



French Wine Tasting in U.S. Capitol

On April 5, the French Wine Society (FWS) and the Embassy of France organized a French wine tasting in the U.S. Capitol in honor of the Congressional Wine Caucus and the Congressional French Caucus. Fifteen U.S. importers of French wine presented their products, representing all of the major wine-producing regions of France. A wide variety of French specialty cheeses was also featured at the festive event, which was attended by about 20 Members of Congress, including Senator George Allen and Congressmen George Radanovich, Mike Thompson, Jim Oberstar, and John Boozman. French Ambassador Jean-David Levitte shared a few reflections on the French wine industry with the Members of Congress and other honored guests.

The event was intended to encourage a cross-cultural exchange of ideas and practices between producers in the wine industry. In particular, Levitte emphasized the importance of the "terroir" concept in French winemaking, the idea that products can be strongly linked to the region where they are produced. Products, such as wine or cheese, become unique to

a region thanks to generations of *savoir-faire* developed specifically therein. For example, "Champagne" can be applied only to products produced in the Champagne region in France because of its distinct attributes.



Rep. Thompson (left), Amb. Levitte (center), Rep. Radanovich (right)

As Co-Chairs of the Congressional Wine Caucus, Reps. Radanovich and Thompson discussed how California and other U.S. wine producers can benefit from a better understanding of this concept to help protect and distinguish their products. Already, vintners in Napa Valley are promoting the unique characteristics of their region that make those products recognizable worldwide. Such practices are increasingly important in light of the recently-signed E.U.-U.S. Wine Agreement, which addresses European concerns about the protection of their exports. The Wine Agreement is currently pending consideration by the U.S. Congress, which must approve legislation to implement the accord.

FWS hosts many events, including *French Wine Thursdays*, wine classes and "April in Rhône," which will be held at the French Embassy on April 26. For more information, please visit www.frenchwinesociety.org.

Maine Celebrates French Cultural Heritage

As the French-speaking world was being celebrated worldwide during the "Semaine de la Francophonie," the Maine legislature participated by holding its fifth annual Franco-American Day on March 22, 2006. A variety of celebrations and conferences took place at the State House to recognize the state's French heritage and the many contributions of Franco-American citizens to Maine's culture. Congressional proceedings were held in French, and French music was featured in various parts of the building. The American National Anthem was also sung in French by 10-year-old Melanie Saucier to kick off the festivities.

The events benefited from the support from the Canadian consulate, representatives from Quebec, and the Boston-based Consul-General of France. These organizations

also discussed trade relations between Maine and France, focusing on future possibilities for increased commercial exchange.

The strong influence of French culture in this New England state dates back to the waves of Quebec and Acadian immigrants who crossed the border at the end of the 19th century. Their descendants constitute nearly a third of the population in Maine, and approximately 5 percent of the inhabitants in Maine speak French at home. However, this bi-cultural identity was originally discouraged by local authorities. French was prohibited in schools early in the 20th century and many felt pressured to anglicize their names.

Many of these laws were not repealed until the 1970s. Recently, this unique group of Americans is experiencing a resurgence of pride in their French cultural identity, particularly among young people. To learn more, please visit www.maine.gov.



Melanie Dorice Saucier, sings National Anthem

30th Anniversary of French Immersion Programs in U.S.

MONTGOMERY County, Maryland, celebrated the 30th anniversary of its French immersion programs, the first of its kind in the United States. Dr. Marie-Cécile Louvet and Mr. Gabriel Jacob launched the first immersion program 30 years ago in March. The goals of these immersion programs are an attempt to help students attain functional fluency in French, gain cultural knowledge about speakers of a second language, and develop a better understanding of their own language and culture.

In the United States, 78 programs in 48 states

around the country teach French to approximately 10,000 students. Louisiana offers eight programs, while the areas surrounding Washington, D.C. offer five programs; the second highest concentration of French immersion programs in the country. The Washington, D.C. area's French-immersion programs are all public, situated in the suburbs of Montgomery and Prince George's county in Maryland and Fairfax, Virginia. Though the concentration of French immersion programs across the rest of the country varies, efforts to increase these cultural opportunities are in progress.

NCAA CHAMPION - LIKE FATHER LIKE SON?

The son of former French tennis great and singer Yannick Noah was instrumental in helping the University of Florida secure the NCAA Basketball Championship this year. Yannick Noah, the first Frenchman in 39 years to win the French Open singles championship, seems to have passed on his athletic talents to his son. Joakim Noah, a sophomore at the University of Florida, helped the Gators advance in the NCAA tournament as a star forward. On April 3, Noah played a key role in securing the Gators' win against UCLA, earning them the national title this year. Noah was voted most outstanding player in the Final Four.

AMERICAN UNIVERSITIES: BASIN OF FRANCOFONIE

Alain Mabanchou, a native of the Democratic Republic of Congo, is a novelist and a writer-in-residence at the University of Michigan. He is one of the many novelists that originates from a Francophone (French speaking) country, recruited by an American university to teach courses in Francophone literature. Today, American universities are increasingly recognizing the importance of Francophone literature and taking initiatives to integrate Francophone studies into their curriculum. Currently, the majority of universities in America who have a French language department only offer courses pertaining to French authors. A course in Francophone literature, however, allows students to explore authors who write in French yet originate in other French-speaking countries. Mabanchou believes that the growth of Francophone studies is due to American students' interest to learn about other places, such as, for example, Madagascar, Senegal or the Ivory Coast. Dr. Marc Papé, originally from the Ivory Coast, is a professor at Dickinson College who also offers several courses in this discipline, including "Francophone Sororities," an exploration of how women construct their identities in different Francophone cultures. As more universities create programs for students to complete studies abroad in Francophone countries, more students are taking an interest in learning about these non-conventional destinations before their departure. The demand for these courses from American undergraduates is consistently growing. Already, several universities in the United States, including Duke, Stanford, Harvard, New York University and the University of Michigan, have established francophone studies departments.

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