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2011

DELVING DEEP INTO THE RHÔNE VALLEY'S VAUNTED **TERROIR**, **BRUCE SCHOENFELD** FINDS A DESTINATION THAT DELIVERS ON A FAIRY-TALE PROMISE: CHARMING VILLAGES, ALFRESCO MEALS, PASSIONATE WINEMAKERS, AND SOME OF THE COUNTRY'S MOST ACCESSIBLE WINES. PHOTOGRAPHED BY **ANDREA FAZZARI**

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In the garden at Maison Trévier, a hotel in an 18th-century town house in Carpentras, in France's southern Rhône Valley. Opposite: Grenache grapes at Château de Saint Cosme, in Gigondas.

THE TOWNS ON THE HILLSIDES AND IN THE VALLEYS
OF THE SOUTHERN RHÔNE HAVE AN AUTHENTICITY
THAT CAN ONLY COME FROM FUNCTIONALITY.
'THEY'RE REAL. THEY HAVE FESTIVALS, AND
BAKERIES, AND GOSSIP,' ONE INNKEEPER SAYS.



*A view of the terra-cotta
rooftops of Carpentras.*

I'd booked us a room at Maison Trévier, a town house dating from the mid 1700's that sits in the midst of the shopping district. We ended up occupying the entire middle floor, which includes a kitchen and a vast sitting room decorated with impressive-looking oil portraits that could have hung in the provincial museum down the street. Gina Trévier, the granddaughter of a grape grower, had owned a wine bar in Paris for 15 years but came south in 2005, she said, for a healthier lifestyle. I understood what that meant after she prepared us dinner: a salad of spinach, fresh fava beans, and olives, then stewed duck with turnips and carrots.

I awoke the next morning to the sound of happy voices from below. My boys were already downstairs in the garden, shaded from the warm morning sun by a canopy, reveling in a singular breakfast of fresh bread smeared with organic apricot and jams that Trévier had preserved the previous fall, a semi-savory

cherry cake, and homemade cherry juice. "When you find good wine," she told us as the birds chirped, "you will always find good food and a nice place to stay." I hadn't imagined that my wine-country fantasy would include quince jam and cherry juice miles from any winery. Yet when I look back now, that morning captured the essence of the trip as much as any wine-soaked dinner or picturesque drive.