

THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 24, 2009
Armstrong back in saddle for a cancer crusade 24
A new crop of headphones that liberate your eardrums 23
Timothy Spall comes alive in his ancient temples

North Korea bars IAEA inspectors from plant
Action is a setback for both Bush and 6-state nuclear pact

Near Wall Street, a world of worry
America's economic crisis and the first administration's record of financial strength has been underlined at a global summit.

Bailout ap is seen as
But voter alarm spurs lawmakers to seek changes



Modern world imperils traditions of cuisine

French gird for war to save gastronomy

French chefs and culinary experts are preparing for war with weapons they know best. Their goal? Persuade the United Nations to declare French gastronomy a world treasure. The designation gives a global imprimatur — and global promotion and protection — to the finest cultural expressions around the world. With the French economy struggling and the cachet of French food and cooking diminishing even at home, the long-shot initiative is an effort to capitalize on what has long been a great source of national pride. **Page 2**



Owen Franken for The NYT
Guy Savoy has compiled a list of French delicacies.

The Mediterranean diet sinks in a sea of obesity

By Elisabeth Rosenthal
KASTELI, Greece: Michalis Stagourakis has seen a transformation of his pediatric practice here over the past three years. The usual sniffles and stomachaches of childhood are now suddenly interspersed with far more serious conditions: diabetes, high blood pressure, high cholesterol. A changing diet, he says, has produced an epidemic of obesity and related maladies.
Small towns like this one in western Crete, considered the birthplace of the famously healthful Mediterranean diet — emphasizing olive oil, fresh produce and fish — are now overflowing with chocolate shops, pizza places, ice cream parlors, soda machines and fast-food joints.

The fact is that the Mediterranean has been associated with longer lower rates of heart disease and cancer in its home region. Today it is found in the upscale restaurants New York than among the young places like Greece, where two-thirds are now overweight and the mounting, health officials say.
"This is a place where you'd see to 100, where people were all fit and kids said, 'Now you see kids whose than their parents'. That's really scary."
That concern has been echoed Agriculture Organization of the which said in a report this summer diet had "decayed into a moribund."
"It is almost a perfect diet, but what people were eating we notice."
DIET, Continued on Page 7

PAGE TWO

Food a world treasure? If it's French, of course

By Elaine Sciolino
PARIS: Their battlefield is filled, they know, with hidden land mines and cunning enemies.
So around a half-dozen French chefs and culinary experts from the ad hoc "French Mission for Food Heritage and Cultures" are preparing for war with weapons they know best.
They ate and drank their way through a three-hour strategy session recently to help their country face the daunting task before it: Persuade the United Nations to declare French gastronomy a world treasure. The designation gives a global imprimatur — and global promotion and protection — to the finest cultural expressions around the world.
So by the time the roasted figs, the wine-macerated prunes, the chocolate mousse and the Earl Grey sorbet arrived in the private dining room of Guy Savoy, a chef with three Michelin stars, the men were in deep discussion about the magic of their country's cuisine.
"It's everything!" Savoy said. "France is the only country in the world with such diversity!" He has compiled an informal list of regional delicacies that he thinks should be saved, including the textured andouille sausage of Vire, the smoked garlic of Arleux, the calisson cookie of Aix-en-Provence, the dense brioche of St.-Genis and a minty candy called "bêtise" from Cambrai.
Jean-Claude Ribaut, the food critic for *Le Monde*, chimed in: "It's the art of the sauce. A carcass and some vegetables boiled in water for six hours, then strained and reduced for another three, to make all sorts of stocks. Focus on the basics."
Jean-Robert Pitte, France's pre-eminent food historian and chairman of the group, sampled the rice pudding with Tahitian vanilla and turned nostalgic. "It's vanilla!" he said. "It's Grandma! It's Gauguin!"
They do not talk openly of their enemies — the acclaimed foreign chefs like Ferran Adrià of Spain who have

challenged the pre-eminence of French cuisine, the fast-food chains that have infiltrated the country.
But with the French economy struggling and the cachet of French food and cooking diminishing even at home, this long-shot initiative is an effort to capitalize on what has long been a great source of national pride.
It was unveiled by President Nicolas Sarkozy himself at France's annual Agricultural Fair last February, in an off-hand announcement that took his ministers by surprise.
He said he wanted France to be the first country in the world whose gastronomy would be formally recognized by Unesco, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization.
Sarkozy is by no means a food connoisseur, and even his close confidants confess that he doesn't much enjoy eating. A teetotaler, he often fakes his way through toasts.
But he is a relentless booster of France, and for him, the initiative seems to be less about taste and more about the creation of new jobs at home and the projection of power abroad.
"Agriculture and the jobs that produce it every day are the source of our country's gastronomic diversity," he said. "It is an essential element of our heritage." He added, "We have the best gastronomy in the world."
For decades, Unesco has kept a list of World Heritage Sites — from Machu Picchu and the Cathedral of Notre-Dame in Reims to the ancient city of Thebes and the Great Wall of China — which it helps protect and preserve through careful monitoring.
Then in 2003, the agency, which is in Paris, adopted the Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage to preserve "oral traditions and expressions" and "performing arts, social practices, rituals and festive events; knowledge and practices concerning nature and the universe; traditional craftsmanship."

Today, Unesco recognizes such cultural manifestations as the storytelling of Kyrgyzstan, the sand designs of Vanuatu, the Ugandan craft of making bark cloth, the folk singing known as iso-polyphony in Albania and ox-herding in Costa Rica.
France's European neighbors in some senses are competing against the French proposal.
In June, Spain revived its own initiative to win recognition of the health-conscious Mediterranean diet, based on olive oil, fish, grains, fruit, nuts and vegetables; Italy, Greece and Morocco swiftly joined the campaign.
In Italy, Coldiretti, the Italian farmers' association, even argued that Italy's food heritage is superior to that of

his proposal, François Simon, *Le Figaro's* acerbic food critic, wrote that if France wins Unesco status, "Opening the door of a restaurant, making a soufflé rise, shelling an oyster, will become part of cultural activity, like falling asleep at the opera, yawning at the theater or slumping over Joyce's 'Ulysses.'"
To lay the groundwork for a lobbying campaign, the French Senate held hearings over the summer in which chefs, food experts and even specialists in the "arts of the table" testified.
The testimony became a repository for both the memories and the dreams of France's food world.
One witness said it could be a way to save the endangered, black-and-white-streaked Coucou of Rennes (a breed of chicken) and the black turnip of Pardailhan.
A second quoted the dictum of the 19th-century food writer Brillat-Savarin, "The discovery of a new dish does more for the happiness of the human race than the discovery of a star."
Recommendations were made, including recognition of France's rich gastronomic literature; improvement in the quality of prepared meals served in schools, hospitals and nursing homes; campaigns to teach children about the joys of eating good food; and encouragement of young people to appreciate the "nobility" of becoming butchers and bakers.
"It is not a matter of saying a 'masterpiece is in danger,' or of mummifying our culinary arts," said Catherine Dumas, head of the Senate committee in charge of the initiative. "We have to show that eating well and appreciating good food are part of the French identity."
She said that while France wants to be first on the list, others certainly could follow. "We are only the pioneers," she said. "Our move is a humble one."
Basil Katz contributed reporting.

**'It's everything!
France is the only
country in the world
with such diversity!'**