



**Gourmet discovery**  
 Clockwise from  
 left: Local  
 delicacies in the  
 alleyways of Saint  
 Malo; Baguettes  
 fresh from the  
 oven; Traditional  
 port from Calem.



“Everything you need to know about French food is right here,” says *Star Legend* Head Chef, Joseph Kalynuik, his distinctive voice cutting through the buzzy vibe of Saturday morning shoppers. It’s the busiest day of the week in Marché des Capucins, Bordeaux’s largest market, and we’re on a ‘shop with the chef’ jaunt, one of the featured activities on a Windstar Cruises’ James Beard Foundation cruise.

Over the next few hours our group of 20 eager gourmands follow Chef Joseph through the labyrinth of narrow aisles as he selects everything from cheeses decorated with pretty flowers to canelés de Bordeaux, baguettes baked in a wood-fired oven, rustic looking terrines, whole fish, tons of prawns and the juiciest looking peaches I’ve ever seen. “We want the food we serve onboard to tell the stories of the places we’re sailing,” he says.

#### / One of a kind

Windstar is the Goldilocks of the cruise industry. Across a fleet of six carrying between 148 and 312 passengers, the boutique-style yachts are nifty enough to manoeuvre into uncrowded harbours, yet equipped with all the features of a luxury liner.

As the only cruise line officially partnered with the James Beard Foundation, a non-profit organisation focussed on nurturing and honouring chefs across North America, the range of eateries onboard the *Star Legend* is quite staggering. Through clever design, every millimetre of space is used creatively. Verandas restaurant, a la carte or buffet by day, transforms into Candles, a special occasion pop-up at night. Amphora, the grand dining room, has a completely different menu every evening featuring at least one James Beard Foundation dish showcasing the backstory of the chef. Then there’s Cuadro 44, a speciality Spanish restaurant; the funky Star Grill on the pool deck; the sleek Yacht Club for snacks and light breakfasts; and a

#### WINDSTAR CRUISES IN EUROPE

Specialised food cruises are gaining notoriety, discovers Jocelyn Pride.

# EUROPE ON A PLATE





## WINDSTAR CRUISES IN EUROPE



depicting 'ladies in waiting'. Or going for a jog around the entire city wall of Saint Malo and punting along a canal in Marais Poitevin, known as the green Venice of France.

### / A touch of magic

As part of the James Beard Foundation experience, a celebrity chef and a team of esteemed wine connoisseurs travel with us, always at the ready for questions, specialised wine tastings and cooking demonstrations.

Author of several cooking books, restaurant owner, *Top Chef* competitor, recipient of many culinary awards and Chair of the James Beard Foundation Awards Committee, chef Tanya Holland is as lively as the dishes she cooks. A champion of inclusivity in modern kitchens and with a knack for blending the flavours of southern American food with a twist of French influence, she enlightens a packed auditorium through life stories, tips and techniques as she creates dishes over a series of demonstrations that we are able to order on the evening menus.

Maybe I'll try to replicate the recipes at home. Or maybe I won't. I strongly doubt I'll ever make a chef or sommelier, however a culinary cruise adds another dimension to a travel experience – it's a window to our world, one bite at a time. **CT**



cocktail bar with a changing selection of canapés.

And as an all-suite ship, imaginative use of space continues. Each evening our suite magically turns into a dreamy bedroom draped with netting opening onto the Juliette balcony and soft lighting throughout the lounge/dining area creating the perfect setting to order room service for a cosy night in.

### / Excursion immersion

Travelling on a specialised James Beard Foundation itinerary elevates the gastronomy experience, and has attracted a full ship. The majority of our 310 shipmates have cruised with the company at least once, one couple I meet are on their ninth. "We booked as soon as this cruise was announced," says Barb, a foodie from Boston.

Boarding the *Star Legend* in Lisbon, over 10 glorious days and nights we eat and drink our way through Portugal, Spain and France. Many excursions, like shopping with the chef, are centred around the flavours of the places we visit. In Porto, we board traditional wooden boats and sail along the Douro River marvelling at the mosaic of colourful houses sprawled along the hilltops, before turning the history pages in the underground cellars of Calem (circa 1859), and tasting their famed port wine matched with cheeses and chocolates.

Bordeaux, needs no introduction, but presents a dilemma for where to go for an afternoon of exploration and wine tasting – Saint Emillion or Medoc? Soft merlots paired with a small charcuterie board in picture-perfect Saint Emillion wins, and Medoc is on the next time list.

In Saint Malo, we head off with other oyster lovers to taste the piece de resistance of the juicy molluscs. Tucked into the coast of Brittany, the tiny walled village of Cancale is oyster central. The sea looks like a patchwork quilt of nets as oyster beds stretch along the coast line, and trodden oyster shells replace beach sand, and are used for steps and pathways. We sashay through the carnival atmosphere amid the brightly coloured stalls spilling along the promenade where fishers shuck their oysters to order. It's then onto La Ferme Marine de Cancale to witness the intense process of carrying on the tradition of family-owned oyster farming and savour a generous tasting platter, that surpasses all expectations.

And sometimes it's spontaneous meanders that unearth memorable moments, like wandering through the neighbourhood of Canido de Ferrol on the north coast of Spain, home of more than 400 'meninas' – street art paintings

### Book it

- Windstar has a range of James Beard Foundation cruises departing during 2025 including the 11-day Baltic Beauty onboard *Star Legend* departing from Stockholm on June 29 (approximate price from \$12,500 per person); the nine-day Adriatic Archipelagos & Greek Goddess onboard *Wind Surf* departing from Venice on August 27 (approximate price from \$10,900 per person) and the 12-day Southeast Canadian Explorations onboard *Star Pride* departing from Montreal on October 7 (approximate price from \$13,600 per person). [windstarcruises.com](http://windstarcruises.com)







### Cruising just right

*Clockwise from far left:* A stylish Star Balcony Room; Colourful street art in Canida de Ferrol; The elegant Amphora restaurant; Exploring the canals of Marais Poitevin.

## Expert tips

**What to pack:** One thing I love about Windstar is that there are no formal nights. Dress code is clearly stated for the various onboard venues, e.g. no swimwear in the public lounges and restaurants; relaxed elegant clothing after 6pm in the restaurants. Pack comfy walking shoes for excursions and deck shoes are great for around the ship. Layers are the key for day wear – a jacket you can squash into a daypack will come in super handy, and make sure you have a hat, sunscreen and sunglasses. The onboard shop has a good stock of incidentals if you forget anything.

**Favourite shore excursion:** La Rochelle was new to me and a walking tour winding through the cobbled streets was a great introduction to this pretty French harbour town. Oozing history and charm we wandered past half-timbered houses and medieval towers before sitting at a long table in a lively street café eating local oysters and drinking wine produced a few kilometres away.

**Favourite meal:** When every meal feels like you're celebrating a special occasion, it's hard to pick a fave. After watching a cooking demo with celebrity guest chef Tanya Holland creating her Creole shrimp and grits speciality, that night I chose it as a starter. I followed with James Beard award-winner Paul Berglund's recipe of poached Atlantic salmon with cucumbers and dill crème fresh as main and topped it off with dessert of hot bittersweet chocolate soufflé. Although it sounds decadent, here's the thing about Windstar dining – the portions are like their ships – Goldilocks sized.

**Insider tips:** Amphora has no assigned seating and the staff have a lovely way of welcoming everyone to the restaurant by asking if you'd like to share a table with others or not. Tables sizes range from two to eight, so it's a great way of meeting people. Don't let the boutique sized ship fool you – the entertainment is high class and innovative. The hottest seat onboard is the Crew Show, which happens towards the end of the cruise.

