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THE
NEW YORK
TIMES
STYLE
MAGAZINE

Men's Fashion
March 5, 2023

**JUST A
SINGULAR
KIND OF
GUY**

The self-motivation
of Willem Dafoe

PARISIAN HOTELS CAN still skew toward the conservative — but not Le Grand Mazarin, opening this spring in the Marais. A combination of three buildings, parts of which date back to the 14th century, the 61-room property is the first hotel project in the French capital designed by Martin Brudnizki, the Swedish interiors star best known for his rococo transformation of the London nightclub Annabel's. The bedrooms are painted in bright shades of green and coral, hung with tapestries and furnished with marble-topped minibars and ruffle-trimmed, leopard-print slipper chairs. An all-day restaurant, Boubalé, serves modern takes on Jewish favorites like gefilte fish, challah and kreplach, and there are two bars, one of them a speakeasy-style lounge with marbleized wallpaper and Murano glass ceiling lights. "It's immersive," says Brudnizki. "I wanted to create the atmosphere of arriving in someone's home and having the most whimsical time." Rates from about \$742, breakfast included, legrandmazarin.com. — Ellie Pitthers

WILD NIGHTS



A bedroom at the new Le Grand Mazarin hotel in the Marais district of Paris.



DESPITE ITS CARAMEL-LIKE flavor, the date has historically been a tough sell to American eaters. Now, though, a few entrepreneurial farmers and chefs are giving the fruit — which contains more potassium than bananas and more fiber than broccoli — an image upgrade. "It's a superfood that tastes like candy" is how Joan Smith, 54, describes the medjools she grows in California's Coachella Valley and has been selling in beribboned, retro-cool brown packages under the label Rancho Meladuco for about six years (ranchomeladuco.com). In 2018, her fellow Coachella Valley farmer David Kohl, 53, co-founded Joolies, his brand of medjools, which are packed in turquoise boxes adorned with cheery rainbows (joolies.com). Both farmers handpick their organic dates at peak ripeness and sell them fresh, not dried, delivering a

Joolies' California-grown medjool dates.

sweeter, softer fruit than what's typically found in the bulk bins. In Los Angeles, Michelle Valdez-Wilton, 42, and Grace Chon, 40, began making chocolate-covered medjool dates at home during the pandemic; their brand, Date Better Snacks (datebettersnacks.com), which they launched last year, offer dark chocolate-dipped dates stuffed with combinations like peanut butter and cacao nibs and cashew-lime crunch. And in Seattle, the Somali-born chef and writer Ifrah F. Ahmed, 31, who grew up eating dates during Ramadan to break the fast, uses the fruit frequently at Milk & Myrrh (ifahmed.com) the traveling Somali pop-up restaurant she started in 2019, adding them to salad dressing and filling them with goat cheese and oodkac — jerked beef cooked in ghee — as an appetizer. "When you have a really good, sticky, fresh date," she says, "it's like a revelation." — Ella Riley-Adams

Dream Dates



MINI MARKET

Colorful Carryalls

Floral prints brighten up big spring bags.

From left: Dior Men, price on request, dior.com. Dries Van Noten, \$755, driesvannoten.com. Erdem, \$510, erdem.com. Louis Vuitton, price on request, louisvuitton.com. Kenzo, \$470, kenzo.com.