



Lisa Bayless  
**Ask the  
Expert**

### Annexation of the Catalina Foothills?

In his recent State of the City address, Mayor Bob Walkup proposed that Tucson annex surrounding areas such as the Catalina Foothills. Walkup noted that a successful annexation of the Foothills could bring in as much as \$60 million of new state money to Tucson in the form of shared revenue funds. Currently, unincorporated areas, like the Foothills, are not eligible to receive these funds.

**What is annexation?** Annexation is the process by which a municipality, such as the City of Tucson, extends its boundary to include neighboring areas.

**The annexation process:** Successful annexation requires the consent of the majority of property owners affected. State law requires signatures from more than 50% of the property owners as well as the signatures from property owners of 50% or more of the assessed valuation in the area.

**The pros of annexation:** The pros of annexation include the return of as much as \$60 million of state tax dollars. Other benefits include police protection, emergency medical response and street maintenance among others from the City of Tucson. Additionally, there would be no more subscription to Rural Metro for fire protection. Lastly, annexation would allow Foothill residents to participate in city elections and decisions.

**The cons of annexation:** The City of Tucson has its own property and sales tax which residents in unincorporated areas, such as the Foothills, do not pay. If annexation occurs, Foothills property owners would incur an additional property tax of \$1.24 per \$100 of the assessed valuation of their homes and business. Annexation of the Foothills could also lead to denser housing zoning which may adversely impact the rural feel and property values of the Foothills. Future development of the Foothills may also face delays/obstacles from the bureaucracy of the Tucson Development Services Department.

**How will annexation affect the value of my Foothills property?** Property owners will incur an additional property tax of \$1.24 per \$100 of the assessed value of their homes. Denser housing zoning could also change the rural feel of the Foothills and ultimately lead to lower property values.

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The charcuterie counter at Victor Hugo

# Brains, Ankles and Other Body Parts:

## An Honest Account of a French Market

Story and Photography by Abigail King

**M**y illusion shatters. Just like that. I'd spent the last few days in a dreamy sunset world, strolling along the river in *la Ville Rose* — the Pink City. Students drifted along, a baguette under one arm, Burgundy wine under the other. In the shade of plane trees, old men played *boules* and I flirted with gourmet dishes.

Now it's a different story. A chicken's head stares at me through polished glass, its neck bent back like a fishhook, its claws curled. I see blood-tinged brain, what appears to be an ankle joint and a bluish sphere that I hope is not a testicle. This is Victor Hugo Market, the biggest and the best in Toulouse, France.

Southwest France has a reputation for rich, appetizing food, from cassoulet to foie gras, truffles to Roquefort. Since 1892, the trade routes of the Dordogne, the Atlantic, the Pyrenees and the Mediterranean have converged every morning except Monday beneath Victor Hugo's covers.

I meet Cathy Méheust on the flagstones of Place Capitole, the city's spacious square. She leads gastronomic tours around Toulouse's markets, and I am intrigued. I want to rekindle my romance with French cuisine.

We get off to a good start. Michel By, an artisan at Octave, reaches for a scarlet jewelry box. It flowers open to reveal pre-

cision ice cream dressed as haute couture gateaux. His collection lives beneath a frosted transparent bubble, a futuristic display at home in Toulouse, which is the home of Europe's aerospace industry.

Although the aeronautical industry can blur borders, Victor Hugo's cheese counter sharpens them. Every Pyrenean valley has its own brand. As Charles de Gaulle said, "How can anyone govern

a nation that has 246 different kinds of cheese?"

Presiding over the ash, amber and creamy discs today is Stéphane Murcia, a charismatic giant in café-au-lait overalls. His stall bustles despite the palatial supermarkets that encircle Toulouse.

"I do not worry," he says. "Supermarkets sell pasteurized cheese. And pasteurized cheese — is *morte*." He



A small section of the cheese counter at Victor Hugo





Sugary macaroons are tempting at Victor Hugo

searches for the English word. “Dead. The flavors die with the bacteria. Bacteria give the cheese its taste, its art.”

Of the 90 or so stalls here, nine devote their space to seafood: glossy silver anchovies, sardines in concentric circles, and a crab clambering sideways, alive in its cage.

Cathy reads my mind. “Tourists are very sentimental about food,” she says. “It is difficult for us to understand.” I nod, trying to look worldly and mature. After all, what difference should it make which animal is destined for the table? Or which body part? But four hares distract me: their fluffy tails hover inches from my face, metal spikes through their skulls.

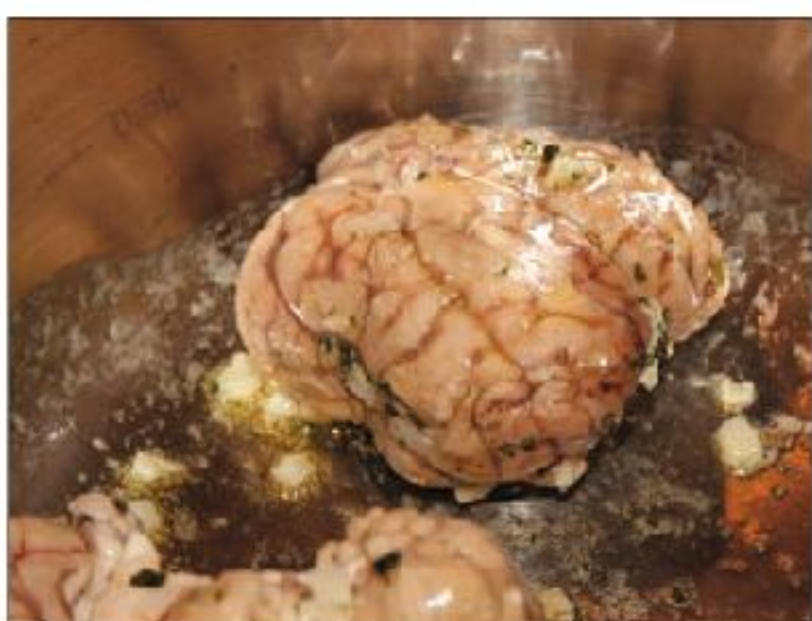
Given this unflinching approach, the word for the take-out counter amuses me: *traiteur*. Marie Orfila introduces me to her selection: skewered hearts, mashed cod and *confit du canard* — wickedly rich duck stored in a whipped-white paste of its own fat.

“The most popular dish?”

Marie’s eyes twinkle as I take in the empty silver tray, crystallized crumbs around the edges: *crème caramel*. I’ve clearly arrived too late. Victor Hugo opens at 5:30 a.m. for professional chefs; my midday visit barely squeezes in before closing time.

Behind an unmarked door, informal restaurants serve some of Toulouse’s freshest food. I surrender to the warmth and chatter, the steam and hiss from the kitchens and the scent of baking baguettes. I side step the waiters and duck beneath black-and-red rugby banners to reach my friend, Sandrine.

“I don’t think much of the trotters,”



A dash of garlic, parsley and brain

she tells me over a pink-centered steak. “But the tongue is excellent.”

I ignore the list of body parts and relax, enjoying the Armagnac-infused terrine, the delicate salmon and the soothing *glug* of wine splashing into my glass. People cram into every space, and the waiters spin and swerve to deliver organic lamb, peppered meats and sugar-dusted macaroons.

Like the market, Victor Hugo’s restaurants focus on local customs and quality — to hell with what the tourists

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plants transpire) increases, rosette-forming plants bolt for the sky, blooming and setting seed quickly — in a matter of weeks. Other plants germinate in later rains, heading for the sky right away. All of these creatures, collectively known as “desert ephemerals,” go from seed to seed again in a relatively short time.

Sixth, there is the business of spreading risk. All banks seem to be involved in this bet-hedging business, and the seed bank is no different. One way it spreads risk is to only sprout a *certain percentage* of any one species’ seed in any one year. No matter how tempting the rain, some seeds are always held in reserve in case of disaster. Disasters are common.

Another way this seed bank spreads risk is to hustle each newly sprouted plant into productivity ASAP, almost before it is a plant. This way at least some seed is returned, with interest, even if the return is small. If good conditions persist the plant will grow larger, and flowering and seed-setting will continue. (Perhaps this will be a truly profitable year! Or, perhaps not.)

In a good desert-wildflower year,

everyone profits. The tourist industry feeds on colorful spectacle. Desert tortoises and mule deer and caterpillars feed on leaves; moths and butterflies and hummingbirds drink nectar; bees gather pollen; seeds go into the burrows of kangaroo rats and pocket mice and into the bellies of larks and sparrows, and on from there, up the food chain. Of course, a lot of seed goes back into the bank.

Nowadays, here in Tucson, a few desert ephemerals live around my house. One of my favorites is a miniature ephemeral known as “purple mat.” It makes me laugh every time. Two teensy leaves appear and — presto! — there is a flower. (Hooray!) Mind you, this flower is larger than its plant.

If moisture holds out, this plant spreads. A month later it may be the size of a saucer, absolutely covered with ecstatic purple-ness. The bank’s investment is paying off.



*Diana Turner is a local landscape designer and freelance writer. Comments for publication should be addressed to letters@desertleaf.com.*

## GREAT ESCAPE continued

think. Stark presentation, impressive results. Maybe I should see what I’m missing. Embrace the unknown and try something new.

When I’m back in my own kitchen I unwrap *cervelles d’agneau* — lambs’ brains. I warm them on the stove, mixing in the obligatory garlic and parsley. I take a bite. Firm. Slippery. Different. Not at all bad.

My infatuation with French food has certainly faded. But I can respect the knowledge, passion and common

sense lavished on their meals. This isn’t lust, it’s real love.

Corrugated slices of brain stare at me from my plate, and I can’t handle it any longer. I slide them into the garbage can. They say that love is blind. Shopping here, maybe that’s just as well.



*Abigail King is a freelance writer who was living in Toulouse, France, when this story was written. Comments for publication should be addressed to letters@desertleaf.com.*

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