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Happy Holidays

Vivva MONTREAL

What are you doing tonight?

December 2006—v1.7 Arts & Entertainment on the Island and Beyond 22,000 copies



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Adventures in a Montreal Culinary Academy Cooking with Class

BY MICHAEL GORMAN

Tomato, tomahto. Potato, *parmentier*? Looking to expand my culinary licks and lexicon as the heat of summer gave way to the cool, cooking-friendly days of autumn, I decided to scour the internet for courses offered in English in Montreal.

In just a click or two, I discovered the impressively named *Académie Culinaire* in Old Montreal, which promised, for a price, to teach me to master all the basic techniques. I would become more comfortable in the kitchen
 and – most important *continued on page 9*



Computer programmer Ian Ishmael, centre, confers with classmates during a recent Basic Techniques course at Académie Culinaire.

Restaurant Review

Eating Out In The East End

BY STUART WOODS

As I swallow a deer's tongue – my first! – I'm jarred by sudden commotion. Our waiter has donned a blonde wig to bring dessert to the birthday girl. The party at the next table is in hysterics. One woman is gasping, her face flushed scarlet. I fear she is choking.

Such lapses in decorum are apparently commonplace at **Cabotins dans la mercerie**, perhaps Montreal's most overlooked new restaurant.

Opened in November 2005, Cabotins is the unruly offspring of Bertrand Lacour and Thierry Soubirou, whose previous ven-
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Maternally Yours

Christmas, (Winter) Camp and Cartoon Characters

BY ANNICA MELANSON



There is nothing quite like the holiday season in Montreal. The city is all a-glitter with Christmas lights and decorations. Just strolling down McGill College is a treat but the *pièce de résistance* for me has always been the window display at **Ogilvy's**. Ever since I can remember, I have loved visiting the magical winter wonderland of hedgehogs and bunnies working at the Mill in the Forest. The mechanical animals are Steiff from Germany, the 'Rolls Royce' of stuffed animals,
continued on page 4

CONFESSIONS OF A REAL ESTATE AGENT

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HAPPENINGS

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

HOLIDAY EVENTS

- Now in its 19th consecutive year, **Le Noël des chats** is Christmas-related only by proximity to the 25th. Over 300 cats and kittens descend on Place Bonaventure for Canada's largest feline competition. Tickets are \$12 for adults, \$10 for students and seniors, and \$6 for kids under 12, and a \$1-off coupon is available for download at www.clubfelindemontreal.com. Place Bonaventure, 800 De La Gauchetière. For more information call 450.430.3109. **December 1 to 3.**
- There are plenty of opportunities to catch the **Chœur des enfants de Montréal** this holiday season. On

December 2 the children's chorus teams up with the **St. Lawrence Choir** for a matinee and evening performance. Tickets are \$20 for adults and \$10 for children and students. Oscar Peterson Hall, 7141 Sherbrooke St. W. Call 514.848.4848 for tickets. The choir's annual holiday concert is on **December 8 at 7:30 pm**. Tickets are \$15 for adults and \$10 for children and students. Christ Church Cathedral, 635 St. Catherine St. West. Call 514.989.8925 for tickets. For information on both events go to www.choeurdesenfantsdemontreal.com.

- Jacques Lacombe leads the **Orchestre Symphonique de Montréal** and the **Chœur des enfants de Montréal** through a repertoire of well-known – and not so well-known – Christmas carols. Singing along is encouraged, but not required. Tickets are \$13 to

\$48. Notre Dame Basilica. For more information call 514.842.9951 or go to www.osm.ca. **December 14 at 7:30 pm.**

- Les Grands Ballets Canadiens de Montréal presents Tchaikovsky's **The Nutcracker**. Tickets start at \$16.50 for children under 12 and \$29 for adults. Wilfrid Pelletier Theatre, Place des Arts. For more information call 514.842.2112 or go to www.grandsballets.qc.ca. **December 16 & 17, 21 to 23 and 26 to 30.**

- Music director Kent Nagano conducts the **Orchestre Symphonique de Montréal** and soprano **Karina Gauvin** as they wrestle the big names of classical music. The programme features excerpts from Mozart, Bach, Schubert and Handel's *Messiah*. The OSM Christmas concert on December 19 is already sold out, so buy your tickets

early. Tickets are \$13 to \$61. Notre Dame Basilica. For more information call 514.842.9951 or go to www.osm.ca. **December 20 at 7:30 pm.**

- **Orchestre Métropolitain du Grand Montréal** presents a very similar programme in alternative venues. Tickets are \$12. For more information call 514.598.0870 or go to www.orchestre-metropolitain.com. Église Saint Sixte in Saint Laurent and Théâtre Outremont, 1248 Bernard. **December 19 & 21.**

ARTS & CRAFTS

- Now in its 51st year, **Salon des métiers d'art du Québec** brings together over 450 artisans from Quebec and around the world to display the products of their craft. Admission is free. Place Bonaventure. For more information

continued on the next page

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Kindellan-Sheehan's Latest Review

"... *An Easy Mark* is a solid outing for Kindellan-Sheehan, who so clearly loves the western Montreal neighbourhoods that serve as its backdrop. Caitlin Donovan makes a strong amateur detective, with the help of loyal sidekick Carmen DiMaggio, although one can't help but wish her better luck after the string of calamities she has suffered. But however bright and sensible Caitlin seems, it's almost certain she'll end up again in the thick of some fresh disaster."

– Layla Dabby, *Montreal Gazette* (October 14, 2006)

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A VIVA CITY GUIDE

call 514.397.4807 or go to www.salon-desmetiersdart.com. **December 2 to 21.**

CINEMA

- After a brief closure this fall, **Cinéma du Parc** is open for business thanks to financing by rep-theatre impresario Roland Smith. The new programme is so far thoroughly bilingual. Cinéma du Parc, 3575 Park Ave. For show-times call 514.281.1900 or go to www.cinemaduparc.com.

MUSIC

- **James Brown.** The hardest working man in showbiz celebrates another year on the road. Tickets are \$44. **The Metropolis**, 59 St. Catherine St. East. For tickets call 514.844.3500 or go to www.ticketpro.ca. **January 3.**

COMMUNITY EVENTS

- A dramatic performance by John Houston of Charles Dickens' classic **A Christmas Carol**. Tickets are \$15. Atwater Library Auditorium, 1200 Atwater Ave. For more information call 514.935.9581 or 514.935.7344. **December 1 at 8 pm.**
- **Films That Transform.** The McGill medical faculty's ongoing series screens *Gap Toothed Women*, a documentary about women who share the eponymous dental trait. Tickets are

\$10, \$5 for students and seniors. Moyshe Hall, 853 Sherbrooke St. W. **December 12 at 7 pm.**

- **The McGill Suzuki Group**, which features members ages 3 and up, performs a programme of traditional Christmas and Hanukkah songs as well as classical works by Bach, Fauré and Pachelbel. Admission is free. Westmount Baptist Church, at the corner of Sherbrooke & Roslyn. **December 17 at 4 pm.**

AT THE NEW FORUM (BELL CENTRE)

- For tickets and information go to www.bellcentre.ca or call 514.790.1245.
- December 7 & 8 The Australian Pink Floyd Show
- December 15 The Musical Box presents Genesis
- December 25 to 27 Super Cirque
- December 30 Les Cowboys Fringants
- December 31 Resolution 2007
- January 5 Evanescence
- January 13 Jean-Pierre Ferland
- January 23 Rock Star Supernova
- January 31 Justin Timberlake
- February 4 Billy Talent
- February 19 Barenaked Ladies
- March 28 Christina Aguilera

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

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BOOK REVIEW

First Things First

BY CATHERINE MCKENZIE

The First Thing We Do
by Robert Michael
McKenzie



I received a strange assignment from my editor this month: review my father's first novel. Is the *Vivva* editor testing my objectivity? Can't tell. What I can tell is that, despite the odd circumstances (and the title of the book that I am trying not to take personally, being a lawyer and all), I enjoyed this book very much.

But why should I expect you to believe this? Well, if you asked my father, he would certainly tell you that I have never had any trouble expressing an opinion that differed from his. To that, I would add that I have spent a lot of the time since I learned to read (which my father taught me to do) reading mystery novels: Dick Francis, Rex Stout, Anne Perry, Agatha Christie; I've read them all. So now that I've established my credentials...

Stout on the St. Lawrence

The First Thing We Do is the first in the Charles Dupont series of novels. Told from the perspective of his assistant, Gerry McNaughton, these books follow the well-worn path established by Rex Stout with the Nero Wolfe series. But despite the familiar parameters, these characters are their own individuals, living in the real world of Montreal. And unlike the way in which this background is used by Kathy Reichs in her series of books, McKenzie writes about Montreal like someone who really lives here, and he gets the rhythm and cadences that are unique to it.

The book is set in 1991, four years before the referendum and when Mordecai Richler's article in *The New Yorker* was stirring up resentments. The book begins with a lawyer being killed. The police believe it is a 'settling of accounts', but the victim's father can't accept that and hires Dupont to solve the crime. McNaughton quickly discovers that the victim's law firm is teeming with acrimo-

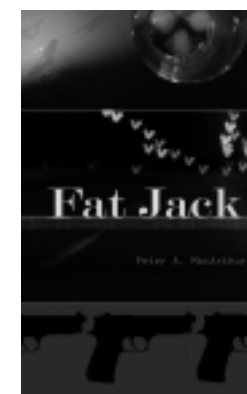
ny stemming from years of extreme Quebec politics. But the victim's colleagues aren't the only suspects: the victim had a dark side to his life involving drugs and loan sharks and gangs. As McNaughton digs deeper, another body turns up and the pressure mounts to unveil the killer. Dupont and McNaughton both do and do not get their man, and the pieces only fall into place in the final pages, back in the familiar parameters of the last chapter 'reveal' before a gathering of all the suspects.

Some Stereotypes amid the Family and Jazz

There are a few nice touches here that distinguish this novel, in particular the way that McNaughton relates to his children, and his love for listening to and playing jazz. On the other hand, there are a few too many stereotypes mixed in among the well-drawn

main characters, and I could have guessed who the killer was (if I had tried harder), if not exactly why or how he did it. But I am making space on a shelf for the books that are surely to follow. I look forward to spending more time with these characters, and I recommend this book.

Catherine McKenzie is a lawyer in Montreal.



Detective fiction *Montreal-style*.
by Peter MacArthur

Redlader Publishing

BOOK REVIEW

Vampires Are Forever

The Historian by Elizabeth Kostova
Dracula by Bram Stoker

BY LINDSAY HOLMGREN

If you are someone who harbours a secret interest in Dracula, you'll be happy to know that yet another version of the dark prince's story has been released. From Elizabeth Kostova comes her first novel, *The Historian* (2005), a retelling of the Dracula myth through the lens of archival research. The influence of research has extended well past the walls of the academy into the world of popular culture, as the astounding success of *The Da Vinci Code* (2003) reveals. *The Historian* in some ways retells the story of its own construction, for Kostova spent innumerable hours researching in archives like those described in the book. At the Rosenbach Library in Pennsylvania, for instance, Kostova perused Bram Stoker's notes for his famous formulation of the story *Dracula* (1897).

Vlad the Impaler

Like Stoker, Kostova builds upon extant documentation about Vlad Țepeș, or 'Vlad the Impaler,' in order to fashion her 20th-century count. However, Kostova is far more interested in historical accuracy, and her novel contains a considerable amount of detailed information about the actual man upon whom she bases her narrative. Kostova's *Dracula* is deeply concerned with preserving his own existence. (I won't give away how.) Also in the Stoker tradition is the epistolary style: journal entries and letters passed among the main characters account for the majority of the novel, though Kostova's book also contains a considerable number of historical documents. And like Stoker's Jonathan Harker, Kostova's unnamed first-person narrator seems to be providing her readers with a confessional account of the events. While Harker's account is drawn from his journal, *The Historian* itself stands in for the journal of Kostova's narrator.

Among the most important distinctions between Kostova's and Stoker's novels are the post-communist concerns evident in the former's crafting of an Eastern Bloc hero whose interest in protecting his homeland drives his self-fashioning and military aggression (another departure from Stoker). Moreover, while *The Historian* is made up of conventional Gothic elements, it also employs some of the

devices of historiographic metafiction: fictionalized accounts of actual events that challenge the notion that historians can remain objective. Kostova's development of these ideas – especially as they relate to an occult figure (Dracula) who represents a region formerly occulted by communism (the Eastern Bloc) – makes the book worth reading. The cliffhangers I could do without. (I couldn't help but think of William Faulkner's observation about bad books making good movies.)

Travels with Dracula

The first person narrator is telling her story in 2008. Within that first-person narrative, however, are many other accounts. Much of the narrative takes place while the narrator's father is a student and tells the story of his travels through eastern Europe in search of his graduate supervisor who had mysteriously disappeared. And of course history repeats itself, as the narrator goes in search of her father who has now disappeared in the same area. Much of the prose and descriptions are enchanting, and the immense amount of research that went into the book is obvious. Layering past and present journeys through western and eastern Europe and the eastern United States, this story swiftly transports its readers, Dracula-like, through time and space, and one finds oneself wondering where all this will lead...

Kostova's original crafting of the myth is fun and merits a read. Unfortunately, the book does not seem to have been edited as well as it could have been and often drags, especially by the last 200 or so pages. Yet the novel, which received an astonishing \$2-million advance, has spent months on bestseller lists, has been translated into many languages and has received generally positive reviews. How then has this book done so well?

First, it's a mystery about vampires, which surely doesn't hurt book sales. Second, we are witnessing a growing fascination with archives and the university in Western popular culture – a fascination that certainly is satisfied by *The Historian*. Finally, Time Warner did some major publicity to secure a solid return on their enormous investment.

Stoker Still Superior

For my money, however, I'd rather read Stoker. More than 100 years old, Stoker's novel is still an excellent read. Whether

you're interested in Victorian culture, gender relations, folklore, mystery or you just enjoy an entertaining thriller, Stoker delivers. The writing style is superior to that of Kostova, and the story is much easier to follow. Most of us have lives to live and other things to read. And on those rare occasions when we have days at a time to do nothing but read, I'm not convinced that *The Historian* should be at the top of our lists. One option is to wait for *The Historian* to come out on the big screen. (Kostova snagged another cool

\$1.5 million on the movie deal.) I suspect the film will be pretty good, especially if David Magee, screenwriter of *Finding Neverland* (2004), writes the screenplay as he is currently expected to do.

But if you want to read both (and this is certainly a fine option), the order I strongly recommend is Stoker first, Kostova second.

Then read Stoker again.

Lindsay Holmgren is a doctoral candidate and sessional lecturer in the Department of English at McGill University.

MATERNALLY...

continued from page 1

and the display has been delighting children and adults alike since 1947. It's a Montreal tradition.

Chez Romy, the restaurant on the lower level of Ogilvy's, hosts breakfast with Mr. Claus on **December 2, 9 & 16 at 8:30 am or 10:15 am**. Breakfast includes fruit salad, scrambled eggs, bacon, juice, milk and coffee for \$10.50 per person. Santa visits each child while they have breakfast and gives each one a present. Call to reserve. An added bonus: there is now a diaper change area in the bath-

room on the third floor of the store. La Maison Ogilvy, 1307 St. Catherine St. West, 514.842.7711.

What's Christmas without Christmas Trees?

The Montreal Museum of Fine Arts is having its yearly Christmas tree exhibit where an assortment of about 40 Christmas trees are decorated by different Montreal ethnic groups and associations. The exhibit runs from **November 24 to January 7**. Admission is free. The Montreal Museum of Fine Arts, Michael and Renata Hornstein Pavilion, 1379 Sherbrooke St. West, 514.285.2000, www.mbam.qc.ca.

Speaking of Christmas trees, how about choosing and cutting your own Christmas tree at **Quinn Farm**? During weekends in December, families and groups can go and have a horse-drawn wagon ride through the fields and then select and cut down their own tannenbaum! For the wagon ride only, the price is \$5 and includes a cup of hot chocolate, coffee or hot apple cider. If you opt for the tree cutting, the price of the activity is \$40 for a tree up to eight feet. Reservations are necessary. Quinn Farm, 2495 Perrot Blvd. South, Notre Dame de l'Île Perrot, 514.453.1510, www.quinnfarm.qc.ca.

Santa Claus and Winter Camp

For a fun-filled morning or afternoon, head down to the **Complexe Desjardins** Christmas Village. There is a maze with live elves for the under-3 gang, a giant inflated slide and, of course, Santa Claus. (He's the best one I have ever seen. The real deal!) Your child will have a turn sitting on Santa's knee and an elf will take a picture. (If you decide to purchase the



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photo, there is a fee.) All of the activities are free of charge. Complexe Desjardins is accessible by Metro Place des Arts or, if you are driving, there is free parking with any purchase of \$25 or more in one of the shops in the mall. Complexe Desjardins, 150 St. Catherine St. West, 514.845.INFO, www.complexedesjardins.com.

If you are looking for ways to entertain your kids during their time off school, **The Young Men's – Young Women's Hebrew Association (YM-YWHA)** is having a two-week winter camp for children ages 3-12 from **December 26 to January 5** (excluding weekends and Mondays). Activities include arts & crafts, swimming, outdoor games, gym games and a workshop at the Saidye Bronfman Centre. The cost of the winter camp for one week is \$125 for members and \$150 for non-members. The cost for two weeks is \$225 for members and \$260 for non-members. Sibling discounts are given. YM-YWHA, 5400 Westbury, 514. 737. 6551 ext. 541, www.ymywha.com.

Films and Stars

The **IMAX** theatre at the Montreal Science Centre will be showing a holiday movie: *Santa vs. the Snowman*. The film is animated and is the story of a snowman who captures the spirit of Christmas. The film is shown in 3-D (your little ones will have fun with their cool 3-D shades!) and lasts 40 minutes. The recommended age is 3 and up. Admission is \$12 for adults and \$9 for children 4 and older. For children under 4, admission is free, but you may be asked for a proof of age (a Medicare card is fine). Imax at the Montreal Science Centre, King Edward Pier, 2 de la Commune, 514.496.4724, www.centredeessciencesdemontreal.com.

The Montreal Planetarium is once again presenting their two annual shows: *Season of Light* and *Draco the Celestial Dragon*. *Season of Light* discusses the placement of the stars, planets and constellations in the December sky, different

holiday traditions and celebrations throughout the world and also talks about season and climate changes. It will be presented every day in **English at 2:30 pm** and in **French at 1:15 pm & 3:45 pm**. The show is suitable for ages 7 and up.

Draco the Celestial Dragon is about a dragon that has lost his treasure among the constellations and his voyage through the galaxy to find it. This show is suitable for children ages 4-7 and the show will be presented on Saturdays and Sundays in **English at 11:30 am** and in **French at 10:30 am**. Both shows will be presented until January 7 (the planetarium is closed on Mondays, December 25 and January 1). Admission fees are \$8 for adults, \$6 for students, \$4 for children ages 5 to 17 and free for children under the age of 4. (You may be asked for proof of your child's age. A Medicare card is fine.) The Montreal Planetarium, 1000 St. Jacques St. West, 514.872.4530, www.planetarium.montreal.qc.ca.

Caillou!

Is your child a fan of **Caillou**? My daughter is and we are looking forward to having a visit with him at the Biodome. From **December 2 to January 21**, children ages 3 and up can join Caillou as he discovers the land and culture of the Innu (an aboriginal people inhabiting eastern Quebec and Labrador). There will be a storytelling session, games, an expedition where children will be given passports and stickers after each station has been visited and a play area modeled after an Innu camp. Admission is \$12 for adults, \$9.50 for students and \$6.50 for children ages 5 to 17. Kids under 4 go free (as always, bring proof of your child's age). The storytelling sessions are given on weekends and holidays (December 23 to January 7) in French at 10:30 am, 11:30 am, 12:30 pm, 2:30 pm and 3:30 pm. The story is told in English at 1:30 pm. On weekdays, the story will be told daily in French at 10 am, 11 am, 12 pm and 1 pm

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and in English on Thursdays only at 11 am. The story lasts 20 minutes. The Montreal Biodome, 4777 Pierre de Coubertin Ave., 514.868.3000, www2.ville.montreal.qc.ca/biodome.

Merry Christmas, Happy Hanukkah,

enjoy the eggnog and all of the wonderful family activities that Montreal has to offer!

Annika Melanson is the author of THE MONTREAL POCKET PARENT and LE BOTTIN DES BAMBINS.

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Cooking: Christmas without a Christmess

BY ANTHEA DAWSON

Holiday festivity is steadily filling the air. Even before our American neighbours fixated on Thanksgiving turkeys and pumpkin pies, we Montrealers were marinating in Christmas frenzy as we hung up our Halloween costumes. With the bombardment of terrible radio jingles and monstrous inflatable Santa Clauses littering the front yards, it is very easy to become cynical. All the commercialism surrounding this one particular day in December makes it difficult to remember that the greatest thing about Christmas is getting your family all together again.

Tips to Avoid Burnout

With so many mouths to feed around the holidays, it is easy to become overwhelmed as the host or hostess. The key to success on such occasions is to keep your menus simple. By preparing as much as you can before the masses arrive, it makes it a lot easier to enjoy your time with the family without feeling like a workhorse. **Buffets** work especially well when serving a large troop and usually can be prepped during the day.

Most of us have our family's favourite Christmas dinner recipes down to a science – the slow-roasted turkey with sausage/cornbread stuffing, the mashed potatoes and gravy, not to mention dog-eared fruitcake recipes passed down from generation to generation. One meal that may not be so traditional for everyone is that on Christmas Eve. It's a night when most of your family and friends arrive on your doorstep, with a big following day of present wrapping and turkey basting. Keeping your Christmas Eve menu as simple as possible can go a long way in keeping your holiday sanity. One of the easiest and most welcome meals to throw together on this commonly freezing night is the ever-popular **cheese fondue**. With no more than 15 minutes of prep, you can be sitting around the table in no time, and fondue makes for a fun and very 'interactive' meal.

Fondue from the Foundation

Forget those store-bought packages and make your fondue from scratch – you won't believe how easy it is and the taste is incomparable. Traditionally you would find **emmental** and **gruyère** cheeses in this famous Swiss dish, but **comté** is another hard cheese with a strong kick that adds beautiful flavour. With such a quick prep time for the melting pot, you can really have fun with your dipping platters, filling them with lots of different tastes

and colours. Baguette cubes to broccoli florets to mini gherkin pickles all dip perfectly into the bubbling cheese – a great way to get the kids to eat their veggies. With a nice bottle of dry white wine (a riesling or sancerre for instance), sherry or apple cider, you have a beautiful and fun dinner ready in no time.

Cheese fondue is certainly not the lightest of meals, so you do not want to overstuff the table with heavy side dishes. The perfect accompaniment to the fondue is a crisp green salad with a tart apple or pear to offset the richness of the cheese. The recipes to follow are both really simple, and they can be a lot of fun for the whole family. Follow-up with some cut fruit and gingerbread, and this easy menu will let you tackle Christmas dinner with no trouble at all. Dust off the old fondue pot and have fun. Happy holidays and happy eating too!

Three-Cheese Fondue with Kirsch

1 Tbsp. butter
2 cloves garlic, minced
1 large shallot, minced
1 ½ cups dry white wine
½ lb. (2 cups) gruyère, grated
½ lb. (2 cups) emmental, grated
¼ lb. (1 cup) comté or Swiss, grated
2 Tbsp. Kirsch
1 Tbsp. cornstarch
¼ tsp. ground nutmeg
½ tsp. Worcestershire sauce
kosher salt & white pepper to taste

To Dip:

Crusty baguette cubes, blanched broccoli florets, sliced apples & pears (sprinkled in lemon to prevent browning), roasted potato wedges, red & yellow pepper chunks, sweet grape tomatoes, gherkin pickles, and whatever else that strikes your fancy!

Melt butter in a heavy-bottom stainless

steel pot. Sauté the garlic and shallot on medium-low heat until translucent (not browned). Add white wine.

Slowly add the grated cheeses to the pot, stirring in a figure-eight motion with a wooden spoon to prevent the cheese from balling. Keep stirring at a low heat until the cheese has melted, making sure not to let it boil.

In a separate bowl, combine the Kirsch with the cornstarch and mix well. Stir into the melted cheese and let the mixture simmer for about 5 minutes, stirring often, until thickened. Add nutmeg, Worcestershire sauce and salt & white pepper, stir to combine, and remove from the heat. Pour cheese mixture into a fondue pot and fit over Sterno flame or candle. Keeping the heat on a steady, low flame, dip away and sip your lovely wine!

Serves 6 to 8

Shaved Fennel & Arugula Salad with Pear

3 lbs. baby arugula
1 fennel bulb, halved & cored, and thinly shaved on a mandolin
2 Bosc pears, cored & cut into thin wedges (if prepping ahead of time, sprinkle with lemon juice to prevent browning)
2 scallions (green onions), thinly sliced
¼ cup dried cranberries
¼ cup pecans, toasted & chopped (optional)
¼ cup crumbled blue cheese or feta (optional)
1/3 cup apple cider vinegar
1 Tbsp. honey
2/3 cup extra-virgin olive oil
kosher salt & pepper to taste

In a large salad bowl, combine arugula, shaved fennel, pears, scallions, dried cranberries, toasted pecans and blue cheese (if using). Toss well to combine.

In a separate bowl, whisk together

apple cider vinegar, honey and olive oil until well emulsified. Season to taste with salt and pepper. Add to salad and toss just moments before serving to prevent wilting.

Serves 6 to 8

Anthea Dawson is the executive chef at Simply Wonderful, a catering firm.

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RESTAURANT...*continued from page 1*

ture was an impromptu, unlicensed eatery in Plateau loft space.

Not Your Typical Décor ...

The new restaurant shares its predecessor's spirit of rebelliousness. Set in a vintage 1930s storefront on St. Catherine St., the eclectic and perverse décor includes white tubesocks for serviettes, tablelamps screwed into the ceiling and mannequin parts that jut rakishly from the bar.

The food, thankfully, is rooted in the stern traditions of French cuisine. The deer tongue is served on a narrow, Japanese-style sushi plate in small dime-sized medallions. Tuna-like in consistency, it comes flanked by a tart tomato coulis and rich, cocoa-flavoured mashed potatoes – a rare treat, since the bold flavour of unsweetened cocoa is a woefully underused ingredient. Mussels in a white wine sauce are a less spectacular entrée, but handled handsomely.

As for the mains, the real draw is cassoulet Cabotins, a casserole of white beans, ham, pork loin, lamb and canard confit dusted with bread crumbs. I'd been disappointed by this dish elsewhere when it turned out to be a thin stew enlivened by lonely pieces of meat and foie gras. Here, the prized morsels are practically melting in rich viscous gravy.

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Even the East End's Most Famous and Not-So-Beautiful Landmark Can Look Christmasy

... Or Your Typical Service

Despite the food, Cabotins might not appeal to every sensibility. Staffed by actors and unapologetic extroverts, Cabotins' service might be too familiar for refined diners.

Located on St. Catherine St. near the Olympic Stadium, Cabotins is far afield of the culinary mainstream in the city centre. Owner Bernard Lacour says that the remote setting is what attracted him to the neighbourhood.

'On St. Laurent we'd be one restaurant among many,' he says. 'Out here we can let loose a little.'

Indeed, there is no precedent for fine dining in the neighbourhood, which is still recovering from economic recession in the 1980s and the stigma of violence and crime.

Maisonnette – the City

Things have not always been so for **Maisonnette**, which in its heyday was the second largest municipality in Quebec. By the time the borough was annexed to Montreal in 1918, it had earned the nickname 'the Pittsburg of Canada' for its bustling industrial sector – bolstered, no doubt, by Maisonnette's commodious tax laws.

In fact, the premises of Cabotins were once a fashionable boutique. The glass storefront still displays one of the original mannequins and the booze is laid out behind the bar on wooden shoe racks.

Communing with the ghosts of the past is only part of Cabotins' unorthodox charm. There is, however, no better way to discover an unfamiliar part of the city.

'When people are forced to discover something by themselves, they think it belongs to them,' says Lacour. 'They feel they've helped create it.'

Further Exploring

After my positive experience at Cabotins, I decided to discover East End Montreal in earnest.

Unfortunately, good restaurants are few and far between. On Promenade Ontario – a vibrant strip in **Hochelega** – grubby diners are nestled amongst pawnshops, karaoke studios and dim, neon-lit dives. Although seemingly indistinguishable, they vie for customers with extraordinary bargains ('Spécial Spaghetti Mania! LUN au VEN \$1.99!') and by underselling the neighbour's 'hot dog steamé' by mere pennies.

After pointed questions to locals, I ended up at **La Bécane Rouge** on St. Catherine St. a few blocks east of Pie IX.

On the vanguard of gentrification when it opened nine years ago, La Bécane Rouge is a neighbourhood classic and a well-placed watering hole for theatregoers attending Théâtre Denise Pelletier across the street.

Amid the Diners ... A Bistro

The restaurant is a casual bistro that serves fine French food. The unassuming décor is dominated by a large chalkboard on the back wall that displays the table d'hôte – mostly items copied directly from the menu.

My pork rillettes (a semi-firm meat preparation similar to pâté) was tasty though unassuming, and consisted of three slices served on stale toasted baguette. This left room for the potage, which was served to

Where to go:

Cabotins dans la mercerie

4821 St. Catherine St. East

514.251.8817

Monday to Friday: 11 am to 3 pm;

5 pm to 10 pm

Saturday: 5 pm to 10 pm

Sunday: 11 am to 3 pm

La Bécane Rouge

4316 St. Catherine St. East

514.252.5420; www.labecanerouge.com

Monday to Friday: 11:30 am to 2:30 pm

Tuesday to Saturday: 5 pm to 10 pm

Sunday: 5 pm to 9 pm

our table of four at staggered intervals. My soup arrived only after I had finished the entrée, and I was forced to consume it at an otherwise empty table under the gaze of my companions.

The mains were much better, except for my lamb ravioli: a dozen or so pieces of overcooked, pasta-wrapped ground lamb in bland tomato sauce. The real winner was the collier de cerf, slow-cooked – almost stewed – in dried fruit and served beside a colourful squash purée.

The meal ended on a high note with café crème brûlée. That is, until our waiter neglected to collect the bill and had to be chased down.

All told, I had stumbled upon an established restaurant relying too heavily on its reputation. **V**



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WINE

The Holiday Season and Alcohol: Who Would Have Guessed?

BY CAROLA PRICE

And so the festive season is upon us. When did it get here and why am I not ready for it? That may be the question that plagues most of us. Quasi-Martha Stewarts look out, because the unprepared are quite a big group. What is there to do for the holiday season in wine, you wonder? Quite a lot. How many hostess gifts include wine in a neatly wrapped gift bag? What wines do you try to hang on to when you throw your holiday shindig? This month, I have a few wine suggestions that will delight any host, make you look like a wine expert and keep the bills in your pocket for other gifts.

Getting Ready for the Season

Scouting motto in mind, to be vinously prepared is something that can be handled with one quick trip to the liquor out-

let of your choice. Remember that even if you don't give all the bottles as gifts, you will have wine to open in haste when someone pops by or when matching a deliciously hearty beef stew in the middle of a snowstorm. It is winter, after all, and I would not give light wines or specifically summer wines as gifts.

The Sparklers

The bright twinkling lights that seem to multiply every year give me the idea, and many others, of **Champagne**. Now I know that unless there is an unlimited budget, many of us prefer to give away sparkling wine and keep the champers for ourselves. There are so many wonderful sparkling wines that their stigma as cheap wine should be laid to rest.

The only difference between a sparkling wine and Champagne is location. If it isn't made in northern France, specifical-

ly the Champagne region, then it cannot be called Champagne. The three main grapes in any bottle of bubbly are **chardonnay**, **pinot noir** and **pinot meunier**. The wine can also be labeled differently. If using only chardonnay then the wine may be called *blanc de blanc*. If using only pinot noir, it may be called *blanc de noir*. If produced in Spain, it is called *cava*. And all can be classified as *brut*, *sec*, *demi sec* or *doux*.

And then there are the producers of great sparkling wine. You may be surprised to learn that there are well established French Champagne houses in California. The wines they produce are dangerously close to their French counterparts and half the price! In Spain, the yeasty character of Champagne is always present, but the addition of roasted nuts and fresh apple also plays on the tongue. The Loire region produces a *blanquette de Limoux* that is very green-apple-like and goes fantastically well with goat cheese and fish dishes. Canada produces a dessert sparkling that is mixed with ice wine. Although it is very pricey, you must try it just once and be amazed. Hungary produces a relatively light and very easy-drinking white with millions of little bubbles. The price is so reasonable that it has become a staple at my holiday parties.

The Sweeties

Typically, hundreds of bottles of **port** land on doorsteps all over Quebec during the holidays. Our obsession with chocolates and dessert lead to the natural progression toward sweet wine. Port is versatile, and matches sweet and savoury equally well. With all the differences in port, how does one choose? Tawny may be the most versatile of the bunch, but can range in price dramatically. It is sweet but has a roasted nut character and lots of body. Pâtés, heavy, gooey and blue-veined cheeses, and roasted game meats with sweet confits match tawny port amazingly well. Vintage character port is also good for the budget. Its prune and tobacco

character lends itself towards berry desserts and fruitcakes, but can match well with chocolate soufflés and dark truffles.

Other sweet wines for the adventure-some palate include **maury**, **banyuls**, **recioto** (made in Valpolicella) and **muscat** from Australia, Canada or Italy. And as always, I must help promote our own industry by including the best late-harvest **rieslings** and **vidals** made in Ontario and Quebec that are a perfect backdrop to apple desserts and crème caramel.

Festivus for the Rest of Us

When throwing a party we must remember those who don't drink alcohol. My '**lite sparkling sangria**' is just the answer. Take white grape juice, mineral water, cranberries, orange slices and a lime curl poured into a champagne flute and you have the most beautiful and delicious drink appreciated by many a guest looking for a refreshing alternative to pop or plain water.

Regardless of religion or conviction, you will be invited to a party or celebration this holiday season. Whether giving something to the boss or your child's teacher, remember that it doesn't have to break the bank to be thoughtful. A well picked wine will fit the wrapping quite nicely. Armed with this article and your list of people you will be able to complete the entire list in one afternoon at one store. Martha Stewart move over: cookies are nice, but wine is what we really want swirling in our mouths. Have a great holiday and please let moderation be your master. Cheers!

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 Intentional Sommelier Guild. She can be reached at carola@ivvmontreal.com.

For this month's wine reviews by Carola, please see the box at right.



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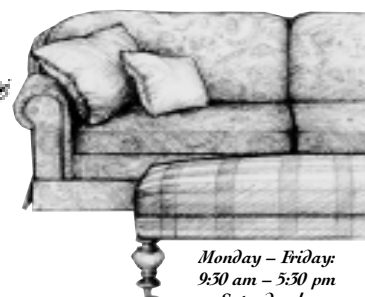
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COOKING...*continued from page 1*

– to dazzle my friends with newfound flare. I signed up for the eight-week session, committing myself to three hours every Wednesday evening. So did a dozen others.

Two were nannies, sent to cooking class by their employers. One was recently married, another soon to tie the knot. One was newly retired and looking for something to keep from going crazy. Half were women, half were men. All, over the course of eight weeks, would become better cooks.

For the Love of Cooking

We worked from the school's own textbook, *Pour le plaisir de cuisiner*, with each lesson painstakingly translated and transcribed by our instructor, **Isabelle Aubertin**. A talented chef and engaging teacher, Aubertin had trained for four years in catering schools in her native France, later gaining practical experience at a variety of establishments, including **Ballylickey House** in Ireland and the **Dorchester** in London, England.

'I enjoyed the challenge of creating my own outside catering business in London, opening a French restaurant in an old farmhouse in the northeast of Spain and

being the private chef of the chairman, directors and clients of **Fuller's Smith and Turner**, one of the oldest breweries of London,' Aubertin told me, summing up just some of her credentials. 'For the past 10 years, I gained Québécois experience in a few places that are gone today, like the **Lutétia** in Montreal and **The Daguet** in Longueuil,' she said.

From Chef to Teacher

Transferring her experience into a classroom of her own had been a long-time dream, and besides teaching at the Académie, she is currently working toward a bachelor of professional teaching at the University of Sherbrooke.

Aubertin enjoys sharing her passion for cooking – and it shows.

Her eyes light up when she shows us an unfamiliar kitchen tool, such as the vegetable mill through which we strain our potage parmentier – your grandmother's potato soup, only much, much better.

We learn how to handle a knife and how not to sharpen one. Who knew that a sharpening steel could actually become a knife-ruining menace in inexperienced hands?

And of course, we learn to cut, prep and cook everything from chicken to roast beef to seafood to vegetables. We pick up

'paysanne' to add to our existing vocabulary of vegetable cuts, which for most of us had consisted until now of slice, dice and – maybe – julienne.

Be Prepared

Over and over, like a never-ending potato-peeling session, she drills into us the importance of 'mise en place' – having everything at the ready before the first pot or pan is fired.

'When I teach cooking, I enjoy creating a synergy with the people, understanding their needs and making them happy,' said Aubertin. 'After 24 hours of lessons, I hope my students will understand the importance of organization and planning before cooking. I hope they will change their habits and use the techniques they practise during the courses to gain time, hygiene, money, quality and success.'

To make a long story short, we do all of that and more. And we're left not only with new skills, but – for some, at least – a sense of having achieved our personal goals.

'The class on roasting really stood out for me because it's a very basic technique that I didn't know how to do,' Ishmael told me at the end of it all. 'For the same reason, the first class, where we made chicken stock, and the second, where we

learned about thickening sauces, also stood out. Finally, the last class was great because we got to use what we learned to create almost anything we wanted.'

'I would certainly recommend it to anyone,' Ishmael said, 'from the person who needs a recipe to make toast to the person who wants to learn basic French cuisine.'

Montreal's Académie Culinaire, with locations in Old Montreal and Laval, offers a variety of cooking courses, including some in English and a selection of Christmas-themed classes. Visit www.academieculinaire.com for more information.

Michael Gorman is a Montreal writer.

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Wines for the holidays

Cruz, Late Bottled Vintage, Portugal

Code SAQ: 560151

\$19.95 – 17/20

The nose of prune and almond lead to a slightly tobacco and earthy character. It is sweet without being cloying and matches well with runny cow's milk cheeses from the Charlevoix and Quebec regions. Don't forget the dark chocolate truffles and artisanal chocolate with chilies.



Freixenet, Brut de Noirs, Spain

Code SAQ: 352369 – \$14.00 – 18.5/20

This sparkling rosé screams out for oysters or any shellfish. Medium hard cheeses also complement, but really this is for those nights when the canapés are mainly fishy. There is a light red berry background with some vegetal character and it has a refreshing and persistent finish.



Henry of Pelham, Late Harvest Vidal, Ontario

Code SAQ: 395228

\$21.25 – 18/20

Slightly sweet, but with some roundness in the mouth by alcohol, it makes for a great wine to

pair with fruity desserts. Hang on to the brown sugar and caramelized flavours in the wine and use lots of grapes, figs, pistachios, pecans or walnuts to bring out some of the tannin.

Domaine de Valcros, Hors d'âge Banyuls, France

Code SAQ: 855056

\$14.80 – 16.5/20

This is the ultimate wine for fruits and for chocolate. Its nose is rich and fruity while leaving an impression of dried apricot and praline. The finish is slightly alcoholic, but rounded out with a mouthful of prune and caramel almonds.



Casa Lapostolle, Merlot, Valle Rapel, Chile

Code SAQ: 831493 – \$18.10

This isn't the easiest wine to find, but is a great medium-heavy bodied red with all the fun and easy drinking qualities of Merlot, yet can be cellared for up to five years. Aromas of black cherry, tobacco leaf, black pepper, vanilla and green peppers lead to a plummy flavour in the mouth with some chocolate background on the finish. Great matches include steak or roast beef and heavier cow's milk cheese and aged cheddars.

maisonneuve 20

NOUVEAU

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MOVIE REVIEW: BORAT

Review to Make Sense of the Funny that I Saw

By CATHERINE MCKENZIE

Borat: Cultural Learnings of America for Make Benefit Glorious Nation of Kazakhstan



To tell you anything about this movie other than the fact that *Borat: etc...* is about a man named Borat, who is from Kazakhstan and who takes a journey across America while making a documentary to enlighten his people, would be to ruin any of the comedy contained in it.

Talking to Kazakhstanis

Most of you will have heard that Borat is really Sacha Baron Cohen of *Ali G* fame. For those of you who haven't seen *Da Ali G Show*, Borat is a recurring character who takes his broken English and antiquated un-PC ideas into ordinary situations in the Western world. Hilarity usually ensues. Think Rick Mercer's 'Talking to Americans' on steroids. In *Borat*, Cohen extends his short sketches into an hour-and-a-half journey from Kazakhstan to New York to California and back to Kazakhstan.



Borat on a previous trip to the USA.

I found this movie very funny. In fact, I have rarely laughed so hard in a movie. And while I sometimes felt guilty for laughing, I realized that this is what I was supposed to feel. This movie is a guilty pleasure, and like all such things, enjoying it has consequences. For me, it was wondering why I laughed so heartily at some of the uncomfortable moments and not others.

Oscar-worthy?

What also struck me is just how fear-

less Cohen is. While some of these scenes are obviously staged, some were just as clearly not. Regardless, Cohen always stays in character, never cracks a smile, and says and does the most outrageous things. No one would ever consider this performance for an Oscar, but what does this say about us? Does Meryl Streep really commit more to a part than

Cohen does in this movie?

This movie is not for the faint of heart or for people who don't enjoy laughing at other people's dysfunctions. But for the rest of us, I highly recommend it.

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

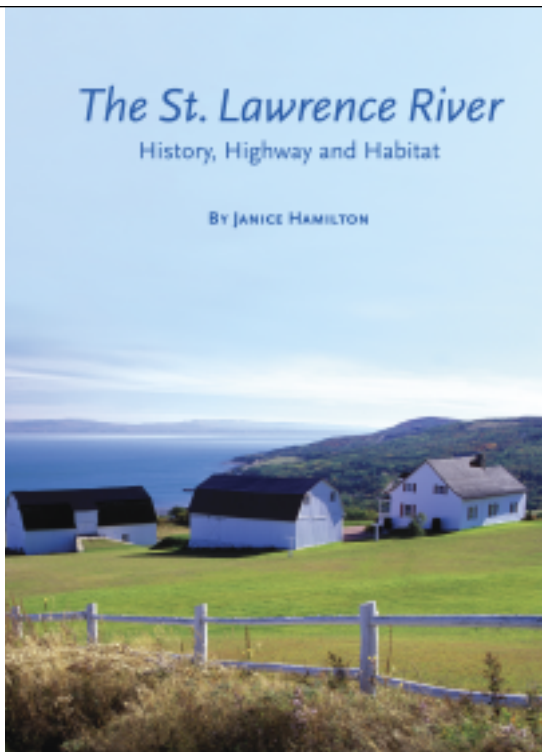
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The St. Lawrence River

History, Highway and Habitat

By JANICE HAMILTON



TELEVISION: COMEDY

Humour, Death and Ugliness All Try to Be Funny

By DAVID PRICE

Okay, so here it is: our promised look at comedy.

30 Rock



Thursday nights at 9:30 pm, NBC

The head of a *Saturday Night Live*-esque show (Tina Fey) comes under the jurisdiction of a new network chief (Alec Baldwin) who has made his mark selling 'triple heat' ovens – and is now in charge of microwave and east coast programming. His answer to a show that is working? Add an erratic and possibly mentally unwell actor (Tracy Morgan) to the cast.

This show gets points from me for at least four reasons. (1) It makes fun of MegaCorp and the pure idiocy that passes for thought in that environment. 'Triple heat' is a metaphor for so many things... (2) It has the guts to lampoon the black celebrity entourage (in the premiere, our 127-pound white heroine has lunch with a dozen or so large, black, male entourageurs in sweatsuits). Do white celebrities have silly entourages? Of course, but it would take less courage to make a less funny joke about them. (3) It brings the over-the-top sex kitten's purr of Jane Krakowski (of *Ally McBeal* fame) back to television. Be still my beating heart... (4) Alec Baldwin shines – by bringing a flawless deadpan performance to a show that has a lot of possibly distracting frantic energy. Congratulations to him on a successful crossover to comedy.

On the other hand, I'm a little worried that the unsubtle Morgan character might worsen *30 Rock* as much as he is supposed to complicate the fictional show, but I will remain optimistic. If they keep Morgan as a punchline by having the plot driven by the other characters, this could really work.

'TIL DEATH



Thursdays nights at 8 pm, Fox

The plot: the 20-something-year marriage of Brad Garret (from *Everybody Loves Raymond*) and Joely Fisher comes under self-examination after the newly married couple of Eddie Kaye Thomas and Kat Foster move in next door. This is better than you'd think. Garret can actually act: the thick-but-sensitive brother that he played in *Raymond* is not the extent of his range. Remember him in *Seinfeld* as the over-attentive mechanic? There is a lot of obvious stuff: mother-in-law problems (that dead horse has decomposed), youth vs. age, etc., but some great lines too.

How about Garret's comment while dining in a French restaurant adorned with those ubiquitous, Toulouse-Lautrec style prints? 'So the French really like their old ads, eh?' No points for plot originality, but if they keep the writing good, it will remain watchable.

THE CLASS



Monday nights at 8:30 pm, CBS

The plot: Jason Ritter throws a party for his fiancée with all of their grade 3 classmates. The group is motley: Ritter has been out of touch with them, but some went on to high school together. They all reconnect at the disastrous party (Ritter's fiancée leaves him halfway through), and romantic and not-so-romantic pairings start to happen. This show has potential, but it has yet to find its rhythm.

Good points: the woman whose prom date turned out to be gay (at the prom) has married a man who appears (quite decisively!) to be gay. Lizzy Caplan's character is tough, unsentimental and unapologetic – a woman playing a traditionally male role. Anyone who remembers her as the lovelorn schoolgirl in *Freaks and Geeks* will applaud this performance. And the show is not afraid of making fun of suicide – over two episodes! That takes courage. Jesse Tyler Ferguson's portrayal of an unhappy, weak-willed toxic garbage hauler is the stand-out: effeminate, but not gay; funny, but effortless; drawing your attention without hogging the limelight. If they can just get the rest of the cast and plot to gel in the same way, this could be great.

UGLY BETTY.



Thursday nights at 8 pm, ABC

The plot: a young, sheltered Hispanic woman gets a job working at a top-tier fashion magazine – and, oh yeah, she's ugly. Maybe I am the wrong audience for this show, but this is pretty poor stuff. There is lots of obvious writing: over-the-top antagonistic execs; an insecure boss with a plucky assistant; quirky, ethnic family members. Even when they try to break away from all that, they fail. There are gay characters: a co-worker and a young nephew. That would be fine, but the two 'levels' of humour are identically played. Both are over the top and effeminate (and so, by conventional thinking, hilarious – thanks, *Will and Grace*, for contributing TV truism to the networks' thinking). Result: stereo infrastructure with mono sound! My advice: skip it.

REAL ESTATE

Finding the #1 Real Estate Agent for You... (and not the #1 agent in Canada)

BY BARRY SCHREIBER



Often, homeowners engage 'top agents' to sell their property. They contract the #1 agent in the area and when their house doesn't sell quickly enough, they try reducing the price or even changing to another 'top agent' (often with the same result). But the problem more than occasionally lies in the answer to this question: *Did they really have the best agent for their needs?* What they see initially is an agent with a lot of listings and 'sold' signs. They buy reputation. What they'll never see are all the listings that agent has lost. After all, what agent would disclose that? And quite apart from an agent's track record is the relationship the seller will have with that agent – and that's critical to an enjoyable and successful experience.

Key Questions

I've never known a seller to ask key questions like, 'How will you communicate with me and how often and what will you be telling me about visitors and the market?' 'What will your marketing program look like?' Not enough thought goes into the interview process, so I've drawn up a list of questions and issues to help sellers find the #1 agent – for them:

1. **Consider the agent's presentation** because it indicates the agent's strength as a marketer. The agent, through his presentation, is marketing himself to you. If his presentation doesn't make him stand out and is pretty much like every other agent's presentation, chances are the marketing of your property will be just as ordinary. Is it mostly talk, with some comparable properties used to establish a price for your property, or is it a well thought out presentation?

2. **Ask how the agent will market your property to make it stand out.** Ask to hear about a marketing plan that has worked in selling another home. I don't mean seeing an ad that shows a big photo of the agent '1 in Eastern Canada, etc.' coupled

with a long list of homes and a small photo of the house, but a real plan that helped to sell a house; and ask to see some ads that made the house stand out from other real estate ads.

3. **Ask about the agent's special marketing skills.** If your agent has to hire photographers, copy writers and graphic designers, chances are that agent won't send out postcards, newsletters and special inserts featuring your house because of the high cost of hiring talent. You should have an agent that will not exclude these tools. Did you ever notice how a house's garden photographed in March for an ad and the MLS (the Multiple Listing Service) still has the snow showing in May? Now you know why.

4. **Ask what kind of time will be devoted to your property.** An agent with 20+ listings can obviously devote less *personal* time and advertising dollars to promoting your listing. Don't be overly impressed with a lot of listings. Will your agent be there at the open houses or will his team be there? If it's the agent himself you want, insist on having him.

5. **What kind of activity reports and communication frequency will you have?** Discussing the kind and frequency of activity reports with the agent will give you an idea of the kind of relationship and communication you will have. Will you get weekly written reports on the number of visitors who have seen your property and the response to their visits? Will you get periodic updates on the market and what similar properties have sold for in your area?

Make sure you ask about this because all too often I've heard this refrain: 'Well, once my agent got my listing I never saw him again; instead I had a parade of selling agents (representing buyers) in my house and I had to open the door.' Which reminds me, make sure you know whether you want your agent present at all visits. If so, stipulate this.

6. **How long a contract?** The minimum contract one should give an agent is 60 days, because that's what it takes to get an MLS listing. (The majority of properties are sold via the MLS, and with both a list-

ing and selling agent.) You can always extend a contract, but getting out of one is difficult and upsetting to both parties. So interview carefully.

In choosing the #1 agent for you, it's likely he/she is someone with a strong negotiating background, solid and distinctive marketing skills, and an impressive advertising portfolio, plus the personal time to devote to your property and a meaningful way of communicating with you. Sounds obvious? The fact is few people know how to interview to find out if that's what they're getting. I hope this article helps you.

Barry Schreiber is a marketing specialist and an affiliated real estate agent with GROUPE SUTTON CENTRE-OUEST in Westmount. He can be reached at schreiberb@videotron.ca and 514.781.2425.

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MSSWAPP

ART: MARSANS SQUARED, LACOMBE & LAZARUS

BY CHRIS 'ZEKE' HAND

The Centre de créativité Gesù is an interesting place. Most of the Raelians' press conferences are held at the Gesù, a thoroughly contemporary take on the church basement. It also hosts concerts for the Jazz Festival, government press conferences and (most dear to my heart) art exhibitions by Québécois artists. Currently, it has four separate exhibitions that are on display until December 13.

Germain Marsan, Nicolas Marsan, Ber Lazarus and Jean-François Lacombe are the four artists. Initially, the Marsans, *père et fils*, approached Ivon Bellavance at the Gesù with a different project. Bellavance decided that 'Marsan l'entre-tient Marsan,' the project that father and son wanted to exhibit, had been seen too many times. Bellavance suggested that the Marsans each do something new.

Bellavance then added Lazarus and Lacombe. While all four were conceived and are shown as individual shows, they seem to also be connected. Beyond the *père et fils* nature of the Marsans, three of the four use wood and all four of them use some form of recycled materials.

Jean-François Lacombe

One note to mention, Jean-François Lacombe had an exhibit at Zeke's Gallery in 2004 and is a good friend of mine. With a little luck, our friendship will not cloud my judgment.

Lacombe's 'Sanctuaire #1: Victime' is a tower of doors in the north transept of the church: three doors in a triangle, three times, each on top of each other. It is topped with pieces cut from a previous installation of his called 'les anguilles' and there is a pod-shaped piece of his from the 'Lampa' series suspended from a wire about two feet away. (The only reason I know this is because these works were exhibited at Zeke's. There is no chat tag.)

There are all sorts of allusions that can be discovered, depending on how much of a Catholic education you received. The extent of mine is three doors for the father, the son and the holy ghost; and something about Babel. While I know the term 'the shoes of the fisherman' and about not eating meat on Fridays (both of which imply, to me, that fish are sort of significant), I have absolutely no clue as to why eels were included. I guess they are sort of like fish. Sometimes there are problems with a secular education.

Given the title, the placement and recent Quebec culture, I'm fairly certain that Lacombe is making a statement

about how important the Catholic church was to him. Being a Jew, I'm not entirely certain I understand. Since I was utterly clueless, I asked him for some details, and he graciously responded:

My piece is a construction built in stages, assembled and using wire leads to stabilize it and keep it upright. All the hinges and door handles have been removed so as to physically show the impossibility of opening or closing the doors. However, in order to show some sense of hope, I left an opening at the top which any person or being (or, in this case, the eels) can use to escape. I placed one of the Lampas next to it so that you can better understand the scale of the tower.

While I'm not entirely certain I would agree with him (normally I don't), it does go a long way towards making up my lack of education.

Ber Lazarus

'Still Life in Motion' is the name of the larger piece by Ber Lazarus at the Sawyer room. Even without going to see it, this whole art-in-a-church thing gets even more interesting. For those of you with an even more secular education than me (or without access to Google), please read Luke 16:19-31 and John 11:41-44. And don't even get me started about the Sawyer room being like a tomb. But if you do go to see it, and you should, because it is a very nice piece, you will see three metal hoops that have three smaller metal hoops suspended inside each other, each with a whale bone hanging in the centre. If you pretend that the whale bone is Saturn, and the hoops its rings, you'll get the idea. But what makes them cool is that if you brush up against them, they make a gong sound.

Lazarus also has two examples from his Ex-Libris series of books. Again to play off the art-in-a-church concept, he has carved out the middle of a variety of books. Then, using tiny plastic dolls which you can only see through a judas (or peep-hole) – I told you this art-in-a-church thing was heavy – he creates scenes that reference the book he has gutted. Then, to bring in the sledgehammer, the first one that you see is called 'Les Illusions Perdues.' It almost makes me want to go to Sunday school. The Sawyer room is in the back of the Gesù. Don't miss it!

Germain Marsan

'Planches' is the name of the piece by Marsan the Elder. It combines five series

of planks of wood painted in ink, two maps and ten serigraphs mounted on the wall and floor.

What is important to the work is the river, what form the writing takes (or, if you prefer, language) and the philosophy of Gilles Deleuze. His planks with ink are graceful designs that at first are very simple and Zen-like in nature. The traces and marks take the place of writing to inform you of the wood's history.

Playing off of the idea of a plank and flatness, especially in French, is extremely important to Marsan. However, the history of the wood is as important. The whole show is held together because everything has come from the river banks (unfortunately, I failed to write down the river's name), including the rocks that were covered in ink in order to make the serigraphs.

Nicolas Marsan

Marsan the Younger is where the art-in-a-church thing falls flat on its face. His show is called 'Pin au P2.' As with his father's work, language comes to the forefront: the name of the exhibit would be

literally translated as 'Pine by the square inch.' Sometimes being anglophone can unintentionally make viewing art difficult, as I scoured high and low to understand why two atoms of phosphorus would have any significance in his work.

Basically, they are a bunch of wood planks (not like his father's) that are put together and painted on in place of a canvas. They have a bunch of repeated images painted on them, which are then subjected to various forms of abuse, and then painted again, and subjected to more abuse, until each individual image becomes unique.

Unlike his father's work, the surface is much more than just a placeholder for what is on the work. It is an integral part of it that aids in creating the variations.

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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.

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SPOTLIGHT ON MONTREAL FICTION:

Robert Michael McKenzie

Former Dawson mathematics professor Robert McKenzie has just published his first novel, **The First Thing We Do** – a Charles Dupont mystery (Redlader Publishing, 2006). It is available at Paragraphe, Chapters, Indigo and Coles. Two subsequent Charles Dupont mysteries, **Two in the Blues** and **Three in the Canal**, are scheduled for spring and fall 2007. Here is a second sneak peek at **The First Thing We Do**:

CHAPTER 2 (Part 1)

When I checked the answering machine at Dupont's around 10:00am on Monday, there was a message from Maurice Abrams. He identified himself as the father of Danny and the senior partner of the law firm, Mulholland, Franklin, Herscovits and Abrams. I'd heard of them and I'd heard of him. He wanted Dupont to investigate his son's death.

I called back on Dupont's private line, hoping I'd find him up. Dupont is a late riser and never in a good mood in the morning, but he was up and answered on the second ring. I told him of Abrams' call, and he reluctantly agreed to see Abrams at 4:30, after he arrived back from the university.

When I called Abrams back, I was surprised he answered the phone himself; he had given me his home number. He agreed to come by at 4:30.

I had business to tend to for the rest of the day, the loose ends of an insurance fraud I was investigating on my own. Arriving at Dupont's house on Redpath Crescent, high on the slopes of Mount Royal, around 3:30, I let myself in and went to the kitchen to check with Johnny Fong, Dupont's life-long friend and part-time cook. He was furiously chopping garlic and ginger on the big wooden chopping block at one end of the kitchen.

"Hi Gerry, how you doing?" he said.

"Just fine, Johnny. What's on the menu for tonight?"

"Thai style garlic-pepper beef with Pad Thai, stir fried rice noodles. You staying for dinner?"

"Probably. Dupont has an appointment at 4:30 with the father of a murder victim. It could go on awhile."

"OK, I make another dish just for you. What you like?"

"Surprise me, Johnny, just don't make it too spicy. The last time I ate some of your Thai cooking, my mouth needed a

fire extinguisher afterwards."

Going to the office, I checked the answering machine, found nothing interesting and had just started sorting through the mail on Dupont's desk when he arrived. He greeted me and went straight to the bar in the corner and fixed himself a large Scotch on the rocks.

"Damn, I don't need this case now," he said. "With the book due, I've got more on my plate than I can handle. Where am I going to find the time to do any work for this Abrams character?"

I shrugged as if to say, "I don't know either," and he continued:

"When you talked to me this morning, you reminded me that the police had already written off this murder as a settling of accounts. We had better find out why.... This Danny Abrams was a criminal lawyer?"

"Yes, he worked for his father's firm."

The doorbell rang and I went to answer. On the security monitor for the front door, located in the vestibule just inside the doorway, I could see an elderly gentleman with an umbrella. I opened the door and greeted him.

"Mr. Abrams. I'm Gerry McNaughton. We spoke on the phone earlier. Come in, Monsieur Dupont is expecting you."

I took his umbrella and showed him to the office. He extended a hand, "Bonjour, Monsieur Dupont. Comment ça va?"

"Ça va bien, Mr. Abrams. It's a pleasure to meet you, only I wish it could have been under more fortunate circumstances. I was sorry to hear about your son. I'm having a drink. Would you care to join me?"

Abrams hesitated a minute, then said, "Well I don't normally, but these aren't normal times. What do you suggest?"

"There's a new drink in the bars this weekend," I said. "It's called a Big Owe cocktail after the collapsed beam at the stadium."

"How is it made?" asked Dupont.

"Jim Beam on the rocks with a large dash of bitters."

Abrams chuckled. "Very well, a Big Owe cocktail then, please."

I went to fix the drink, and Dupont passed me his glass for a refill and settled himself in the chair at his desk facing Abrams.

"Mr. Abrams, you should understand that I am extremely reluctant to take on any case now because I have many other

commitments. But tell me about your son, then I'll decide if I can be of any use."

"As you probably read in the papers, he was ambushed on his way to work on Friday. He was killed just like that other lawyer last May. Shot from another car at close range while he waited for a traffic light two blocks from his home."

He choked up a bit, paused a moment to compose himself and continued, "The way he was killed, the police have already written it off as a settling of accounts. What accounts, already!" He shrugged his shoulders and raised his palms



upwards in exasperation. "My son was a good boy with a wife and two kids, my grandchildren. He worked hard. He wasn't the most talented lawyer in the world, but he was conscientious. He was only 47. Who would want to kill him?"

"Your son worked for your firm?" asked Dupont.

"Yes, he was a criminal lawyer, a defence attorney. Defence attorneys don't usually make enemies. It's the prosecutors the criminals come looking for."

He sipped his drink and sat back a moment looking utterly defeated. "I planned to retire at the end of the year. I'm 75 years old. I was going to pass my preferred partnership in the firm to Danny. Now what do I do?"

"Perhaps you could give me some background on your firm, Mr. Abrams," said Dupont. "I need to know about the history, the character of the members, whether there were animosities, who might have had a motive for killing your son, and anything else you think might be useful."

"You think he might have been killed by someone in our firm?" asked Abrams.

"If I'm going to come to any other conclusion than the police, I have to have somewhere to start. The majority of murders are committed by someone the victim knows."

"Very well, I'll begin at the beginning. I went into the law because I won a scholarship to McGill. McGill had a quota on Jews back then and there was a lot of discrimination. World War II broke out as I was finishing law school so I enlisted. Because I had a law degree, they put me in the intelligence service. I was so quick to pick up the procedures that they made me a teacher. I never left Canada."

"After the war I went looking for work and was hired by Mulholland and Franklin. They had one of the best corporate law practices in the city, but it was all WASP clients. They hired Herscovits and me to expand the business and bring in some Jewish clients. Things were very segregated then, but they didn't discriminate against us, everything was very amicable. Eventually, we were offered partnerships." He took a long sip from his drink. "But all good things must come to an end."

"What changed?" asked Dupont.

"We decided to expand into criminal law in the late fifties and we needed a couple of crackerjack criminal lawyers. We hired René Cormier who was practicing with a couple of French lawyers just out of Laval Law School, and having some success, but I guess he wanted the exposure of a larger firm. And we wanted him!" He raised his arms as if still excited by the prospect. "In those days he wore crisply tailored suits and gave even crisper arguments in court. We made him a partner within five years, but that's when all the trouble started. He's a separatist, though he never let on when we hired him." He left it hanging and drained his drink. "This agrees with me, this Big Owe cocktail. Do you suppose I might have another?"

I took his glass and Dupont's as well and went to the bar for refills.

"The biggest irritation to Cormier, though, was the partnership agreement. When we expanded into criminal law, we took new offices in a building in Old Montreal where we still are. There were a lot of renovation expenses so we figured that we were owed something as the original four and established preferred partnerships in the firm, entitling us to a larger share of the profits. These preferred partnerships could also be passed on to your children if they were members of the firm. Otherwise, they expired when you did."

Dupont smiled broadly and asked, "How did Cormier feel about that?"

PRACTICAL POINTS: INVESTING

CSI: Montreal***

BY JOHN SMITH

A report published recently by the Canadian Securities Administrators (**The Allen Report**) revealed, not surprisingly, that a significant proportion of Canadian investors felt they were not well enough informed to make decisions on their own. That would put investing into much the same category as law and medicine, but somehow the report felt that the public should be well informed enough to make the right selections.

Investigate What?

One maxim that has been used for years is the old saw, 'Investigate before you invest.' Truly a pithy little saying that has become almost irrelevant in these days of information overkill. The average investor would be unable to substantiate an opinion about a company's prospects after reading the annual report, management information statement and the accompanying financial statements. These masterpieces of confusion may meet the legal requirements, but the challenge of extracting meaningful information by the investor is almost impossible.

On-site inspection might be the best plan for most investors. At an early age, my sister wanted to know if she could buy into a new company that everyone was shopping at and was obviously going to be a big success: **Steinberg's** on Victoria Avenue. It will always stick in my mind as a simplistic, but successful, method of investigating a potential investment. Buy the company where you spend your money.

An Apple a Day.....

One of the many challenges an investment advisor faces during their career is the task of finding suitable investments for young children. The best choice for this type of investor is to ask the child if he could name a store (or a bank or a gas station or a computer or music device) that they are familiar with and then narrow the choices down from there. Usually the child will choose a company that he has already researched: a friendly teller at a bank; good fries at a fast food outlet; a downloadable music source; an airline that served really yucky food (oops! that one was a sell), and make a good choice. That sort of practical investigation can sometimes be the root of a good investment program. The kids understood the

potential of the iPod before the market did.

Participate in the choice of your holdings if you can. But discuss them with a professional just as you would the law or medicine.

(Some) Investor Education is at your Fingertips.

The Allen Report suggested that more could be done to educate the public, but not much attendant press highlighted what is already available for anyone who wishes to devote some time to the process. The amazing internet will of course supply you with endless choices, but few can be of use to the investor who is starting out or has maybe started late in life and doesn't want to appear unsure or suspicious. One of the best resources for Canadian investors is the well established and well funded site run by the Ontario Securities Commission: **www.investor.ca**. Available in multiple languages and simple to use, it covers basic and advanced material and also points out the various pitfalls and vagaries that can sometimes make the process of investing a little painful.

The message derived from the website is that investing for the long term is a successful strategy to build a nest egg for your financial comfort, but that nest egg requires supervision. The public needs more help with understanding what makes markets work and why they sometimes fail. Those lessons are hard to learn and that is why a well informed investor also seeks professional advice. Maybe the recommendations of the Allen Report will help give investors the answer to market cycles, but somehow I doubt it. 'Investigate before you invest' is a nice, neat phrase – but what counts is the ability to look at the psychology of markets and avoid the extremes and irrational enthusiasm or despair that have always been a part of the volatility that markets experience. So far no one has a foolproof guidebook for that part of the investigative process.

***Canadian Securities Investing: Montreal.

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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- Store your tree in a sheltered, unheated area until you bring it inside.
- Cut off about an inch at the bottom of the trunk to help water absorption.
- Let the branches fall naturally before you begin decorating in order to avoid 'bald spots.'
- Never leave your tree without water for more than an hour or two. If the tree runs out of water, make another straight cut across the base of the trunk.

- The Canadian Christmas Tree Growers Association estimates that a new tree absorbs about four litres of water a day. **V**

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Fernet Plantation. 3000 Bélanger, St. Cuthbert. For information call 450.826.2403 or go to www.sapins-noel.com.

Univert Plantation. 385 rang 11, Bonsecours. For information call 450.535.6596 or go to www.univert.biz.

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Books

Political cartoonist **Terry Mosher** – better known as ‘Aislin’ to readers of *The Gazette* – will sign copies of his new book, *What Next?*. The programme includes a screening of a documentary about the artist’s life produced for the CBC’s *Life & Times*. Arts Knowlton, 9 Mount Echo Rd. Free, but reservation is required. For information call Brome Lake Brooks, 450.242.2242. **Dec. 9 at 7 pm.**

Movies

Theatre Lac Brome screens *What the Bleep Do We Know?* and *Merry Christmas*, about Christmas on the western front in World War I. Arts Knowlton, 9 Mount Echo Rd. Tickets are \$7, \$5 for members. Call 450.242.2270 for more information. **Dec. 3 & 17 at 5 pm.**

Arts & Crafts

Le marché de Noël sur la Route des vins. Arts & crafts, local products and wine. Brome-Mississquoi. For more information call 1.888.811.4928. **Until Dec. 31.**

Salon des artisans de Sutton. Free. Hôtel de ville de Sutton, 11 Principale S., Sutton. **Dec. 23 to 31, 11 am to 5 pm.**

EASTERN TOWNSHIPS EVENTS

Music

Jazz Christmas with Mike Goudreau & Friends. Tickets are \$15. Alec and Gérard Pelletier Hall; 4 Maple, Sutton. Call 450.538.0486 or go to www.mt-sutton.com for more info. **Dec. 1 at 8 pm.**

Le Violon Vivant. Fiddle-player Marie-Clothilde Benoit is accompanied by Willy le Maistre in their rendition of traditional Quebec songs. Tickets are \$15. Alec and Gérard Pelletier Hall; 4 Maple, Sutton. Call 450.538.0486 or go to www.mt-sutton.com for more info. **Dec. 2 at 8 pm.**

Pot-Pourri Choir Christmas concert. Tickets are \$10. Grace Anglican Church, 52 Principale, Sutton. **Dec. 9 at 3 pm.**

L’Unité Gospel Choir. Tickets are \$20. Alec and Gérard Pelletier Hall; 4 Maple, Sutton. Call 450.538.0486 or go to www.mt-sutton.com for more info. **Dec. 9 at 8 pm.**

Christmas Events

Kick off the season with the **Santa Claus Parade** in Knowlton. Kids can meet Santa after the parade at Knowlton Academy, 81 Victoria Ave. **Dec. 2 at 1 pm.**

Christmas stories by Petronella Van Dijk and Lyson Nicolas. Tickets are \$10 for adults, \$5 for kids. Alec and Gérard Pelletier Hall; 4 Maple, Sutton. Call 450.538.0486 or go to www.mt-sutton.com for more info. **Dec. 10 at 1:30 pm**

Friends of Cœur du Village Christmas show. Tickets are \$12. Alec and Gérard Pelletier Hall; 4 Maple, Sutton. Call 450.538.0486 or go to www.mt-sutton.com for more info. **Dec. 16 at 8 pm.**

On the slopes...

After last year’s lackluster ski season, and following the recent scare of Mont Orford’s closure due to a labour dispute, Townships resorts and skiers alike are praying for snow.

But even though climate experts are calling for another warm and wet winter, winter sport enthusiasts need not despair. Ski hills with advanced snow-making capabilities – like Bromont and Mont St. Bruno – require less than 48 hours of -4°C weather to blanket their main runs in artificial snow.

Most ski hills open in the first half of December. Check snow conditions

throughout the season using the resources below.

MONT ORFORD

(season details in flux at press time)
www.ortford.com – 1.866.ORTFORD1
Adult day pass: \$45

MONT SUTTON

www.montsutton.com
1.866.538.2545 (snow report)
Adult day pass: \$48

SKI BROMONT

www.skibromont.com
1.866.BROMONT
Adult day pass: \$52

MONT ST. BRUNO

450.653.3441 – www.monsaintbruno.com
Adult day pass: \$33

MONTJOYE

819.842.2447 – www.montjoye.qc.ca
Adult day pass: \$27

MONT SHEFFORD

450.777.0909 – www.montshefford.com
Adult day pass: \$34

JAY PEAK

www.jaypeakresort.com
1.800.451.4449 – 802.988.2611
Adult day pass: \$59



KNOWLTON

3 Victoria

450 242-2000

Fax: 450 243-0914

lois@royallepage.ca



Tucked away on a quiet street in Foster, Brome Lake, with a view to the woods and a recreational path outside the front door. Smart bungalow with lots of upgrades, including a new kitchen and a roomy deck. Wood-burning fireplace, hardwood flooring, a third bedroom and workshop to finish downstairs. \$189,000



Make this a Christmas to remember and give your family a country home on famous Sugar Hill Road overlooking beautiful Brome Lake. 40 acres, spacious 5-bedroom home ideal for entertaining the extended family and friends, circle drive, great landscaping, inground pool, garage and guest quarters, too. \$1,100,000



Lakeside exclusivity – 100 feet of sandy beach on Brome Lake. Family-sized home with 4 bedrooms, home theatre, living areas opening to decking and the lake vista, 3-car garage to house your collection or your boat. Picture yourself skiing, skating and coming home to warm-up by the fire, dreaming of the summer pleasures. \$995,000

Eastern Townships living by Lois Hardacker

Chartered Real Estate Agent



Big sky country – A hilltop home with a super southerly view of rolling hills and mountains. On a cul-de-sac with lots of opportunities for hiking and snow-shoeing, as well as three acres of your own. This 4-bedroom home is in excellent condition and very well-decorated and equipped. Check it out! \$339,000



Deck the halls of this great contemporary home with its rustic country cachet. Pine flooring, spacious living and dining areas, garden room with woodland view, deck and spa. Luxurious bath off the master bedroom with its mezzanine office, basement workshop with exterior door. Private 5.9 acres. \$450,000



Tie a red ribbon on the front door and give your family a home for all seasons. Ready now and waiting for you, this home has a Brome Lake access just steps away. Built in 2006, it features hardwood floors, pretty ceramic tiling, deluxe bath and powder room, a two-level deck, and more. Come see! \$278,000



Make a New Year’s resolution to invest in a great location near the scenic and charming village of Knowlton. 109 acres of land in the protected agricultural zone where rampant development is halted. The right to have two houses where the view is magnificent makes this a sound choice. \$809,000



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Westmount Walk to Greene Ave and downtown from this elegant 4-storey stone beauty with preserved architectural details. Expansive entertainment area, walk-out to terrace with panoramic views of Montreal. **Asking \$1,795,000**

Virtual tour: www.mcguiganpepin.com/571240



Westmount Spectacular, 6 bedroom family home, loaded with architectural details and quality renovations. Deluxe eat-in kitchen/family room/office. Beautifully finished basement. Absolute move-in. **Asking \$1,525,000.**



Upper Westmount Located on a quiet 6-house street, near the look-out and park. Highest quality renovations, from top to bottom. Low maintenance house with automatic irrigation system, garage, perfect for busy professionals. **Asking \$1,395,000**

Virtual tour: www.mcguiganpepin.com/570755



Westmount Situated on "the flat", steps to Westmount Park, this 4-bedroom, 4-bathroom Victorian jewel has loads of original woodwork, stained glass, bay windows, skylights. **Asking \$1,098,000**

Virtual tour: www.mcguiganpepin.com/571081



Westmount Are you a professional who cherishes the idea of working at home in a private deluxe cherry wood office? Enjoy being able to walk to the shops? Does cooking in a gourmet chef's kitchen appeal? This property has this and more. **Asking \$995,000**

Virtual tour: www.mcguiganpepin.com/571213



Downtown Situated at the back of a quiet courtyard in a prime downtown Montreal location, this house has potential for renovators. With 4 bedrooms, plus two in the basement, house is bright with windows on 3 sides. **Asking \$620,000**



Westmount Beautiful Victorian townhouse across from park. Three bedrooms, plus basement apartment, parking, walking distance to Atwater and Westmount Square. **Asking \$570,000**

Virtual tour: www.mcguiganpepin.com/571163



The Canal One bedroom condo, corner unit, walk to Atwater Market, metro. Pleasant view on park. Garage, air conditioned. **Asking \$189,000**

Don't listen to the rumours that the market is sliding. Our sellers are selling. Our buyers are buying. We've doubled our transactions in the last 4 months compared to last year. Call us.

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