can certainly help you make the most of your day or more in Paris.

To find out more, visit her great website at:

<http://www.nuitblanchetours.com>

Also, if you plan to hit a lot of museums while in Paris, we have heard many great things about the Paris Museum Pass, which you can find out about at:



III. Villers-la-Faye's very won, very vieux château



Front area of the château where there once was a drawbridge over the moat

After that brief foray to the sparkling wonder that is Paris, back to the Burgundian countryside! From the deck here at our house, La Maison des Chaumes, we not only have a nice view over the valley towards Magny-les-Villers and Beaune, but also of the remaining tower of Villers-la-Faye's very own château. Quoi? You didn't know that the bustling metropolis of Villers-la-Faye had its very own château? Ce n'est pas vrai!

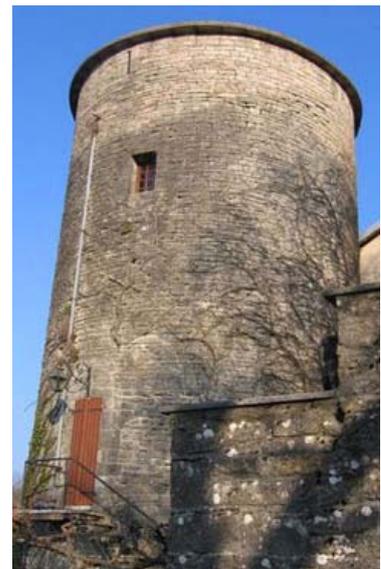
Villers' château was built in the early 15th Century, and like many castles of this period it was anchored by four round towers just like a castle out of a Grimm's fairy tale. It came complete with a drawbridge and crocodile-filled moats (actually, I'm kidding about the crocodiles, but not the moats).

The castle was built and occupied by "Les Seigneurs de Villers" who occupied a series of eminent positions at

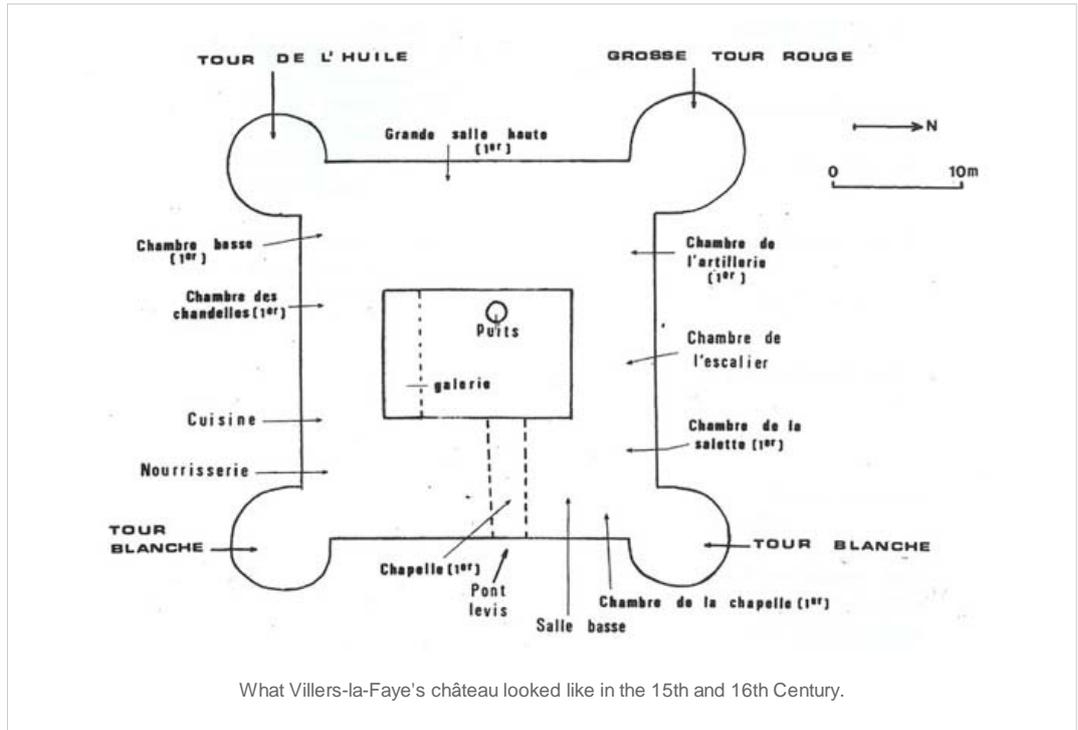
court for the French king, from 1114 when Guy de Villers participated in the Crusades, through to 1601 when François led an army of 100 men for the roi de France.

You can walk by the château by taking the road which goes past Jacky's store and the village "Salle des Fêtes", then turning your first left at the aptly named "rue du Château". Walk to the end of this street, where you can see where the old drawbridge was just ahead of you, and then turn left again on the gravel path that runs in front of the old "Tour d'huile" and the continues out towards the myriad of paths that run through the vineyards and fields between Villers-la-Faye and Magny-les-Villers.

Here is the plan of the original château. The only remaining tower, which is the one the deck of La Maison des Chaumes looks on to, was called the "Tour d'huile" (the "Tower of oil"). I'm not sure of the exact origin of the name, but I wouldn't put it past those medieval Villerois (as the inhabitants of Villers-la-Faye are known) to have poured boiling oil on their enemies from time to time.



The tower from the frontas you see it today



IV. French activities and Burgundy on a plate

Over the past year Franck has really gotten one of his pet projects off the ground - activity planning for our guests. If you would like any assistance planning independent walking or biking tours, or want to find out about cooking classes, french language instruction, winetastings, hot air balloon rides, or just about anything else, all you need to do is contact him. He has compiled an impressive amount of unbiased information that he shares with our guests absolutely free of charge. He is also very proud of his Burgundy, and wants to help everyone who comes here enjoy it the way it should be enjoyed.

On our booking form just check the "Yes, I would like help Activities Planning" box and Franck will take it from there.

However, for those of you who would also like to integrate an formally organized tour during your stay at one of our properties, we have met up with the lovely Sue Boxell from "Burgundy on a Plate" who offers personalized tailored tours around Burgundy that are really something very special. She offers in particular some wonderful one day tours that all have their starting point in or near to Beaune, obviously very practical for our guests.



Contact Sue and she will do everything she can to recommend or arrange the perfect tour for you.

Here is the link to Sue's website: <http://www.burgundyonaplate.com/index.html>

V. Winemaker in residence

We meet up again with our winemaker in residence, Marc-Oliver Buffet, who shares his opinion on the 2007 vintage which is currently being bottled all over Burgundy.

IN VINO VERITAS

by Marc-Olivier BUFFET
Domaine François Buffet, Volnay
www.bourgogne-buffet.com

"2007 has been a very strange year in many ways. Despite cool and intemperate weather conditions from May onwards, the harvest began around September 1st (once the flowers appear the harvest is always 100 to 110 days after this date no matter what the weather). So the vintage was what we consider "précoce" (early) even though the weather and temperatures were below average – this is indeed a first! The 2007 vintage was also typified by a very modest yield, particularly with certain parcelles of red pinot noir grapes where the production was nothing short of laughable.

Nevertheless, in my opinion the 2007 vintage hasn't finished surprising us! During pressing the cuverie was redolent with the odours of cocoa and coffee. When the wines were moved to barrels this has again altered and the wines gave off incredible whiffs of blackberry and raspberry. Because the vintage is unusually concentrated, the wines continue to give off a sweetish taste even once the residual sugars have been completely absorbed. In conclusion, in my mind 2007 is certainly a vintage to follow as it is my belief it still holds many pleasant surprises in the future."



VI. Hautes-Côtes Goats



One of the most tortuous parts of being pregnant here in France was that JUST before those two lines showed up on the pee stick I had discovered a source for the most delicious goat cheese (chèvre) I have ever tasted in my life. Worse yet for my pregnant self who was not allowed to consume unpasteurized cheeses, it was only a short hop away in the village of Echevronne.

Our friends Andrea and Greg and their two children recently came to visit us from Canada. Andrea comes a close second to me in her adoration of chèvre, so as I was no longer pregnant, a visit to "La Chèvrerie des Hautes Côtes" was definitely on the cards.

I had been told last year on my last pre-pregnant visit that if I called ahead it was possible to take the kidlets up and watch the goats being milked. This is exactly what I did, and I was instructed to arrive at about 5:30pm which is apparently milking time. We followed the milk wagon up the hill behind the family Domaine and found what basically amounted to children's Nirvana in the goat barn.

Besides the adult goats being milked, there were several baby goats ranging from 1 to 5 months old. I don't know about you but every time I see children and baby goats in the same enclosed space I have to wonder if they were not in fact best friends up in heaven who were

tragically separated at birth. They are kindred spirits, no doubt about it.

Camille couldn't stop shrieking with joy at the little 1 month old goats that kept doing these frisky little twisty jumps and kicks of happiness at being surrounded by giddy children.

The children fed them hay, patted them (rather vigorously, but the baby goats didn't seem to mind), and watched the milking with fascination. We must have spent a good hour up there, yet had to drag the children away.

When we came back down the hill we had a lovely goat's cheese tasting, featuring the 5 different types of goat's cheese La Chèvrerie makes - these range from fresh to very dried, and they also produce a lovely ash-covered one as well. The cheeses sell for 2 Euros a piece – a steal!

Sadly we didn't get any photos of the platter full of cheese as Andrea, Camille, and I (ahem) demolished it in an astonishingly



short amount of time.

We made our purchases and then moved on to tasting the family's wine production. Just a little anecdote that I found irresistible - one of their favorite goats, a lovely female named Biscuit – likes nothing better than accompanying the family into the vineyards and working alongside them. If you ever are driving around Echevronne and see a goat in the middle of the vines, you are not hallucinating. Similar to the chickens pecking around the churchyard in Magny-les-Villers this is just business as usual here in Burgundy.

Turns out the Domaine makes some pretty darn tasty wine as well as delectable goat's cheese. I picked up three bottles of their white Côte de Beaune and three bottles of their Beaune 1ère Cru and we enjoyed them immensely that evening over dinner on our veranda.



Here is all the information you need:

La Chèvrerie des Hautes-Côtes
Mme. PLAIT

Rue Haute à Changey
(this is the little hamlet you come to before you arrive in the village of Echevronne)
21240 ECHEVRONNE
Tel: 06.37.20.34.66
Tel / Fax: 03.80.21.55.81

Monday to Friday after 5:30pm
Saturday afternoon
Sunday all day

A visit to the goat farm (highly recommended by Camille, amongst others) is possible if you call ahead.

VII. Wine and Running - a Very Burgundian Combination

Recently Franck participated in a 10km run in Nuits-Saint-Georges. The 10k run, along with a half-marathon, was in honour of the annual Nuits-Saint-Georges charity wine auction. The race ran past some of the world's most prestigious vineyards (Romanée-Conti anyone?) and even weaved its way under the Archway of Château Clos de Vougeot. Glasses of wine were served alongside water at the rest stations along the route, and included in the registration price Franck received an emblazoned wine tasting glass that allowed him to participate in a mammoth tasting afterwards (which he did, of course).



I was on the phone one day telling my sister Suzanne - who happens to be a dedicated runner - all about it. When I got to the bit about the wine being served at the rest stations she started laughing.

"What's so funny?" I asked.

"It's just that it's sort of a bizarre combination."

"What's a bizarre combination?"

You know...running and drinking wine."

That's when it struck me; this had never given me a moment's pause. I must have become Burgundian without realizing it somewhere along the line; I now operate on the presumption that everything has to do with wine, unless I am told specifically otherwise.

Here is a sample of wine-related runs available in Burgundy in 2008:

- o October 4th, 2008 - Les Grands Crus Marathon / Half-Marathon / 10km weaving through Burgundy's Grand Cru vineyards. Begins and ends in the village of Marsannay-la-Côte
- o www.marathondesgrands crus.com

- o October 18, 2008 – The “Foulée des Vendanges” in Savigny-les-Beaune with a 10km race celebrating the Annual Grape Harvest. Free 1 and 2 km races for children or childish adults.
- o www.foulee-des-vendanges.com
- o November 15, 2008 – Half-marathon celebrating the world-famous annual wine auction in Beaune. Race course weaves from Beaune through the picturesque villages of Pommard, Volnay, and Meursault and their vineyards.
- o www.semibeaune.net
- o March 15, 2009 – Nuits-Saint-Georges Wine Auction Half-Marathon and 10km offers 2 superb race routes in the renowned vineyards in and around the festive town of Nuits-Saint-Georges.
- o www.semi-nuits-st-georges.com

Who ever said wine and health didn't mix? Not Burgundians, that's for sure. As you can read on the wall of 15th Century Château in Savigny-les-Beaune, Burgundian wines are above all “nourissants, théologiques et morbifuges”.

VIII. Restaurant Review

Jacky's alternatives

We are all bereft now that Villers-la-Faye's special jewel, Jacky's bistro, has been closed and put up for sale. (News Flash, it has just been sold and I've heard through completely unsubstantiated village gossip that the new owner is going to open up a restaurant).

Franck and I, ever the dedicated vacation rental managers, have been actively seeking substitutes for the “Jacky's Bistro” experience while we wait not so patiently for a new bistro to be opened up stumbling distance down the road from us.

Although no place can ever hope to match the volume of food or the “uniqueness” of décor that defined Jacky's, here are three alternatives that all offer “prix fixe” menus during lunch on weekdays (and you'd better show up at 12:00, because these ain't places where you can waltz in at 2:00pm and demand food) and provide amazing value.

These places are a little rough around the edges, but if you're really serious about living like a local, you will not find any better value for your food dollar. The no-smoking law which was passed this January also means that now these restaurants can be enjoyed without coming down with instantaneous emphysema from second hand smoke.

Our advice is to call ahead at all three places, check what the daily dish is so you won't be unwittingly sitting down to a steaming dish of pig's entrails, and reserve ahead.

Here are our top three:

Café de France
13 Boulevard Bretonnière
21200 BEAUNE
Tel: 03.80.22.25.44

Run by a brother / sister pair who must be descendant from a line of giants (and always make me think of Hagrid in Harry Potter) and who concoct some of the best coq au vin and lapin à la moutarde that have ever passed my lips

Café Restaurant de la Place
14, Grande Rue
21700 MEUILLEY (village just 5 minutes drive from Magny-les-Villers and Villers-la-Faye)
Tel: 03.80.61.03.16

Run by a pair of women who keep the jokes flying throughout the entire lunchtime service. Make a mean apple tarte.

Auberge du Guidon
RN (route nationale) 74
21700 COMBLANCHIEN
tel: 03 80 62 94 39

A massive favorite with the region's truckers, so be sure to book ahead.

IX. French Favorites

On our [new website](#), which will be launched very soon you will find an [Amazon store](#) with all of our French Favorites available, as well as lots of other nifty new french items that I will be adding, like « Petit Bateau » onsies for babies - <http://grapejournal.blogspot.com/2008/02/in-love-with-petit-bateau.html>

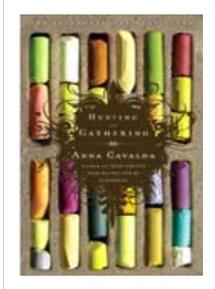
As soon as this service is up and running I will let you know in my blog, which is always the best place to check for all the latest information about well...everything.

In the meantime, however:

Ensemble, C'est Tout, translated into English under the title « Hunting and Gathering »



by Anna Gavaldas



This novel, a roaring success in France, is the story of three lost souls, Camille, Phillibert, and Franck (excellent choice in names, apart from the « Phillibert ») who are thrown together by fate and end up unwittingly transforming each other's lives. It's a story that unfolds in Paris, but manages the trick of simultaneously being very French and at the same time so human that you can imagine it happening to you, wherever you are.

A must read if you want to keep up with the French literary scene, and in my humble opinion a whole lot more fun than Camus.

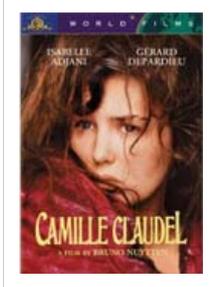
Ensemble, c'est tout (Original French with English Subtitles)



I loved the book so much that I was a bit reluctant to go to the movie, but my French girlfriends dragged me along and I am very glad they did. The cast is brilliant. It is anchored by Audrey Tatou (she of the « Amélie » fame) as Camille and Guillaume Canet as Franck. I now harbor a massive crush on Guillaume Canet, but don't tell my Franck.

Totally irrelevant piece of French celebrity gossip – the delicious Guillaume Canet is the boyfriend of Marion Cotillard who just won the Oscar from La Môme which I will be featuring in my Amazon.com store and in our next Grape News. Oui, you heard it here...

Camille Claudel



In honour of the recent Camille Claudel exposition in Dijon, I thought I would feature this classic French flick starring the beautiful but evasive Isabelle Adjani as Camille Claudel, and that ubiquitous French favorite, Gérard Depardieu, as her lover, mentor, and ultimately her enemy, Auguste Rodin.

This true story of their passionate obsession with art and with each other has been hailed as a "cinematic masterpiece". It is superbly acted, and was rightly nominated for Academy Awards in 1989 for the Best Foreign Language Film, and for Adjani as the Best actress.

Get your hankies ready, and refresh your knowledge of this long-undervalued woman artist.

Rose



I listen to this CD at least once a day at the moment. There is something refreshingly light and cheerful about this French singer's voice even when she is singing about sad things (she is French, after all, and they are never ones to put a gloss on the ups and downs of life).

The whole CD is fabulous, but if you are buying songs separately, don't miss out on my favorites "La Liste" and "Ciao Bella" (which is also Camille's favorite, and which she serenades us with on a regular basis).

X. La Maison des Chaumes

As those of you who have been following my blog will know, we put on a big push this winter to renovate our house, La Maison des Chaumes, in order to ready it for Mademoiselle Clémentine. We now have a brand new kitchen that is perfect for enthusiastic cooks such as ourselves, a gorgeous bathroom and the entire inside of the house is freshly painted and looking very fetching if I do say so myself. We have also been on a few antique buying outings and have snapped up some new old items such as a wooden bench and a gorgeous old buffet for the living room.

The exterior was our next project, and we're already far along on that front with Franck sanding and painting our shutters a beguiling shade of Indian blue and some serious landscaping.

We're still working with the idea of renting out La Maison des Chaumes as a vacation rental when we move back to Canada in the summer of 2009. It will be an ideal place for longer sabbaticals in France as the house is larger than any of our other properties, heats well in the winter, has a small garden area and a huge deck, and is just down the road from the local village school. Burgundy is also ideally located for exploring the rest of France and Europe. If you have absolutely any questions about planning a sabbatical for yourself or your family here in France, don't hesitate to get in touch with us.

La Maison des Chaumes will be available for rent from August 1, 2009 onwards.

Just email me at laura@graperentals.com if this sounds enticing to you. I'd be happy to answer any questions you may have, as well as email you photos.

XI. Grape Seeds - useful things & tidbits

- A very good pizza truck has begun gracing the place right beside the Salle des Fêtes in Villers-la-Faye on Thursday nights. Pizza men are men of mystery by nature and often disappear without notice, but the best way of making sure they stick around is by buying their pizzas.
- A recent guest of ours spent quite a bit of time in the relatively new bar / café / bistro in the stunning and nearby village of Pernand-Vergelesses called "La Grappe Pernand" and said it was a friendly and pleasant spot.
- The restaurant "La Ciboulette" right near the Porte Saint Nicolas in Beaune continues to garner rave reviews from our guests.
- We will be launching our new website very shortly. I will be emailing everyone on our mailing list to let them know, and will also be posting all new information on my blog.

XII. Availabilities

Once again this year all of our properties have filled up quickly, especially between the beginning of April and the end of October. We will be raising prices slightly for the 2009 season, but if you book in 2008 you can still benefit from our 2008 rates, even for a stay next year.

Here is the remaining availability for 2008 as it stands at the time of publication:

LA MAISON DES DEUX CLOCHERS (2 bedroom village house in Magny-les-Villers / between 400 and 600 Euros a week)



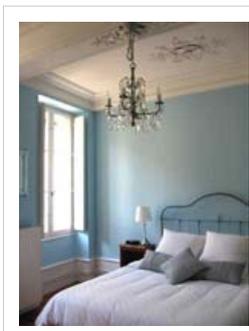
- Availabilities:
 - November 4th to December 31st

LA MAISON DE LA VIEILLE VIGNE(1 bedroom village house in Villers-la-Faye / between 450 and 650 Euros a week)



- Availabilities:
 - November 20th to 26th
 - December 16th to 31st

LE RELAIS DU VIEUX BEAUNE (2 bedroom apartment in heart of medieval Beaune / between 550 and 750 Euros a week)



- Availabilities:
 - October 31st to December 19th

I have already started taking quite a few bookings for 2009 at all three (soon four!) properties, so if you're planning on a trip to Burgundy don't delay!

To find out any further information about any of the properties, traveling to Burgundy, or making a booking, don't hesitate to contact me at any time by email at laura@graperentals.com.

Or by phone in France at (33) 3.80.62.72.17

A Bientôt!

Laura & Franck