

French Twist D.C.

I'll Always Have Paris...

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30 Highlights from Best Of France 2015 in New York

September
2015

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Over the weekend, I made a quick trip to New York City to check out the third edition of [Best of France](#), an event organized by the New York French community to showcase French brands in the United States. Yes, there was wine. Yes, there was cheese. Yes, there were stripped shirts – including the world's biggest *marinière* courtesy of Breton brand [Saint James](#). There were even cancan dancers from the Moulin Rouge. But beyond the expected images of France, there were also US-based French start ups, major brands like Air France, L'Oreal and Ariane Espace, as well as small businesses representing the best of France's *savoir faire* from cakes and foie gras to apps, knives, bikes, etc.

POLITICIANS, A COW AND THE BAGUETTE-MASTER



Laurent Fabius, Minister of Foreign Affairs and International Development, kicked off the event on September 26

With visits from the minister of foreign affairs, Laurent Fabius, the minister for ecology, sustainable development and energy (and former presidential candidate slash unofficial French first Lady) Ségolène Royal AND François Hollande (you know, just THE President of the whole country) it's fair to say the event attracted some high profile visitors.

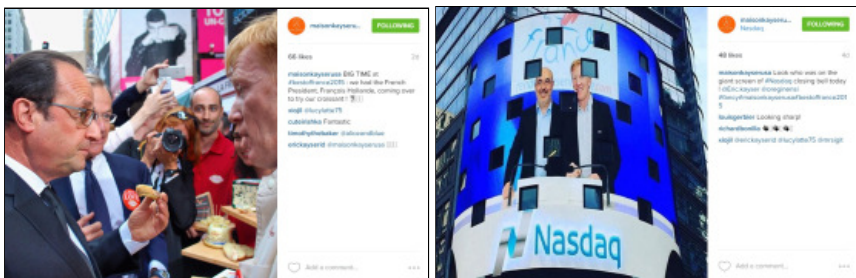


French president François Hollande visits Best of France 2015

Unfortunately for *moi*, Hollande dropped by [Best of France](#) on Sunday around 3PM and that's exactly when my train back to DC left so I missed out, again. But I did get to get to meet some pretty cool French icons like [La Vache qui Rit](#) and Eric Kayser.



Kayser provided bread for pretty much every event where bread was needed (so all of them, we're talking France here!) and was pretty much everywhere during the two days of Best of France: signing books, ringing the closing bell at NASDAQ, meeting the president, etc.



Of course, I inquired about plans to open a [Maison Kayser](#) in DC, which have been in the works for quite some time. Sadly, I have no good news to report on that front, it's not gonna happen until 2017 at the earliest. Le womp womp.

VIVE LE BEURRE

There are Guinness World Records for pretty much everything and over the course of

Best of France, [President](#) broke the record for largest butter sculpture with this impressive rendition of the city of Paris' skyline. It took 7 days for dairy artisans Jim Victor and Marie Pelton to carve a ton of butter into this spectacular landscape. Cocorico!!



GATEAUX BASQUES, CANELES AND OTHER SWEET TREATS

Speaking of butter, I loved tasting some wonderful French products like this amazing gateau basque from [Gateau Basque Lauburu](#).



Not familiar with this almond-based cake? [Read this NPR primer to learn more.](#) It's so

good and will soon make an appearance at a Whole Foods near you!!



More well known in the US is the equally buttery canelé. The lovely Celine of [Canelés by Celine](#), who opened New York's first canelé-only bakery back in 2014, was around to sell some of her original creations like a basil pesto or bacon canelé. I have my reservations about these flavours, but it looks like [Hollande was a fan!!](#)



Introducing the bacon canelé, a definite made in France treat...with a distinct American twist, from Canelés by Celine



There were too many wonderful French food at [Best of France](#) to mention everything, but I'll just mention one more: [Michel et Augustin](#). They too not only had the chance to present their products to Francois Hollande (apparently everyone but me got a pic with the pres who roamed the event for over an hour before walking back to his hotel by foot...) but also to gain some new fans in the US. After perfecting their recipes and selling more than 150 million cookies in France, Augustin moved to New York to bring his kooky cookies to the homeland of cookies. Their products are currently available in 25 Starbucks in New York and hopefully that's just the beginning because I *love* their

raspberry with bits of pistachio cookies.

OF COURSE THERE WAS WINE...

Let's be honest... you can't have an event promoting France without wine being involved. There was the not-so traditional, like Winestar which offers single-serving cans of vino...



...and then there were more traditional offerings at two FABULOUS grand tastings held at the AXA Center, just a few blocks up from the main event.



Presented in partnership with James Beard Award Winner and New York Sommelier [Jean-Luc le Dû](#), the tasting offered over 100 wines, organized by regions from Champagne to Jura, Corsica or the Loire. Having recently returned from a (too-quick) trip to Bordeaux, I lingered at the table promoting wines from that region, sampling wonderful wines from Saint Emilion and Pomerol.

...BUT THERE WAS ALSO RHUM

The area of [Best of France](#) where I spent the most time was the "Rendez Vous in France" section dedicated to French tourism. I have a million new spots I want to visit on my next trip to France but at the top of the list are the French Antilles islands of Martinique, Saint Martin and Guadeloupe. The islands sponsored the welcome reception on opening night where I sampled some wonderful rum-based cocktails (another sponsor was Diptyque and all attendees left with a candle. Not a mini one. A real candle. That was VERY awesome.)

Other than Saint Martin, the French Caribbean islands are not super well known to American travelers, in part because there were no direct flights to reach them... until now!! Throughout the winter, European low-cost airline [Norwegian is offering pretty affordable flights to Point-a-Pitre and Fort-de-France](#). I'm already plotting a birthday getaway



LE MOULIN ROUGE DANCERS CANCAN-ED ON BROADWAY



The beautiful *danceuses* of the most famous cabaret in the world garnered the most attention in both the French and US media (sorry François Hollande!) for their first visit to New York in their 126 years history. They made the rounds on morning and late night shows, performed on the main stage at [Best of France](#) and even [posed for pictures in front of the Statue of Liberty](#). Americans, of course, are the third largest clientele for the [Moulin Rouge](#), after the French and the Chinese, so this was an important promotional visit I'm sure for the cabaret and I must say I enjoyed watching their high energy performance! Of course, like everyone else that's not me, they too got their photo op with the president



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