

Diarmaid Condon says French

development is real community living

Wine and spa at heart of concept

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New property owners at its Les Jardins de St Benoît development are being encouraged to integrate into the local village community. This is being promoted through participation in grape and olive harvests, cookery classes and regional festivities, to preserve the local customs and traditional way of life. The concept has, says the company, proven popular with buyers who have been keen to immerse themselves in the activities and slower pace of French village life.

This authentic-style develop-

ment is designed to be an extension of the village of St. Laurent, developed in a similar style to the existing old village build.

Marc Achard says: "We think people buying a property abroad often want the benefits of a new build, but don't necessarily want to buy on a characterless resort, where they could be living anywhere in the world. People today

prefer interacting with locals, sampling new customs and having the opportunity to practice the language of the country in which they are staying."

Achard continues: "No gates or fences surround the development, and locals are welcome to use the facilities, which include a Mediterranean Spa. The mayor of St. Benoît and the local council have embraced the development, and their input has helped ensured it is a true extension of the village."

Owners are given membership of the local wine co-operative and invited to take part in the harvesting of grapes, as well as bottling wine with the locals. Cookery classes will be given by the locals, sharing regional recipes such as cassoulet, tapenade and goose liver pâté, and teaching

how to bake bread the French way.

At the heart of the resort are the 12th century medieval gardens, 'Les Jardins'. These are being restored to provide an authentic setting for the many activities planned — classical music recitals, historical lectures, spring and summer aperitifs and concerts of traditional Languedoc music.

The development will feature traditional Mediterranean façades with wooden shutters, generously appointed rooms, natural lime-washed walls and high ceilings with exposed wooden beams in the bedrooms. To the rear, floor-to-ceiling French doors open out to the gardens, while the sunny aspect should ensure the rooms get plenty of light.

Each residence is constructed from high quality local materials

by guild craftsmen and all come with a 10-year construction bond. Townhouses have one or two bedrooms with floor areas extending to 70 sq. m. over two levels. The kitchen and family bathroom feature high-specification fittings and equipment. Each residence has its own garden and terrace. Villas come with either three, four or five bedrooms and interior space extends up to 146 sq. m.

Properties feature a garden planted with native flowers, fruit trees and herbs, as well as a private swimming pool. The price for a one-bed townhouse with garden is €234,375, a two-bed townhouse with garden will cost €291,975, and a four-bed villa with private pool sells for €625,000.

DEVELOPER Garrigae Resorts says it is "re-introducing the simple and traditional pleasures in life" to property buyers at its riverside vineyard estate and spa development in Languedoc, south-eastern France.

For further information call 01 524 1201 or visit www.garrigae.com