



MADE IN HEAVEN

Made in France: three small words that pack a big punch. Whether attached to a wheel of cheese, a handbag, or an evening gown, the label conjures a world of taste, elegance and *art de vivre*. **Jennifer Ladonne** goes shopping...



"IT'S ABOUT EDUCATION AND TRANSFORMATION... SOME OF OUR CLIENTS HAVE TOLD US WE'VE CHANGED THEIR WAY OF CONSUMING"

As more and more people around the globe look to buy French products, the Made in France label speaks not only of the values and quality of French manufacturing but is also a formidably powerful marketing tool. But commercial impact and psychological associations aside, what do these words really mean? As it turns out, not so much. According to former MP Yves Jégo, "Made in France is not controlled, and is therefore often overused." And abused: lacking any meaningful government supervision, the label – which is not official – can be affixed to almost anything.

BENDING THE RULES

Furthermore, mind-numbingly complicated customs rules for a boundless variety of French products, ranging from dental implants and animal feed to mustard and haute couture, means that rules can be easily bent. "For example, on a plate made in China you could affix a little thing like a hook in France and, because you transformed it from a plate to a decorative object, call it Made in France," says Émilie Auvray, whose Marais boutique, L'Appartement Français, is one of the city's most scrupulous providers of Made in France wares.

That's also why Jégo spearheaded the founding of the lesser-known but infinitely more meaningful Origine France Garantie (OFG) certification in 2010. With the double mandate to "provide clear and precise information

to the consumer" and "make companies manufacturing in France recognisable", the certification ensures that 100 per cent of the product is made in France and at least 50 per cent of the components are from France.

This is great news for the 79 per cent of French respondents to a 2017 BVA-FNPCA survey, who said they trust French artisans' expertise and the quality of French products and would be willing to pay a little more for that assurance. But it's no big news to Auvray, who, with her partner David Rémy, has been scouting out and selling top-quality and sustainable French-made products for years, and were behind six pop-up shops around Paris before opening their cosy »

Clockwise from opposite page: Shop in style at Empreinte; browsing in L'Appartement Français may take some time; some of the luxury goods to be found in Émilie Auvray's cosy boutique in the Marais



“THE SHIRT IS FULLY COMPOSTABLE, BUT YOU’LL NEVER NEED TO DO THAT SINCE IT WILL OUTLAST YOU”

Marais boutique last spring. Auvray and Rémy’s aim was to showcase the exceptional wealth of products exclusively made in France in order to highlight the difference. “When you mix a made in France product with other products you don’t see it, you don’t understand it. Why would you buy a €39 T-shirt when there’s a €12 T-shirt made in China right next to it? You have to educate people around this and explain why,” Auvray says.

QUALITY MATERIALS

A case in point is an impeccably cut deep-indigo T-shirt made from the supplest French linen and sewn with 100% cotton thread. “The shirt is fully compostable, but you’ll never need to do that since it will outlast you,” she says.

At this charming shop, organised like a chic French pied-à-terre, you can find most anything, from toothpaste and perfume to candles, jewellery, handmade lamps and loveseats, along with a collection of clothes and accessories for men and women.

Auvray has a story for everything in the store (they carry more than 50 brands made in France) and her knowledge of and love for her wares are unmistakable. When an impeccably elegant wide-brimmed hat in



Clockwise from above: Empreinte’s finely curated collection lends the store a gallery feel; artisanal jewellery, unique furniture and high-quality clothing can all be found at Ambassade Excellence

value. “For us it’s about education and transformation. Our clients take the time, they think – some have told us we’ve changed their way of consuming. Step by step, it’s about becoming conscious.”

CAREFULLY CURATED

A 10-minute walk from the lower to the upper Marais, takes you to Ambassade Excellence, a boutique that makes up for its diminutive size with a discriminating, hand-picked selection of clothing and accessories, beauty, house wares and gastronomy. Sandrine and Vincent Bergerat – connoisseurs of made in France – spent five years scouring France from coast to coast to ferret out a selection of French-made products within a set of principles: local, sustainable, and made in France in compliance with ethical working standards.

I didn’t know I could fall so hard for a baking dish until Bergerat showed me the lushly hued stoneware from Manufacture de Digoïn, founded in 1875. You could design an entire kitchen around a sculptural



velvety black felt caught my eye, a one-of-a-kind item in the store, she explained that it had just arrived from Manufacture des Possibles, a company in the Aude founded in 1830. In its heyday, Manufacture was the only *chapperie* in France that performed every one of the 65 steps it takes to handmade a hat. When the business closed in 2018, a local woman came to the rescue, coaxing the company’s last nine employees out of retirement to train a new generation of hat makers. The first of the new line appeared in October.

While browsing, I overhear Rémy explaining to a woman how to maintain her new pair of 1083 jeans – named after the distance between Menton and Porspoder, the farthest points in mainland France – a sought-after niche brand. Made of organic French denim (the word denim derives from “de Nîmes”, meaning from the town in southern France), the jeans are woven in the Vosges and assembled in Marseille and near Paris. “Wear them for a week – to bed is good – wash inside out, no dryer, wear again for a week, wash and then you can hem them,” she advises.

Meanwhile, in their ornate Art Deco-style boxes, perfumes from the house of Le Galion (developed in the 1930s by one Monsieur Vachet, the nose behind the House of Dior’s first perfumes) have retained their original formulas, along with some new fragrances.

What Auvray loves most about her job is the opportunity to alter mindsets around sustainability and



terrine in mallard blue or a glossy buttercup-yellow pitcher. “Every grandmother in France owned a dish by this company,” says Bergerat, but by 2014, the 140-year-old company was on the edge of insolvency – until Corinne Jourdain stepped in with a group of investors. The traditional models remain the same with a fresh palate of gorgeous colours and finishes.

The wares at Ambassade fly in the face of the disposable chic favoured by many high-street chains. Slip on a pair of exquisitely detailed Lavabre Cadet silk-lined gloves in kid leather, for example, and you will understand the expression “second skin”. According to Bergerat, Lavabre Cadet is one of France’s two remaining *gantiers* still making gloves by hand in Millau, the traditional glove-making capital (the other is Causse). Similarly seductive is a dashing pair of hemp jeans by Atelier Tuffery, France’s oldest jeans manufacturer, founded in 1892 and run by the present generation of Tufferys.

Prices aren’t cheap, but calculated over the years these goods will last you, not to mention their eye-catching elegance, they’re a very good deal indeed.

For wearables, the boutique also carries classic woven belts by L’Aiglon, founded in 1889, Ector sneakers so jaunty and stylish they could only be made in France, sleek leather handbags by Olivia Clergue, and spectacular leather coats, jewellery and lingerie. French caviar, cognac, champagne and fruit >>

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MADE IN PARIS

While made in France has no official label, as of 2018, Made in Paris does. Audrey Gallier and Lorna Moquet, two young Parisians passionate about the artisanal tradition that's alive and well in the city, were among the first to anticipate this now wildly popular trend, opening Sept Cinq (names after the first two numerals of the Paris zip code) back in 2012.

A concept store in the very best sense of the term – that is, with a strong theme and focused on substance rather than surface – the boutique's lovingly hand-picked jewellery, accessories, house wares and artwork are actually wearable, usable, loveable and, in some cases, edible.

Most non-natives won't be familiar with labels like Coucou Suzette's whimsical jewellery, Rivecour's fabulous (and well-priced) handmade ankle boots in soft but sturdy leather, Elise Chalmin's adorable T-shirts, or Sept Cinq's own jewellery collection in colours and designs so pretty and versatile that you'll wear them every day. And that's probably a good thing since many of these brands are difficult, or impossible, to find elsewhere and carry the caché of a Paris "find".

There's plenty to covet in an atmosphere that's stylish but also warm and hospitable: bags, shoes, sneakers and boots, clothes, accessories for women

"PRICES AREN'T CHEAP, BUT CALCULATED OVER THE YEARS THESE GOODS WILL LAST YOU, THEY'RE A VERY GOOD DEAL INDEED"



Above and top: Sept Cinq, run by Audrey Gallier and Lorna Moquet, showcases products made in Paris, guaranteeing items which are both stylish and well-made

preserves handmade in Corsica round out the gastronomy selection. For beauty, look no further than Chantal Sanier's sensational Odeur de Sainteté perfumes, sold in sculptural wooden boxes. Not in Paris? Not a problem – check out Ambassade Elegance's website for its online shop.

Across the Square du Temple-Elie Wiesel, on the medieval rue de Picardie, the streamlined concept store Empreintes is the new showplace for Métiers d'Art, champions of the country's top artisans and craftspeople. Equal parts gallery and boutique, the three-storey space displays useful and beautiful items that often blur the line between craft and art.

The store is loosely arranged by department, with jewellery, large sculptural pieces and furniture on the top floor, hand-blown glass and porcelain – ranging from whisper-thin bowls in pastel hues and design plates (more for display than everyday use) to large statement vases – on the second floor, and lower-priced objects and everyday items on the ground floor.

There's also a bookshop and displays that introduce some of the artisans and their process. The inventory changes every three weeks to give the multitude of French talent an opportunity to shine, and shoppers the chance to snap up new gems every month.

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and men and house wares. To complete the experience, customers are encouraged to cosy up to the bar for an artisanal made in Paris soda.

Though these standout boutiques ensure that what you're getting is truly French-made, anyone who wants to delve deeper into the Made in France mystique can explore Paris's two dedicated trade shows: the Salon du Made in France, which is to be held in November 2020 at the Porte de Versailles; and Made in France Première Vision, which focuses on fashion and accessories and is held in spring just a stone's throw from these three fabulous boutiques, at the beautiful Carré de Temple in the haut Marais. **FT**

● **L'Appartement Français**, 27 rue du Bourg Tibourg, 75004; 01 45 35 11 53

www.lappartementfrancais.fr

● **Ambassade Excellence**, 18 Rue de Vertbois, 75003; 09 82 51 54 49

ambassade-excellence.com

● **Sept Cinq**, 54 Rue Notre Dame de Lorette, 75009; 09 83 55 05 95

www.sept-cinq.com

● **Empreinte**, 5 Rue de Picardie, 75003; 01 40 09 53 80
www.empreintes-paris.com