

Top Foods to Eat in Quebec

Though Canada isn't known for its cuisine, you don't have Canadian restaurants in China in the way that we have Chinese restaurants here, there is one region of the country known for its regional delicacies and comfort foods - and that is Quebec.

Here is a rundown of the top foods to try while in Quebec, according to National Geographic.

Poutine

Poutine just might be Quebec's signature food. The messy pile of fries, gravy, and cheese curds isn't new, but in recent years it's experienced a renaissance, spreading across Canada and beyond. Gourmet versions have appeared in trendy gastro-diners and even the New York Times has jumped on board, celebrating poutine's arrival in Manhattan.

The traditional take is still best for poutine newcomers. That means picking up a basic version—thick-cut, home-style fries, homemade gravy, and fresh curds—from a roadside chip truck. The trucks are found on busy city streets and along highways across the province.

Tire sur la Neige in Montérégie and Laurentians

Quebec is known for all things maple-related, but this is one of the province's most distinctive offerings. Tire sur la neige, or sometimes simply tire d'érable, is a taffy formed by pouring still-hot, boiled maple sap directly onto fresh snow. The result is a soft, flexible candy that begs to be eaten immediately.

Tire sur la neige is available at most sugar shacks. These visitor-friendly maple syrup production outfits are found across southern Quebec, with the highest concentration in the Montérégie region (on the south shore of the St. Lawrence River, near Montreal) and the Laurentians.

Cheese in Eastern Townships

Quebec's cheese scene is so vibrant that there is an entire route des fromages designed for cheese tourists. The route includes producers across the province, but if you have limited time, the Eastern Townships has a large number of options.

Part of the reason for the province's thriving dairies is its legalization of young, raw-milk cheeses—the production of soft cheeses that have been aged less than 60 days is banned in much of North America. Ask about local specialties wherever you find yourself. Rather than copying famous French cheeses, Quebec's producers have been creating varieties of their own.

Smoked Meat Sandwich in Montreal

Don't call it pastrami. Montreal's sandwich of choice bears some similarities to the New York deli specialty, but there are key differences, too, in the process and spices used to cure the beef brisket and in the resulting flavour.

The undisputed king of smoked meat is Schwartz's Montreal Hebrew Delicatessen. Schwartz's has been slicing and serving since 1928, and it's still in its original location on Saint-Laurent Boulevard. Pull up a chair, order smoked meat on rye, and take part in an 80-year-old tradition.

Tourtière in Quebec City

Tourtière is a traditional Quebecois meat pie. The filling varies from region to region, but it often involves minced pork, beef, or wild game. The pies are sold in grocery stores across the province, but one of the best places to sample one is at Aux Anciens Canadiens, a restaurant in Quebec City that specializes in old-fashioned Quebecois cuisine.

In addition to its tourtière, Aux Anciens Canadiens also serves other classics: traditional pea soup, baked beans, pig's knuckle ragout, and the essential Quebec dessert, maple syrup pie.

Lamb in Charlevoix

Charlevoix lamb is one of a kind, and its producers have the law backing them up on that. In 2009 the region became the first in North America to have a food product legally protected: just like French Champagne or Italian Parma ham, only authentic Charlevoix lamb can be marketed as such.

The Charlevoix region extends east of Quebec City and north of the St. Lawrence River. It's a remarkably diverse area, mixing tidal flats with mountains, agricultural areas, and fjords, and it's a designated UNESCO Biosphere Reserve—so even if you're not much of a lamb eater it's an area worth visiting.