

# Snails set fast-selling pace

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area that runs along the north bank of the St. Lawrence River about an hour's drive from Quebec city.

"The escargots have turned out to be our bestselling product," Sylvie enthuses. "We're selling them to lots of places in Montreal and to restaurants in Toronto like Centro, Scaramouche, Auberge du Pommier and the 360 Revolving Restaurant in the CN Tower."

The married couple (he is from France and was formerly involved in international banking; she is Quebecoise and has a masters degree in philosophy) now export the tiny snails, sold frozen in packs of six, to restaurants in several Canadian cities and, most recently, to a few upscale New York eateries.

"I love the escargots," gushes Marc Thuet, who was born, raised and trained as a chef in France. "They have terrific taste. They're smaller and even more flavorful than the escargots from Burgundy." Thuet uses them in dishes like Ragout of Lobster with Morels.

He also raves about the Quebec foie gras he buys from the Maries. "I had been looking for good foie gras for a long time," he explains. "It's not too hard to find a foie gras you can sauté, but when you want to make a terrine, the liver must have just the right amount of fat, the right color and be of top quality, or you don't get good results."

Thuet's not the only chef of French background to appreciate Marché Atlantique wares.

"There are quite a few chefs from France in Quebec and particularly in the Charlevoix region," Sylvie says, "who have encouraged us with products like the smoked fish, scallops with their roe, whitefish and trout caviar from Pelée Island, the foie gras and, recently, with

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some wonderful cheeses like migneron (a more flavorful version of that other Quebec cheese, Oka) that we're getting from a small producer in Charlevoix."

Marc Thuet waxes quite eloquent when he talks about the Maries' efforts to nurture homegrown specialty foods. "My Canada definitely includes Quebec," he says with verve. "I don't want political problems to break up this country, especially when we can all share so many *produits de terroir* — the wonderful gifts of food that come from our soil."

Hey, couldn't have said it better myself!