

FOOD

Frog food

Just how French are Chicago's Gallic eateries?

Americans' historical antipathy toward the French has been encouraged by the current administration and its "freedom fries." They can scoff all they want, but even Dick Cheney—a man who obviously loves food—has to admit that the French know how to cook. Finding French cuisine in Chicago is easy, but just *how* French are these ambassador restaurants? *The A.V. Club* investigates.

Brasserie Jo, 59 W. Hubbard St.

Region: Alsace, in eastern France on the German border. The food combines both countries. **Frenchiest item:** Cassoulet toulousain—bean stew with meat. The French make even the dullest things sound pretty. **Most American item:** Slow-roasted pork. You can find that just about anywhere for less. **Most unpronounceable item:** Bouillabaisse (boo-ye-base), a soupy concoction of fish and vegetables. **Most predictable entrée:** Escargot. Apparently, the French don't eat snails very often, but their restaurants always serve them. **Foie gras, oui or non?** Non, but the menu has *chicken* liver. **Verdict:** The restaurant represents the Alsace region as it should. Try the tarte flambée (kind of like pizza, but much fancier with crème and cheese). No prices are listed on the menu, so be prepared to spend a lot of "l'argent."

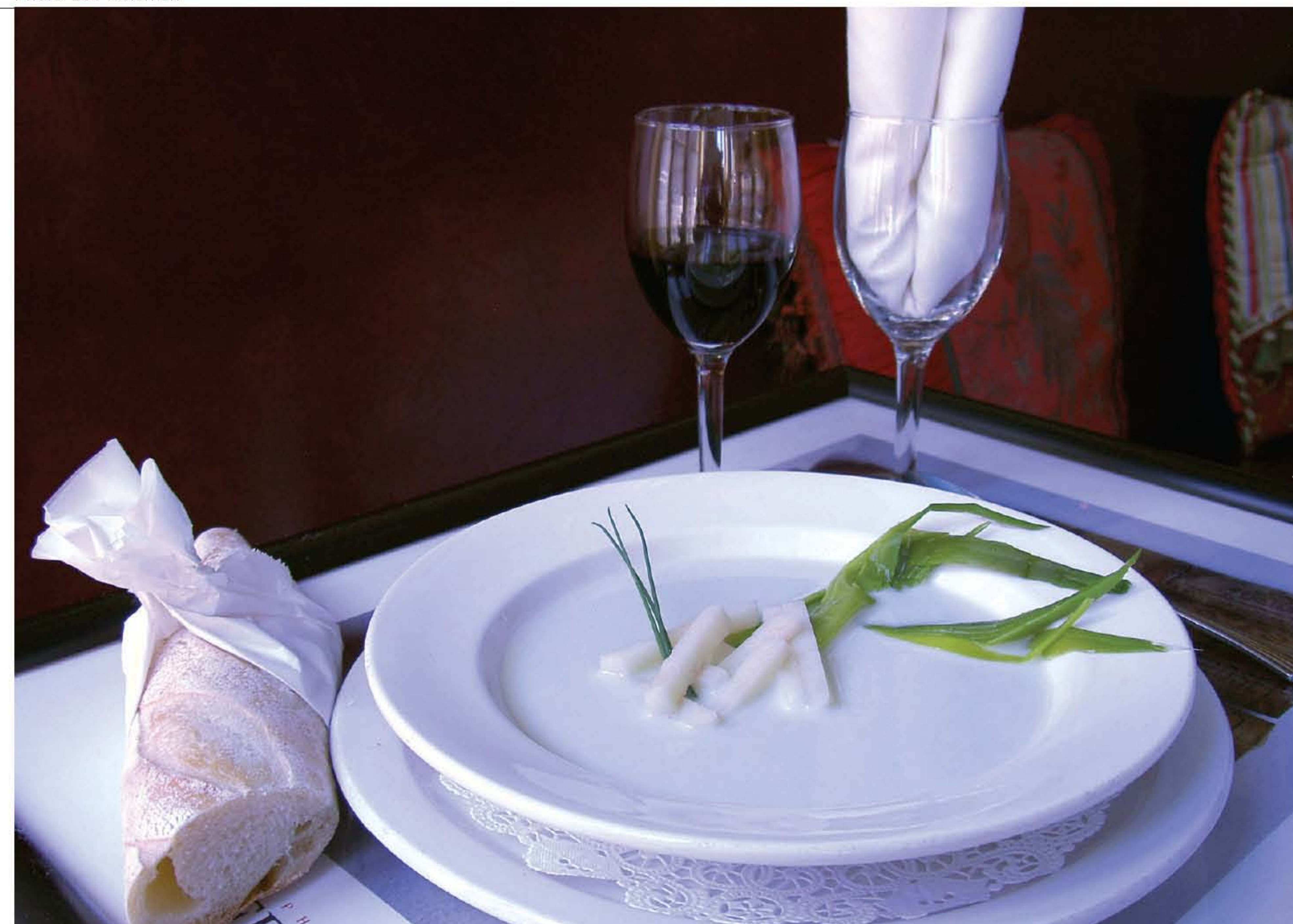
Bistro Campagne, 4518 N. Lincoln Ave.

Region: Rural southern France. **Frenchiest item:** Poêlée Campagnarde, or braised greens. **Most American item:** Bistro burger. Apparently putting "bistro" in the name makes it more French. **Most unpronounceable item:** Salade maraîchère au chèvre chaud. Roughly translated, it's warm goat-cheese salad. **Most predictable entrée:** Steak frites, i.e., steak with high-end fries. It's common and definitely a safe bet. **Foie gras, oui or non?** Non. **Verdict:** The menu and ambience are less pretentious than Brasserie Jo's, with more options for vegetarians.

Cyrano's Bistrot & Wine Bar, 546 N. Wells St.

Region: Bergerac, in the Aquitaine area on the southwest coast of France. Cyrano's takes its name from the main character of

Photo: Zoe Weisman



Cyrano's vichyssoise

Edmond Rostand's *Cyrano De Bergerac* (though Cyrano wasn't really from Bergerac). **Frenchiest item:** Vichyssoise, a cold soup with leeks, onions, potatoes, cream, and chicken stock. **Most American item:** Half a chicken. With a wide assortment of pâtés and fricassee dishes, rotisserie chicken is the closest thing. **Most unpronounceable item:** Vichyssoise, again (vee-shee-swahzz). **Most predictable entrée:** The fromage

plate—France and smelly cheeses go hand-in-hand. **Foie gras, oui or non?** Oui! Cyrano's is one of the few places still serving foie gras, despite the city's ban. **Verdict:** Considering Bergerac was actually from Paris, the place has a more Parisian vibe than a coastal one. With its small menu, it feels like the type of bistro you'd find in the City of Light. —Garin Pirnia

A: Alcohol
BYOB: BYOB
D: Delivery
O: Outdoor dining

V: Vegetarian friendly
L: Late-night dining (after 11pm)
B: Brunch