



Located in Apex, French Bleue is a specialty home boutique that focuses on living beautifully. "We have something for everyone," says owner Libby Padula.

# À la française

French Bleue helps homeowners incorporate French flair into their lifestyles and homes.

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Text by **Dana W. Todd**



Later in the year, French Bleu plans to expand by opening a Parisian-style café at the front of the store. The menu will include imported French cheese, freshly baked baguettes, and other cuisine in a bistro-like atmosphere with tables and chairs that spill onto the sidewalk in true French fashion. “French Bleu is nestled into a corner of the Highline Building in the heart of downtown Apex across from the fire station,” Padula says. “The location encourages gathering and is the perfect place to bring the community together.”

Stay tuned for French Bleu’s organized trips to France, where participants will have the opportunity to shop from the same sources as Padula and learn about the French culture from a local’s perspective.

While Padula works with homeowners to help them blend the old and new into their interior design, she also is launching a trade program that will allow designers to supply their clients with the unique antiques and accessories she brings home from her European buying trips.

“I’m most interested in creating a comfortable and peaceful shopping experience, where shoppers can see the possibilities of blending one special antique piece into their existing homes,” Padula says. “Our goal is to bring a small touch of French culture into everyone’s lifestyle.”



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**ENTREPRENEUR** Libby Padula is on a mission to bring the warmth of French antique furniture and the elegance of French culinary delights and lifestyle to the Triangle. She opened specialty housewares boutique French Bleu in downtown Apex last November to provide a diverse inventory of antique European furniture, linens, tableware, and lifestyle products such as gourmet foods and candles originating from France.

“I show homeowners how to blend various period pieces with modern furniture and accessories in a way that is livable,” Padula says. “Adding one-of-a-kind antiques to a home ensures it feels layered with history and warmth while still being fresh and modern. It’s all about the right mix.”

Padula stocks the French Bleu store with antiques sourced from showrooms in the southern French countryside where she travels on regular buying trips, with an occasional foray into Italy to shop the local antique fairs. Her finds include pieces with a story and a history, and she enjoys sharing that information with homeowners. “Looking into a 1600s-era mirror, I can’t help but think of all the people who have also looked into it and what was going on around them,” she says.

Visit French Bleu at 209 North Salem Street, Suite 105, in Apex, or go to [frenchbleu.com](http://frenchbleu.com).