

# Tourists discover a Quebec favourite

## Poutine a 'fast-food' delicacy

By Mansoor Ladha

When native Quebecers hear the word poutine, they don't usually think of Vladimir Putin, Russia's president, says Danis, my guide in Quebec City. She is talking about poutine, the popular food synonymous with Quebec.

Walking down a street in Quebec City on a sunny afternoon, you are bound to see someone gorging on poutine, a high-calorie classic staple of Quebecois cuisine.

This popular Canadian dish, originated in Quebec, is made with French fries and cheese curds, topped with a light brown gravy. The dish is typically found in such fast-food outlets such as McDonald's and in some places in United States. It's a favourite of late-night revellers.

Poutine is believed to have originated in rural Quebec in the late 1950s and several communities have claimed to be the birthplace of poutine, including Drummondville and Victoriaville. The dish, which was considered junk food that for a long time used to bash Quebecois culture, has quickly become their pride.

Since February 2013, Quebecois also celebrate Poutine Week, an entire week dedicated to poutine, when more than 30 restaurants featured the Quebecois icon on their menus as the city proudly highlighted it on their culinary food tour. Diners were encouraged to hop from restaurant to restaurant, tasting poutines and voting for their favourite on the festival's website, which received more than 100,000 hits in the week.

Prime Minister Justin Trudeau was served a poutine-inspired canape—smoked duck with red wine gravy and cheese curds on top of a wafer — at a White House state dinner in 2016. Then President Barack Obama is reported to have said he wanted “our Canadian friends to feel at home.”

I certainly felt at home when I was able to get a taste of this Quebecois delicacy during a visit to A L'Abordage Microbrasserie, located in one of the oldest buildings dating back to 1843 in the heart of the beautiful village of Sutton, Quebec. One can view brewing facilities of this establishment from large windows while sampling their speciality beers. I ordered their food speciality — duck poutine — and was pleasantly surprised to get a generous portion of fries, topped with duck meat and sprinkled with gravy.

Poutine goes well with beer and the microbrewery specializes in an excellent selection of American and American-inspired beers. The pub-style menu of the microbrewery includes, among other things, burgers, fish and chips and of course poutine — all homemade. The establishment provides a relaxed and sporty atmosphere devoted to producing an ideal setting for sports enthusiasts, skiers and cyclists.

The Eastern Townships of Quebec have been referred to as a land of astonishing beauty, picturesque villages and a kingdom of mountains. The entire region is an appetizing destination dotted with famous vineyards and five-star tourist accommodations.

A pioneering Quebec vineyard is L'Orpailleur, established 30 years ago in one of Quebec's most welcoming and beautiful regions, Dunham Valley.

Based on the experience of North European countries where winters are harsh and severe, l'Orpailleur adjusted its wine-growing method to protect vine stock from freezing by covering them in the fall and exposing them in the spring. L'Orpailleur grapes are carefully selected for their earliness, disease resistance and organoleptic qualities.

L'Orpailleur wines account for over 40 per cent of Quebec wine sale for Aperitif Cider and Ice Cider, and are available in 265 branches. Quality of their wines is recognized and appreciated both by Quebecers and industry experts. L'Orpailleur wines have been awarded



PHOTOS BY MANSOOR LADHA

An order of poutine with gravy on the side and various types of beer is a typical and popular Quebecois dish.

over 130 medals in various international contests, which is an acknowledgment of its quality and finesse.

Just opposite to L'Orpailleur is Union Libre, a 75-acre estate producing distinctive ciders and wines. Union Libre has been producing its vintage from white grapes, marketing under its own brand of Fire Cider, Fortified Fire Cider (Aperitif Cider) and Ice Cider, becoming a leading producer since 2014.

“We have created unique aromas, flavours and textures in the spirit of creative freedom,” explains owner Sylvie Chagnon. Union Libre is conveniently located in the Eastern Townships of Quebec, 50 minutes' drive from Montreal on the Wine Route of Bromé, Missisquoi and only four miles from the U.S. border.

Located in the heart of Quebec's Eastern Townships in the beautiful town of Bromont is Hotel Bromont. The hotel, surrounded by spectacular views of mountains, is only two minutes from Ski Bromont. Whether you are a skier, a golfer or just holidaying with your family, it's the place to relax and enjoy. It offers everything from mountain biking, cycling, horseback riding or hiking. Kids would also love to visit the nearby zoo and water park.

From breakfast, lunch to dinner, Hotel Bromont's famous restaurant, Les Quatre Canards, provides a unique dining experience in a warm and cozy atmosphere. The hotel is renowned for providing spectacular views of nearby mountains and its chef Mirsad Basic, who offers regional menu and a wine list of great quality to diners.

A great vacation hotel, providing excellent service, indoor and outdoor pools, hot tubs, spa facilities, kids' services and a great getaway any season.

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A waitress carries beer samples for customers.



A staff member of L'Orpailleur, a pioneering Quebec vineyard which sells 40% of Quebec's wine, pours its famous product.