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Vivva MONTREAL

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October 2006: Special Chateauguy Valley Edition

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Chateauguy Features see box at right

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SOUTH BY SOUTH-WEST

Autumn in the Chateauguy Valley

BY PHIL NORTON

The Chateauguy valley is Quebec's tourism secret, a genuine country get-away tucked into the province's south-west corner just 40 minutes from the Mercier bridge. Farm, forest, open water and big sky await the lucky few who discover it.

The drive south from Chateauguy and the Mercier quickly places you in the heart of a prairie harvest scene. Tractors

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See also these Chateauguy features:

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Books / Movies

How I Got from Capote to Bees in Four Easy Steps

BY CATHERINE MCKENZIE

The genesis of this article is the fact that a new Capote biopic, *Infamous*, is now screening at the Toronto Film Festival. Shot at the same time as last year's *Capote*, it is apparently excellent. This got me thinking about the earlier movie,
 and the journey it had taken me on. *continued on page 10*

Maternally Yours

Eureka: Dragons, Dining and Discounts

BY ANNIKA MELANSON

Eureka! I have just discovered a wonderful way to spend the morning with my daughter: **The Montreal Science Museum** at the Old Port. I have been wanting to take my daughter, Amel, for awhile, but
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HAPPENINGS

Vivva Montreal's guide to what's on around the island.

FALL COLOURS

- Fall foliage is usually at its peak around the first weekend in October. Family-oriented events are being organized in the Laurentians in the town of St. Donat. A \$5 pass includes rides on the ski-lift of Mount Garceau and on a horse-drawn carriage. **September 30 and October 1, 7 & 8.** For info and directions call 1.888.ST.DONAT or go to www.st-donal.com/week-end-couleurs-a.html.
- If you're heading south to the Eastern Townships, you can choose between venues. Gondola day passes at Orford are \$9.75 for adults, \$7.50 for kids under 12 and free for kids five and under. **September 29 & 30 and October 1, 6, 7, 8 & 9.** Call 1.866.673.6731 or go to www.orford.com. Lift passes at Owl's Head are \$10 for adults and \$8 for kids.

September 30 and October 1, 7, 8 & 9. Call 1.800.363.3342 or go to www.owl-shead.com.

CINEMA

- **Festival Nouveau Cinéma** is celebrating its 35th year with new works by Pedro Almodóvar and Ken Loach, the North American premiere of Lars von Trier's *The Boss of it All*, as well as the world premiere of Quebecer Philippe Falardeau's *Congorama*. **October 18 to 28.** Tickets are \$12 and are on sale beginning October 14 at the Just for Laughs Museum (2111 St. Laurent Blvd.). For more info call 514.282.0004 or go to www.nouveaucinema.ca.
- Perhaps an antidote to serious world cinema, **Montreal International Adventure Film Festival** hosts screenings on adventure, travel and extreme sport from **October 26 to 28.** Individual tickets start at \$12 and can be purchased at the UQAM ticket office by calling 514.987.3456. For more info go to www.espaces.qc.ca/fifam.

SPORT

- **CIBC Run for the Cure**, in support of breast cancer research, takes place on Sunday, **October 1.** The walk or run begins opposite 1155 Rene Levesque Blvd. W., at 9:30 am. To participate call 514.871.1717 or go to www.cibcrunfortheure.com.
- The **Canadiens** host the Ottawa Senators for their home-opener on Saturday, **October 14.** Call 514.790.1245 for tickets or go to www.admission.com.
- The Alouettes celebrate a strong showing this season at **ALS Fan Day**, when they host the Edmonton Eskimos on **October 21** at the Big O. Tickets start at \$23.50 and can be reserved by calling 514.790.1245 or at

admissions.com. For more info go to www.montrealalouettes.com.

Music

- **Massive Attack** plays the Metropolis **October 8 & 9.** Tickets for the postponed September 11 show will be honoured on October 8. Call 514.908.9090 or go to www.ticketpro.ca.
- **Matmos** plays Le National (1220 St. Catherine E.) **October 10.**
- **Zappa Plays Zappa** at the Metropolis **October 24.** Call 514.908.9090 or go to www.ticketpro.ca.

COMMUNITY EVENTS

- **Films That Transform.** The McGill medical faculty's ongoing series features *Bonjour! Shalom!*, a film documenting Montreal's Hasidic Jewish population, in Moyse Hall (853 Sherbrooke St. W.). Tickets are \$10, \$5 for students and seniors. **October 17**, at 7 pm.
- Artists **Lawrence Periman & Claude**

Hazanavicius are exhibited at The Gallery in Victoria Hall beginning **October 19.** Call 514.989.5265 for more information.

- The Westmount **Fall Lecture Series** is inaugurated by Ravi Hage. At the Westmount Library, **October 25** at 7:30 pm. Call 514.989.5265 for more information.

AT THE NEW FORUM (BELL CENTRE)

October 1 James Blunt
October 4-9 Disney on Ice – Monsters Inc
October 10 Iron Maiden
October 15 Barbra Streisand
November 8 Bob Dylan
November 1 Elton John
November 19 Lipizzaner Stallions
December 15 Genesis
January 23, 2007 Supernova
February 19, 2007 Barenaked Ladies

- Send your Happenings idea to vivvamountreal@pricepatterson.com.

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Montreal Goes Pop

BY STUART WOODS

Now entering its fifth year, **POP Montreal** has grown into a many-headed beast. With live music, film screenings, an arts and crafts fair, and art shows at several Plateau venues, it has become a rallying point for hipsters and artists alike.

"Booking artists like Beck or Franz Ferdinand is not what POP Montreal is all about," says executive director Noelle Sorbara, referring to past headliners. This year's mandate is to showcase lesser-known talent by celebrating unsung heroes.

To buy tickets online go to www.admission.com. For more info go to www.pop-montreal.com.

October 4

In a 50-plus-year music career, **Ramblin' Jack Elliot** profoundly influenced the American folk revival. Now 75, the itinerant minstrel is the acknowledged link between Woody Guthrie and Bob Dylan. Elliot shares the stage with homegrown artist **Al Tuck**. Tickets are \$25. At the Ukrainian Federation, 5213 Hutchinson.

October 5

Joanna Newsom's much admired debut, *The Milk-Eyed Mender*, immersed listeners in a skewed universe of unicorns and impish revelry. The classically

trained harpist will preview songs from her new record, *Ys*. Tickets are \$23. At the Ukrainian Federation, 5213 Hutchinson.

October 6

Legendary cult figure **Roky Erickson** is credited with coining the term 'psychedelic'. Erickson was the victim of the draconian marijuana laws of his native Texas. Following rehabilitation, which included the use of electric shock therapy, Roky legally declared himself an alien ('from a planet other than earth'). His life story is documented in the film *You're Gonna Miss Me*, which will be screened before his performance. Tickets are \$25. At the Associacao Portuguesa, 4170 St. Urbain.

October 7

Pop Levi is poised to make good on the buzz surrounding his first EP, *Blue Honey*. His solo work is best described as psych-tinged, blue-eyed soul. Tickets are \$10. At the Main Hall, 5390 St. Laurent.

October 8

One of Montreal's most beloved groups closes the festival. Avoid scenesters will tell you that **Sunset Rubdown** is better than Wolf Parade, bandleader Spencer Krug's highly-regarded 'side-project'. Tickets are \$12. At the Ukrainian Federation, 5213 Hutchinson.

MISSION: MONTREAL

Apples and Alpacas: The Chateauguay with Kids

In which our correspondent Ashley Cotter-Cairns girds his loins to tackle ... a relaxing family day in the country.

A tough assignment this month: I had to pack wife and son into our covered wagon and head west. Well, pack wife and son into our Ford hatchback and head southwest, to the Chateauguay valley. My mission was simple: get some fresh air and exercise and return with self-harvested Quebec fruit. Oh, the glamour of journalism!

It was quite opportune timing, because Carolina and I had been complaining that summer was in its death throes and our young son, Jasper, hasn't done enough outdoorsy stuff. Plus we've still not explored the greater Montreal area, as we keep reminding ourselves to do.

On your Bike, Mate

It soon became apparent that our original plan, to rent bicycles and tow Jasper along in a little red wagon behind us, wasn't going to pan out (unless the bike place also rented scuba gear, see my September article for *Vivva*). And it looked as if there was going to be a historic battle between husband and wife about whether to go apple picking after all.

But before we hit the orchards (or each other), we stopped off at the site of another historic battle. **The Battle of Chateauguay**, an official historic site of Canada, has a visitor centre in Howick/Allan's Corners (open Saturday and Sunday only – http://www.pc.gc.ca/lhn-nhs/qc/chateauguay/index_e.asp, 1.888.773.8888). The battle, in 1812, was a heroic defence of Montreal from American

invaders by British and French-Canadian forces. Various generals, including Charles de Salaberry, claimed the victory as their own. Now, all that's left is a few pretty, flat fields covered in grass.

This being a Friday, we had to imagine the wonders of the visitor centre and let our minds and eyes play across the fields where so many men had fallen all those years ago. Briefly awed by the weight of so much history, we continued on our journey towards the border. Passports are not essential down here, but take a wrong turn and you might be asked to show them by a jaded border guard. Best you don't ask him about any future plans to capture Montreal...

The Apple of our Eyes

We'd promised Jasper that we would pick apples, an argument which, though shallow, tipped the Battle of the Apple in my favour. After some research, we'd decided on **Blair Orchards** (1421 Route 202, Franklin Centre, 450.827.2605) as our u-pick of choice; but found it was like looking for a needle in a haystack (forgive the farming pun). This part of Chateauguay is crawling with orchards, each farm covered in low-pruned apple trees. Them's a lot of apples, believe me.

Once we located Blair Orchards, we weren't disappointed by anything but the weather. It has everything you'd want from a u-pick apple orchard: stunted-looking trees covered in low-hanging fruit; a café selling soup, local jams and pickles, bread and cakes; even a selection of miniature animals for children to get up close and personal with.



Should your chosen day make a liar of the weather forecasters, they even supply ready-picked Spartan or MacIntosh apples in full- or half-peck bags. (If you were ever curious about how much a peck of pickled peppers is, you'll be surprised. It's quite a lot!)

Jasper was on a promise, so on our way to make friends with the miniature donkey, the goat and the alpacas, we lifted him up towards a tree and let him stroke the apples. I don't think he minded much that he didn't get to harvest any, but if he did, he took it like a man.

Off the Beaten Track

There's not too much traffic on the roads and there's quite a distance between populous areas. The apple business apparently runs on cash: visit your bank before you travel, as Blair Orchards, for one, does not accept Interac or credit cards. We didn't see an ATM anywhere close.

If you're looking for a place to eat something not containing apples, there's quite a limited choice nearby. Ormstown has one or two little eateries, though we arrived back there too late to sample any of their wares. Route 201, which cuts straight through the valley, is very picturesque in places as minor highways go, but mostly devoid of restaurants until you get closer to the city and back into the sprawl of strip malls and warehouse outlets.

Even if apples are not your favourite fruit, your time in the Chateauguay valley won't be wasted. There's some of the lushest green countryside I've seen out-

side of England and, with that comparison in mind, a wet Friday is as good a time to appreciate it as any.

Ashley Cotter-Cairns is a Hudson writer. He can be reached at ashley@church-of-texas-holdem.com

5½ Things that Vivva Montreal recommends you do in October

- 1 Hit the tam tams before it gets too cold. You might even see a plane land on Park Avenue!
- 2 Take it up a notch at the terrasse of Hotel Place d'Armes for the 5 à 7.
- 3 Wednesdays at the Notre Dame Cathedral for amazing classical music with Louis Lortie.
- 4 Try deep frying the turkey this year.
- 5 Get 11 friends and a mini bus and reserve a *table champêtre*.
- 1½ Have a last beer of the season on a patio or deck. (Repetitious & unoriginal – docked half a unit).

*Have 5½ Things to recommend for November? Send your idea to vivvamountreal@pricepatterson.com
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Fall Feasts: Apples, Cheese and Pork

BY ANTHEA DAWSON

Less than a one hour drive from Montreal, one of Canada's most luscious agricultural and scenic havens can be found. The Chateauguay valley, located several kilometres to the southwest of Montreal on the south shore of the St. Lawrence River, is littered with meandering rivers, 19th century covered bridges and unique antique shops.

Where There's Milk, There's Cheese

The Chateauguay valley is largely a rural farming area, with dairy farming as the principal activity. As a dairy area, the Chateauguay valley also offers a wide variety of local artisanal cheeses that have been gaining in popularity. The Covered Bridge, a two-month aged, raw milk cheese made from a mixed herd of Jersey and Holstein cows, is creamy and smooth in texture, with a mushroom flavour. Vacherin Chaput is another famous cow's milk cheese, wrapped in spruce bark and known for its velvety texture. And Cabri, an aged goat's milk cheese, offers a fresh herbal and earthy flavour. Many of the Chateauguay valley's most famous cheese offerings can be found at local markets around Montreal, such as Atwater or Jean Talon, and are well worth a sinful sampling.

Apple of our Eyes

However, aside from the booming dairy industry, most people would probably associate the area more with its vast apple orchards that line the US border. From late August to late November, MacIntosh, Cortland, Spartan and Empire orchards dominate the landscape.

Lots to Choose From

One of the greatest things about cooking in this wonderful city is taking advantage of Quebec's lush local agriculture and autumn is by far the most fruitful season – during which we are completely spoiled with incredible produce. From butternut squash to corn to baby beets and, of course, apples, our markets are literally overflowing with colour and flavours, and there is no better time to sample our own local offerings. Autumn apples are a true delicacy and the menu that follows offers both a main course and dessert emphasizing our local fare. Cooking apples need to have a balance of sweet and sour flavour – a sweet apple is perfect for eating, but will be very boring when cooked if it doesn't have any acidity.

Here is a quick rundown (although

there are so many varieties available, it is a good idea to ask at the market regarding the exact sweetness or tartness): Cortland is best for salads; Empire is very sweet and good for dessert or cider; MacIntosh



Photo: Phil Norton

flesh is firm, very juicy and good for cooking; and Granny Smith is very tart and good for a sweet dessert-like pie.

Balsamic Roast Pork Loin with Apples & Fennel

- 4 pounds boneless pork loin, tied
- Salt & pepper
- 1 Tbsp. fennel seed
- 2 Tbsp. vegetable oil
- 2 cups beef stock
- 3 Tbsp. good quality balsamic vinegar
- 3 Tbsp. honey
- 3 pounds sweet potatoes, peeled & cut into wedges
- 4 Tbsp. olive oil
- 3 pounds local apples, peeled, cored & cut into wedges
- 2 fennel bulbs, trimmed, cored & cut into wedges
- 4 cloves garlic, minced
- 1 Tbsp. fresh thyme
- 1 Tbsp. cornstarch mixed with 1 Tbsp. cold water
- 1 Tbsp. maple syrup (optional)

Preheat your oven to 350°F. Season the pork loin with salt, pepper and fennel seed.

In a heavy cast-iron skillet, heat oil to medium-high and sear the roast on all sides until nicely browned. Place in a roasting pan.

In a medium-sized saucepan, combine stock, balsamic and honey and heat until the honey has dissolved. Pour the hot sauce over the pork roast, cover with heavy-duty tin foil and bake for about 1 1/2 hours.

Meanwhile, in a large bowl, toss sweet potatoes with 2 Tbsp. olive oil and salt & pepper. Bake on a parchment-paper lined cookie sheet at 350°F until the potatoes are nice and crispy, about 30 to 40 minutes. Set aside when ready.

In a bowl, combine apples & fennel with minced garlic, fresh thyme and salt & pepper. Remove pork from oven after 1 1/2 hours of cooking, and line the roasting pan with the apple fennel mix. Bake for another 15 to 20 minutes, without foil, or until the internal temperature of the pork registers 140°F. Transfer pork to a serving platter and let it rest and keep warm (this allows the juices to settle, and the pork will not dry out after slicing).

Strain the cooking liquid into a small saucepan. Bring it to a boil, then reduce the heat to medium. Whisk in the cornstarch/water mix and cook, stirring constantly, until the sauce thickens slightly.

Arrange the sweet potatoes, apples & fennel around the pork on the serving platter. Drizzle with maple syrup, slice and serve with the balsamic sauce.

Serves 4 – 6

Spiced Apple & Cranberry Crisp

For the Filling:

- 3/4 cup packed light brown sugar
- 3 Tbsp. all-purpose flour
- 1/2 tsp. cinnamon
- 1/2 tsp. ground cardamom
- 1/4 tsp. ground nutmeg
- Pinch of salt
- 2 pounds local seasonal apples, such as Empire, Cortland or Macintosh, cored, peeled & sliced 1/4-inch thick
- 1 Tbsp. fresh lemon juice
- 1 cup dried cranberries

For the Topping:

- 1/2 cup all-purpose flour
- 1/2 cup packed dark brown sugar
- 1/2 tsp. cinnamon
- 1/4 tsp. ground nutmeg
- 1/3 cup unsalted butter, chilled
- 1/3 cup toasted slivered almonds (optional)

Preheat the oven to 375°F. Butter a 9 x 6-inch baking dish.

Combine the brown sugar, flour, sugar, cinnamon, cardamom, nutmeg and salt in a bowl.

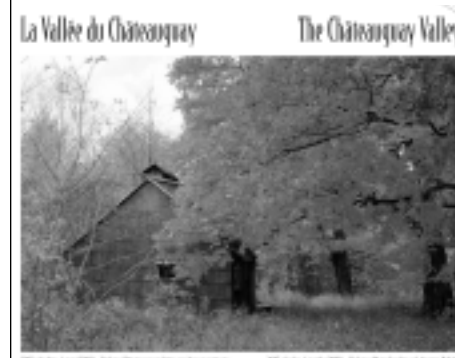
In a large bowl, toss the apples with the lemon juice. Stir in the dried cranberries. Sprinkle the sugar mixture over the apples and toss well until apples are well coated. Spread the mix evenly in the baking dish.

For the topping, combine the 1/2 cup of flour, dark brown sugar, cinnamon and nutmeg in a small bowl. Add the butter

and work it into the flour mixture with your fingers until the mixture is crumbly. Cover the apple mixture with the topping and sprinkle the almonds evenly on top. Bake for 30 minutes, or until topping is evenly browned. Serve hot, with a big scoop of vanilla ice cream. Serves 6

Anthea Dawson is the executive chef at Simply Wonderful, a catering firm that specializes in everything from small dinner parties to weddings and cooking classes.

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Alpenhaus

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MATERNALLY...*continued from page 1*

hadn't because the museum's website states that the activities are suitable for ages 4 and up. Amel is 3 1/2 and loved it! We spent most of the morning in Dynamo's Lair, a castle designed for children ages 4 to 7. There are about 20 interactive stations and games, a slide and a fun tunnel that kids can crawl through.

Most of the activities are either in mock towers or scattered throughout the central part of the room. One of the towers hosts Marching Music: giant piano notes on the floor for little ones to step on and create 'soothing' melodies (yeah, right!), there are two 'doodling stations', where fragments of iron are encased in a transparent table and kids can use a magnetic 'pen' to create designs and explore magnetic fields, a heat-activated art gallery, a wishing well, just to name a few of the activities. The recommended age range seems right, but if you feel that your 3-year-old might be ready, give it a shot.

Fossils

After Dynamo's Lair, we continued exploring. The current temporary exhibition is Ice Age Mammals. A giant cast of a complete skeleton of the *Mammuth americanum* that inhabited North America 15

million years ago is on display and there are other smaller showcases containing different species, artifacts and fossils.

Climate Change ... Way Back Then

The exhibit also explains how climate changes have affected our planet and there are computers with connected earphones scattered around. This exhibit is on until March 2007 and is suitable for children ages 8 and up.

Upstairs there is more: Technocity (computers, robotics, energy, resources) and Eureka! (matter, forces, waves, energy transfer), for children over the age of 8. I did notice that there are diaper change tables in the public bathrooms.

The museum's hours are Monday to Friday, 8:15 am to 3:30 pm and Saturday and Sunday, 8:15 am to 5:30 pm. Admission prices are \$10/adults, \$9/teens (13 to 17), \$7/children (4 to 12). If your child is under 4, admission is free, but you may be asked to show his/her proof of age. Birthday party packages are available on weekends starting at \$12.50/child: call 514.496.2281. The museum's main number is 514.496.4724 or visit their website: www.montrealsciencescentre.com. King Edward Pier at the Old Port (you will see the big IMAX sign; it is also located in the same building).

Dining Out with Children

For those of you looking for a fun, local spot to dine out with your brood, I have a new suggestion: **Fusion Delights**, where the motto is 'The fusion of healthy eating with delicious food.' Amel and I decided to 'do lunch' there recently on a rainy Sunday. (There are tables outside for better weather.) The restaurant is bright and cheery with a chilled-out vibe.

There is also a bookshelf with lots of children's books and activities, which is great for some 'quiet time'. The menu was designed by a naturopath. The lunch menu includes salads, grilled sandwiches, pizzas, wraps and homemade soup. Everything on the menu is made from scratch on the premises. The evening menu is a mix of Italian and Lebanese.

The best part? Everything is healthy, natural and very reasonably priced. The menu is vegetarian-friendly and vegan-friendly and the organic *végépaté* was the best I have ever tasted. Highchairs are available and families with young children are welcome. 'Build your own pizza' parties are available as well as catering. Tea and fresh scones are served daily.

Learning about Healthy Eating

On October 16, a nutrition workshop will be offered in the evening. The workshop will be given by a naturopath to teach people how to pack a nutritious lunchbox. Each person will build their lunchbox and take it home, so that their lunch will be ready for the following day. Reservations are necessary.

On October 28, Micky Farkas, a children's entertainer, will be on-site to entertain children with interactive singing and dancing with a Halloween theme. The fun starts at 3 pm. Fusion Delights has been open since February 2006 and is located at 5667 Sherbrooke Street West (corner of Harvard), 514.481.7698.

Grocery Shopping

I was recently shopping in **Teva**, a health food store in the Snowdon area and I thought that I should mention that it is very stroller-friendly! There is a ramp to enter the grocery store, a space to 'park' your buggy by the door and the aisles are nice and wide. There is a great range of gluten-free and nut-free products, as well as organic frozen baby meals. Teva also stocks chlorine-free, biodegradable disposable diapers and wipes (look for Seventh Generation Baby). Some other interesting products that I came across were Lice Stop, a pesticide-free alternative to treating hair lice, pesticide-free children's vitamins and the only organic prenatal supplement available in North America that can be taken with or without food. Perfect Prenatal, made by New Chapter. And no, I am not expecting! A delivery service is available for those living close. Teva, 5143 Decarie Boulevard, 514.486.5542.

Last But Not Least: A Discount

For the grandparents out there, **Oink!** gives a 20% discount to grandparents on the first Tuesday of every month. 1343 Greene Avenue, 514.939.2634.



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English Sector Entrance Exams
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Sec. 1 to Sec. 5: January 26, 2007

French Sector Open House
September 30, from noon to 4:00 pm

French Sector Entrance Exams
Sec. 1: October 21
Sec. 1 to Sec. 5: October 22

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CHATEAUGUAY... *continued from page 1*

and combines ply the endless flat fields as migrant workers pick the bounty from the black earth. Out of the city's traffic and past the strip malls of suburbia, the pace slows. Cyclists clad in bright jerseys point their morning course toward the rolling back roads of the border area. It's another world where the Chateauguay River and its rocky tributaries flow past old wooden barns in **Rockburn**, under the covered bridge at **Powerscourt** and over the water wheel at an old grain mill in **Dewittville**.

From various roadside lookout points in **Franklin Centre**, one looks across blazing red and yellow woodlands to Montreal's miniscule skyscrapers on the horizon. Another viewpoint on Covey Hill Road gazes directly east, where, on a clear day, you can spot Pinnacle in the Eastern Townships and Mount Mansfield, Vermont's highest peak.

Covey Hill is adjacent to a 6 million-acre wilderness, the Adirondack Forest Preserve that stretches to central New York State, but the only view of the Adirondack peaks is from Ridge Road near **Huntingdon**. This borderline foothill region boasts some of the purest water in the world and abundant wildlife.

Fruit Country Beckons

This is apple country and October is peak season. Pick-your-own orchards dot the landscape along Route 202 between **Hemmingford** and **Hinchinbrooke**. Each farm offers its own unique blend of French and English cultures with a mix of tourism styles, either for those who like a festive atmosphere with hayrides and a petting zoo, or for those who prefer to get away from the crowds.

If you access the region from Autoroute 15, Hemmingford is the first 'must' stop. It's more upscale than towns further west; you might call it the Knowlton of the Southwest Townships. The bustling village has exhibits of art and antiques; a pub; natural and ethnic food stores; and apple orchards right in town. **The Witsend Pub** (450.247.3597) offers full-course dinners in a heritage house, as well as fine brews at the bar.

Petch Orchards (450.247.3414, <http://www.securen.net/members/tamlge-or/petch/>) offers good old-fashioned fun with tractor rides, a children's maze made out of straw bales and an apple museum. Don't forget to take home a gallon of fresh-pressed juice and certainly some of their famous apple juice doughnuts.

For more modern and classy tastes, visit **La Face Cachée de la Pomme**



(450.247.2899 ext.228, www.appleice.wine.com) where their ice ciders can be taste-tested like fine wines. In **Havelock**, you can do the same with grape products at the vineyard, the **Vignoble du Marathionien** (450.826.0522, see also 'Chateauguay Wine, Cider and Cheese', p. 7).

It was in Havelock, on the upper slopes of Covey Hill, where the early 19th century pioneers carved pastures out of the forest, then planted the first groves of commercial apples. Down-slope along Route 202 in **Franklin**, English farm names predominate the old farms: Blair, Frier, Stevenson, Cassidy, Bye, McMillan.

At **Blair Orchards**, if you have your car windows open, the smell of freshly baked pies and the rhythm of a country band will force you to turn into their lane.

The Arthurs came to Quebec in 1820. The fifth generation runs the family farm and a sixth is on the way. Stroll beneath their huge sugar maples in the yard and a woodlot that the Arthurs have never cut in 183 years. One tree measures 13 feet around. The kitchen's creations are reason enough to stop here, plus the building is an architectural gem with a window overlooking a pond and covered footbridge. Children scramble down to the brook, tossing sticks into the current and returning with bouquets of fragrant peppermint.

Time to Eat, Drink and Be Merry

An alternative lunch break is at the **Rockburn Pub** (450.264.2239). It sits beneath grandfather maples beside an old stone church. Weekends draw plenty of motorcyclists and antique car enthusiasts, but there's always room on the porch or beside the hearth in the cozy Irish pub.

For fresh-baked goods, drive to the top of the ridge where the u-pick orchard **Ocnas Orchards** (450.827.2019, www.ocnasorchards.com) offers a panorama of the St. Lawrence valley. Besides the best view in the county, the Ocnas' farm offers bread from an old-fashioned outdoor clay oven.

While you pick your bright red Cort-

lands, Spartans and Empires, the clouds in a big blue sky seem almost within reach. V-formations of migrating geese are so close you can hear their wings beat.

Antique treasure hunters will have to go to **Ormstown** where five dealers have set up shop. If you need another Guinness or an enchilada, check out **Qué Pasa** (514.829.2686), an old-style pub offering Mexican fare.

Cycle Paths, Wildlife and Iroquois Villages

The western corner of the Chateauguay valley offers outdoor lovers a variety of activities. Way out in Dundee is the **Lac St. Francois National Wildlife Refuge** where waterfowl, hawks and owls stop over on their migration south.

Near **St. Anicet** an archeological dig at the Drouler Farm uncovered remnants of an Iroquois village dating back over 500 years. The village and longhouses have been reconstructed. A similar park is at **Pointe du Buisson** near Beauharnois.

Bicycling is easy on a series of paved paths around **Valleyfield**. One access point is across the Larocque lift bridge on Route 201, or along the Soulanges canal that connects all the way to Dorion.

In Valleyfield you can even find outdoor activities indoors. An old brick church has been converted into the **Vertige** rock climbing gym (450.371.2331, www.vertige-escalade.com). There are dozens of ropes to the ceiling and walls with artificial hand and foot holds.

One final tip while you're in the upper St. Lawrence region: fill up on gas; it's always \$.10/litre cheaper than in Montreal.

Most of the attractions are listed on the regional tourism map of the upper St. Lawrence 450.264.5252 (www.circuitdu-paysan.com) and in the brochures of Tourisme Suroit 1.800.378.7648 (www.tourisme-suroit.qc.ca).

In southwest Quebec, you're surrounded by good air, good food and good people, which is just about all you need.

Phil Norton is a Franklin writer and photographer.



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WINE

Chateauguay Wine, Cider and Cheese

BY CAROLA PRICE

The leaves have begun their colour change and the crisp night air reminds us that the chill of winter will soon embrace us all. For me, this time of year signifies the beginning of a wine's life and not a grape's demise. Armed with notebook and the attitude of an explorer, my friend and I decided to seek out the bounty of the Chateauguay valley. I wanted to share with my readers the joy of harvest time in the country and what can be enjoyed any weekend, such a short drive from Montreal.

My mission was to match our local cheeses with beer, sparkling or iced cider and, of course, wine. This is the perfect time of year to drive and walk around the countryside. During the week most facilities are practically empty, leading me to suggest that a 'sick day' from work may be in order.

Time to Collect

Any grape harvest begins with testing the grapes for the right sugar level. Once the optimum level is reached, the fruit finds its way to the fermentation tanks. When fermentation is complete, it is time to choose the holding system for the ageing process: oak barrels or stainless steel tanks.



An unreviewed producer (they were closed for the day) with a great sign.

While visiting one of Quebec's finest cider makers, La Face Cachée de la Pomme (617, Route 202, Hemmingford, 450.247.2899 www.appleicewine.com), I found out that the same rules apply when making hard cider.

(By the way, beer is also fermented, but is not put into oak barrels. Almost all commercial beer is aged for several weeks. Some small craft brewers age their product for up to three months before releasing it.)

Cheesy Bites

Cheese is one of the most perfect foods for wine. The lactic acid in any cheese tones down the tannin, acidity and harsh flavours found in many wines. At Artisanal Cheese in New York City (www.artisanalcheese.com), they write, 'A great wine pairing should not merely enhance the flavour of wine; it should also improve your perception of the cheese itself. Both wine and cheese are raised up to new heights...'

I love trying any kind of cheese, whether it is pasteurized or made with raw milk. Quebec has some of the most divine examples that I have ever come across. While many are made from cow's milk, quite a few sheep and goat's milk products are made less than 30 minutes from Montreal. We found the goat cheeses at Ruban Bleu (449 Rang St. Simon, St. Isidore de la Prarie, 450.454.4405, www.rubanbleu.net) outstanding. I suppose the gorgeous day, the delicious ciders and the braying that welcomed us to the farm made our experience all the better. The woman at the counter filled us with information and samples of goat's milk Camembert and one that resembled old cheddar.

Shop Around

We left almost every stop on our tour with a new bag of goodies. Wrapped up with the excitement of the tastings and newly learned information, we hit the gift shops with vigour. I wanted to buy almost every wine and cider I could carry, but was held back by my friend, who reminded me that there were more stops on our little journey.

While wine and cider can be cheap, iced product of any fruit is not.

If you love to drive and discover new



palate pleasers, this might be a tour for you. The only thing I should stress is to pick up the Route des Fromages guidebook before leaving Montreal. It will be essential to your enjoyment when on those winding country roads with little signs and big views. Learn a lot, enjoy the views and drive carefully. For more information call or email Circuit du Paysan (1.800.378.7648 or 450.377.7676, and www.routedesfromages.com).

A Matter of Taste

18/20 Unibroue, Fin du Monde beer, Quebec. Any dépanneur should carry this product.

The cheddar from Ruban Bleu pairs perfectly with this beer and brings out the slightly nutty aftertaste in the beer. This blond beer has a smooth finish with some spiciness and tart flavours. Think plum pudding with champagne-like bubbles.

17/20 Frimas cider, Face Cachée de la Pomme, Quebec SAQ#00742627 \$49.25

The acidity of chevre and raspberries in a dark chocolate cup matches the velvety texture of the cider perfectly as it glides down the throat. It is iced cider of the highest quality with a golden brown hue and a lively smell of spiced apples and almonds. It is tart and sweet without being cloying, has a long finish in the mouth and very well balanced fruit and acidity.

16/20 Boisé de Havelock, Vignoble Marathonien, Quebec. Available at the winery exclusively.

The delicate white blume and charcoal goat cheese pyramid matched the floral and slightly citric texture of the Boisé de Havelock. This is an excellent wine for light cheeses or as an apéritif. It is slightly fruity with some lime peel in the background. The taste is tart green apple and some butter while the finish is medium-bodied and not too acidic. It also matches well with egg dishes and fish dishes in wine or cream sauces.

Other Wines to Enjoy With Cheese...

18/20 Babich, Sauvignon Blanc, New Zealand SAQ# 00560144 \$19.05

This crisp and well balanced white shows well when paired with goat cheese.

I find that Pecorino is also lively with the lime and grassy flavours in the wine. It is New Zealand's best grape and has finally seen some action here in Quebec. Enjoy it with grilled chicken and lime as well as Thai and Vietnamese dishes whether spicy or not.

19/20 Montes Alpha, Merlot, Chile SAQ#00564617 \$23.25

This juicy black Merlot also has a bit of Cabernet Sauvignon in it to make it slightly tannic and more powerful than other Merlot. It is well matched with stinky creamy cheeses like Saint Damase and Brillat Savarin or with medium cheese washed in wine like Le Sainte Rose or old cheddar washed in port.

It has a long finish with tobacco and chocolate overtones, black pepper and some plum in the mouth and a hint of chocolate in the aftertaste. Pairs well with grilled red meat and pasta with meat sauce or a wonderfully rich lasagna.

Carola Price is a sommelier, chef and co-author of the bestselling MONTREAL FROM BREAD TO WINE. She is a member of the Canadian Association of Professional Sommeliers and The International Sommelier Guild. She can be reached at carola@ivvmontreal.com.

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ART

Flowers, Earth and Metal: Fall Art Exhibits in Westmount

BY CHRIS 'ZEKE' HAND

Valerie Butters is a woman. All women I know like flowers, so it goes without saying Valerie Butters likes flowers. Good thing, too, as pretty much everything she paints is flowers or landscapes with flowers. Ms. Butters has an exhibit opening at **Avenue Art** on October 5.

Valerie Butters

My interview with her was a wide ranging conversation that went from her experiences as one of the few female infantry soldiers in the Canadian Armed Forces ('I was the best shot in my platoon') to the differences between painting from life and painting from photographs ('Photographs enable me to explore the abstract nature of the flowers'). While all of her available work is still life or landscape, Ms. Butters does not paint flowers exclusively. She is constantly exploring other forms, means and methods. As she says, 'Who has time for hobbies when you have an obsession?'

From Chicoutimi to Greece and Back

Born in Chicoutimi, the daughter of a jet fighter pilot, Ms. Butters moved around the country an awful lot during her childhood, eventually ending up in Ottawa just long enough to call it home. Post-graduation and post-army, she traveled extensively throughout Europe. But it was on Corfu that she decided that she needed to paint. It wasn't exactly an 'I need a paintbrush, now!' moment, but it was compelling enough for her to forsake sun, sand and bathing suits for Canadian winters. Once back home, she enrolled in the Ottawa Art School, and she has never looked back.

Flowers

About 70% of her paintings are from real life, using just her eye and hand to interpret what she sees. The rest are from photographs. The reason she paints flowers is that, back when she was just starting to paint, flowers were a cheap and very easy to procure subject. And on top of it, her studio ended up smelling glorious. Unfortunately, the lifespan of fresh cut flowers isn't terribly long, but her favourite time to paint them is four days after they have been cut or right before

they die.

She churns out painting after painting as if her life depended on it. It is the process of painting and how her brush interacts with the canvas using acrylic paint as the catalyst that is as important to her as the process of breathing. This vibrancy is evident in every brush stroke in every painting she creates.

Terre, Pierre et Fer

Vibrant brush strokes ain't what you're going to get if you go down around the corner from Avenue Art to the **McClure Gallery**. There they have an exhibition opening on October 5, called *Terre, pierre et fer*, which highlights the work of Jean Brillant (not the dead Canadian hero), Jean-Louis Emond and Eva Lapka, three long time veterans of the Québécois art scene.

Unlike Ms. Butters, the three artists use very earthy materials: dirt, rock and metal. Most of the pieces for the show had not been completed when I spoke to the artists, but they were all hard at work.

The basic premise for the show was to have each artist work with one of the elements, either earth, stone, or iron, in order to experience the interplay between pieces in a group show. However, as Ms. Lapka works with stoneware and other ceramics, Jean Brillant in metal and sometimes with stone as well, and Jean-Louis Emond in metal, I imagine that one will have to take the premise with a grain of salt. Sometimes when you squint things look even better than they do in reality.

Eva Lapka

Ms. Lapka was born in Czechoslovakia and immigrated to Canada in 1968. She is a veteran of numerous exhibits and her work is in the collections of many museums worldwide. I was told that her piece *Ara Pacis* ('Altar of Peace') would be in the exhibit. It is a rough v-formation (of what I imagine are ceramic hands) above two other ceramic hands on a small black pedestal. From the pictures I saw, it looked sorta like what I could imagine a flock of doves would look like if they all decided to become evangelical Christians and lay hands in order to try to heal the world. It looks pretty enough. (The only problem is that these days evangelical Christians

have no desire to heal the world, pity.)

Jean Brillant

As the interviews were taking place in M. Brillant's studio, it became a little bit easier to imagine what he was going to be making. He showed us a gas cylinder that he was planning on incising in order to make the most delicate lace-like filigree you could imagine. We were lucky enough to see a smaller version that M. Brillant had already made and I can't begin to describe the sheer amazement that came over me. M. Brillant had used a welding blowtorch in order to cut into the cylinder and everything sorta got twisted around in my head, and it made me go all ouroboros inside and out. Toss in the inherent contradiction between big gas cannisters made from cold rolled steel and 'lace-like filigree', and it's a good thing I didn't faint right then and there.

Hedwidge Asselin, the curator of the exhibit, will be giving a public talk on **Thursday, October 12 at 7 pm** at the McClure Gallery. The artists will be in attendance as well and they promise to answer questions from the audience.

Terre, pierre et fer:

October 6 to 28, 2006

McClure Gallery

350 Victoria

514.488.9558

Tuesday to Friday: 12 noon to 6 pm

Saturday: 10 am to 5 pm

Vernissage: Thursday, October 6 at 6 pm.

Inspired by Summer: Valerie Butters

October 5 to 19

Avenue Art Gallery

4880 Sherbrooke Street West, Suite 170

514.867.3745

Wednesday, Thursday, Friday, 10:30 am to 5 pm and by appointment

Chris Hand runs Zeke's Gallery. All the opinions expressed are his own. He does not represent, manage, consult or otherwise have ANY affiliation with any of the artists or galleries he writes about, unless it is explicitly stated within the review.

'This sweeping portrait of the St. Lawrence ... is overdue. ... The text is crisp, well-organized and tells you everything you need to know about the St. Lawrence...'

– J. D. Gravenor in the Montreal Gazette (June 30, 2006)



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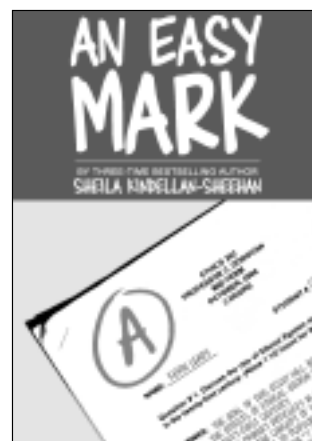


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TV — NEW DRAMAS

He Said ... She Said








BY CATHERINE MCKENZIE
AND DAVID PRICE

We all love TV. Every year, however, a number of television shows die. Last year's crop included The West Wing, Arrested Development and Everwood. Here is an attempt to scout out new hit dramas for our readers.

Next month: comedies.

VANISHED

Mondays at 9 pm, Fox & Global

He:     
She:     

He said: This thriller about a US senator's missing wife is a Frankenstein collage. There is an FBI agent haunted by his past (take your pick: *The X-Files*, *Magnum*, *P. I.*, *Knight Rider*...). The cityscapes are alternately rendered as successive freeze frames (*CSI*, *Angel*) or high tech renderings on computer (24 with a nod to *Tron*). We follow the camera into a computer's inner workings (*House/CSI* with the slight twist that this microscopic world is technological, not biological). The slightly wild children of the senator chafe under the constant security blanket (24, *The West Wing*). And the conspiracy: victims have numbers tattooed on them or left on killers' 'calling cards' (*The Da Vinci Code*!). If you like those productions and aren't looking for something radically new or brilliantly acted, this might be the ticket. I almost forgot: one possible new element to *Vanished*: the unscrupulous, sexually charged TV reporter. I hope she mixes things up!

She said: I agree. I would add that, even though they presumably have all season to resolve this mystery, there are elements that are rushed. Why pretend that they are able to obtain every traffic, ATM and security video from the radius of the abduction site within hours? While it is a format that works on 24, it is disorienting here because this show is not progressing in real time. Additionally, there were a few real clinkers on the dialogue front: 'Tell him I will see him in hell' is a line that never needs to be repeated.

JUSTICE

Wednesdays at 9 pm, Fox & CTV

He:     
She:     

She said: *Justice* follows a very expen-

sive, very good team of criminal defence attorneys from first client meeting to verdict. The added twist is that we find out, post-verdict, what really happened.

Much like *Vanished*, this show relies on choppy camera work to create drama. Movies I was reminded of were *Panic Room* and *Flight Plan*: the camera goes through walls rather than taking us through doors. Wouldn't it be nice if pace were created with great writing?

This show is led by *Alias* alumnus Victor Garber. I have personally never been a fan, and find him stiff (is he part robot?). The chemistry between the rest of the cast is quite good, until Garber shows up.

I also chafed at the unreality of the attorneys. Clearly, they have not learned the difference between asking a question and giving a speech, and objections are only made whenever they feel like it. That being said, the creators have created a world that encompasses more than the courtroom. A standout: the snippets of a CNN-type show called *American Crime*.

He said: I agree. The Garber character intrudes with quips and not-so-*bon mots*. The first episode introduction of the legal team was like a scene from *Guns of Navarone*, *Mission: Impossible* (or *Top Secret*!). Each member has a special skill... Extra points docked for using Warren Zevon's bad-boy-in-Cuba story song 'Lawyers, Guns and Money' for this corporate, cookie-cut show about a slick, cookie-cut world. And the law firm is called TNT&G. Need I say more?

STANDOFF

Tuesdays at 9 pm, Fox

He:     

She: Show not rated; for lead actor, see below.






He said: Boy, is this bad! The plot: there are two hostage negotiators who are having a secret relationship. The man is played by Ron Livingston – who has been eating regularly since his 'starving actor' days of *Swingers*, *Sex and the City* and *Band of Brothers*. The woman is played by Rosemarie DeWitt – who is an off-the-shelf, anodyne brunette-with-some-red-hue-to-her-hair. There are several hackneyed interplays: lover versus lover (*they draw parallels between work situations and their relationship*!), street cops versus their superior (*they are great at what they do, but*

break rules in doing so!) and tough-SWAT-team-cop versus understanding-psycho-babble-cops (*he wants to shoot the bad guys; they need just a few more minutes to get the job done*!) The writing is hackneyed too: 'Go with your gut' (I am not kidding) and 'Make the call.' There is even a scene where the main characters argue until they kiss. (*Earth to Hollywood writers*: Sam and Diane from *Cheers* wrote, published and sold the movie rights to this scene. Do not re-attempt.). As I zoned out, I started to think about more interesting things than this show, like what constitutes good writing. Think of Livingston-Berger in *Sex and the City*. He is famous for breaking up with Carrie on a post-it note. I'd actually forgotten this exit strategy, but I do remember his character looking very Hollywood on a motorcycle and then having self-acknowledged problems mastering the bike for the rest of the episode. *Earth to Hollywood writers*: writing against type (at least sometimes) and being original are what spice up a show, and lead to viewers, survival, even fame...

She said: Ron Livingston's cute.

MEN IN TREES

Fridays at 9 pm, ABC

He:     
She:     

She said: Anne Heche plays a famous author and relationship coach. Everything in her life seems perfect until she finds out, while on a business trip to a small town in Alaska, that her fiancé is cheating on her. She is distraught, and yet taken with the small town (of mostly men), and decides to stay for awhile, writing and researching her next book.

I have a feeling that I shouldn't like this show. I know it is a mixer: part *Northern Exposure* (see if you can catch the building that evokes that show), part *Sex and the City*, and, in its small town quirky aspects, part *Gilmore Girls*. I know that there were a few dialogue clinkers, and a few plot issues. Like many of this year's shows, this show suffers from accelerated pacing. I know all this and yet, I enjoyed watching. Heche is funny (particularly in the opening sequence, and whatever David says in here, he laughed too). James Tupper (who is going to be the romantic, will-they-or-won't-they lead) is exactly as he should be: handsome in a rugged way with a great collection of fisherman's sweaters. The show has been given a brutal time slot, but – hey – that's what VCRs and PVRs are for! Give it a try.

He said: This is not a 'mixer'. It is a Dolly-the-sheep clone. From *Northern Exposure*: Alaska, the small town radio show, the quirky radio host, the new New York resident, the wise/semi-wise native Americans. To its own discredit: hack-

neyed writing ('that's the thing about love'), unoriginal plotting (Heche's character throws her unused wedding dress off a cliff) and a copied format (at the end of each show, we hear Heche's thoughts in a voice over. *Doogie Howser* anyone?). Heche's acting is good, but she is swimming against a strong current.

SMITH

Mondays at 9 pm, CTV

Tuesdays at 10 pm, CBS

He:     
She:     

He said: The plot: Ray Liotta is the leader of a crack burglary squad. He appears to keep his life secret from his wife (played by Virginia Madsen) and family. As of the end of the first episode, the police are on his tail. This is promising television! Why? (1) *It contains the unexpected*. When two uncharming toughs tell one of Liotta's team members (in a pre-caper, background scene) not to surf on a beach that is native Hawaiian turf, he responds by walking to his car, retrieving a rifle and shooting them dead. You won't see that on *Vanished*! (2) *The writing is good*. The same character is asked if he has settled down or if 'he is still chasing the prettiest girl left at last call.' If you've ever been at a sleazy bar when the lights go on, this remark speaks volumes. You won't hear dialogue like that on *Men in Trees*! (3) *The plotting is good*. The team members and their skills are introduced inside the flow of the story. The Amy Smart character is the forger; our surfer is the marksman, there is an electronics man etc... There is a great switcheroo with tattoos. You won't find plot like that on *Justice*! (4) *It is well acted*. Liotta is firing on all cylinders. Need I say more? You won't find great acting on *Standoff*!

Is *Smith* perfect? No: there were scenes that repeated for no good reason, the trailers and first episode gave too much away (although not everything) and the non-linear plotting could have been less non-linear, but more effective. But, of all the shows I've seen this season, it has the most promise.

She said: I agree. This show is the best of the crop so far. Ray Liotta is very good and very cool. Why is he so appealing as a scumbag? Even better is the fact that this show appears to understand that not everything needs to occur in five minutes. Seeds have been planted that will take all season, or more, to develop. I actually felt as though I had watched a movie and not 42 minutes of TV. The cast is excellent, although I found Virginia Madsen – and her knowing looks – annoying.

Catherine McKenzie is a lawyer.
David Price is a publisher.

TOWNSHIPS CALENDAR: GOLF

Fall is a great time to play golf in the Townships (or anywhere), but there are unique challenges. Before you even get there, be careful of fall cyclists. People might dream of a future where they own the road, but in the meantime they are in danger. Expect them: alone, in four-somes, even facing oncoming traffic.

On the links, be ready to play behind (or sandwiched inside) a tournament. Be patient. Think of the 19th hole.

Things to remember about actually golfing in the fall:

Fog. A golf day can be both rained and fogged out. The colder weather also slows down the fog burn-off. Don't make firm plans too far in advance.

Water. A weaker sun comes up later. As a result, early rounds of golf lead to feet wet from dew. Bring an extra pair of shoes and socks for the back nine.

Leaves. Leaves are everywhere. They can look like a golf ball – or hide one. Bring your most distinctive balls and make sure to follow your shots.

Some suggestions with their end-of-seasons. (There is some vagueness to

these dates, so if it matters, be sure to call; on the flip side, they can be open later if the weather is good):

October 15

Lac Brome (Knowlton) 888.539.0808
Inverness (Bondville) 450.242.1595
Owl's Head (Mansonville) 450.292.3666

Mid-October

Dufferin Heights (Stanstead)
819.876.2113

End of October

Cowansville 450.263.1332
Rochers Bleus (Sutton) 800.361.2468
Lennoxville 819.562.4922

End of November

Les Cèdres (Granby) 450.372.0167

Other Townships Stuff

FALL COLOURS: Gondola day passes at Orford are \$7.50 to \$9.75. **Sept. 29 & 30 and Oct. 1, 6-9.** Call 1.866.673.6731 or go to www.orford.com.

10th Annual Autumnfest at Owl's Head **Sept. 30 & Oct. 1, 7-8.** Arts, crafts and fall foliage. Antiques on Sunday Oct. 1. Lift passes (also on Oct. 9) are \$8 to \$10. Call 1.800.363.3342 or go to www.owlshead.com.



Dufferin Heights. Lord Dufferin, governor general from 1872-78, proclaimed the view 'the most scenic found anywhere.' Photo: Matthew Farfan – author of *The Eastern Townships: In Town and Village*.

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BOOKS/MOVIES... continued from page 1

Step One: Capote (#1)

This movie, for which Philip Seymour Hoffman won an Oscar, *Capote*, is not a traditional biopic. Rather, it follows Truman Capote through the process of writing his best known book, *In Cold Blood*. In an interview with the author of the movie (actor Dan Futterman, best known for his work on *Judging Amy*), he stated that the genesis of the movie was his realization that one of the most interesting characters of Capote's true-crime drama wasn't in the book: Capote himself. Capote was on the scene within days of the murder, spent weeks in the small town where it occurred and interviewed many of the main characters personally. He was accompanied on that journey by his long-time collaborator and friend, Harper Lee.

Capote's presence on the scene put him in a position to first meet, and eventually befriend, the murderers, and in particular Perry Smith (excellently played by Clifton Collins Jr.). The movie covers the lives of these two men and the frustration that Capote feels at not being able to finish his book until the final outcome is known. Hoffman's acting is brilliant, although I personally think the Oscar should have gone to Heath Ledger for his aching performance in *Brokeback Mountain*.

Step Two: The Ball Starts to Roll

It was because of this movie that I decided to re-read *In Cold Blood*. Like the movie, the book follows the story of the murder of the Clutter family by two small-time criminals who were under the mistaken impression that the Clutters had a safe full of money hidden somewhere in their house. The book tells the story from all angles. We see the members of the family going about their lives. We see the killers on their journey toward the small town where the murders take place and their attempt at flight afterwards. We learn about the impact these murders have on the town, and on those who were close to the family. Then the book shifts to following the murderers through the penal system.

It was an interesting experience reading this book once I knew what Capote's role was behind the scenes. It turns out he is in the book, hidden behind code words like 'a journalist who spoke to' so and so, or 'a friend of' this or that person. It is essentially a perfect book, keeping our interest from start to finish, and showing us the humanness of the killers, if not their humanity.

Step Three: And if That Mockingbird Don't Sing...

Another character in *In Cold Blood* who

Capote

In Cold Blood
by Truman Capote



To Kill a Mockingbird
by Harper Lee



The Secret Life of Bees
Sue Monk Kidd



Bee Season
by Myla Goldberg



is not named is, of course, Harper Lee. During the time that this 'female journalist' (as she is referred to) was helping Capote gather the pieces of his masterpiece, a little novel called *To Kill a Mockingbird* was published. I had last read this book, along with all schoolchildren, sometime in high school, and my memory of it was hazy and clouded by the powerful images created by Gregory Peck in the movie version. Re-reading it made me remember why it is part of the modern cannon, and why it should be.

To Kill A Mockingbird is set in the South in the 1930s and is told from the perspective of a young girl named Scout. Scout's best friends are her older brother James and an odd little boy named Dill who visits every summer. Her father, Atticus, is a lawyer in the town they live in. This book contains two main plots that interweave: Scout, James and Dill's obsession with a neighbour named Boo Radley who never leaves his house, and Atticus' defence of a young black man who is falsely accused of raping a white girl. These two events eventually come face to face and change Scout's life forever.

Harper Lee does so many things right in this book, but the most impressive, I think, is how she manages to tell a story through an 8-year-old narrator and capture both the thoughts of the child she was and the adult she has become. When people speak about this book, they mostly focus on its message about race and racism in the South. This book is just as much about the relationship between a girl and her father, and a girl and her brother. And whatever the subject matter, Lee's tone, style and choice of language are as fresh and modern as if the book had been written last year.

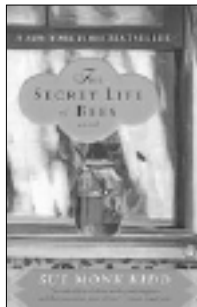
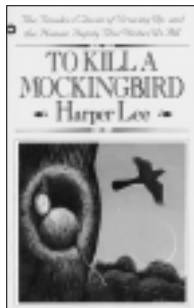
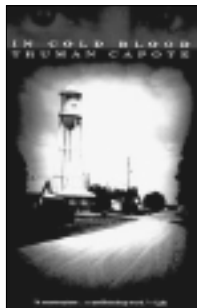
Step Four-A: The Buzz of Bees

I next read *The Secret Life of Bees* by Sue Monk Kidd, a book with parallels to *To Kill A Mockingbird*. This book follows the adventures of a young girl in the South in the 1960s who runs away from home to get away from her abusive father. She escapes with her housekeeper, a black

continued on the next page

BOOKS/MOVIES... continued from page 10

woman just waking up to her rights, and ends up living with a family of black women who are beekeepers. I personally thought this was just a standard effort. In fact, with the exception of the beginning chapter (from which the title comes), there is little that is original here. Rather, the author has created a martini of a book: part *To Kill a Mockingbird*, part *Fried Green Tomatoes*, part *The Color Purple*, and a dash of at least five or six other books. Maybe *Mockingbird's* excellence makes it impossible to write a story from the perspective of a precocious girl child in the racially divided South. Whatever the case, I was not surprised by any develop-



ment or twist in this book, and guessed the ending about 50 pages in. While Kidd is a good writer, she is not an original one.

Step Four-B: More Bees

When I was buying *The Secret Life of Bees*, another title caught my eye, the novel *Bee Season* by Myla Goldberg. Intrigued, I succumbed to temptation

and bought the book.

Bee Season is the story of a young girl who has never excelled academically until she learns that she is a prodigy speller. This fact finally gets her the attention she always wanted from her father, whose interest to date had been focused on her more academically inclined older brother. However, the spelling bee is merely the device that takes us into the lives of each of the family members: the father who studied to be a rabbi and spends his days studying theological material, the lawyer mother who is the income source for the family and who is descending into madness, the older brother who spins off his axis into another religion when his father's attention is taken away and the



main character whose spelling talent takes over her life.

While I enjoyed the beginning of this book, it soon veered off into such bizarre (though imaginative) places that I lost interest. None of these characters is particularly likeable, and the book ends fairly abruptly without any real resolution to any of the problems that were created between the pages.

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**PRACTICAL POINTS****Rates and Rating: Portfolio Performance Measurement**

BY JOHN SMITH

A few years ago, the Ontario Securities Commission spearheaded an overhaul of the policies for investment dealers servicing the retail client. The commission set up committees and proposed a fairly tight agenda for the delivery of what was called the Fair Dealing Model (FDM). The work continues on the client/advisor relationship.

The intent was to establish a clear understanding of the client's needs and wishes and the ability of the dealer to deliver those targets on a cost efficient basis. The work on this FDM is still underway, but the groundwork allowed the committee members an insight into the practices of the investment industry and a few simple steps were suggested that could be of help to the average client.

Tracking Portfolio Performance

A significant area of discussion was the ideal requirement to produce an ongoing record for clients allowing them to track their investment performance against original targets. This facility is still not readily available for most investors, which is unfortunate, because it is simply the most important element for rating the results of a portfolio over time. Let us suppose that you as an investor had in mind a rate of return (exclusive of income) that would allow you to achieve a solid growth for your investments over a long period of time. Let us take a simple criterion: the average rate of inflation for the past three years plus 5%. Today that compound growth rate needs to be about 7%. Not out of reach for most investors allowing for a modicum of risk to achieve the result. Now suppose you had agreed with your investment advisor that this target rate would be reviewed annually and checked against the actual results. All fine so far.

Your monthly statement may show your holdings in two columns: cost basis and present value. From those numbers, you can calculate your gross returns, but they do not provide you with an annualized compound rate of return. It is all very well to know that your \$25,000 bank share investment made in 1986 is now worth \$100,000, but what is its compound rate of return (excluding dividends)? Actually, very close to that 7% tar-

get you set. However, without the annualized compound return, the month end statement is not very informative.

What's a CAGR?

You are able to calculate your annual return fairly accurately yourself if you tap into Investopedia.com and search for CAGR (Compound Annual Growth Rate) and then use the CAGR calculator. It is not perfect, but it is very good. All you need to know is the cost basis, the date of purchase and the present market value. Armed with that calculation for each holding and for your portfolio in total you can assess your performance against your target. You might be surprised! A similar calculator can be found at CNNMoney.com at the very bottom of the homepage. It refers to housing prices, but the calculations are the same.

Two Lows at Once

While September 2001 will be remembered for the shocking destruction of the World Trade Center, it also marks a low point in the valuation of securities. Consequently, the purveyors of mutual funds and similar investments will now be able to use this benchmark starting point and the subsequent recovery of the markets to extol their remarkable performance. In the case of investments held in US securities, this marketing information must be placed within the context of the reality that the popular indices of American markets have not yet recovered their peak values achieved in the years 1999 and 2000.

Investors should always be concerned about absolute rates of return and not relative rates. It is all very well to beat the market averages by a measurable amount, but the results may only reflect the performance from carefully selected starting dates. It is therefore not hard to anticipate that the forthcoming sales literature will refer to the past five years and ignore a generous portion of the preceding period. The resulting calculations will imply a very favourable future for their selected funds. Caveat emptor.

John Smith is the nom de guerre of a retired investment executive. John has been a broker, investment banker and trader in Montreal and Toronto, as well as active in company management and the investment industry's self-regulatory agencies.

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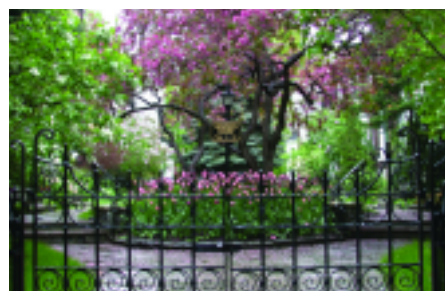
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