The appetizing **cuisine of Provence** bursts with Mediterranean influences. **Olives** are a defining ingredient, whether in sauces and salads, tarts and pizzas; mixed with capers in tapenade; or simply accompanying the traditional Provençal aperitif of pastis. Another Provençal classic, **garlic**, is used in pistou, a paste of olive oil, garlic and basil, and aïoli, the name for both a garlic mayonnaise and the dish in which it’s served with salt cod. Vegetables – tomatoes, capsicum, aubergines, courgettes and onions – are often made into **ratatouille**, while **courgette flowers**, stuffed with pistou or tomato sauce (fleurs de courgettes farcies), are an exquisite delicacy. Sheep, taken up to the mountains in summer, provide the staple **meat**; you’ll find the finest, agneau de Sisteron, roasted with Provençal herbs as gigot d’agneau aux herbes. **Fish** is prominent on traditional menus, with freshwater trout, salt cod, anchovies, sea bream, monkfish, sea bass and whiting all common, along with wonderful seafood such as clams, periwinkles, sea urchins and oysters. **Sweets** include almond calissons from Aix and candied fruit from Apt, while the **fruit** – melons, white peaches, apricots, figs, cherries and Muscat grapes – is unbeatable. **Cheeses**, such as Banon, wrapped in chestnut leaves and marinated in brandy, and the aromatic Picadon, from the foothills of the Alps, are invariably made from goat’s or ewe’s milk. The best **wines** come from around the Dentelles, notably Gigondas, and from Châteauneuf-du-Pape. To the east are the light, drinkable, but not particularly special wines of the Côtes du Ventoux and the Côtes du Luberon appellations. With the exception of the Côteaux des Baux around Les Baux, and the Côtes de Provence in the Var, the best wines of southern Provence come from along the coast.