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## Just enough of the right attractions at Mediterranée

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Ajam-packed store can be either a fun treasure hunt or give the appearance that nothing is special because there's so much of it.

On the other hand, have you ever walked into a store that had too few items? You know within the first five seconds that there's absolutely nothing you're interested in, but you don't want to seem rude. So you walk slowly, twice around the rack of items and then graciously say goodbye.

Via Mediterranée is just right, as you'll discover today at its grand opening.

This quaint house turned shop of pottery, furniture and home accessories doesn't overwhelm you; it has just enough unique items in each room to keep you interested.

Why? Because just about everything here has a unique and charming story, and you know me - a piece is as good as the story it tells.

The story really begins with the shop's owner, Sophie Christian.

### Cicadas, anyone?

We might as well start with the bug that we in America find nothing more than an auditory nuisance. Christian has them in all sorts of sizes and colors, in ceramic and plaster of Paris, painted with a natural pigment found in the soil of Roussillon in Provence, known to be the highest-quality pigment in the world.

In France, the cicada symbolizes good fortune much like the Chinese cat or the American horseshoe. There, the cicada also marks vacation time, so it's a welcome sound indeed. Christian opened the store because of the cicadas - well, sort of.

"I found myself with an MBA and some very good jobs in sales. But I didn't like anything I was selling, so it was very difficult," she said.

She took a trip back to her native France and stumbled upon a tiny pottery shop in the southern part of the country. There, she found herself and her passion.

### Pottery and more

"I walked into this adorable shop filled with artisan pottery, and when I walked out, my life had changed. I knew I had to sell something I really believed in, and this was the beginning," she said.

Pregnant with her third child, she came back to America and persuaded the shop owners to let her sell their pieces.

"Once I got the beautiful pottery," she said, "I knew that people would want other accessories, so I've been carefully adding to my inventory with unique pieces from artisans primarily from France."

At Via Mediterranée, the prized pottery pieces are called Anduze Pots exclusively made for her store.

"Some are made to be functional, and others just function as a gorgeous art piece inside or outside the home," Christian said.

Other pieces are half-glazed, which creates an artistic twist. All of Christian's pottery is chosen to work well in any

home decor, from contemporary to Southwestern. The hanging wall pots called "amphore" can also be used simply as art or can hold kitchen utensils, paintbrushes and even cotton balls in the powder room.

### **The rooster story**

Finally! A rooster accessory with a great story!

Christian beamed as she told me the story of one of her favorite finds.

"These roosters are all made by an 85-year-old man in France," she said. "His son doesn't want to carry on the tradition, says it's too difficult and time-consuming. So when this man dies, his treasures will no longer be made."

The pottery roosters are hollow inside with a spout. Christian said that years ago field workers used these roosters to keep their water and wine cool and would drink out of the beak.

### **Take time to talk**

When you go to Via Méditerranée, take some time to visit with Christian. She'll tell you all about the Moroccan hearth, wrought-iron work, unique lamps and taffeta and organza curtains from Lyon, the textile capital of France.

There's even gorgeous jewelry from Franco-Polish artist Wanda Sikora, who sells to only two other stores in France.

Here you'll find more than pottery. You'll find passion.

Via Méditerranée is at 7001 E. First Ave., Scottsdale. The phone number is (480) 990-7263.

**Watch for Jan's home and lifestyle features from 11 a.m. to noon Monday and Thursday on Channel 12's Arizona Midday. You also can hear her from 2 to 4 p.m. Saturdays on KFYI-AM (550).**

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