

FRENCH BISTRO COOKING

SPECIAL ISSUE

Gourmet

THE MAGAZINE OF GOOD LIVING

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Profiteroles with Coffee Ice Cream & Chocolate Sauce

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GOURMET MARCH 2008 VOLUME LXVIII NUMBER 3



FRENCH BISTRO COOKING

FEATURES

90 SPRING AWAKENING Rosemary, thyme, lavender, bay leaf ... the aromas of the Provençal countryside just landed on your Easter table with these irresistible recipes for spiced orange wine; onion tart with mustard and fennel; fish soup with saffron rouille; roasted red peppers; rack of lamb with Swiss chard; roasted-garlic soufflé; and Meyer lemon cake with lavender cream.

102 JURA THE OBSCURE You've probably never heard of it, but if you travel to the dark, wooded mountains of the Haut Jura, on France's border with Switzerland, you'll find your way to such delicacies as *vin jaune*, fresh Mont d'Or cheese, and absinthe.

BY JACK TURNER RECIPE ON PAGE 108

110 BIENVENUE Who needs that French restaurant just around the corner when you can enjoy steak frites; a wonderful one-pot meal; profiteroles with coffee ice cream and chocolate sauce—and more—right in your own home?

118 ALSATIAN SENSATION Coq au vin takes a turn for the white with chicken in Riesling. It's the centerpiece of a rich and luxurious Alsatian-inspired menu that also includes trout *choucroute*, red and white endive salad, and a pear and almond tart.

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ON THE COVER TOP THIS: PROFITEROLES WITH COFFEE ICE CREAM AND CHOCOLATE SAUCE. RECIPE ON PAGE 117. PHOTOGRAPH BY MARCUS NILSSON. FOOD STYLING BY PAUL GRIMES. PROP STYLING BY HALEY THURSHWELL.

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GRAND MARNIER CRÊPE CAKE

SERVES 8 TO 12 (DESSERT)

ACTIVE TIME: 45 MIN START TO FINISH: 4¾ HR

- 6 large eggs
- 1 cup whole milk
- 3 cups chilled heavy cream, divided
- 1 teaspoon pure vanilla extract, divided
- 1 cup all-purpose flour
- ½ teaspoon salt
- 1 cup confectioners sugar, divided
- 2 teaspoons grated orange zest, divided
- 2 tablespoons unsalted butter, melted
- 1 tablespoon Grand Marnier or Cointreau

► Blend eggs, milk, ½ cup cream, and ½ teaspoon vanilla with flour, salt, ¼ cup confectioners sugar, and 1 teaspoon zest in a blender until just smooth.

► Brush a 10-inch nonstick skillet lightly with some of melted butter, then heat over medium-high heat until hot. Pour in a scant ¼ cup batter, immediately tilting and rotating skillet to coat bottom. (If batter sets before skillet is coated, reduce heat slightly for next crêpe.) Cook until underside is golden and top is just set, 15 to 45 seconds. Loosen edge of crêpe with a heatproof rubber spatula, then flip crêpe over with your fingertips and cook 15 seconds more. Transfer to a plate. Continue making crêpes, brushing skillet with butter each time and stacking on plate.

► Beat remaining 2½ cups cream, ½ teaspoon vanilla, ¾ cup confectioners sugar, 1 teaspoon zest, and Grand Marnier in a large deep bowl with an electric mixer until cream holds stiff peaks.

► Center a crêpe on a serving plate and spread with ¼ cup cream. Continue stacking crêpes and spreading with cream, ending with a crêpe. Chill, covered, at least 4 hours and up to 24.

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65 CHASING PERFECTION Anyone can make the perfect omelet, right? Don’t be too certain of that.

BY FRANCIS LAM

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- AND WHEN YOU'RE DONE TAKING IT ALL IN, YOU CAN JOIN THE ACTION BY STARTING A CONVERSATION IN ONE OF OUR FORUMS
- SO BE SURE TO STOP BY SOON AND COME BACK OFTEN—THE MENU CHANGES DAILY

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FROM VEXING TO VOILÀ

GOURMET MAGAZINE started out in 1941 with a French name, a strong bias toward French cuisine, and a two-year-long series of columns by Samuel Chamberlain about the exploits of an American family living in France. By 1943, when those columns had been turned into the book *Clémentine in the Kitchen*, America's love affair with all things French was an accepted fact of life.

The French food that fascinated us back then, however, was not the haute cuisine of restaurants. Americans certainly respected the food of chefs, but it was pretty much familiar territory; for most of the 19th and 20th centuries, every American restaurant worth its salt had a famous French chef manning the stoves (and if it didn't have one, it pretended that it did). Then World War II came along, and Henri Soulé and the team of chefs he had brought over to run the restaurant at the French Pavilion for the 1939 World's Fair, finding themselves stranded on this side of the Atlantic, fanned out and opened a number of authentic, high-end places.

What Americans *really* longed to taste, though, was the simpler fare found in the French countryside. They hungered for a bit of bistro food. But for that they had to go to France, because honest French food cooked in the simplest manner was impossible to make in America. We just did not have the products. You could find Tournedos Rossini in restaurants all across the country. Grand Marnier soufflés were everywhere. But something as elementary as an omelet, a baguette, or a perfectly roasted chicken was beyond our reach. Even an ordinary green salad with an impeccable vinaigrette was an impossibility, because the olive oil for the dressing couldn't be found. (In those days, in fact, what little olive oil there was in this country usually had to be purchased from a pharmacy.) Little wonder, then, that GOURMET's writers spent so much time scouring the French provinces, devouring the food they found there.

Times have changed, and our tastes have matured, but our love for the rustic cooking of provincial France remains as powerful as ever. Most Americans still yearn for the classic food of the French bistro—thin steaks with shoestring potatoes and a ramekin of béarnaise sauce; pot-au-feu; chicken in creamy wine sauce; profiteroles. What has changed is this: With the advent of great American products, it is as easy to make this food in the United States as it is in France.

In fact, it might be easier. A friend who divides his time between southern France and Northern California once told me that he loved both homes but that he was a better cook in California, where all the young growers, bakers, and cheesemakers around the Bay Area could provide him with pristine products. That is less true now because, as Bill McKibben relates in "Small World" (page 124), France is beginning to rediscover the flavors of its past, and the food of the French countryside is once again on the rise. These days, whether you want to taste it there or cook it here, you're in luck: If you are a fan of rustic French food, this is your moment.

This issue is filled with so many wonderful recipes that you will want to cook them all immediately. It is also filled with tales from hidden corners of France that may well be new to you. Few places are as beautiful (or as delicious), for example,

as the Haut Jura ("Jura the Obscure," page 102). Meanwhile, Colman Andrews has found the perfect place to eat on the Riviera ("Cannes Do," page 38).

And should you yearn to cross the Riviera into Italy, we can help with that, too. We've teamed up with Expedia.com to bring you a contest whose grand prize is a trip to Italy for two. Log on to the new gourmet.com between February 12 and April 6, and you'll have an opportunity to instantly win a travel prize or a signed copy of *The Gourmet Cookbook* and be entered for a chance at the Italy trip.

It's easy to enter the contest. It's even easier to start cooking food you will love—all you have to do is turn the page.

TIMES HAVE CHANGED, AND OUR TASTES HAVE MATURED, BUT OUR LOVE FOR THE RUSTIC COOKING OF PROVINCIAL FRANCE REMAINS AS POWERFUL AS EVER.



Ruth Reichl

RUTH REICHL EDITOR IN CHIEF

MARCH

UP FIRST

We've all seen them, their brows furrowed in concentration and that mild flicker of terror in their eyes. What's wrong with these people? They are the cooks—even the most experienced among them—desperately trying to get their hot soufflés to dining rooms full of guests without mishap. What these anxious people don't yet know is that this recipe for frozen apricot soufflé (page 138) can banish their fears while simultaneously dazzling their friends. All it involves is a few simple steps and a little *trompe l'oeil* trickery. Success is guaranteed if you can: (1) purée some apricots (not too smooth; you want each bite to contain bits of chewy fruit), (2) whip up a meringue, (3) beat some cream, (4) then fold all three together and stick the mixture in the freezer. Wrapping a collar around the dish allows the soufflé to "rise," while a dusting of cocoa powder and confectioners sugar just before serving gives it that "just out of the oven" look. And here they come now, smiling broadly and exuding confidence. Meet the men and women who have mastered the frozen soufflé. —Lawrence Karol



LETTERS

Our southern issue transports a native Virginian back home and delights some Edna Lewis devotees; holiday cookies worth showing off; and a simple and satisfying Indian flatbread.

A NATIVE VIRGINIAN whose roots reach back to Jamestown, I moved to New York City in 1989 and thought I was happy living amid skyscrapers and sipping Martinis. And I was—until I read Edna Lewis's achingly lovely essay, "What Is Southern?" (January 2008). Nothing has ever made me feel so homesick. Suddenly I was ten years old again, on an early misty morning with my grandmother, walking across the fields of her farm in search of tender young poke leaves. With my copy of *GOURMET* in hand, I spent a happy winter weekend thinking about pimento cheese, fried okra, collard greens, rhubarb pie, and chicken and dumplings. Thanks for the essay and all the down-home recipes.

MITCHELL OWENS
BROOKLYN, NEW YORK

WHILE WALKING FROM MY MAILBOX to my front door with the January issue of *GOURMET*, I was delighted to see, while in quick mid-flip, a photograph of Edna Lewis. Six years ago, after moving to Atlanta, it was the work of Miss Lewis that solidified my love of southern cuisine. I never met her, but whenever I recreated one of her recipes, her way with words and her obvious love for the food of the South always made me feel as if she was standing right beside me in the kitchen. To find, upon closer inspection, that the January issue was almost entirely devoted to Miss Lewis was a great Christmas present. Thank you.

MICHAEL McCONNELL
ATLANTA

FOR THOSE OF US who are not enamored of the culture and cuisine of the southern part of the United States, the January 2008 issue was one for the recycle bin. I went from page to page and not once did I crimp a corner to remind me to go back and savor a recipe or an article. It seems to me that creating theme issues like this one is bound to leave more than a few readers reaching for your competitors.

MARIANNE WISNER
ROLLING HILLS, CALIFORNIA

I FIND SOMETHING TO TREASURE in each issue of *GOURMET*, but your January issue is one I hope to keep, and share, forever. I was thrilled to discover many wonderful Edna Lewis recipes I had never cooked before, plus others in her straightforward southern style (so easy to adapt to various dietary restrictions). We all owe Scott Peacock a major debt of gratitude for not allowing this wonderful woman's work to sink into the past.

SUE ROBERTS
GOURMET.COM

LAST YEAR I ATTENDED a pastry class at the Culinary School of Fort Worth. My friends expected my holiday treats to be eye-popping works of art. Unfortunately, my flans flopped, my brownies buckled, and my *palmiers* pooped. Your December 2007 recipe for beautiful, tasty Trios cookies ("Home Sweet Home-made") saved my reputation. Thank you for the great holiday issue!

STEVEN THORPE
GRAPEVINE, TEXAS

AT MY HOME, making chapatis has always been a family affair. When I was growing up, my mother made the dough the night before if we planned on eating them for breakfast. My sisters and I took turns kneading it the next day, attempting to roll out perfect circles, sometimes failing miserably and ending up with shapes that looked like mangled hearts.

SHEENAH HAMID
SINGAPORE

CHAPATIS

MAKES 12 ROUNDS
ACTIVE TIME: 1 HR START TO FINISH: 2 HR
(INCLUDES STANDING)

This fast-cooking flatbread traditionally accompanies dal or curry dishes, but it's versatile enough to pair well with almost any soup or even to dip in hummus.

1 3/4 cups whole-wheat or Indian atta flour plus additional for kneading and dipping

1 teaspoon salt
3/4 cup lukewarm water
Vegetable oil for greasing skillet

► Stir together flour and salt in a large bowl, then make a well in center and add water to well. Using a fork, stir until a dough forms. Turn dough out onto a lightly floured surface and knead, adding more flour as needed, until smooth and elastic (dough will be slightly sticky), about 8 minutes.

► Transfer to a clean bowl and cover bowl with plastic wrap. Let dough stand at room temperature at least 1 hour.

► Divide dough into 12 equal pieces and roll each piece into a ball, then cover with a kitchen towel (not terry cloth). Dip 1 ball of dough into additional flour, shaking off excess, then flatten ball with your hands on lightly floured surface.

► Roll dough into a 5- to 6-inch round with a lightly floured rolling pin, lifting and rotating as necessary. Shake off excess flour, then transfer round to a sheet of wax paper and cover with another kitchen towel (not terry cloth). Repeat with remaining balls, arranging rounds in 1 layer (do not stack).

► Heat a dry 10-inch cast-iron or heavy skillet over medium heat until hot. Lightly grease skillet with a paper towel dipped in oil, then cook one round of dough until underside is golden brown in spots, about 30 seconds. Gently turn over and cook until deep golden brown in spots, 30 seconds to 1 minute. Turn over again and cook, gently pressing with tongs, until chapati is cooked through, 30 seconds to 1 minute more. (Chapatis may puff up.)
► Keep warm, wrapped in another kitchen towel, and cook remaining rounds. Serve immediately.

COOKS' NOTE: Dough can be made 12 hours ahead and chilled (after standing at room temperature 1 hour), covered with plastic wrap.

WE WANT TO HEAR FROM YOU

Send your letters to feedback@gourmet.com. All letters and recipe submissions become the property of *GOURMET* and may be edited, published, or otherwise used in any medium.

YOU ASKED FOR IT

A tart-sweet gelée that will punch up any cheese plate; toffee-rich cookies big enough to share (but you won't want to); and a sophisticated balsamic dressing that outshines the bottled kind.

I RECENTLY HAD DINNER at a French restaurant in Newport Beach, California, called Bistro Le Crillon. One of the appetizers, an assortment of cheeses and crusty French bread, came with a clear, pale gold Chardonnay jelly. There was a crucial hint of some flavor I can't identify, and my attempts at duplicating it aren't turning out anything like the original. I would be thrilled to have the recipe.

NAOMI JANZEN
SYDNEY

CHARDONNAY GELÉE

Adapted from Bistro Le Crillon
SERVES 6 (PART OF CHEESE COURSE)
ACTIVE TIME: 5 MIN START TO FINISH: 8¼ HR
(INCLUDES CHILLING)

While this delicate gelée is a wonderful addition to any cheese plate, it's an especially good foil for rich, strong cheeses.

- 1 cup Chardonnay
 - ½ cup sugar
 - 1 segment star anise (not whole star anise)
 - Scant teaspoon unflavored gelatin (from a ¼-oz envelope)
 - 2 tablespoons water
- ACCOMPANIMENTS:** strong cheese such as aged chèvre or Stilton; thinly sliced baguette

▶ Lightly oil a 1-cup ramekin or bowl. Bring Chardonnay, sugar, and star anise to a boil in a small heavy saucepan over high heat, stirring until sugar has dissolved. Reduce heat to medium and gently boil until mixture is reduced to 1 cup, about 8 minutes.

▶ Meanwhile, sprinkle gelatin over water in a small cup and let soften 1 minute. Stir gelatin into hot Chardonnay mixture until dissolved, then discard star anise. Cool slightly, then pour Chardonnay mixture into ramekin and chill, covered, until set, at least 8 hours.

▶ Dip bottom two thirds of ramekin in a bowl of hot water 20 seconds. Run a sharp paring knife around edge of gelée, then invert ramekin onto a serving plate and, holding ramekin and plate together, firmly shake to unmold gelée.

COOKS' NOTE: Gelée can be chilled up to 2 days.

I GO OUT OF MY WAY to visit one of the Dish D'Lish sites at the Seattle-Tacoma airport when I fly so I can pick up one of their delicious cookies on my way out of town. I don't know that I could re-create them, but I'd love to try!

RENEE HERMER
EVERETT, WASHINGTON

CHOCOLATE-TOFFEE S'MORE COOKIES

Adapted from Dish D'Lish
MAKES 10 JUMBO COOKIES
ACTIVE TIME: 15 MIN START TO FINISH: 8¼ HR
(INCLUDES CHILLING DOUGH)

Extra-large, chewy, and finished with a sweet melted-marshmallow topping, these unique cookies are as delicious as they are fanciful.

FOR DOUGH

- 1½ cups all-purpose flour
- ½ cup unsweetened cocoa powder
- ¾ teaspoon baking soda
- ½ teaspoon salt
- 1 stick unsalted butter, softened
- ¼ cup shortening
- ½ cup granulated sugar
- ½ cup packed light brown sugar
- 1 large egg, lightly beaten
- 1 teaspoon pure vanilla extract
- 1 (8-oz) package toffee baking bits

FOR TOPPING

- 1½ (5- by 2½-inch) graham crackers
- 1 cup mini marshmallows
- ¼ cup sweetened condensed milk

MAKE DOUGH: Whisk together flour, cocoa powder, baking soda, and salt in a bowl.

▶ Beat together butter, shortening, and sugars in another bowl with an electric mixer until fluffy, then beat in egg and vanilla. At low speed, mix in flour until dough just comes together, then mix in toffee.

▶ Shape dough into an 8-inch log (3 inches in diameter) on a floured surface with floured hands, then flatten ends and chill, wrapped in plastic wrap, at least 6 hours.

MAKE TOPPING AND BAKE COOKIES: Preheat oven to 350°F with racks in upper and lower thirds. Line 2 large baking sheets with parchment paper.

▶ Finely grind graham crackers in a food processor (you should have about ¼ cup),

then stir together with marshmallows and condensed milk (mixture will be very sticky).

▶ Cut dough crosswise into 10 (¾-inch-thick) slices. Place 2 to 3 slices on each baking sheet (cookies will spread about 5 inches during baking). Place a heaping tablespoon of topping in center of each slice.

▶ Bake cookies, switching position of sheets halfway through baking, until topping is golden and cookies are baked through, 18 to 22 minutes. Slide cookies with parchment onto racks to cool completely. Bake remaining cookies in same manner on freshly lined baking sheets.

I'VE BEEN SHOPPING AND EATING at Bakers' Best Café & Catering in Newton Highlands, Massachusetts, for years. Their balsamic vinaigrette is in a class by itself—I buy it by the quart and keep it in the refrigerator at all times. Would you please get the recipe to share with all your readers?

KAREN LEAVITT
SUDBURY, MASSACHUSETTS

BALSAMIC VINAIGRETTE

Adapted from Bakers' Best Café & Catering
MAKES ABOUT 1¼ CUPS
ACTIVE TIME: 15 MIN START TO FINISH: 15 MIN

This balsamic dressing is more deeply flavored than anything you'll buy in a bottle.

- ¾ cup balsamic vinegar
- 2 tablespoons Dijon mustard
- 1½ tablespoons chopped basil
- 1 tablespoon chopped flat-leaf parsley
- 1½ teaspoons mild honey
- ¼ teaspoon chopped chives
- ¼ teaspoon minced shallot
- ¼ teaspoon minced garlic
- ⅛ teaspoon hot sauce such as Tabasco
- 1 cup canola oil

▶ Pulse all ingredients, except oil, with ½ teaspoon each of salt and pepper in a food processor until combined. With motor running, add oil in a slow stream and process until combined. Season with salt and transfer to an airtight container. Chill, covered, until ready to use or up to 2 weeks.📧

MENU

restaurants: reviews and trends

CANNES DO

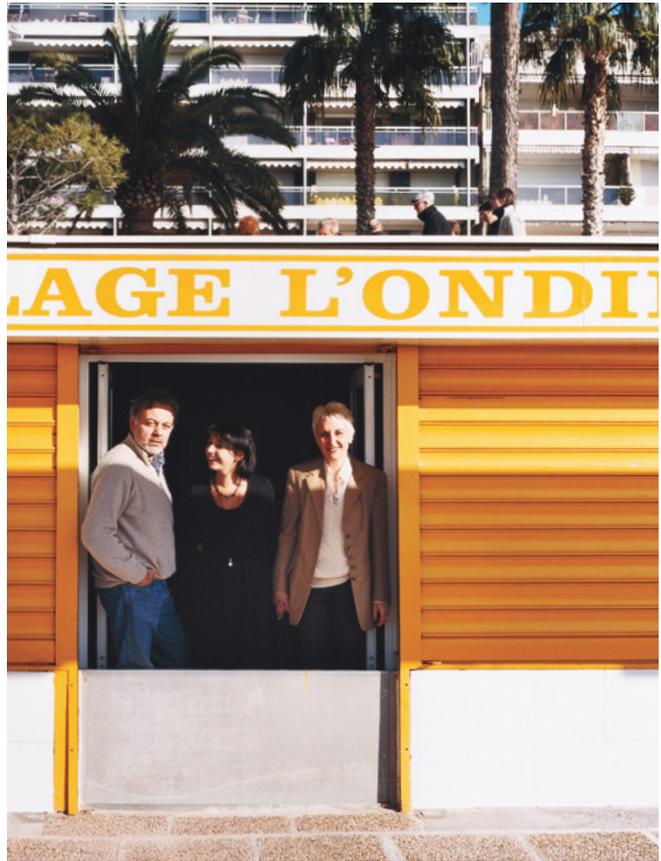
When one door closed, another opened, taking Jean-Pierre Silva all the way to the Côte d'Azur.

BY COLMAN ANDREWS



It's a beautiful September day in Cannes, and at the casual beachfront restaurant La Plage L'Ondine, on La Croisette, the elegant palm-lined promenade, everyone is sitting outside. They've forsaken the indoor dining area for tables draped in glowing yellow napery, shaded by a broad white-and-yellow-striped canopy or by white-fringed yellow umbrellas. They are a happy-looking bunch—bronze-skinned retired couples, local businessmen in short-sleeve shirts, animated extended families chatting in three or four languages while babies squeal and towheaded imps race back and forth, grazing the cane-backed chairs. The tables are crammed with food: oversize salads (tomato and artichoke with basil and mozzarella; a "crazy" mix of foie gras and marinated salmon; a classic Niçoise), gargantuan slabs of beef fillet or breaded veal (the latter dwarfed by heaps of >

MENU CANNES DO



En famille: Silva family partners Jean-Pierre, Dorothée, and Isabelle devote an entire section of L'Ondine's menu to the lobster.

spaghetti on the side), grilled whole fish big enough to give Jonah the jitters. Bottles of rosé and occasionally white wine appear (full) and disappear (empty) with assembly-line regularity.

Just beyond the tables, out on the sand, dozens of men and women and occasional children recline on chaises longues in bathing suits (some of the women are offhandedly topless), napping or reading underneath their own umbrellas, or basking in the sun. Out in the water, a few swimmers wade or splash through what passes for surf in this part of the Mediterranean, while in the background yachts bob on the gently rippling sea. And surveying everything, moving calmly but constantly between the tables and back and forth to the bustling kitchen, pausing now and then to talk to guests or prod waiters, and sometimes just to look out over the beach, is Jean-Pierre Silva, a pleasant-looking 50-year-old man wearing white trousers and a white short-sleeve shirt with the legend "*Le Chef, C'Est Moi*" embroidered on the pocket.

If you had met Jean-Pierre Silva in 1990, the year he was awarded his second *Michelin* star, and had tasted his carefully fashioned, imaginative contemporary cooking (salmon with caviar and leeks in sesame gelée; sweetbreads with balsamic vinegar and star-anise potatoes), you might have suspected that he was on his way to real gastronomic stardom—maybe he would even garner a third star one day. It certainly would have occurred to you that the contemporary black-and-white dining room at the *Hostellerie du Vieux Moulin*—the inn Silva then ran with his wife (and dining-room manager and sommelier), Isabelle, in the verdant but obscure little Burgundian village of Bouilland—was a real find, a place well worth recommending and coming back to. And indeed it was just that, and it continued to be for a few more years. But life in the restaurant business is rarely without change, and Silva's career has taken some unpredictable turns.

BORN IN LYON IN 1957, the chef says that as a boy he thought he might enter the priesthood, but by the age of 11 or 12 had decided that he wanted to cook for a living instead. After his family moved to the south of France when he was a teenager, he found a job apprenticing in a restaurant kitchen in Antibes—and met Isabelle. The two married in 1976, and the following year Silva landed a good job cooking at a highly regarded (now defunct) restaurant called *La Mourachonne*, in Mouans-Sartoux, in the hills about halfway between Antibes and Grasse. The Silvas diligently saved their money as Jean-Pierre honed his skills, and in 1981 they moved north and bought the *Vieux Moulin*.

I found the place in 1983 (learning about it from the prescient American-born wine *négociant* Becky Wasserman) and was immediately seduced. Jean-Pierre's food was fresh in conception and full of flavor—I remember a dish of thin-sliced raw fish marinated in grapefruit juice with pink peppercorns, "nouvelle" but delightful, and a savory fricassee of Bresse chicken in sweet-pepper cream—and he sought out excellent local ingredients (vegetables grown just across the road, baby pigeon from a nearby farm, superlative goat cheese from another) long before "local" became a marketing cliché. Isabelle, meanwhile, ran the restaurant and schooled herself in wine, as Jean-Pierre kept getting better and better in the kitchen. In 1986, *Michelin* awarded the *Vieux Moulin* a star, and the Silvas responded by beefing up the dining-room staff—a *maître d'hôtel* was hired—and remodeling the dining room. Then the second star came, and ...

"I woke up one day," says Silva, "and realized that I wasn't a cook anymore. I was a manager and an accountant, which is not what I wanted to be." The Silvas also wanted to be able to spend more time with their daughters, Laure and Dorothée. A year after they got their second star—and a number of years >

before more celebrated chefs like Joël Robuchon and Alain Senderens voluntarily gave up stars and opened simpler restaurants than the ones they'd had—the Silvas agreed to take a step backward. Isabelle reassumed control of the dining room and stripped the service down to the basics, and Jean-Pierre recast his food, with Burgundian-inspired fare like pike perch in vinegar sauce with lentils and cannelloni filled with boneless coq au vin taking the place of more lapidary creations with Asian accents. *Michelin* promptly took away a star—but, says Silva, his business increased.

STILL, THOUGH, he wasn't happy. He wanted something even simpler, and maybe someplace warmer. He flirted with the idea of moving his family to St. Bart's and opening something there, but he also looked back to the south of France. His dream, he said—and many chefs say this—was to have a tiny place where he could cook food he liked for a handful of customers. Unlike most chefs, he actually made it happen: In 2000, the Silvas bought a beautiful old stone millhouse in the hills above Cannes, in a village called Le Rouret, and began to renovate it into a family home with a small restaurant attached. In January of 2003, they sold their Burgundian property and moved south, and six months later, they opened a 15-seat place they called La Table de Mon Moulin. Here, Isabelle was the entire dining-room staff, and Jean-Pierre, by himself, cooked one fixed-price menu daily, five days a week, based on ingredients he bought each morning at the market in nearby Cagnes-sur-Mer. It was wonderful stuff, full of Provençal flavors—cold tomato soup with a poached egg and fresh herbs, sea bass with scallion marmalade, pork medallions with new potatoes and wild chard, fig tart with apricot sorbet. “Le Rouret was my dream,” says Silva, “and I'd still be doing it if my daughter hadn't changed her life.”

Dorothee Silva studied architecture at a private academy in Nice, finishing first in her section, and then went to work for a year as an unpaid apprentice for the trendy Nice-born designer Jacqueline Morabito—but she couldn't find a job on the Côte d'Azur and didn't want to leave the area. “One day,” says Silva, “she came to me and said, ‘Can't we do a restaurant together?’ She got her mother on her side, and then I didn't stand a chance. There wasn't room for another person at Mon

Moulin, so we decided to look around—and we found L'Ondine.” He pauses and smiles. “Now I'm ‘Silva, *plagiste* [beach proprietor],” he says, not necessarily sounding displeased.

Isabelle still keeps an eye on the restaurant, answering phones and preparing the checks, and is still in charge of the wines. (Visitors are usually surprised to find good Burgundies—from producers like Joblot, Jean Grivot, and Boillot—on the list, but there is also a broad selection of top Provençal bottles, including a vivid Château Ste. Marguerite rosé and an intensely aromatic Château Malherbe Blanc.) Dorothee, now 27, is everywhere, scurrying around, greeting customers, busing dishes, toting umbrellas in their heavy stands from table to table—being a restaurateur.

It's hard to compare the food at L'Ondine with what Silva has cooked in the past. It has different intentions and is served on a different scale. “Here, we don't have the precision we had in Bouilland,” Silva admits. “But I'm trying to ... I think the word is *inculcate* my cooks with the right lessons, as right as possible. I explain the dishes to them and show them how I want them made. During the service, I'm between the kitchen and the dining room, so I look at everything as it comes out and send it back if it's not what it should be.”

He also—and this is key—does all the ordering. Over the years, Silva has built up a network of top suppliers, and though he may now be serving the (comparative) masses, he sees no reason to use fish or meat or produce of inferior quality. He buys the best—and talks about it with enthusiasm.

He gets unusual oysters, for instance, from Corsica. “They look like *creuses* [large crinkle-shelled oysters],” he says, “but have the flavor and texture of *plats* [smooth-shelled varieties that are often firmer and more delicate tasting].” He serves what he assures me are “the last fresh frogs' legs in Cannes,” and they are maybe the best I've ever had, lightly breaded and quickly fried in olive oil with minced garlic and parsley.

One whole section of the menu is devoted to lobster—the conventional Northern Atlantic variety on occasion, but usually *langouste*, the clawless spiny lobster, served grilled, flavored with assorted sauces (such as Champagne or curry), as bisque or salad, as a gratin ... These he buys live from a supplier in Nice who is the largest importer of the

crustaceans in Europe; depending on the season, they come by air from Morocco, Senegal, South Africa, Chile (particularly good, he says), even California. His favorites, though, are the fat, juicy *langoustes roses*, pink spiny lobsters, from farther along the French Mediterranean coast toward Spain—and this is what he is serving, just seared on the grill and impeccable, when I visit L'Ondine in September.

SILVA HAS ALSO JUST RECEIVED, direct from a fisherman near Cannes, a *sériole*, or amberjack, and a *mérou*, or grouper. “The *mérou* was immense,” he says excitedly, as if he had just landed it himself. “It weighed twenty kilos [44 pounds] or more, which is very unusual for the Mediterranean.” Both fish are destined for the “*retour du marché*” (“back from the market”) menu that Silva appends to the regular menu every day. He offers me a preview sampling, serving the amberjack as carpaccio—moistened with a sauce of olive oil, tomato juice, Tabasco, garlic, and herbs—and the grou-

per roasted. (“The grouper was too firm, too fresh,” he says later. “It will be better tomorrow, when the flesh has relaxed a little. Anyway, I prefer the amberjack. It has more finesse.”)

Though the dishes offered on the market menu aren't necessarily any more “gastronomic” than those on the regular one, this is where to look for the frogs' legs and for whatever fish Silva has successfully angled for. Also, there are seasonal specialties—like the wild mushrooms that are just coming when I arrive, which he serves simply sautéed as an appetizer or a main dish, or cooked into an unconventional but remarkable risotto, alternately creamy and crunchy, made with carnaroli rice along with spelt and a special red rice from the heart of Piedmont.

L'Ondine is but one of a whole line of La Croisette restaurants with beach facilities attached. Most of them are packed in the summer and rather sad the rest of the year. Not L'Ondine: “We're the only beach that doesn't go private during the Cannes Film Festival,” says Silva. “The

only one that stays open for the local clientele. The locals appreciate it. If you're good to them when Cannes is full of people, they'll support you when it's off-season. Sometimes in the winter, there'll be thirty people at the other places and a hundred here.”

There's only one problem with that, says Silva: “At Le Rouret, we were closed on weekends and at lunchtime on Wednesdays. I had time for other things. Now I work all the time, every day.” In fact, I point out, the restaurant is open for lunch only (in July and August, it serves dinner on Fridays and Saturdays and on nights when there's a civic fireworks display). “But I still work all day,” he answers. “You should have a beach restaurant when you're thirty. I'm too old.” He glances around to make sure his daughter isn't within earshot, then adds, “I'll do this with Dorothée for some years more. Then maybe I'll do something small again.”

LA PLAGE L'ONDINE Blvd. de La Croisette, Cannes (04-93-94-23-15)@



RESTAURANTS

The places we're talking about—and making reservations at—this month.

CHICAGO: Clearly, the owners of **Prosecco** are on a mission to save the Italian sparkling wine from its role as the world of bubbly's also-ran. Thirty varieties are on offer; a miniature flute starts each dinner; and the drink finds its way into chef Mark Sparacino's creamy gold-leaf risotto. The rest of the menu—succulent short-rib-stuffed diver scallops, escalar with a buttery orange emulsion, a rack of lamb so big it could feed all of Italy—mirrors the gilded Vegas-meets-Venice décor. It's anything but humble. *710 N. Wells St. (312-951-9500).*

HOUSTON: Fish wizard Danton Nix worked in the kitchen of almost every famous gumbo joint in Houston before finally opening his own seafood house and oyster bar, **Danton's Gulf Coast Seafood Kitchen**. It's definitely no-frills, but the weathered woodwork and vintage sportfishing photos on the walls give the place an old-fashioned Gulf Coast vibe. Nix's dark, awesome shrimp-and-oyster gumbo (some of the best we've ever tasted) is the big draw, but so are the incredible prices on big, fat, fresh-shucked Galveston Bay oysters. *4611 Montrose Blvd. (713-807-8889; dantonsseafood.com).*

NEW YORK: Sitting up front in the long dining room, you can see Lincoln Center's glow from across the street and watch the musicians as they stroll in to grab a glass of wine and a plate of charcuterie. Since its opening in mid-January, **Bar Boulud**, Daniel Boulud's latest outpost, has become the Russian Tea Room of the 21st century. In place of blini and glasses of hot tea, there's gutsy house-made *pâté*, *saucisson*, *rillons*, and *fromage de tête*, along with a menu of familiar bistro foods—escargots, steak frites, coq au vin—and an enviable wine list. *1900 Broadway (212-595-0303; danielnyc.com/barboulud).*

SEATTLE: At **Chiso Kappo**, a tiny sliver of a place hidden upstairs from his popular Chiso restaurant, you're in chef Taichi Kitamura's hands. With the \$100 *omakase*-style tasting menu, eating what someone else wants you to may seem an expensive gamble. But with an ebullient chef and astonishing dishes—truffle-and-*uni chawan mushi* hovers over sweet crab and lily bulb; Washington oysters float in tart, traditional *ponzu*—this bet is a sure thing. *701 N. 36th St., Ste. 200 (206-547-0937; chisoseattle.com/kappo).*

WESTCHESTER, NY: Owner Richard Friedberg and chef Neil Ferguson split their time between Manhattan's Allen & Delancey and this breathtaking restaurant on the banks of the Hudson. Set in the stunning 248-year-old Oldstone Manor, **Monteverde** features such refined, confident offerings as tender filet mignon and roasted marrowbones, sweetbreads with a beet-and-truffle casserole, and raspberry *clafoutis* topped with ethereal kirsch sabayon. *28 Bear Mountain Bridge Rd., Cortlandt Manor (914-739-5000; monteverderestaurant.com).*

YORK BEACH, ME: In this summer haven, Lydia Shire has opened the warm, bustling, year-round **Blue Sky**. The dining room is of her own design, and the lobster-heavy menu puts her trademark take-no-prisoners style front and center in unbelievable dishes like lobster deep-fried in house-rendered lard, charcoaled skirt steak with a "crush of green garlic," and a savory potato doughnut drizzled with Lyle's Golden Syrup. *2 Beach St. (207-363-0050; blueskyonyorkbeach.com).*

Subtlety is the driving force behind Chiso Kappo, in Seattle, while restraint is a word uttered rarely, if ever, at Chicago's Prosecco.

GOOD LIVING

tastes tools gifts travel trends shopping cookbooks



DOWN SOUTH, OKRA HAS BEEN USED TO INCREASE A COW'S MILK YIELD, STANCH BLEEDING, CLEAN METAL, AND EVEN UNSTOP DRAINS.



In Japan, wedding cakes are generally photo ops. Newlyweds "cut" a **FAKE CAKE** by inserting a knife into a slot, smile for the camera, then discard the cake.

POULETS DE BRESSE, THE WHITE-FEATHERED ROASTING HENS FROM THE MIDI, ARE FED WHEAT AND MILK AND ARE THE ONLY POULTRY IN THE WORLD WITH AN AOC DESIGNATION.

CRUSHING GARLIC and letting it sit for 15 minutes before cooking is heart healthy. It allows the formation of compounds that relax blood vessels.

From 1995 to 2005, Chinese meat consumption rose 49.7 percent, to **134 POUNDS** per capita.

Thank Thomas Jefferson for your **FRENCH FRIES.** He so loved the *pommes frites* he had in Paris, he brought the recipe home and served them at the White House.

In the U.S., a supermarket soft drink is 52 percent larger, a hot dog is 63 percent larger, and a **CARTON OF YOGURT** is 82 percent larger than in France.



CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: HORACE BRISTOL/CORBIS; ROMULO YANES (3)

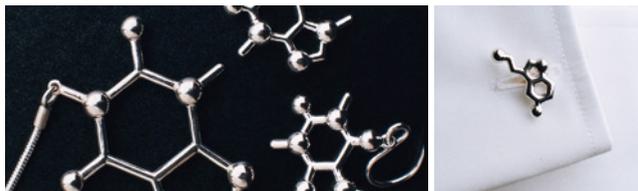
GOOD LIVING

FEEDING YOUR FACE

A pig's foot a day helps keep wrinkles away? So says chef Himi Okajima, who has made *tonsoku* the rage in Japan and is now serving 40 variations of the trotters at his sleek New York restaurant Hakata Tonton. Rich in collagen, a protein responsible for maintaining skin strength and elasticity, porcine cuisine is said to help prevent aging. We're skeptical, too, but at least one natural-supplement outfit, New Zealand's Waitaki Biosciences, believes enough to have launched its own bovine-based edible collagen. —Sara Reistad-Long

REACH OUT AND PICK

The Fallen Fruit collaborative, of Silver Lake, Los Angeles, wants its neighbors to know that the bananas, loquats, and other produce growing in public parks and streets is theirs for the taking. For information on the group's maps, tours, and Public Fruit Jams (preserves-sharing events), visit fallenfruit.org. —Kristi Cameron



MY CHEMICAL ROMANCE

BIOCHEMIST AND METALSMITH RAVEN HANNA LIKES TO WEAR HER STIMULANTS ON HER NECK. HER STERLING-SILVER EARRINGS AND NECKLACES ARE INSPIRED BY MOLECULES LIKE CAFFEINE, THEOBROMINE (A STIMULANT THOUGHT TO BE RESPONSIBLE FOR CHOCOLATE'S MOOD-ENHANCING QUALITY), AND CAPSAICIN. (FROM \$40; MADEWITHMOLECULES.COM) —Beth Goulart

CLOCKWISE FROM TOP: HANS GISSINGER; ROMULO YANES (2); AUSTIN YOUNG

GOOD LIVING



RECYCLE, REUSE, REJOICE

Preserve Kitchen's handsome and well-crafted products are made from 100 percent recycled materials. (The line includes colanders, cutting boards, and prep boards; \$11.99–\$24.99; available at Whole Foods nationwide.)

—Haley Thurshwell



JADED

JOE SHEEHAN, SON OF ONE OF NEW ZEALAND'S MOST ACCLAIMED JADE CARVERS, CRAFTS COMMON OBJECTS SUCH AS CUPS, KEYS, AND PENS FROM SOME UNCOMMON MATERIALS. (GO TO TIMMELVILLE.COM FOR INFO.)



TASTY BAIT

The most interesting and meticulously crafted fish bait we've tasted (well, the only fish bait we've tasted) is the raw sheep's-milk cheese from Mary and Dave Falk's LoveTree Farmstead. Selling it as bait lets the Falks circumvent state law requiring aging for 60 days. We're biting. —Jeanette Hurt

GARDEN PRETTY

You may not own Van Gogh's *Irises*, but nature can still be your muse. With flora- and fauna-inspired dinnerware, the spring table will be your canvas. (1. "Chirp" dinner plate, \$38; salad plate, \$27; bowl, \$42; from lenox.com. 2. Hermès "Jardin des Orchidées" dessert plate, \$115; cream bowl, \$95; 800-441-4488. 3. Herend "Princess Victoria Rust" dinner plate, \$80; dessert plate, \$65; 800-643-7363. 4. "Bouillabaisse" dinner plate, \$335; soup plate, \$252; small bowl, \$206; from meissenusa.com.)

—Haley Thurshwell



CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: ROMULO YANES (3); NICK BARR; ROMULO YANES

GOOD LIVING TRAVEL



Furnishings at Haymarket (top row) strike a theatrical note; at Dukes, updated décor fits well in the light-filled conservatory.



NOW PLAYING IN LONDON

If you've ever dreamed about opening in *Hamlet*, here's a hotel for you: **Haymarket** (011-44-20-7470-4000; haymarkethotel.com; from \$481), smack next door to the historic theater of the same name. This place has so much dramatic flair, you wonder if co-owner-designer Kit Kemp might have pulled all the bold colors and wild patterns right out the stage door and into her lobby. It's not so much that there's a scene inside; the hotel itself is the scene. Guest rooms are huge and equally embellished. The downstairs lap pool and lounge, bathed in swirls of colored light, set the scene for some kind of tropical fantasy. Who needs *Hamlet*?

If, however, your American accent turns upper-crusty the minute you hit Heathrow, here's another London hotel: **Dukes** (011-44-20-7491-4840; dukeshotel.com; from \$343), discreetly tucked away in St. James's. Expect the same top-notch service you'd find at One Aldwych, hotelier Gordon Campbell Gray's other London hotel, but not the minimalist décor. When Campbell Gray took over this venerable outpost last year, he kept the traditional English look but brought it into the 21st century by toning it down. This Dukes speaks more to Prince William than to his dad. You'll still have a royal good time over Martinis in the bar, but in jeans and a jacket rather than a Savile Row suit. —*William Sertl*

STAYING IN BURGUNDY, WITH JUST THE RIGHT FAMILY

In Puligny-Montrachet, one of Burgundy's most famous wine villages, La Maison d'Olivier Leflaive is everybody's dream of a French country hotel—stylish, comfortable, friendly, and also owned by a member of one of the region's most renowned wine families. The 12 rooms are individually decorated, and the flat-screen TVs fit right in with the sleek aesthetic. The hotel makes a great base for exploring the surrounding wine villages. Best of all, it has a *bistrot à vins* with a terrific selection from Leflaive's cellars. (011-33-3-80-21-37-65; maison-olivierleflaive.fr; from \$220) —*Alexander Lobrano*

Wine advice for this month's menus and beyond. BY GERALD ASHER



SPRING AWAKENING
PAGE 90

For the *pissaladière* and, most especially, for the garlicky rouille that accompanies the fish soup of our Provençal dinner, I recommend a white wine with a ripe, sunny flavor and more mouth-filling substance than one can usually find in those of Provence itself—one that can accommodate, at the very least, a pungent amalgam of garlic and

olive oil. I looked to Sonoma County, for the Island Block Alexander Valley Chardonnay '05 of Murphy-Goode, a plump, slightly peppery wine with attractive fruit backed with the depth provided by time in oak. The Stuhlmuller Estate Chardonnay '06, also from Alexander Valley, is made in large part from a particular subset of Chardonnay vines developed from cuttings taken from the old Gauer Estate vineyards. It has a bolder aroma, redolent of tropical fruit, that leads to a firm and slightly mineral finish. The Robert Young Vineyard Chardonnay '05 of Chateau St. Jean, from another distinguished Chardonnay clone—that of the Robert Young vineyard itself—is fermented in oak and aged on its lees, as are the other two, but it is not allowed to undergo the secondary malolactic fermentation that helps round out a wine even as it softens its principal characteristics. Instead, the wine has a bright edge of citrus that balances its creamier, oak-based qualities. There's a hint of pear in the fine, long finish.

I stayed with Alexander Valley for the stuffed rack of lamb, choosing Cyrus '03, an impeccably harmonious Cabernet Sauvignon-based blend; Cabernet Franc gives added elegance to the opening bouquet, and Merlot ensures a smooth texture that marries happily with the succulence of the meat and its raisin and pine-nut stuffing. There is a similarly lush quality in the Lake Sonoma Alexander Valley Cabernet Sauvignon '04, a wine with a particularly soft, even rich, finish. The Cabernet Sauvignon '04 from Dashe Cellars, by way of contrast, has its measure of refined tannins, which give the wine an elegant structure emphasized by a hint of violets left on the palate. On the other hand, Murphy-Goode's Alexander Valley Cabernet Sauvignon '04 is a classic reflection of the valley's benchland and hillsides by way of its plum and black currant on the nose, its firm structure, and its long, complex finish.

ALSATIAN SENSATION
PAGE 118

Choucroute and bacon give a hearty dimension to the trout of our Alsatian menu, which calls for a wine bigger than one might normally choose for a freshwater fish. I settled on the Pinot Blanc Vieilles Vignes '06, an intensely fruity wine harvested from old vines on the Meyer-Fonné estate. Willm's Réserve Pinot Blanc '05 is another wine of good, sappy texture and honeyed finish. Domaine Weinbach's Pinot Blanc Réserve '06 is plump, too, and its fruit stands out because it's supported by a barely perceptible sweetness.

A touch of sweetness, not unusual in Alsatian wines of successful vintage, enhances the mature fruit of Meyer-Fonné's

Pfoeller Riesling '06, too. It's my first choice for the chicken in Riesling. Willm's Riesling Réserve Cuvée '03 combines a lemony nose and flavor with the mineral depths of mature Riesling; Domaine Weinbach's Grand Cru Schlossberg Cuvée Ste. Catherine '06 is both full-bodied and intensely flavorful; and Ostertag's Fronholz Riesling '05 again brings a touch of lemon and a hint of honey to a long, classic wine.

Ostertag's Fronholz vineyard also yields the luscious Gewürztraminer, Sélection de Grains Nobles '05, which I chose for the pear tart. Sélection de Grains Nobles is the equivalent of a German Beerenauslese—a wine made from grapes that are late-picked, one shriveled and intensely sweet berry at a time. Golden in color and flavor, it tastes of aromatic apples dipped in honey. The Gewürztraminer Grand Cru Furstentum Vendanges Tardives '05 of Domaine Weinbach also smells and tastes of a sun-filled orchard. For those who might prefer a less intense dessert wine, I recommend Marc Kreydenweiss's Moenchberg Pinot Gris Grand Cru Vendanges Tardives '05, a sweetly balanced wine with a fresh piquancy that provides a counterpoint to the tart. ☺



RECOMMENDED WINES

SPRING AWAKENING

ALEXANDER VALLEY CHARDONNAYS

Chateau St. Jean Robert Young Vineyard '05.....	\$25
Murphy-Goode Island Block '05	\$24
Stuhlmuller Vineyards Estate '06.....	\$23

ALEXANDER VALLEY CABERNET SAUVIGNONS

Cyrus '03	\$55
Dashe Cellars '04	\$38
Lake Sonoma '04	\$25
Murphy-Goode '04.....	\$24

ALSATIAN SENSATION

ALSATIAN PINOT BLANCS

Domaine Weinbach Réserve '06	\$28
Meyer-Fonné Vieilles Vignes '06	\$17
Willm Réserve '05.....	\$12

ALSATIAN RIESLINGS

Domaine Weinbach Grand Cru Schlossberg	
Cuvée Ste. Catherine '06	\$70
Meyer-Fonné Pfoeller '06	\$34
Ostertag Fronholz '05.....	\$40
Willm Réserve Cuvée Emile Willm '03	\$15

ALSATIAN DESSERT WINES

Domaine Weinbach Gewürztraminer Grand Cru Furstentum	
Vendanges Tardives '05	\$128
Marc Kreydenweiss Moenchberg Pinot Gris Grand Cru	
Vendanges Tardives '05	\$64
Ostertag Fronholz Gewürztraminer	
Sélection de Grains Nobles '05 (375ml)	\$74

FROM LEFT: JOHN KERNICK; MARCUS NILSSON



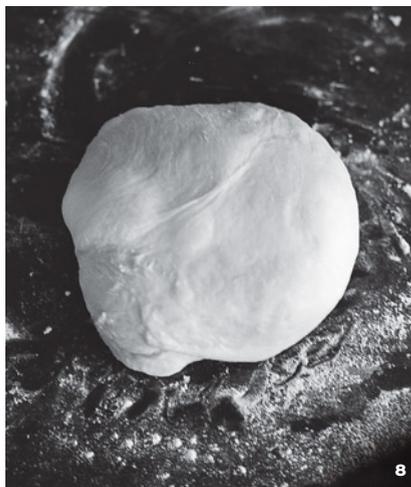
BREADWINNER

Turning out a perfect homemade loaf—light but full of flavor—is breathtakingly simple when you follow the lead of Richard Bertinet, a **master baker** from Brittany who has a cooking school in Bath, England. Here, we show you the glories of one versatile sweet dough—and an unusual method of working it that will amaze you. **BY JANE DANIELS LEAR**
RECIPES BY RICHARD BERTINET

ONE OF THE WONDERFUL THINGS ABOUT THIS DOUGH is that it's sweet, but not too sweet," said food editor Maggie Ruggiero. She and colleague Ian Knauer had just returned from Richard Bertinet's weeklong bread-baking program at his Bertinet Kitchen, and she was talking a mile a minute. "Think of it as a cross between brioche and a classic white loaf. It gets its richness from butter and milk, but the basic recipe [page 60] would be absolutely delicious with any sandwich filling." She couldn't wait to show us—and our readers—what she'd learned (page 58). (1) When mixing all of the ingredients together, Ruggiero, like Bertinet, turns the bowl with one hand and, with the >

Orange and mint loaves have a burnished golden crust and a heavenly aroma—you are going to want to take all the credit for these.

TECHNIQUES



other, uses the rounded end of a plastic bowl scraper to form a rough, sticky dough. (2) The scraper also acts as an extension of your hand, getting the dough (more of a primordial ooze, really) from mixing bowl to counter in one piece. (3) Working such a wet dough without incorporating additional flour—on an unfloured counter, to boot—is contrary to everything we knew (or thought we knew) about breadmaking. Avoiding additional flour and incorporating as much air into the dough as possible makes it light, not leaden. Slide your fingers underneath it, with your thumbs on top. After lifting it toward you and slapping it back down on the counter, stretch the dough vertically and swing it over itself in an arcing, wavelike motion. You can get a real sense of the rhythm of it all in the video of Bertinet demonstrating

the procedure at gourmet.com. The first few times you (4) gather the dough off the counter, it will look and feel chaotic; just keep working it. (5) After five to ten minutes, it will become smooth and elastic and start to bounce, rather than splat, when it hits the counter; you can hear the change as well as see it. After cleaning the counter with the (flat) side of the scraper and lightly flouring it, form the dough into a ball by folding each edge into the center and (6) anchoring it with your thumb. Rotate the ball as you go. (7) After turning the ball over, let it rise in a bowl, covered with a linen towel, until it is (8) doubled in size. Look at those air bubbles. (9) Bertinet's bacon "pastry slices" (page 65) are reason alone to make this dough. For more information about his cooking school, visit thebertinetkitchen.com. >

SWEET DOUGH

Adapted from *Dough: Simple Contemporary Bread* by Richard Bertinet
 MAKES ENOUGH FOR 2 LARGE LOAVES OR 12 INDIVIDUAL PASTRIES
 ACTIVE TIME: 15 MIN START TO FINISH: 1¼ HR

You'll see this dough—essentially what's known as pain viennois—all over France as an alternative to brioche. In addition to the variations below, you can make small baguettes, slice them in half horizontally, and slip a thin bar of good chocolate inside for a very French after-school snack. We can't emphasize enough that you shouldn't be alarmed at the wetness of the dough. Don't try to knead it with the heel of your hand, but simply work it as shown on page 58 and in the video on gourmet.com, and you'll be rewarded with a satiny, springy dough that is, as Bertinet would say, "full of life."

- 1 cup plus 2 tablespoons whole milk
- ½ oz fresh (cake) yeast or 1 (¼-oz) package active dry yeast (preferably Red Star or Saf; not rapid-rise)
- 1 lb 2 oz bread flour (about 3¾ cups)
- ½ stick unsalted butter, softened
- 3 tablespoons superfine granulated sugar
- 2 teaspoons salt
- 2 large eggs

EQUIPMENT: a flexible plastic bowl scraper (see Shopping List, page 142)

- ▶ If using fresh yeast, heat milk until just warm. If using dry yeast, heat milk to 120 to 130°F.
- ▶ Rub yeast into flour in a large bowl, then rub in butter. Stir in sugar and salt. Fold in milk and eggs with bowl scraper, rotating bowl, until liquid is absorbed and a wet, sticky dough forms. (Dough will be wetter than most you've encountered.) Scrape dough out onto an unfloured surface. (Dough will be a sticky mess. Don't be tempted to add more flour. By working the dough through a process of repeatedly stretching and folding it over onto itself, trapping air, dough will become cohesive and supple.)
- ▶ Slide your fingers underneath both sides of dough with your thumbs on top. Lift dough up (to about chest level) with your thumbs toward you, letting dough hang slightly. In a continuous motion, swing dough down, slapping bottom of dough onto surface, then stretch dough up and back over itself in an arc to trap in air. Repeat lifting, slapping, and stretching, scraping surface with flat side of bowl scraper as needed, until dough is supple, cohesive, and starts to bounce slightly off of surface without sticking, about 8 minutes.
- ▶ Transfer dough to a lightly floured clean surface. Form into a ball by folding each edge, in turn, into center of dough and pressing down well with your thumb, rotating ball as you go. Turn ball over and transfer to a lightly floured bowl, then cover with a kitchen towel (not terry cloth). Let rise in a draft-free place at warm room temperature until doubled, about 1 hour.

ORANGE AND MINT LOAVES

Adapted from *Dough: Simple Contemporary Bread* by Richard Bertinet
 MAKES 2 LARGE LOAVES
 ACTIVE TIME: 45 MIN START TO FINISH: 4¾ HR

This bread deepens and becomes more complex in flavor and aroma the day after baking, and it is absolutely stellar when toasted. Serve it with enormous helpings of soft scrambled eggs and crisp-fried bacon or sausages for breakfast, or as a light tea bread late in the afternoon. It would also make a fantastic bread pudding.

Sweet dough (recipe precedes) made with mint-infused milk (see cooks' note, below), risen

- 1 tablespoon grated orange zest
- 1 tablespoon Cointreau or other orange-flavored liqueur
- 1 large egg, beaten with a pinch of salt

EQUIPMENT: a flexible plastic bowl scraper

ACCOMPANIMENT: mint butter (recipe follows)

FINISH PREPARING SWEET DOUGH: Stir together zest and liqueur.

▶ Gently release risen dough from bowl with scraper onto a lightly floured surface, then flatten slightly and spread with zest mixture. Fold dough in half several times, then work, slapping and stretching dough as described in sweet-dough recipe, until zest mixture is incorporated. Form into a ball and transfer to a lightly floured bowl, then cover with a kitchen towel (not terry cloth). Let rise again in a draft-free place at warm room temperature 1 hour.

FORM LOAVES: Gently release dough from bowl with scraper onto a lightly floured surface (do not punch down) and divide into 2 pieces. Form each piece into a ball. Flatten 1 ball with heel of your hand into a rectangle (about 8 by 6 inches). Fold a long edge into center and press seam down with heel of your hand. Fold opposite edge over to meet in center, pressing seam. Fold in half along seam, pressing edges to seal. Put, seam side down, on a lightly buttered large baking sheet. Repeat with remaining dough.

▶ Brush tops of loaves with egg (chill remainder) and let stand a few minutes until egg feels dry. Cover with kitchen towel and let rise in a draft-free place at warm room temperature until almost doubled and feels springy when gently prodded, about 1½ hours.

BAKE LOAVES: Preheat oven to 425°F with rack in middle.

▶ Brush top of each loaf again with egg. Holding a pair of scissors at a 45-degree angle, make snips along top in a line down center of each loaf. Transfer to oven and immediately reduce temperature to 400°F. ▶ Bake until loaves are dark golden brown, 20 to 30 minutes. Transfer to a rack to cool.

COOKS' NOTE: To make mint-infused milk for sweet dough, bring milk (1 cup plus 2 tablespoons) and 1 bunch mint to a simmer in a small saucepan, then remove from heat and let stand, covered, 1 hour. Strain through a sieve and return to saucepan (discard mint). Reheat before using per sweet-dough recipe.

MINT BUTTER

Adapted from *Dough: Simple Contemporary Bread* by Richard Bertinet
 MAKES ABOUT ½ CUP
 ACTIVE TIME: 5 MIN START TO FINISH: 5 MIN

Mint is such a common backyard herb that it's easy to take it for granted. But there's a reason why it's one of the most popular flavorings in the world: In taste and fragrance, it manages to be both cooling and warming all at once. The preceding loaves, which get their flavor essence from mint-infused milk, are delicious on their own, but something magical happens when they're accompanied by a dish of fresh-mint butter. Spearmint is bright and mellow, with an almost lemony backnote; peppermint is stronger and spicier.

- 1 stick unsalted butter, softened
- ½ cup loosely packed mint leaves

▶ Pulse butter and mint in a food processor until combined.

COOKS' NOTE: Mint butter keeps, covered and chilled, 5 days.

For ANOTHER RECIPE, see page 142.

CHASING PERFECTION

Hey, it's just an omelet. **How hard can it be?** Well, depending on what you're looking for, it can be super-easy or almost unattainable. BY FRANCIS LAM

HIT IT ONCE, JUST ONCE, but it was *beautiful*. It was exam time and I was nervous, waiting for my turn. I had the proper fire. The heat felt right. I made smooth, swirling passes with my spatula, and when I rolled my pan over the plate, I knew it. Chef took a look at my omelet and squinted at me. He poked at it, pinched it, and then he knew, too. He called out to the class, "When you show me yours, I want it to look like this." He set the plate in the window

for the rest of the school to see, then turned around and gave me a quick wink.

Before Chef Skibitcky got ahold of my brain, I, like every other rational person, thought an omelet was something anyone can make. You throw eggs in a pan, stir them around, fold them in half, and put them on a plate. Done. No-brainer. It only gets interesting when you start tossing in other things—ham, some cheese, maybe a sautéed ›





mushroom or two. Once, there was an omelet contest in my college cafeteria. The winner had it all wrapped up the minute he pulled an avocado and a wedge of Brie out of his bag. Young girls screamed and old men yelled. I stood and watched quietly, respecting him.

But there I was, years later, waking up at 2 A.M. for a class called A.M. Pantry. Still half asleep, I listened to Chef Skibitcky talk about French omelets, about how Escoffier himself used to test his prospective cooks by watching them make one. I perked up. I'd heard of roasting a chicken as a litmus test for cooks before, but an omelet? Really? What did they put in it?

THREE EGGS, SALT, PEPPER, AND A LITTLE BUTTER. That's all Chef had in front of him when he began his demonstration. I was skeptical. He started to swirl the liquid in the pan, his hands moving slowly at first, deliberately. He curled his wrist and snapped into a sweeping motion, gathering all the eggs back together with his spatula. He shook the handle gently, his movements getting gradually faster. There was something going on here. I saw how careful he was to watch and respond to the eggs, even if I didn't know exactly what he was watching. He gave the pan a good whack with his fist and rolled it over a plate. The omelet slid out, tucking itself into a tidy cigar shape.

We passed it around to taste, and I couldn't believe what I was eating. It was fantastically tender, almost slippery with creaminess. Not quite scrambled and not quite custard, it hit my mouth and dissolved in a cloud of butter and egg. I raised my fork for a third bite, but the other students started looking at me funny. Reluctantly, I passed the plate along.

I wanted more. It wasn't just that it was delicious; it was that I realized that at that moment I was seeing for the first time something I thought I'd known my whole life. Like how, if you

grew up with tomato-shaped rocks from supermarkets, your first explosive bite into a tomato off the vine in August shows you what a tomato really is.

Chef made another one, talking us through what he was seeing. It's a precarious balancing act—you want the pan hot enough so the eggs don't stick, but not so hot that they cook unevenly. You want to beat the eggs so that they're fully blended, but not so much that they get foamy and dry out in the pan. You want to cook them gently so that they're smooth and creamy, but not so soft that they weep. We weren't even at the good part yet, and this was really starting to not seem like something anyone can make.

Quickly now, Chef shook and stirred until the *very last drops* of liquid egg hit the bottom of the pan at the exact same moment, cooking together to form a thin sheet that, when rolled, wrapped around the moist curd inside. "You want baby skin," he kept saying. "Not elephant skin." In other words, you have to set the skin just enough so that it can hold the omelet together, but not so much that it gets wrinkled and rubbery. And then you have to make sure that you cook it long enough so that it develops a little flavor, but not so long that it browns and loses its delicacy.

It was astounding how something so commonplace, so elemental, could have so many variables. You just have to learn to see all those variables, to recognize what effect every moment of heat, every motion of the hands has. To get back to that thing I tasted, I would have to know exactly what to look for and nail it every step of the way.

Three eggs, salt, pepper, and a little butter. That's all there is in a classic French omelet, but it's enough to keep reteaching me this vital lesson: Things are only simple when you've stopped asking the right questions of them, when you've stopped finding new ways to see them. Because what you find, when you learn how to find it, is that even simple things can be wonderfully, frustratingly, world-openingly complex.

It's been half a decade since Chef taught me that lesson, since that morning when I went home and rolled out omelet after awful omelet until my roommate woke up to find plates covering every level surface in our kitchen. Eventually, I let my obsession revert to a healthy level of interest, until a couple of months ago, when I went out to breakfast with a friend. She thought the place was sketchy but ordered anyway, saying to me, "I figured, 'How badly can you screw up an omelet?'"

It was time, I decided right then and there, to get back in touch with my inner egg philosopher. Not long after, I invited some friends over for brunch. Twenty of them.

My guests trickled in, some still groggy and wielding bottles of cheap sparkling wine because nothing cures a hangover like the thing that caused it. As they mingled and mixed Mimosas, I put together my station at the stove. I picked up my pan and held it to my face to check the heat, a weird little habit I picked up somewhere along the way. It was time.

I put a ladle into my clarified butter, grabbed hold of my spatula, took a meditative breath, and promptly mangled my first omelet. It was brutal. The pan was way too hot, the eggs fried instantly, and the skin wasn't elephant skin, it was geriatric-elephant skin. It flopped out like a pancake when I tried to roll it onto the plate.

I gave it to the drunkest guy in the house.

My next two were similarly disgraceful, and I was running out of drunk guests. But soon things began to pick up. The heat was getting intense in my little kitchen; I was sweating >

through a film of butter. I was starting to feel like a cook again, and somewhere around my 13th try, there were a few that were pretty good. If an omelet can be art, can teach me a new way to see the world, it's funny that I had to feel like a laborer before I could make it.

Still, by the end of the morning, perfection was a long way away. If the beauty of the omelet is its seeming simplicity, that simplicity is unforgiving. Either you nail it and it's transcendent, or it's, well, just eggs. I needed a brush-up on my technique, but Chef Skibitcky had moved across the country. I called in a ringer.

Daniel Boulud is perhaps the finest French chef in America. He is certainly one of the most classically trained, winning national recognition when he was an apprentice in Lyon, where he had to knock out 30 omelets in a row for a staff meal. Today, though, he is a restaurant magnate with a presidential smile, a refined air, a team of beautiful assistants—far removed from his days as a cook, even further from his days as an apprentice.

So, despite his credentials, I didn't expect him to come out firing when I visited him in his restaurant on the Upper East Side of Manhattan. But he was on it before he even took his seat. "To understand the omelet, you have to understand what the omelet represents," he said as he walked in. "You have to understand what the omelet *means*." Wait a minute, I think we're on the same page.

HE STARTED TALKING about his technique, how he likes to stir finely diced butter into the raw egg so that it melts on the heat, insulating the eggs and controlling how they curdle. He talked about using forks to work the pan because they break up the curds as they form, keeping them tender and creamy, rather than a spatula that just lifts and slaps around big sheets of egg. He talked about finishing the omelet with a touch of butter and a tiny kiss of high heat. He referred to this as "toasting" the eggs but then took it back. He tried "sear" but decided against that, too. He used these words gingerly, knowing that he didn't really mean them. For a man so articulate with the language of food, it's interesting that he struggled for the exact words here. Maybe our high-heat, ass-kicking cooking culture is so invested in brawny terms for powerhouse techniques that we lack words for an effect as subtle as the one he was describing.

As he talked, he motioned with his hands, illustrating his points with miming gestures the way I see only cooks do. I noticed a few burns and scars on his knuckles. They looked fresh.

He asked me about the pan I use, the type and the size, then paused thoughtfully. A second later, he held his thumb and forefinger maybe a centimeter apart. "So you have this much egg in your pan?" I nodded yes, but to be honest, I had no idea. It could be that much, it could be twice that much—I had never noticed. And yet, with just the information I gave him, he thought through the ratios of diameter and volume and could visualize what the beginnings of my omelet looked like. (He was right, by the way.) "Your Teflon pan gives a little magic ease," he said. "Black steel is more capricious." My pan would do, but a well-seasoned black steel pan would be better; it would let me use metal forks, and its angled corners would give the omelet a lip to roll out more evenly.

I scribbled furiously in my notebook, giddy with the sensation of having my mind blown and suppressing the urge to yell, "Yes! Yes! Of course!" When I sat down with Boulud, I thought that I had the theory of the omelet down, that I might just ask him for something like a little tip on how to shake the pan, or how to tell if the heat was right. Instead, our conversation revealed how much deeper he had thought about this than I ever

had. The more you learn about something, the more you find out there's more to learn, and I was swimming in new questions.

We talked for almost an hour, causing one of his beautiful assistants to remind him that he was well late to his next meeting. He waved off the warning, pulling down an enormous book on the history of French cuisine to see what it had to say about omelets. In that moment, this Chef, this magnate, looked like an eager young cook again. A cook aiming for the top, because even though we were talking about eggs, we knew what we were really talking about was perfection, about giving the idea of perfection a physical form.

I left and immediately got myself a black steel pan. I've been scouring it with salt and oil to season it ever since, understanding that I'm deeper in a hole, further away from making my ideal omelet than I realized. The other day, as I was scrubbing on my pan again, trying to make new metal old, a friend found me. Gently, but sort of pityingly, she asked, "What ... are you doing?"

Okay, so maybe it's a little much, this obsession of mine. But tell me: How many places in your life do you know, really know, what *perfection* looks like? How many ways do you know to chase after perfection?

For me, the first step is to figure out how to keep my pan from rusting. ☺

PERFECTION AS AN OMELET

► Break three large, super-fresh, room-temperature eggs into a bowl and beat them lovingly with a little salt and pepper until they are perfectly combined, but be careful not to froth them. Stir in a teaspoon of butter that you've cut into tiny dice, making sure it's evenly distributed. If the butter can't be from Brittany, make sure it's at least chilled, okay?

► Now take your eight-inch black steel pan that has been well seasoned for 20 years, and that you reserve exclusively for eggs. Heat one tablespoon of clarified butter over a medium-high flame. Get the pan hot enough so that the eggs will start cooking right when you pour them in, but not so hot that they bubble violently and start frying.

► Use the back of two forks to stir the eggs in silver-dollar-size circular motions at slow speed (120 revolutions per minute), revolving them around the pan. When the eggs have become a thickened liquid containing small

curds, gently shake the pan and increase speed to medium (140 rpm). When they're all wet curds, shake more vigorously and speed up to fast (160 rpm).

► While the eggs are all cooked but still tender and slippery curds, let the pan sit untouched on the heat and count to seven to form the skin. Lift the pan and, with your free hand, give the handle a couple of good whacks to shake the omelet loose and get it to slide up the top edge. Set the pan down and change your grip so that your palm faces up and the handle is perpendicular to your wrist.

► Roll the omelet onto a warmed plate by flipping the pan handle-first so that your palm faces down again. Don't be afraid—you just have to commit to it and go. If it doesn't come out, it wasn't meant to be.

► Now examine your omelet: the tight cigar shape, the rich yellow color, the smoothness, the thinness of the skin. Curse yourself for all the ways it's not perfect, insist that this is a personal failing, and start over. —F.L.

QUICK

KITCHEN

ZUCCHINI RICE GRATIN

SERVES 4 TO 6 (SIDE DISH)

ACTIVE TIME: 25 MIN START TO FINISH: 1¼ HR

With golden cheese that yields to an abundance of roasted vegetables, this gratin is an ideal side dish, but it really doesn't need anything more than a green salad to make it a satisfying dinner.

- ⅓ cup long-grain white rice**
- 1½ lb zucchini (about 3 medium), sliced crosswise ¼ inch thick**
- 6½ tablespoons olive oil, divided**
- ½ lb plum tomatoes, sliced crosswise ¼ inch thick**
- 1 medium onion, halved lengthwise and thinly sliced**
- 3 garlic cloves, finely chopped**

- 2 large eggs, lightly beaten**
- 1 teaspoon chopped thyme**
- ½ cup grated Parmigiano-Reggiano, divided**

- ▶ Preheat oven to 450°F with racks in upper and lower thirds.
- ▶ Cook rice according to package instructions.
- ▶ While rice cooks, toss zucchini with 1 tablespoon oil and ½ teaspoon salt in a shallow baking pan. Toss tomatoes with ½ tablespoon oil and ¼ teaspoon salt in another baking pan. ▶ Roast zucchini in upper third of oven and tomatoes in lower third, turning vegetables once halfway through roasting, until tender and light golden, about 10 minutes for tomatoes; 20 minutes for zucchini. Leave oven on.

- ▶ Meanwhile, cook onion and garlic with ½ teaspoon salt in 2 tablespoons oil in a large heavy skillet, covered, over low heat, stirring occasionally, until very tender, 15 to 20 minutes.
- ▶ Stir together onion mixture, cooked rice, eggs, thyme, ¼ cup cheese, 1 tablespoon oil, ¼ teaspoon salt, and ½ teaspoon pepper. Spread half of rice mixture in a shallow 2-quart baking dish, then top with half of zucchini. Spread remaining rice mixture over zucchini, then top with remaining zucchini. Top with tomatoes and drizzle with remaining 2 tablespoons oil, then sprinkle with remaining ¼ cup cheese.
- ▶ Bake in upper third of oven until set and golden brown, about 20 minutes.

For more EVERY DAY recipes, see page 80.

RECIPES BY ANDREA ALBIN PHOTOGRAPHS BY ROMULO YANES



25 min



15 min

A creamy, Dijon-spiked sauce adds a third dimension to the combination of crisp skin and tender flesh that's the hallmark of great chicken.

ROASTED CHICKEN WITH DIJON SAUCE

SERVES 4

ACTIVE TIME: 15 MIN START TO FINISH: 45 MIN

Adding Dijon to this sauce lends not only a nice kick but also body and richness—without resorting to lots of cream and butter (a shocking idea in an issue that sings the praises of French food, we know).

- 3 lb chicken parts (thighs, drumsticks, and/or breasts), with skin and bones
- 1 tablespoon vegetable oil
- 2 small shallots, thinly sliced
- ¾ cup dry white wine
- ¾ cup reduced-sodium chicken broth
- ¼ cup heavy cream
- 2 tablespoons Dijon mustard
- 1 tablespoon finely chopped chives

- ▶ Preheat oven to 450°F with rack in middle.
- ▶ Pat chicken dry and sprinkle with 1¼ teaspoons salt and ½ teaspoon pepper.

Heat oil in an ovenproof 12-inch heavy skillet over medium-high heat until it shimmers. Working in 2 batches, brown chicken, skin side down first and turning once, about 5 minutes per batch.

- ▶ Return all chicken, skin side up, to skillet and roast in oven until just cooked through, 15 to 20 minutes.
- ▶ Transfer chicken to a platter, then add shallots, wine, and broth to pan juices in skillet and boil, scraping up any brown bits, until reduced by half, 2 to 3 minutes.
- ▶ Add cream and boil until slightly thickened, about 1 minute.
- ▶ Strain sauce through a sieve into a bowl. Whisk in mustard, chives, and salt and pepper to taste.
- ▶ Serve chicken with sauce.

CREAMY CELERY-ROOT AND HARICOT VERT SALAD

SERVES 4

ACTIVE TIME: 20 MIN START TO FINISH: 25 MIN

Thin green beans add ribbons of color as well as bite to a celeriac rémoulade.

- ½ cup mayonnaise
- 2½ teaspoons fresh lemon juice
- 1 lb celery root (celeriac), peeled and quartered
- ½ lb haricots verts or other thin green beans, trimmed and halved crosswise
- 2 tablespoons finely chopped parsley, divided

EQUIPMENT: an adjustable-blade slicer fitted with ⅛-inch julienne blade

- ▶ Stir together mayonnaise, lemon juice, and ¼ teaspoon each of salt and pepper in a large bowl.
- ▶ Cut celery root with slicer into ⅛-inch-thick matchsticks and add to mayonnaise dressing.
- ▶ Cook beans in boiling salted water (1 tablespoon salt for 2 quarts water), uncovered, until just tender, about 4 minutes. Drain, then rinse under cold water to stop cooking. Drain well and pat dry.
- ▶ Toss beans and 1 tablespoon parsley with celery root. Serve sprinkled with remaining tablespoon parsley. >

PORK TENDERLOIN WITH ARUGULA ENDIVE SALAD AND WALNUT VINAIGRETTE

SERVES 4

ACTIVE TIME: 15 MIN START TO FINISH: 1 HR

Here, a garlic-packed vinaigrette is infused with caramelized sucs—pan drippings—from the roast pork, creating an uncanny fusion of nutty, meaty flavors.

- 1¼ lb pork tenderloin**
- 1 tablespoon vegetable oil**
- ⅓ cup red-wine vinegar**
About ½ cup extra-virgin olive oil
- 1 cup walnuts, toasted (see Tips, page 143), divided**
- 2 garlic cloves, coarsely chopped**
- 2 tablespoons water**
- 5 oz baby arugula**
- 3 medium Belgian endives, sliced crosswise into ¼-inch pieces**

►Preheat oven to 375°F with rack in middle.
►Pat pork dry and sprinkle with ¾ teaspoon salt and ½ teaspoon pepper. Heat vegetable oil in a 12-inch ovenproof heavy skillet over medium-high heat until it shimmers, then brown pork on all sides, about 6 minutes total. ►Transfer pork in skillet to oven and roast until an instant-read thermometer inserted into center registers 145 to 150°F, 20 to 25 minutes. Transfer to a cutting board and let stand 10 minutes.

►While pork stands, add vinegar to skillet (be careful; handle will be very hot) and boil, scraping up any brown bits, until slightly reduced, about 30 seconds. Transfer to a heatproof measuring cup and add enough olive oil to bring total to ¾ cup liquid.
►Pulse ¾ cup walnuts with garlic, water, ½ teaspoon salt, and ¼ teaspoon pepper to a coarse paste in a food processor. With motor running, slowly add oil mixture to make vinaigrette.
►Toss arugula and endive with just enough vinaigrette to coat, then divide among plates. Top with thin slices of pork and drizzle with remaining vinaigrette. Crumble remaining ¼ cup walnuts over pork.

FENNEL SOUP WITH ORANGE CRÈME FRAÎCHE AND CROUTONS

SERVES 4 TO 6 (FIRST COURSE OR LIGHT MAIN)

ACTIVE TIME: 30 MIN START TO FINISH: 50 MIN

With an earthy flavor punctuated by hints of orange and a smooth, velvety texture, this soup is perfect as a simple weeknight supper or as a starter for an elegant party.

- 1 small leek (white and pale green part only), halved and thinly sliced**
- 3 garlic cloves, finely chopped**
- 1½ teaspoons fennel seeds**
- 5 tablespoons extra-virgin olive oil, divided**

- 1 medium russet (baking) potato**
- 2 medium fennel bulbs, stalks discarded, reserving fronds, and bulb cut into ½-inch pieces**
- 5 cups water**
- 1 (8-inch) length of baguette, cut into 1-inch cubes**
- ½ cup crème fraîche or sour cream**
- 1 teaspoon grated orange zest**

►Preheat oven to 375°F with rack in middle.
►Wash leek (see Tips, page 143), then cook with garlic, fennel seeds, and 1 teaspoon salt in 3 tablespoons oil in a heavy medium pot over medium-low heat, stirring occasionally, until softened, about 8 minutes. ►Meanwhile, peel potato and cut into ½-inch pieces.
►Add potato, fennel, and water to leek mixture and simmer, covered, stirring occasionally, until vegetables are very tender, 15 to 20 minutes.
►Toss bread cubes with remaining 2 tablespoons oil in a shallow baking pan. Bake, stirring once or twice, until crisp and golden brown, 10 to 15 minutes.
►Purée soup in batches in a blender until smooth (use caution when blending hot liquids). Return to pot and season with salt and pepper. ►Chop 1 tablespoon fennel fronds and whisk together with crème fraîche and zest. ►Serve soup with orange crème fraîche and croutons.

For more EVERY DAY recipes, see page 82.

A salad tricked out with a garlic and walnut vinaigrette is a slightly unexpected—and an altogether excellent—counterpoint to succulent pork.



15 min



SEARED SCALLOPS WITH TARRAGON-BUTTER SAUCE

SERVES 4

ACTIVE TIME: 20 MIN START TO FINISH: 20 MIN

Beurre blanc—the classic French butter sauce—is a cinch to prepare and has a tendency to make just about anything taste better. This take on it uses the scallops’ juices to add complexity.

- 1¼ lb large sea scallops, tough ligament from side of each discarded**
- 7 tablespoons unsalted butter, cut into tablespoons, divided**
- 2 tablespoons finely chopped shallot**
- ¼ cup dry white wine**
- ¼ cup white-wine vinegar**
- 1 tablespoon finely chopped tarragon**

► Pat scallops dry and sprinkle with ¼ teaspoon each of salt and pepper (total).
 ► Heat 1 tablespoon butter in a 12-inch nonstick skillet over medium-high heat until foam subsides, then sear scallops, turning once, until golden brown and just cooked through, about 5 minutes total. Transfer to a platter. ► Add shallot, wine, and vinegar to skillet and boil, scraping up brown bits, until reduced to 2 tablespoons. Add juices from platter and if necessary boil until liquid is reduced to about ¼ cup. Reduce heat to low and add 3 tablespoons butter, stirring until almost melted, then add remaining 3 tablespoons butter and swirl until incorporated and sauce has a creamy consistency. Stir in tarragon and salt to taste; pour sauce over scallops.

20 min

QUICK RASPBERRY CHARLOTTE

SERVES 6

ACTIVE TIME: 15 MIN START TO FINISH: 50 MIN

Saturated with brandy, cream, and raspberry purée, dried Italian-style savoiardi get the French treatment here.

- 7 oz savoiardi (crisp Italian ladyfingers)
- 1 tablespoon Cognac or other brandy
- 1 pint premium vanilla ice cream, melted
- 10 oz frozen raspberries (not in syrup)
- 1 cup water
- Rounded ¼ cup sugar
- 1½ teaspoons fresh lemon juice
- ¾ cup chilled heavy cream

EQUIPMENT: a 7- to 8-inch soufflé dish

- ▶ Layer ladyfingers in soufflé dish. Stir Cognac into melted ice cream and pour evenly over cookies. Let stand 10 minutes.
- ▶ Purée raspberries with water, sugar, and lemon juice in a blender until smooth.
- ▶ Beat cream with an electric mixer or a whisk until it just holds stiff peaks, then add ¾ cup raspberry sauce and continue to beat until mixture holds soft peaks.

- ▶ Lightly press on cookies with a spatula to compact slightly, then drizzle ½ cup raspberry sauce over them. Spread raspberry cream evenly on top and chill, covered, in freezer 30 minutes. ▶ Serve charlotte with remaining raspberry sauce.

MERGUEZ LAMB PATTIES WITH GOLDEN RAISIN COUSCOUS

SERVES 4

ACTIVE TIME: 10 MIN START TO FINISH: 30 MIN

Merguez, the spicy lamb sausages of North Africa, are popular throughout France. These nearly labor-free patties are a quick way to re-create them in your kitchen. The sweetness of the raisin couscous contrasts nicely with the meat's deep spice.

- 1¼ teaspoons fennel seeds
- 1¼ lb ground lamb
- 3 garlic cloves, minced
- 2 tablespoons harissa (spicy North African condiment)
- 1¼ teaspoons ground cumin
- 1¼ teaspoons ground coriander
- ¼ teaspoon ground cinnamon
- 1 tablespoon vegetable oil

- 1¼ cups reduced-sodium chicken broth or water
- ⅓ cup golden raisins
- 1 cup couscous
- ½ cup chopped cilantro
- Zest of 1 lemon

EQUIPMENT: an electric coffee/spice grinder

ACCOMPANIMENT: harissa or hot sauce

- ▶ Toast fennel seeds in a small heavy skillet over medium heat until fragrant and a shade darker, about 1 minute. Grind to a fine powder in grinder. ▶ Mix together lamb, garlic, harissa, spices (including fennel), and ½ teaspoon salt thoroughly with your hands (do not overmix). Form into 4 oval patties (about ¾ inch thick).
- ▶ Heat oil in a 12-inch heavy skillet over medium-high heat until it shimmers, then cook patties, turning once, about 9 minutes total for medium-rare.
- ▶ While patties cook, bring broth, raisins, and ¼ teaspoon salt to a boil in a 2-quart heavy saucepan, then stir in couscous. Let stand off heat, covered, 5 minutes. Fluff with a fork; stir in cilantro, zest, and salt to taste. ▶ Serve patties on couscous.

For more EVERY DAY recipes, see page 84.

As exquisite as it is easy, this ravishing dessert can be thrown together at the last minute and will still knock people's socks off.



15 min

TEN-MINUTE MAINS

RECIPES BY LILLIAN CHOU



Quiche has gotten a bad rap. We say, foolish are the “real men” who wouldn’t eat this onion-flecked ham-and-Swiss icon.

CRUSTLESS QUICHE

SERVES 4

ACTIVE TIME: 10 MIN START TO FINISH: 30 MIN
(NOT INCLUDING COOLING)

Getting rid of the crust for this clever play on quiche Lorraine is a win-win: The cooking process is simplified, and you’re left with the very best part of the quiche.

- 1½ tablespoons fine dry plain bread crumbs
- 1 cup frozen chopped onions
- 1 cup diced cooked ham (¼ lb)
- 1 tablespoon unsalted butter
- 1 (8-oz) package shredded Swiss cheese (2 cups)
- 4 large eggs
- 1 cup heavy cream
- 1 cup whole milk

EQUIPMENT: a 10-inch quiche dish or 10-inch glass pie plate

ACCOMPANIMENT: green salad

- ▶ Preheat oven to 425°F with rack in middle.
- ▶ Butter quiche dish, then sprinkle all over with bread crumbs.
- ▶ Cook onions with ham in butter in a

12-inch heavy skillet over medium-high heat, stirring occasionally, until pale golden, about 5 minutes. Spread in dish, then evenly sprinkle cheese on top.

- ▶ Whisk together eggs, cream, milk, and ½ teaspoon pepper and pour over cheese. Bake until top is golden and custard is set in center, 20 to 25 minutes. Cool slightly before cutting into wedges.

BLADE STEAKS WITH MUSHROOM-MADEIRA SAUCE

SERVES 4

ACTIVE TIME: 10 MIN START TO FINISH: 20 MIN

An almost mystical combination beloved in France, mushrooms and fortified wines like Madeira elevate everything they touch. The results are exceptionally fine when you put their magic to work on great-tasting (and inexpensive) blade steaks.

- 1½ lb top blade beef chuck steaks (½ to 1 inch thick)
- 2 tablespoons olive oil, divided
- 1 shallot, chopped

- 2 (4-oz) packages sliced fresh mushrooms
- ½ cup Madeira
- ¾ cup water
- 1 teaspoon cornstarch mixed with 1 tablespoon water

- ▶ Pat steaks dry and cut 3 shallow slits across center cartilage in each steak (to prevent curling), then sprinkle with ½ teaspoon salt and ¼ teaspoon pepper (total).
- ▶ Heat 1 tablespoon oil in a 12-inch heavy skillet over medium-high heat until it shimmers, then sauté steaks, turning once, 5 to 9 minutes total for medium-rare. Transfer to a plate and keep warm, covered.
- ▶ Add shallot and remaining tablespoon oil to skillet and sauté over medium-high heat 30 seconds. Add mushrooms and sauté until golden, 3 to 4 minutes. Stir in Madeira, ¼ teaspoon salt, and ½ teaspoon pepper and briskly simmer 2 minutes. Stir in water and any meat juices from plate and boil 2 minutes. Stir cornstarch mixture, then stir into mushrooms and simmer until thickened, about 1 minute. Season sauce with salt and spoon over steaks. >

MUSSELS AND FRIES WITH MUSTARD MAYONNAISE

SERVES 2

ACTIVE TIME: 10 MIN START TO FINISH: 30 MIN

While there's no substitute for eating a bowl of mussels on France's Atlantic coast, you'll be surprised at how easy it is to re-create this briny, aromatic dish at home.

- 1 (15- to 16-oz) package frozen french fries
- 1 small onion
- 2 garlic cloves, forced through a press
- 3 tablespoons unsalted butter
- 2 teaspoons dry mustard
- 2 teaspoons water
- ½ cup mayonnaise
- 1 cup dry white wine
- 2 lb cultivated mussels, rinsed
- 2 tablespoons chopped flat-leaf parsley

EQUIPMENT: an adjustable-blade slicer

ACCOMPANIMENT: crusty bread (preferably a baguette)

► Cook french fries according to package instructions and keep warm in oven if necessary. ► Meanwhile, cut onion into very thin slices with slicer, then cook with garlic and a pinch of salt in butter in

a wide heavy medium pot over medium-high heat, covered, stirring occasionally, until pale golden.

► While onion cooks, whisk together mustard and water until smooth, then whisk in mayonnaise and ¼ teaspoon pepper. ► Add wine to onion and briskly simmer, covered, stirring occasionally, until onion is almost tender, about 5 minutes. Add mussels and cook, covered, stirring occasionally, until mussels just open wide, 4 to 6 minutes, checking frequently after 4 minutes and transferring as cooked to a bowl. (Discard any mussels that remain unopened.) Stir parsley into cooking liquid and season with salt. Pour liquid over mussels, then serve with fries and mustard mayonnaise.

COOKS' NOTE: This recipe can be doubled in an 8-quart heavy pot.

PORK CHOPS WITH STEWED TOMATOES, CAPERS, AND ROSEMARY

SERVES 4

ACTIVE TIME: 10 MIN START TO FINISH: 20 MIN

Obviously, those who devote their lives to pork are going to have the best recipes for it, which explains why porc charcutière—named after pork butchers—is such

a time-honored preparation. This version is lighter and a lot quicker than a traditional one, but its flavors are no less fine-tuned.

- 1 (14½-oz) can stewed tomatoes
- 4 (¾-inch-thick) bone-in rib pork chops (2 lb total)
- 2 tablespoons olive oil, divided
- 2 garlic cloves, forced through a press
- 2 tablespoons drained bottled capers
- 2 tablespoons sweet relish
- 1 rosemary sprig

► Coarsely chop tomatoes in can with kitchen shears.

► Pat pork dry, then sprinkle with ½ teaspoon salt and ¼ teaspoon pepper.

► Heat 1 tablespoon oil in a 12-inch heavy skillet over medium-high heat until it shimmers, then brown chops, turning once, about 5 minutes total. Transfer to a plate and cover with foil.

► Add remaining tablespoon oil to skillet and sauté garlic over medium-high heat 30 seconds. Add tomatoes and remaining ingredients and simmer, stirring once or twice, 3 minutes. Add pork with any juices from plate, turning to coat, and simmer, uncovered, until just cooked through, 2 to 3 minutes. Season with salt and pepper.

For more EVERY DAY recipes, see page 86.

A big bowl of the Brittany coast—with a side of perfect-for-dipping fries—can be on your table in half an hour.



VEGETARIAN TONIGHT

Is a cassoulet still a cassoulet without the meat? However you answer that, after one bite you'll agree that this version of the famously soulful French stew is as warming as ever.

RECIPE AND FOOD STYLING BY MELISSA ROBERTS

VEGETARIAN CASSOULET

SERVES 4 TO 6

ACTIVE TIME: 30 MIN START TO FINISH: 1¼ HR

A leek, carrot, and celery mirepoix, cooked until tender with rich white beans, gets a crisp, crunchy texture and delightfully rustic flavor from a garlicky bread-crumbs topping flecked with parsley.

FOR CASSOULET

- 3 medium leeks (white and pale green parts only)
- 4 medium carrots, halved lengthwise and cut into 1-inch-wide pieces
- 3 celery ribs, cut into 1-inch-wide pieces
- 4 garlic cloves, chopped
- ¼ cup olive oil
- 4 thyme sprigs
- 2 parsley sprigs

- 1 Turkish or ½ California bay leaf
- ⅛ teaspoon ground cloves
- 3 (19-oz) cans cannellini or Great Northern beans, rinsed and drained
- 1 qt water

FOR GARLIC CRUMBS

- 4 cups coarse fresh bread crumbs from a baguette
- ⅓ cup olive oil
- 1 tablespoon chopped garlic
- ¼ cup chopped parsley

MAKE CASSOULET: Halve leeks lengthwise and cut crosswise into ½-inch pieces, then wash well (see Tips, page 143) and pat dry.

► Cook leeks, carrots, celery, and garlic in oil with herb sprigs, bay leaf, cloves, and ½ teaspoon each of salt and pepper in a large heavy pot over medium heat, stirring

occasionally, until softened and golden, about 15 minutes. Stir in beans, then water, and simmer, partially covered, stirring occasionally, until carrots are tender but not falling apart, about 30 minutes.

MAKE GARLIC CRUMBS WHILE

CASSOULET SIMMERS: Preheat oven to 350°F with rack in middle.

► Toss bread crumbs with oil, garlic, and ¼ teaspoon each of salt and pepper in a bowl until well coated. Spread in a baking pan and toast in oven, stirring once halfway through, until crisp and golden, 12 to 15 minutes.

► Cool crumbs in pan, then return to bowl and stir in parsley.

FINISH CASSOULET: Discard herb sprigs and bay leaf. Mash some of beans in pot with a potato masher or back of a spoon to thicken broth. Season with salt and pepper. Just before serving, sprinkle with garlic crumbs. 🍴



30 min



SPRING AWAKENING

Provençal cooking has all the sophistication you want for Easter (and expect from French food), along with a rustic spirit born unmistakably of the Mediterranean countryside. Recipes by Paul Grimes Photographs by John Kernick

A citrusy homemade aperitif, opposite, cuts the intensity of a pizza-like tart topped with caramelized onions and fennel.



MENU SERVES 8

SPICED ORANGE WINE

**ONION TART WITH MUSTARD
AND FENNEL**

**PROVENÇAL FISH SOUP WITH
SAFFRON ROUILLE**

Murphy-Goode

Island Block Chardonnay '05

**RACK OF LAMB WITH
SWISS CHARD**

ROASTED RED PEPPERS

ROASTED-GARLIC SOUFFLÉ

Cyrus Cabernet Sauvignon

Blend '03

**MEYER LEMON CAKE WITH
LAVENDER CREAM**





A mellow roasted-garlic soufflé rises to the occasion, while velvety seafood soup, opposite, is pure Provence with its saffron-rouille crown.





The aromas that mingle at the Provençal table echo the ones that grow wild just outside the kitchen windows—rosemary, thyme, lavender, bay leaf.





Double chops of lamb get dressed up with chard and pine nut stuffing; roasted peppers and a garlic soufflé, opposite, play unforgettable cameo roles.





Tangy with lemon curd and also rich and tender thanks to a healthy dose of olive oil, this tempting cake is accented by lavender-honey cream.

SPICED ORANGE WINE

MAKES 2 (750-ML) BOTTLES

ACTIVE TIME: 15 MIN START TO FINISH: 5¼ HR (INCLUDES CHILLING)

What could be more French countryside than pulling a chilled bottle of homemade (or at least home-doctored) wine from the fridge for a special celebration? This orange sipping wine is a little sweeter and stronger than a regular glass of white, and it's the perfect aperitif for the onion tart with mustard and fennel (recipe follows).

2 (750-ml) bottles dry white wine

½ cup sugar

¼ cup orange liqueur such as Grand Marnier

¼ cup Pernod

2 whole cloves

4 Turkish or 2 California bay leaves

2 navel oranges

- ▶ Bring all ingredients except oranges to a boil (reserve wine bottles and corks), stirring until sugar has dissolved.
- ▶ Remove zest from oranges in a continuous spiral using a vegetable peeler and cut off any white pith with a paring knife. Reserve oranges for another use and divide zest between empty wine bottles.
- ▶ Fill bottles with orange wine and cool, uncorked, 1 hour.
- ▶ Cork bottles, then chill at least 4 hours.

COOKS' NOTE: Orange wine can be chilled up to 1 week.

ONION TART WITH MUSTARD AND FENNEL

SERVES 8 (HORS D'OEUVRE)

ACTIVE TIME: 45 MIN START TO FINISH: 3 HR

Simple savory tarts abound in Provence. A particular favorite includes slow-cooked onions, mellow and nearly as sweet as marmalade, punctuated with hints of the herbs that grow wild all over the region—in this case, fennel. Cooks are known to vary their crusts depending on the affair, from short, buttery versions to pizzalike yeast crusts; the latter is used here to keep the tart light.

2¼ teaspoons active dry yeast (a ¼-oz package)

½ cup warm water (105–115°F)

1½ to 1¾ cups all-purpose flour

1 large egg

⅓ cup plus 1 tablespoon extra-virgin olive oil, divided

2½ teaspoons salt, divided

2 teaspoons fennel seeds

3 lb yellow onions, halved and thinly sliced

1 tablespoon Dijon mustard

½ cup grated Parmigiano-Reggiano

- ▶ Stir together yeast and warm water in a small bowl and let stand until foamy, about 5 minutes. (If mixture doesn't foam, start over with new yeast.)
- ▶ Put 1½ cups flour in a medium bowl, then make a well in center of flour and add yeast mixture to well. Stir together egg, 1 tablespoon oil, and 1½ teaspoons salt with a fork. Add egg mixture to yeast mixture and mix with a wooden spoon or your fingertips, gradually incorporating flour, until a soft dough forms. Transfer dough to a floured surface and knead, working in additional flour (up to ¼ cup) as necessary, until smooth and elastic, about 5 minutes. Transfer dough to an oiled bowl and turn to coat. Cover with plastic wrap and let rise in a draft-free place at warm room temperature until doubled, 1 to 1½ hours.
- ▶ While dough rises, heat remaining ⅓ cup oil in a 12-inch heavy skillet over medium-high heat until it shimmers, then sauté

fennel seeds until a shade darker, about 30 seconds. Stir in onions, remaining teaspoon salt, and ½ teaspoon pepper, then reduce heat to medium-low and cover onions directly with a round of parchment paper. Cook, stirring occasionally, until onions are very tender and golden brown, 1 to 1¼ hours.

▶ Preheat oven to 375°F with rack in middle.

▶ Knead dough gently on a floured surface with floured hands to deflate. Pat out dough on a large heavy baking sheet (preferably blue steel) into a 15- by 12-inch rectangle, turning up or crimping edge, then brush mustard evenly over dough, leaving a ½-inch border around edge. Spread onions evenly over mustard, then sprinkle evenly with cheese.

▶ Bake tart until crust is golden brown, 30 to 35 minutes.

Cut into 2-inch squares or diamonds and serve warm or at room temperature.

COOKS' NOTE: Onion mixture can be made 2 days ahead and chilled, covered.

PROVENÇAL FISH SOUP

SERVES 8 (FIRST COURSE)

ACTIVE TIME: 1¼ HR START TO FINISH: 1¼ HR

Your eyes aren't playing tricks on you: Yes, after simmering the fish with aromatics, wine, and tomatoes, we advise you to force every last bit through a food mill—heads, tails, bones, and all—for an incredibly lush soup, tasting of a beautiful union between land and sea (the food mill will strain any unwanted solids to be discarded). A garlicky rouille, exotic with a touch of crumbled saffron, further coaxes out the natural richness of the fish.

4 medium leeks (white and pale green parts only), chopped

1 large fennel bulb, stalks discarded, reserving fronds for garnish, and bulb chopped

3 medium carrots, chopped

2 large celery ribs, chopped

4 large garlic cloves, finely chopped

⅓ cup extra-virgin olive oil

1 tablespoon *herbes de Provence*

2 California or 4 Turkish bay leaves

¼ teaspoon cayenne

⅛ teaspoon crumbled saffron threads

5 lb whole whiting, perch, or cod (preferably with heads), cleaned and rinsed well

5 medium tomatoes, chopped (4 cups)

2 cups dry white wine

4 (3- by 1-inch) strips fresh orange zest

6 cups water

3 tablespoons tomato paste

1 baguette, cut into ¾-inch-thick slices

EQUIPMENT: a food mill fitted with medium disk

ACCOMPANIMENT: saffron rouille (recipe follows)

▶ Wash leeks (see Tips, page 143).

▶ Cook leeks, fennel bulb, carrots, celery, and garlic in oil with *herbes de Provence*, bay leaves, cayenne, saffron, 1 tablespoon salt, and ½ teaspoon pepper in an 8-quart heavy pot over medium heat, stirring occasionally, until softened, about 10 minutes.

▶ While vegetable mixture cooks, cut fish crosswise into 2- to 3-inch lengths.

▶ Add tomatoes, wine, and zest to vegetable mixture and bring to a boil, then boil 30 seconds. Add fish, water, and tomato paste and simmer, uncovered, stirring occasionally, until fish completely falls apart, about 30 minutes.

▶ Preheat oven to 350°F with rack in middle.

- ▶ Arrange baguette slices in 1 layer on a baking sheet and bake until golden brown and thoroughly dried, about 20 minutes.
 - ▶ Force soup through food mill into a large heavy pot, discarding solids. Reheat soup over medium heat, stirring occasionally.
 - ▶ Mound rouille on croutons and put 1 in bottom of each soup bowl. Pour soup around croutons.
- COOKS' NOTE:** Soup, without rouille and croutons, can be made 2 days ahead and chilled, uncovered, until completely cooled, then covered. Reheat before serving.

SAFFRON ROUILLE

MAKES ABOUT 1½ CUPS

ACTIVE TIME: 10 MIN START TO FINISH: 10 MIN

Rich, aromatic rouille is a classic lily-gilding for French fish soups; this one has an extra something special: saffron. Even if you love saffron, though, don't be tempted to add any extra threads. This is just the right amount to really flatter, not dominate, the soup.

- ¼ teaspoon crumbled saffron threads
- ¼ teaspoon hot water
- 1 cup mayonnaise
- ¼ cup chopped roasted red peppers (recipe this page; see cooks' note, below)
- ¼ cup extra-virgin olive oil
- ½ teaspoon fresh lemon juice
- 2 teaspoons finely chopped garlic
- ½ teaspoon cayenne

- ▶ Sprinkle saffron over hot water in a small cup and let stand 1 minute.
- ▶ Blend saffron mixture with remaining ingredients and ¼ teaspoon salt in a blender until smooth.

COOKS' NOTES: Instead of your own roasted peppers, you can use rinsed bottled roasted red peppers.

- Rouille can be made 2 days ahead and chilled, covered.

RACK OF LAMB WITH SWISS CHARD

SERVES 8

ACTIVE TIME: 1 HR START TO FINISH: 2 HR

Your subconscious will register "early spring" with this combination of double-thick lamb chops and earthy, grassy Swiss chard. Perfect for Easter dinner, the dish is heightened by the tang of Dijon mustard and the subtle sweetness of plump golden raisins.

FOR SWISS CHARD FILLING

- ½ cup sweet (red) vermouth
- ½ cup golden raisins
- 1 medium onion, chopped
- 2 tablespoons extra-virgin olive oil
- 2 large bunches green Swiss chard (1 lb total), stems and center ribs reserved for another use and leaves coarsely chopped
- 2 tablespoons pine nuts, toasted (see Tips, page 143)

FOR LAMB

- 4 (8-rib) frenched racks of lamb (each about 1½ lb), trimmed of all but a thin layer of fat
- ½ cup Dijon mustard
- 2 teaspoons finely chopped thyme
- 1 teaspoon finely chopped rosemary

EQUIPMENT: kitchen string

ACCOMPANIMENT: roasted red peppers (recipe follows)

MAKE SWISS CHARD STUFFING: Bring vermouth and raisins to a boil in a small saucepan, then remove from heat and let steep until raisins are soft and plump, about 15 minutes.

- ▶ Cook onion in oil in a large heavy skillet over medium-low heat, stirring occasionally, until onion is tender but not browned, 5 to 8 minutes. Add chard, raisins with any remaining vermouth, ½ teaspoon salt, and ¼ teaspoon pepper and cook over medium heat, turning chard constantly with tongs, until chard is tender and liquid has evaporated, about 12 minutes. Transfer to a bowl and stir in nuts, then cool.

PREPARE LAMB: Cutting as close to bones as possible, make 1 long incision to separate meat of each rack from bones, stopping ½ inch from bottom (do not cut all the way through). Roll meat away from bones to create a long opening, then season inside with salt and pepper and fill with stuffing. Roll meat back over stuffing, then tie meat to bones with string (between every 2 ribs).

- ▶ Preheat oven to 400°F with rack in middle.
- ▶ Stir together mustard, thyme, and rosemary and spread over both sides of each rack. Put racks of lamb in a large shallow heavy baking pan, pairing racks so that they stand up with their bones interlocking but leaving space between them at base.
- ▶ Roast lamb until an instant-read thermometer inserted into center of meat (do not touch bone) registers 130°F for medium-rare, 25 to 35 minutes. Let stand, loosely covered, 15 minutes.
- ▶ Cut each rack into 4 double chops, discarding string, and serve on top of roasted red peppers.

COOKS' NOTE: Stuffing can be made 1 day ahead and chilled, covered.

ROASTED RED PEPPERS

SERVES 8

ACTIVE TIME: 10 MIN START TO FINISH: 1 HR

Just as diced roasted red peppers add a distinctive vegetal sweetness to any dish they appear in, these, left in large chunks for maximum boldness, really complement the meat and its stuffing.

- 5 large red bell peppers, halved lengthwise, discarding stems and seeds
- Olive oil for rubbing

- ▶ Rub outsides of peppers with oil, then arrange peppers, cut sides down, in 1 layer in a large shallow baking pan.
- ▶ Preheat broiler.
- ▶ Broil peppers 4 to 5 inches from heat until well charred (peppers will not char evenly, especially at ends), 20 to 25 minutes.
- ▶ Transfer to a bowl and cover tightly with plastic wrap, then let stand about 20 minutes.
- ▶ When peppers are cool enough to handle, peel off skin. Chop peppers and reserve ¼ cup for saffron rouille (if making) or for another use.

COOKS' NOTE: Roasted red peppers can be made 1 day ahead and chilled, covered. Bring to room temperature before serving.

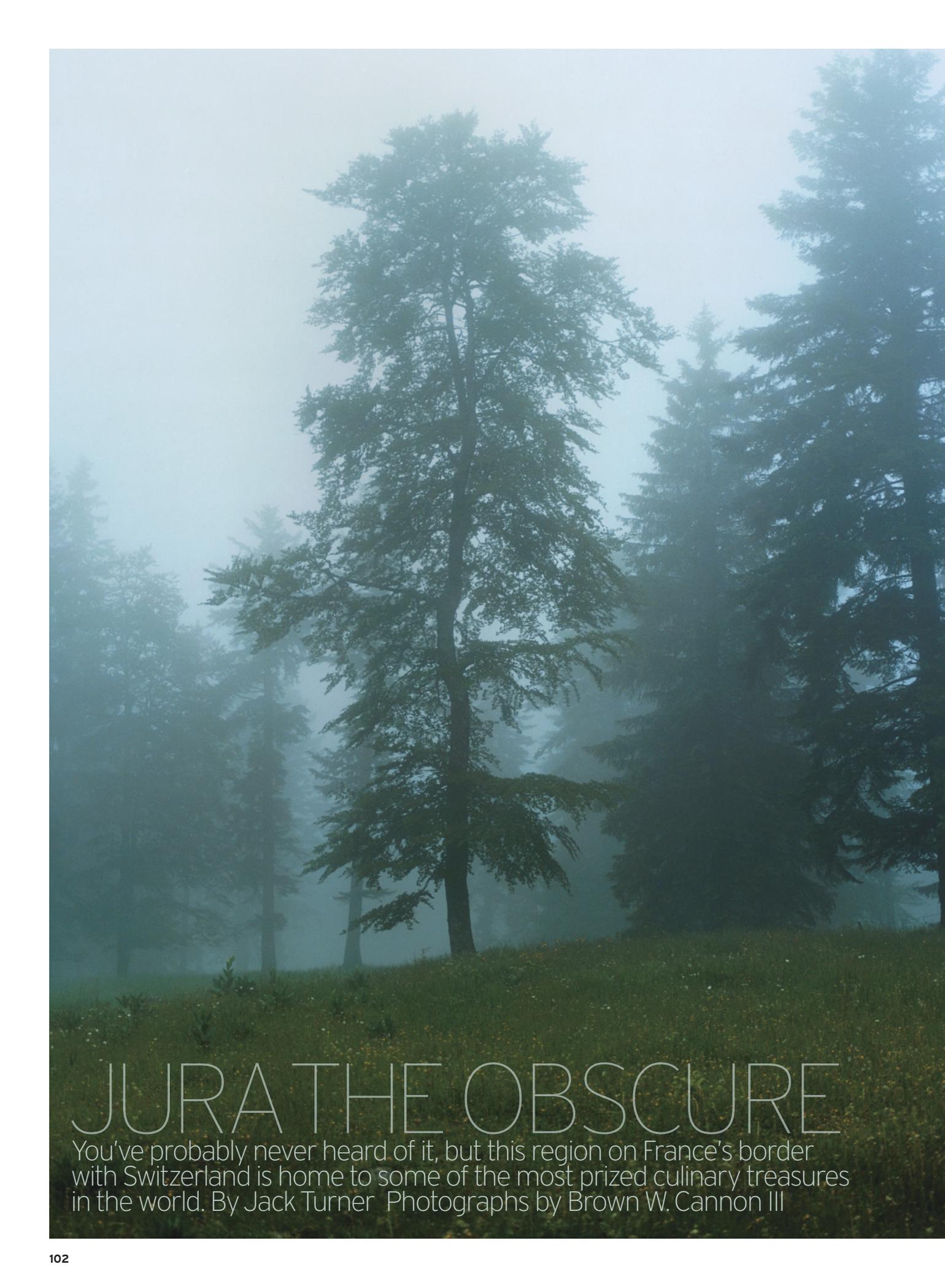
ROASTED-GARLIC SOUFFLÉ

SERVES 8

ACTIVE TIME: 45 MIN START TO FINISH: 2¼ HR

A fluffy soufflé, redolent with garlic, the darling of Provence, will suit the occasion, not to mention the meat itself. Since it's baked in a wide gratin, there's enough irresistible crust and ethereal interior for everyone to get a nice serving of both. For a few helpful tips to keep in mind when making a soufflé, see Kitchen Notebook, page 132.

(Continued on page 141)



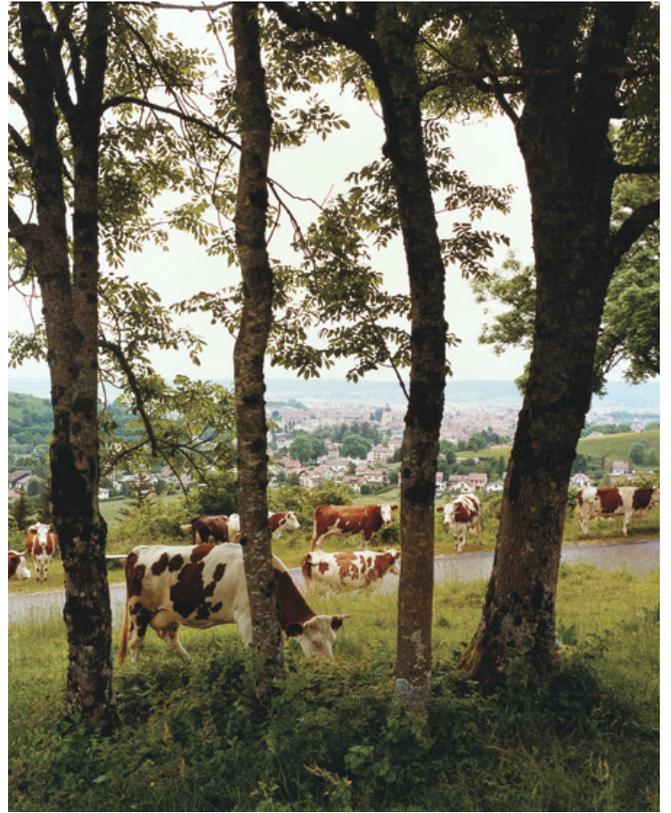
JURA THE OBSCURE

You've probably never heard of it, but this region on France's border with Switzerland is home to some of the most prized culinary treasures in the world. By Jack Turner Photographs by Brown W. Cannon III

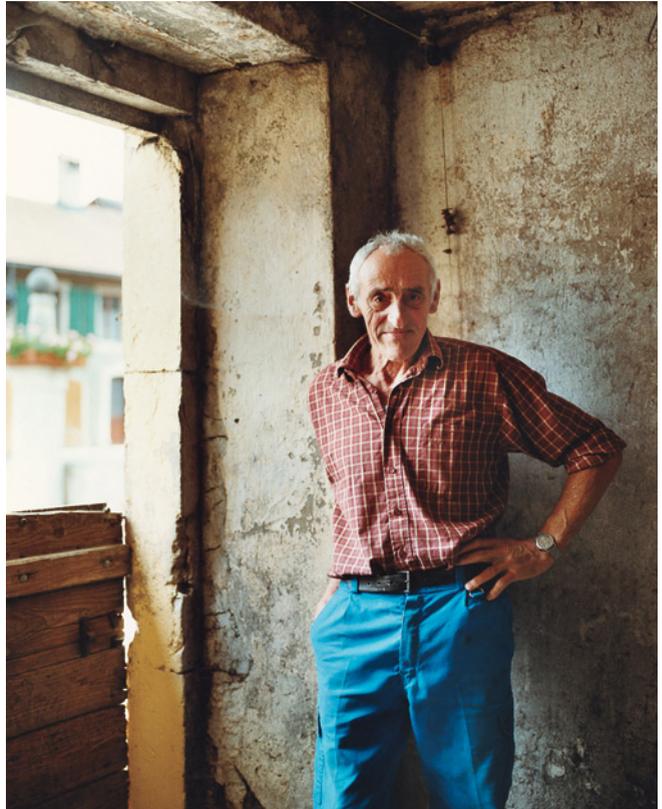
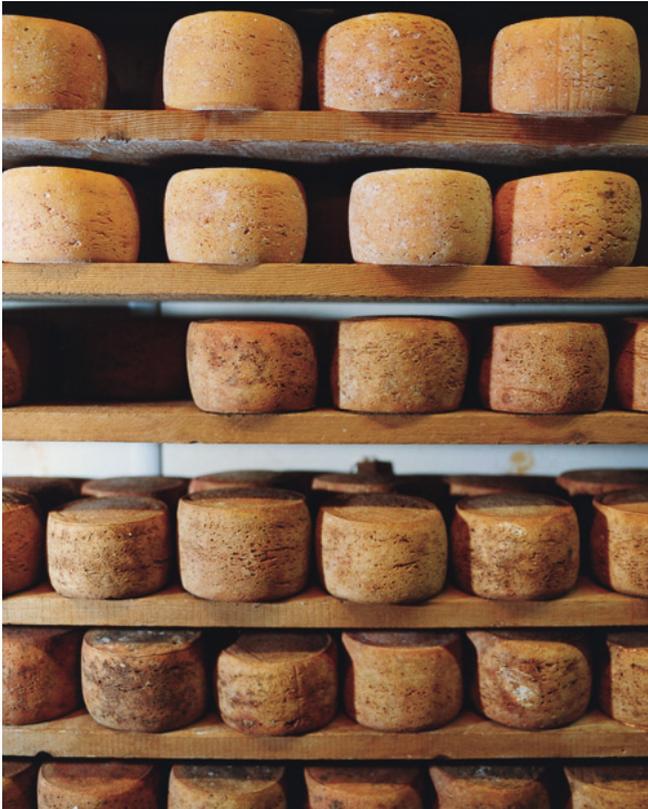
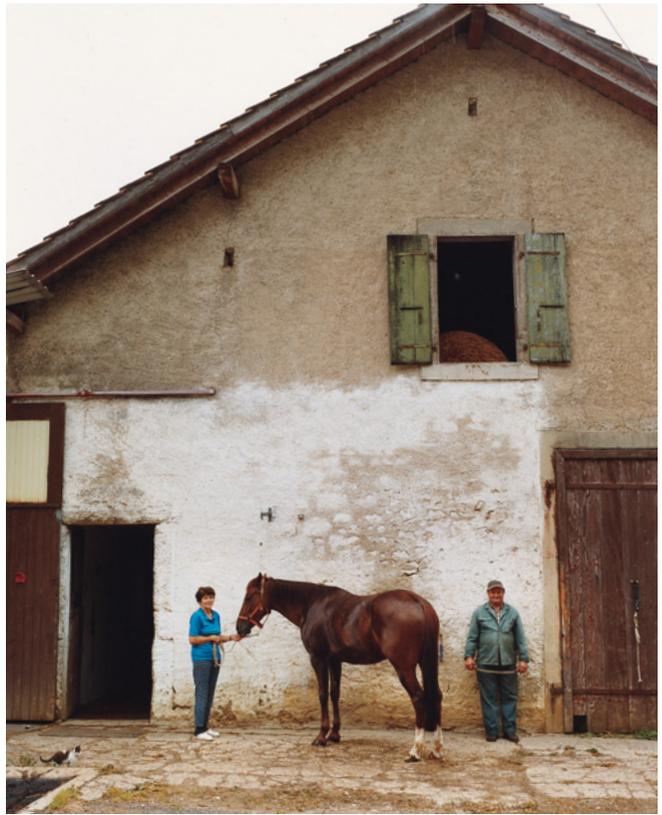


Traveling the dark, wooded mountains of the Haut Jura means finding your way to such delicacies as *vin jaune*, fresh Mont d'Or, and absinthe.





A vin jaune can be guaranteed to go on improving long after other wines have turned to vinegar. The best start to come into their own up to 20 years after bottling. The very best will hold up for 60 years.



While absinthe may once again carry the Jura's name across the world stage, Mont d'Or, another great product of the region, seems destined to remain, for most Americans, a matter of hearsay.

Every year in early February, in the foothills of the High Jura, the long range of mountains that stretches from France into Switzerland, a village throws a party, a party for which the guests have been waiting six years and three months. It is not a party in the usual sense: There are approximately 50,000 people with wineglasses slung on strings around their necks, a heaving mass of humanity, shouting, singing the Marseillaise, and—which helps explain the atmosphere—drinking. This year, there are men with their hair

dyed yellow, others dressed as ancient Gauls, and one, for reasons known best to himself, who has come along as Brunhilde. The immediate cause of the fuss, and the center of attention, is a large oak barrel surrounded by a dozen or so *vignerons* wearing brightly colored medieval robes. They are passing around a microphone through which they deliver tasting notes to the crowd: a scene, the first time you see it, that seems slightly surreal. Imagine, if you can, a bunch of football fans attending a wine tasting conducted by Oxford dons, and you are getting close. If picturing the scene is hard for the uninitiated, there is still less imagining the product they are celebrating and the nominal excuse for this almighty shebang. The event is known as the Percée, the breaching of the barrel stoppered up all those six years and three months ago. Inside is *vin jaune*, the yellow wine of the Jura.

On the first Sunday in February last year, I found myself in the village of Salins-les-Bains—along with several thousand other fans of *vin jaune*, one of the region's most remarkable and yet obscure products. Before Michael Crichton and Steven Spielberg brought the term to Hollywood, anything Jurassic was likely to ring bells only among geologists, dinosaur buffs, and a small group of wine and food lovers who knew better. For the Jura is indeed a lost terroir: These dark, wooded mountains are perhaps destined to be overshadowed by the neighboring topography—the spectacular snowy peaks of the Alps on one side, the open rolling hills, rivers, and valleys of Burgundy on the other. But the Jura's obscurity, if understandable, is unmerited, for the region is home to some of the most distinctive wines and food you will find anywhere in Europe.

They are so distinctive, in fact, that newcomers are in for a surprise. Away from the chaos of the Percée, Jean Berthet-Bondet, a local *vigneron*, frankly admitted his wine was *déroutant*: disconcerting, even puzzling. Walking down his long, vaulted cellar, in the medieval village of Château-Chalon, Berthet-Bondet pulled from a shelf a dusty bottle dating from 1988. We retreated to his study, where he poured me a glass in front of a vast fireplace. The first impression was of Sherry—indeed, some claim the Sherry flavor is a relic of the Spanish occupation of this region, back in the 16th and 17th centuries. But this wine had more character and depth than any Sherry I've tasted. The flavor was mineralized, nutty, with a suggestion of dried fruit and turmeric, held together by a crisp, appley acidity. For a wine nearly 20 years old, its vitality was breathtaking. It was, after the initial shock, quite sublime.

If *vin jaune* tastes like no other wine, it is simply because it is like no other. It is made from the Savagnin grape, a variety unique to the Jura, in a unique manner. In the normal process of barrel aging, the barrels are topped up as the wine evaporates, so as to prevent oxidization. With *vin jaune*, however, the *vigneron* lets evaporation take its course. By the time the wine is bottled, the barrel volume may have shrunk by up to a third, for which reason, according to tradition, the wine is bottled in the smaller *clavelin* bottle, containing a mere 62

centiliters. But where evaporation would spell disaster for most wines, for *vin jaune* it is alchemy.

Removing a stopper from a barrel, Berthet-Bondet shone a flashlight inside, revealing a thin, mottled blue-gray layer of mold: a fine film of yeast that grows spontaneously in the barrel as the wine evaporates. It looked less like winemaking than like a grievous violation of a health code: something you'd scrape off a cheese that had lurked unsuspected in the darkest corner of the fridge, perhaps. However, that alarming film of yeast, called a *voile*, is the secret to the wine's uniqueness. For not only does the yeast protect the wine from oxidizing, it will also, over the next few years, slowly imbue the wine with an inimitable and unmistakable flavor.

During the six years and three months (or longer if the *vigneron* sees fit) the wine spends in a barrel, the yeast works its magic. (Something similar happens in the production of Fino and Manzanilla Sherries, which also benefit from a film of benevolent yeast, or *flor*.) Even when the *voile* is long gone—the yeasts are spent by the time the wine is bottled—a *vin jaune* can be guaranteed to go on improving long after other wines have turned to vinegar. The best *vins jaunes*, which sell for about \$70 a *clavelin*, start to come into their own up to 20 years after bottling. The very best will hold up for 60 years, making them among the longest-lived of wines. Even by the patient standards of the winemaker's art, *vin jaune* needs time.

At the Percée, however, no one was in the mood for waiting. The dignitaries on the stage gave a string of windy, grandiloquent speeches in the civic style, while the increasingly impatient hordes shuffled their feet. Finally, a *vigneron* stepped up and uncorked the barrel with a swing of a hefty wooden mallet. To a mighty cheer from the crowd he raised the glass and, after a sip, dispensed with the tasting notes for a full-throated roar: "*Le terroir—c'est vous!*"

The Monday morning after the Percée, Salins-les-Bains had the air of a town suffering from a richly deserved hangover. Apart from a lone street sweeper looking somewhat daunted by the task ahead of him, all was quiet as I drove away. My road led me north and up the hill, away from the gentle terroir of *vin jaune*, dotted with vineyards and villages, into the hills and woods. I was heading to the High Jura and the Swiss border.

Though politically divided between France and Switzerland, gastronomically the High Jura is one. Specifically, this region is all about milk, albeit milk with a difference. As the road climbed, I passed isolated farms and dark pine forests interspersed with alpine meadows. From these meadows comes the milk that makes the Jura's remarkable cheeses; and from the wormwood that grows wild comes the drink that first put the Jura on the map, arguably the most underrated and misunderstood drink of them all: absinthe, or, as it was once known, the "milk of the Jura."

A little over a century ago, absinthe was the major industry of the High Jura town of Pontarlier. The same was true a few miles across the border, in Switzerland's Val-de-Travers. Indeed, it was here, in the late 18th century, that the drink originated. According to legend, credit goes to one Doctor Ordinaire, who rode around, collecting ingredients and selling the end product, on a horse called Roquette. For a hundred or so years, absinthe was wildly popular in France and Switzerland. But by the start of the 20th century, the drink had made deadly enemies among the temperance unions, the Church, the medical profession, parliaments, and, weirdly enough, the anti-Semitic press (some of the biggest producers were Jewish). For reasons that had little to do with scientific fact but a great deal to do with hysteria and misinformation, it was banned. Until last

March, the production and sale of all absinthe (though not, with characteristic FDA logic, its consumption) was illegal in the U.S., a ban based on a combination of flawed 19th-century science and enduring myths about toxicity—none of which have any basis in reality. (Currently only commercial brands of absinthe that contain less than ten parts per million of thujone, the active ingredient in wormwood, are allowed in this country.) Absinthe is a strong liqueur, but it is no hallucinogen, and it is certainly no poison.

It is, if correctly made, utterly delicious and somehow deeply evocative of the alpine meadows that produced it—all those bohemians and artists were onto something, in fact. And now, in the country of its birth, absinthe is making a comeback. At the Pierre Guy distillery, in Pontarlier, you can smell the aromas of wormwood and sweet, tangy anise before you get out of the car. Across town, at the Emile Pernot distillery, they are also rediscovering their past, turning out a superb absinthe, fresh, floral, astringent, and minty. The day I visited, Pernot was playing host to two absinthe enthusiasts, Peter Schaf and David Nathan-Maister (see “The Details,” page 109), who were borrowing the huge copper still to make what they called the *absintheur*’s absinthe: an exact reproduction of 18th-century absinthe, just as it was when Doctor Ordinaire rode up and down these hills. They have named it, aptly enough, Roquette 1797.

While the French and their collaborators are rediscovering absinthe, a few miles across the border, in Switzerland, it has never been forgotten. Re-legalized on March 1, 2005, absinthe is now one of the valley’s major industries. One reason behind this success is that absinthe never really went away, for in spite of the ban, the Val-de-Travers was the scene of a thriving home industry of moonshine absinthe. If the government said one thing, the Val-de-Travers was determined to do another, and absinthe was its talisman. Indeed, so firmly intertwined are absinthe and the sense of local identity that some people I spoke to voiced regret that absinthe is now, once again, legal. The thrill is gone and so, too, some would say, is the flavor—and they can, if you like, find you a bottle to prove it. (Critics point out that gone, too, is the thrill of not paying taxes on their alcohol.) But on one thing everyone seems to agree: Absinthe’s return represents the righting of a historic wrong.

While absinthe may once again carry the Jura’s name across the world stage, another great product of the region seems destined to remain, for most Americans, a matter of hearsay. *Vin jaune* and absinthe are by any measure extraordinary, but the cheese known variously as Vacherin du Haut-Doubs, Vacherin Mont d’Or, or, more simply, Mont d’Or, is in some ways the most distinctive product to have emerged from these mountains.

The day I visited the Mont d’Or, or “Mountain of Gold,” it was looking anything but golden; in fact, it was not even to be seen, shrouded in snow and swirling clouds. It was hard to picture how the snowy fields must look in summer, filled with grass and flowers and dotted with cows. Their milk produces cheeses known the world over: Comté, Morbier, Raclette, and Tomme. Yet for the cheese aficionado, winter is the only time to visit. The cows come down and into the barn, where they munch on feed harvested from the summer pastures. And the cheesemakers, so to speak, make hay.

More precisely, they make Mont d’Or. On that February morning, I found Fabrice Michelin, an artisanal producer at the foot of the Mont d’Or, stirring the morning’s production as long strands of rennet formed in the vat. Just on the French side of the border, overlooking pretty St.-Point-Lac, Michelin spoke of his cheese with the sense of strong regional identity I had by now come to expect. His cheese, he argued, is the fullest expression of these mountains, sourced exclusively from meadows at an altitude of between 800 and 950 meters. You could try to make Mont d’Or elsewhere, and indeed there are ersatz versions, but they don’t come close.

Mont d’Or is almost unique among cheeses in that it varies not so much with the seasons as with the weeks. By law, it can be made only between mid-August and mid-March, from milk produced by cows fed on hay and alfalfa. As the winter progresses, the feed ages, and the milk—and thus the cheese—develop accordingly. The best time to eat Mont d’Or is, says Michelin, in the depths of winter, when the flavor is at its richest.

By February, the cheeses were looking full, ripe, and deep. He brought me to his cellar, where they were lined up, ripening for market. Over the course of 17 to 25 days, he will hand-brush each and every cheese—seven tons in total—until they

CHICKEN WITH VIN JAUNE AND MORELS

SERVES 4

ACTIVE TIME: 20 MIN START TO FINISH: 3 HR

(INCLUDES SOAKING MUSHROOMS)

An elegant meal for four that requires only 20 minutes active time? That’s our kind of dinner. This creamy, comforting dish is just the type of thing you crave on a blustery March night. Because aged vin jaune can be hard to come by in the United States, we substituted a two-year-old Savagnin (with a flavor similar to a dry Sherry) and were very happy with the results.

¾ oz dried morel mushrooms (½ cup; see Shopping List, page 142)

1 cup boiling-hot water

1 large shallot, thinly sliced

2 garlic cloves, smashed

1 tablespoon unsalted butter

1 cup heavy cream

1 whole chicken (about 3½ lb), cut into 8 pieces

1 tablespoon vegetable oil

¾ cup vin jaune or Savagnin plus additional for sprinkling

▶ Soak morels in boiling-hot water 2 hours.

▶ Squeeze liquid from morels into remaining soaking liquid (set morels aside), then strain soaking liquid through a paper-towel-lined sieve into a bowl and reserve ½ cup.

▶ Cook shallot and garlic in butter with ¼ teaspoon salt in a small heavy saucepan over medium-low heat, stirring occasionally, until tender and golden brown, about 3 minutes. Add cream and reserved soaking liquid and boil until reduced to about ¾ cup, about 8 minutes.

▶ Meanwhile, pat chicken dry and sprinkle with ¾ teaspoon salt and ½ teaspoon pepper. Heat oil in a 12-inch heavy skillet over medium-high heat until it shimmers, then brown chicken in 2 batches, skin sides down first and turning once, until golden brown, about 6 minutes per batch. Transfer to a plate as browned.

▶ Return chicken to skillet, skin sides up, with any juices from plate and add morels, reduced cream mixture, and ¾ cup *vin jaune*. Cook at a bare simmer, covered, over low heat until tender, about 45 minutes.

▶ Transfer chicken and morels to a serving dish and keep warm, loosely covered with foil. Boil sauce until slightly thickened and reduced to about 1¼ cups, about 5 minutes.

▶ Pour sauce over chicken and morels and sprinkle with a little more *vin jaune*.

look like children that have been freshly bathed, scrubbed, and readied for bed. The youngest were pale and creamy, like Camembert; those nearing full ripeness had turned a gorgeous golden pink. Around each cheese was a band of bark—from spruces cut from the forest around the Mont d'Or—which not only holds the cheese together but also imparts a touch of its own unmistakable flavor. Thanks to the spruce, the best Mont d'Or is a sublime marriage of creaminess cut by a delightful suggestion of resin and tannins that leach in from the bark.

As with the absinthe, the cows—or rather the cheesemakers—take little notice of the border. On both sides of it they make Mont d'Or, with the important difference that Swiss Mont d'Or is thermized—that is, heated short of pasteurization. It is by any measure a superb cheese, but one that, many people will tell you, is not quite what it was. Back in France, the Mont d'Or is neither thermized nor, ergo, pasteurized. Which makes a world of difference. The somewhat gummy, milder flavor of the Swiss cheese is overshadowed by the more complex, deeper flavor of the French product.

Even the Swiss precautions, however, are not enough to satisfy the FDA. The very qualities that make Mont d'Or such a superb cheese also guarantee it will rub the cheese police

the wrong way. In terms of texture, a ripe Mont d'Or is positively molten, more liquid than the ripest of Bries. Being made from raw milk, it would be, after the 60 days of aging stipulated by FDA regulations for raw-milk cheeses, long gone. Everything that goes into creating that inimitable, supremely creamy and complex flavor is precisely what condemns it—no deterrent to those determined cheese guerrillas who run the gauntlet of U.S. customs at the airport or to the odd intrepid restaurateur. But for all intents and purposes, Mont d'Or—the real Mont d'Or—does not reach the States.

In the dairy, pressing a fresh batch of cheeses into their spruce bands, Michelin seemed unconcerned. Indeed, he already had his hands full (his clients include a certain M. Sarkozy of the Élysée), and the four small milk suppliers he visits on his daily round at 5 A.M., day in, day out, are already struggling to meet his demand. In a globalized world, where you can get most things online or in a local store, there is something reassuring about his attitude, just as there is something reassuring about the products he and his fellow Juraissiens make. He would, he admitted, like the wider world to know about his Mont d'Or; then he observed, with a Gallic shrug, that they'll just have to come and get it. ☺

THE DETAILS

STAYING AND EATING THERE

At Malbuisson, in the heart of Mont d'Or country, Catherine and Marc Faivre run the superb **Le Bon Accueil** (Rue de la Source, St.-Point-Lac; 011-33-3-81-69-30-58; le-bon-accueil.fr; from \$96), respectful of tradition and happily innovative. Try the saddle of rabbit cooked in Savagnin, coriander, and Savoy cabbage.

The ultimate Jura dining experience can be had at **Jean-Paul Jeunet** (9 Rue de l'Hôtel de Ville, Arbois; 011-33-3-84-66-05-67; jean-pauljeunet.com; from \$128), rated France's Best Establishment of the Year in 2006 by the prestigious *GaultMillau* guide. Jeunet's menu changes every month, according to seasonal variations and the herbs he picks from the surrounding hills. If you go in February, you'll get the Percée menu, accompanied by a range of *vins jaunes*. Try the frogs' legs with parsley and garlic sauce with an infusion of absinthe, and the *féra*, a local fish poached in a Savagnin butter and served on baby turnips dissolving into a milk sauce infused with dandelions and herbs. Located in the historic center of Lons-le-Saunier (a very pretty and surprisingly grand provincial town), **La Comédie** (65 Rue de l'Agriculture; 03-84-24-20-66) serves low-key but superb *cuisine jurassienne*, with an emphasis on the local fish, eels, and crayfish.

BEING THERE

The **Percée** (percee-du-vin-jaune.com) is held each year in early February. In June, Boveresse, Switzerland, hosts an **absinthe festival**. The harvest festival, known as the **Biou**, is held in the major wine-producing villages of the Jura in September. Pontarlier holds the **Absinthiades**, a gathering of *absintheurs* and collectors from around the world, in October. Pontarlier also hosts a small gastronomic fair in early September. There is a well-signposted **Route Touristique des Vins du Jura** (laroutedesvinsdujura.com), which will lead you the length and breadth of the Jura's wines. Not to be missed is **Château-Chalon**, an extremely pretty village that also happens to produce some of the most distinguished of all *vins jaunes*. It's just up the road from the even prettier village of Baume-les-Messieurs, where you can stay in the vast, crumbling abbey and eat at a handful of modest restaurants. To the north, near Arbois, **Jacques Puffeney** (Quartier St. Laurent; 03-84-66-10-89) is a favorite *vigneron*, in the gorgeous stone village of

Montigny-lès-Arsures. For the cheese lover, the best bet is to follow **La Route des Fromages du Haut-Jura** (parc-haut-jura.fr), which will take you to a string of small producers who will give you samples of their product until you are truly cheesed-out. If you are here outside of the Mont d'Or season, you'll have to console yourself with the superb Comté (lesroutesducomte.com). In Pontarlier, on the French side, the **Pierre Guy** (49 Rue des Lavaux; 03-81-39-04-70) and **Emile Pernot** (44 Rue de Besançon; 03-81-39-04-28) distilleries are open to visitors and will happily give you a sample of absinthe. In Switzerland, one of the best distillers is **Claude-Alain Bugnon** (32a Grande Rue, Couvet; 032-863-36-46). His La Clandestine absinthe is a regular award winner—but then he ought to know his stuff, having been a clandestine distiller for many years during prohibition. If your head isn't spinning from the absinthe, there can be few areas as spectacular as the **Creux du Van**, on the mountain ridge above Couvet, with breathtaking views over the lake of Neuchâtel and the Alps—a Swiss version of the Grand Canyon. Once you've soaked up the views, head to **Le Soliat** (near Couvet, on the road to Noiraigue; 032-863-31-36) for a genuine fondue experience, served upstairs in this farmhouse inn. For those in need of a respite, there are luxurious spas at **Lons-le-Saunier** and **Salins-les-Bains**.

SOURCING THE BEST OF THE BEST

Vin jaune is relatively hard to find in the U.S., but Puffeney's superb *vins jaunes* are available at New York's **Chambers Street Wines** (chambersstwines.com), California's **K&L** (klwines.com), and other venues (for stores selling Puffeney's in your area, go to wine-searcher.com). France's **Lucid Absinthe Supérieure** has been available in this country since last May. For sources, visit drinklucid.com. There are many dealers selling illegal and overpriced ersatz Czech absinthes in the U.S., but very few good or legal ones. The best source is Peter Schaf's **www.absintheonline.com**, which will mail some of the finest Swiss and French absinthes from the U.K. (Assuming the products contain less than ten parts per million of thujone, the transactions are legal.) If you want to buy vintage, pre-ban absinthe, such as Toulouse-Lautrec might have drunk (from around \$3,000), try **oxygenee.com/vintage**, the site affiliated with David Nathan-Maister's Virtual Absinthe Museum. —J.T.



BIENVENUE

THERE'S NO PLACE LIKE HOME—EXCEPT MAYBE A NEIGHBORHOOD BISTRO, WHERE STEAK FRITES AND POT-AU-FEU ARE ALWAYS THERE TO GREET YOU. RECIPES BY SHELLEY WISEMAN PHOTOGRAPHS BY ROMULO YANES

Small bowls of Dijon mustard, grated horseradish, and crisp cornichons complete the picture of a classic pot-au-feu.



ENTRECÔTE BÉARNAISE

PAN-SEARED RIB-EYE STEAK WITH BÉARNAISE

SERVES 4

ACTIVE TIME: 20 MIN START TO FINISH: 20 MIN

Tricked out with shoestring fries, this is a time-honored rendition of steak frites—meat and potatoes à la française. A rich sauce on the side enhances the already flavorful well-marbled meat.

FOR STEAKS

- 2 (1¼-inch-thick) boneless rib-eye steaks (16 oz each)
- 1 tablespoon vegetable oil

FOR BÉARNAISE

- ¼ cup dry white wine
- ¼ cup white-wine vinegar
- ¼ cup finely chopped shallots
- 2 tablespoons chopped fresh tarragon, divided
- 3 large egg yolks
- 1 stick unsalted butter, cut into 8 pieces
- ½ teaspoon fresh lemon juice, or to taste

ACCOMPANIMENT: shoestring potatoes (recipe follows)

COOK STEAKS: Halve steaks crosswise, then pat dry and sprinkle all over with 1 teaspoon salt and ½ teaspoon pepper (total).

► Heat a 12-inch heavy ovenproof skillet (not nonstick) over medium heat until hot, then add oil, swirling skillet to coat bottom, and cook steaks 5 minutes per side for medium-rare.

► Transfer steaks to a platter and let stand, loosely covered with foil, 5 minutes.

MAKE BÉARNAISE WHILE STEAKS STAND: Boil wine, vinegar, shallots, and 1 tablespoon tarragon in a small heavy saucepan until liquid is reduced to 2 tablespoons, then strain through a fine-mesh sieve set into a medium metal bowl, pressing on and then discarding solids.

► Whisk yolks into vinegar mixture, then set bowl over a pan of barely simmering water and cook, whisking constantly, until yolks have thickened slightly (do not scramble).

► Whisk in butter 1 piece at a time, adding each piece before previous one has melted completely. (For more about emulsions, see Kitchen Notebook, page 133.) Remove from heat and whisk in lemon juice, remaining tablespoon tarragon, ½ teaspoon salt, and ½ teaspoon pepper (or to taste). Serve steaks with sauce.

COOKS' NOTES: The egg yolks in the sauce will not be fully cooked.

• Béarnaise can be made 20 minutes ahead and kept in bowl, covered, over hot water off heat.

POMMES PAILLES

SHOESTRING POTATOES

SERVES 4

ACTIVE TIME: 25 MIN START TO FINISH: 25 MIN

A mountain of skinny, crisp fries adds drama to the plate. Unlike thick-cut fries, which are traditionally fried twice (first to cook them through and then to crisp them), shoestrings are fried only once. And like potato chips, they taste great at any temperature.

About 6 cups vegetable oil for frying

- 2 russet (baking) potatoes (1½ lb total)

EQUIPMENT: a deep-fat thermometer; an adjustable-blade slicer fitted with ⅛-inch julienne blade

► Heat 2 inches oil to 375°F in a wide 5- to 7-quart heavy pot (at least 4 inches deep) over medium heat.

► Meanwhile, peel potatoes and cut lengthwise with slicer to make ⅛-inch-thick julienne strips.

► Fry potatoes in 5 or 6 small batches, stirring, until golden brown, about 2 minutes per batch. (Return oil to 375°F between batches.) Drain potatoes on paper towels and season with salt.

COOKS' NOTE: Potatoes can be cut 3 hours ahead and chilled in a large bowl of cold water. Drain well and pat dry before frying.

SALADE TIÈDE AUX OEUFS EN MEURETTE

WARM FRISÉE-LARDON SALAD WITH POACHED EGGS IN

RED-WINE SAUCE

SERVES 4

ACTIVE TIME: 45 MIN START TO FINISH: 1¼ HR

Two grand bistro classics meet here: the frisée aux lardons salad with a poached egg, and oeufs en meurette (poached eggs in a red-wine sauce). Frisée, with its slightly bitter flavor and sturdy but delicate texture, stands up beautifully to the rich, concentrated sauce and the warm poached egg.

FOR SAUCE

- ½ cup chopped shallots
- 1½ tablespoons unsalted butter, divided
- 1 teaspoon tomato paste
- 1 (750-ml) bottle dry red wine
- 2 garlic cloves, chopped
- 4 thyme sprigs
- 1 large parsley sprig
- 1 Turkish or ½ California bay leaf
- 1 (¼-lb) piece slab bacon, cut crosswise into ¼-inch sticks (lardons)
- ⅔ cup veal demi-glace (see Shopping List, page 142) or 2 tablespoons demi-glace concentrate plus ½ cup water
- ½ tablespoon all-purpose flour

FOR EGGS AND TOASTS

- 8 (½-inch-thick) baguette slices
- 1 tablespoon olive oil
- 1 garlic clove, halved
- 1 teaspoon distilled white vinegar
- 8 large eggs

FOR SALAD

- ½ lb frisée, trimmed and torn into pieces (4 cups)
- 1 teaspoon distilled white vinegar
- 2 teaspoons olive oil

MAKE SAUCE: Cook shallots in 1 tablespoon butter in a heavy medium saucepan over medium heat, stirring, until golden, about 3 minutes. Add tomato paste and cook, stirring, 1 minute.

Add wine, garlic, thyme, parsley, bay leaf, ½ teaspoon salt, and ¼ teaspoon pepper and boil until reduced to about 1 cup, 25 to 40 minutes. (For more about reductions, see Kitchen Notebook, page 133.)

► Preheat oven to 350°F with racks in upper and lower thirds.

► Meanwhile, cook lardons in a small heavy skillet over medium heat, stirring occasionally, until browned but not crisp. Drain on paper towels.

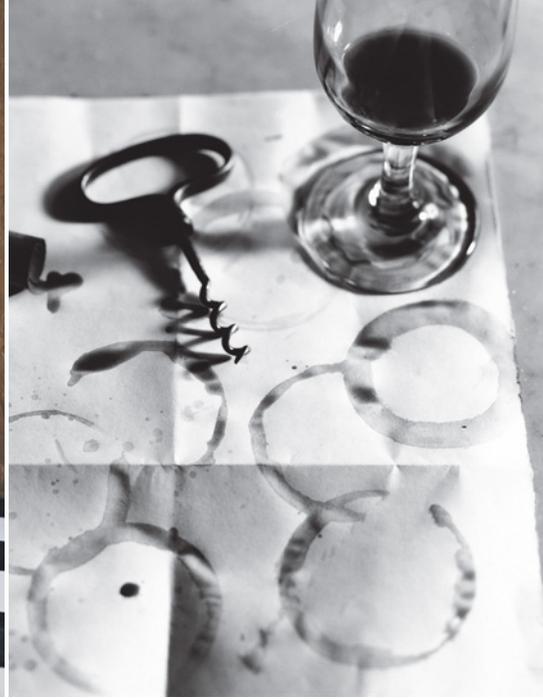
► Strain wine mixture through a fine-mesh sieve into a bowl, pressing on and then discarding solids. Return to saucepan, then stir in veal demi-glace and bring to a simmer.

► Stir together flour and remaining ½ tablespoon butter to make a beurre manié, then whisk into sauce and simmer, whisking occasionally, 3 minutes. Add half of lardons to sauce and keep warm off heat, covered. ► Wrap remaining lardons in foil and keep warm on rack in lower third of oven.

COOK EGGS AND TOASTS: Brush baguette slices with oil and season lightly with salt and pepper. Toast in upper third of oven until pale golden and crisp, about 10 minutes. Rub garlic on toasts. ►



Begin with a rare rib eye topped with béarnaise and a cascade of fries. Add a carafe of good wine, and voilà—the essence of French bistro style.





Profiteroles with ice cream and chocolate sauce call to mind éclairs in a patisserie window. Opposite: *Meurette* sauce adds another dimension to frisée-lardon salad; roasted tomatoes, onions, and olives lend Provençal flair to chicken; a mustard-herb butter gives tang to salmon and lentils.

►Meanwhile, fill a deep large skillet with 1¼ inches water, then add vinegar and bring to a simmer. Break 1 egg into a cup and slide egg into water. Repeat with remaining eggs, spacing them apart, and poach at a bare simmer until whites are firm but yolks are still runny, 2 to 3 minutes.

MAKE SALAD WHILE EGGS POACH: Toss frisée with vinegar and ¼ teaspoon salt, then with oil, and divide among 4 plates.

TO SERVE: Lift each egg out of poaching liquid with a slotted spatula and gently pat dry (still on spatula), then transfer to a toast. Season eggs lightly with salt and pepper and divide among salads. Pour sauce over eggs and sprinkle salads with remaining lardons.

COOKS' NOTE: Sauce can be made 1 day ahead and chilled, covered (once cool).

POULET PROVENÇAL

BRAISED CHICKEN WITH TOMATOES AND OLIVES

SERVES 4

ACTIVE TIME: 25 MIN START TO FINISH: 1½ HR

Featuring olive oil and the combined herbs and produce of the south of France, this one-dish country dinner will transport you to a café table in Aix in a heartbeat.

- 1 lb tomatoes (3 to 4 medium), cut into wedges
- 1 large onion, cut into wedges, leaving root ends intact
- ½ cup drained brine-cured black olives, pitted if desired
- 4 large garlic cloves, sliced, plus 1 teaspoon minced
- 3 tablespoons olive oil, divided
- 2 teaspoons *herbes de Provence*, divided
- ½ teaspoon fennel seeds
- 1 whole chicken (about 3½ lb)

EQUIPMENT: kitchen string

ACCOMPANIMENT: crusty bread

GARNISH: chopped flat-leaf parsley

►Preheat convection oven to 400°F or regular oven to 425°F with rack in middle.

►Toss together tomatoes, onion, olives, sliced garlic, 2 tablespoons oil, 1 teaspoon *herbes de Provence*, fennel seeds, ½ teaspoon salt, and ¼ teaspoon pepper in a 13- by 9-inch or other 3-quart shallow baking dish. Push vegetables to sides of dish to make room for chicken.

►Stir together minced garlic, 1 teaspoon salt, ½ teaspoon pepper, remaining teaspoon *herbes de Provence*, and remaining tablespoon olive oil.

►Remove excess fat from chicken and pat dry, then rub inside and out with seasoning mixture. Tie legs together with string, then put chicken in baking dish.

►Roast until an instant-read thermometer inserted into thickest part of a thigh (do not touch bone) registers 170°F, about 1 hour in convection oven; 1 to 1¼ hours in regular oven.

►Let chicken stand 10 minutes before carving. Serve with vegetables and pan juices.

POT-AU-FEU

SERVES 8

ACTIVE TIME: 1½ HR START TO FINISH: 5¼ HR

A single pot-au-feu can become several courses. First, serve the marrowbones with salt and toast, then present the meats and vegetables. The broth can be a separate course or can be immediately ladled over the meats and vegetables, with mustard and horseradish added to taste and cornichons served on the side.

- 4 lb tied bone-in beef chuck roast
- 4 lb (2- to 3-inch) bone-in short ribs
- 2 onions, quartered
- 2 medium carrots, halved lengthwise
- 6 qt water
- 2 (3-inch) pieces celery
- 6 parsley sprigs
- 6 thyme sprigs
- 2 Turkish bay leaves or 1 California
- ¼ teaspoon black peppercorns
- 1 whole clove
- 8 small or 4 medium leeks (2½ lb)
- 1 lb small boiling onions (about 20), left unpeeled
- 8 (2-inch-long) veal marrowbones (optional)
- 8 small carrots (1 lb), peeled and trimmed, leaving ½ inch of stems
- 1 lb small turnips, peeled and cut into 1-inch wedges

EQUIPMENT: a 12-qt pot; cheesecloth; kitchen string

ACCOMPANIMENTS: toasted baguette slices for marrow; coarse salt; Dijon mustard; finely grated fresh or bottled horseradish; cornichons

GARNISH: chopped parsley

COOK MEATS: Preheat convection oven to 425°F or regular oven to 450°F with rack in middle.

►Pat meats dry, then rub with 2½ teaspoons salt (total) and arrange in 1 layer in a large shallow baking pan with quartered onions and halved carrots. Roast, turning occasionally, until meats and vegetables are well browned, 35 to 45 minutes in convection oven; 45 minutes to 1 hour in regular oven.

►Transfer meats and vegetables to pot with any juices from pan. Deglaze pan with a little water, scraping up brown bits, then add to pot with water (6 quarts) and 1 teaspoon salt. (For more on deglazing, see Kitchen Notebook, page 133.) Bring to a simmer, skimming foam and fat from surface.

►Tie celery, parsley, thyme, bay leaves, peppercorns, and clove in a cheesecloth bundle and add to pot.

►Cut off dark green part from leeks, reserving remainder, and wash. Fold greens and tie in 2 bunches, then add to pot. Gently simmer, uncovered, skimming as necessary, until meats are very tender, about 3 hours.

PREPARE LEEKS AND ONIONS WHILE MEATS SIMMER: Trim roots from leeks, keeping ends intact, then, starting 1½ inches from root end, slit each leek lengthwise and wash between layers. Tie leeks together in 2 bunches, tying each bunch in 2 places.

►Blanch boiling onions in a medium pot of boiling water 1 minute, then drain and peel.

COOK MARROWBONES AND VEGETABLES IN BROTH: Preheat oven to 200°F with rack in lower third.

►Transfer meats to a shallow baking pan, discarding bones from short ribs, and keep warm, covered with foil, in oven. Discard cheesecloth bundle, leek greens, and cooked onions and carrots from broth, then skim off fat from broth with a skimmer or large spoon and keep broth warm over low heat.

►Arrange marrowbones (if using) upright in 1 layer in a medium saucepan and add enough broth from pot (about 1 quart) to cover bones. Add 1 teaspoon salt and simmer gently, uncovered, until marrow is soft, 15 to 20 minutes.

►While marrowbones cook, simmer boiling onions and leeks with 1 teaspoon salt and ½ teaspoon pepper in remaining broth in large pot, uncovered, 15 minutes.

►Add small carrots and turnips and simmer, uncovered, until all vegetables are tender, about 15 minutes.

SERVE POT-AU-FEU: Transfer marrowbones with tongs to a platter (discard liquid) and serve with baguette slices and coarse salt.

- ▶ Discard bone from chuck roast and slice chuck ½ inch thick, then arrange, along with meat from short ribs, on a large platter.
- ▶ Transfer vegetables to platter with a slotted spoon and cut string off leeks.
- ▶ Season broth with salt and pepper, then spoon some over meats and vegetables to moisten and serve remainder in a soup tureen.
- ▶ To eat, ladle broth over meats and vegetables in soup plates, then stir in horseradish and mustard to taste.

COOKS' NOTES: Meats can be simmered 1 day ahead. Chill broth and meats separately, uncovered, until cooled completely, then cover. To reheat meats, remove solidified fat from broth, then return meats to broth and bring slowly to a simmer, about 1 hour, before transferring meats to oven and cooking vegetables.

- Vegetables can be cut and tied 1 day ahead. Chill separately, covering carrots and turnips with water.

SAUMON AUX LENTILLES

SALMON WITH LENTILS AND MUSTARD-HERB BUTTER

SERVES 4

ACTIVE TIME: 40 MIN START TO FINISH: 50 MIN

Despite the fact that salmon seems to be everywhere these days, this dish is something very special. Mustard-herb butter gives a lemony pop to the meatiness of the fish, while French green lentils add a unique texture that regular brown lentils just don't have.

FOR MUSTARD-HERB BUTTER

- 5 tablespoons unsalted butter, softened
- 1 tablespoon chopped chives
- 1 teaspoon chopped tarragon
- 2 teaspoons grainy mustard
- 2 teaspoons fresh lemon juice

FOR LENTILS

- 1 cup French green lentils
- 4 cups water
- 2 medium leeks (white and pale green parts only)
- 1 tablespoon unsalted butter
- ½ to 1 tablespoon fresh lemon juice

FOR SALMON

- 4 (6-oz) pieces skinless salmon fillet
- 2 tablespoons unsalted butter

MAKE MUSTARD-HERB BUTTER: Stir together all ingredients with ¼ teaspoon each of salt and pepper.

COOK LENTILS: Bring lentils, water, and ¾ teaspoon salt to a boil in a heavy medium saucepan, then reduce heat and simmer, uncovered, until lentils are just tender, 20 to 25 minutes. Remove from heat and let stand 5 minutes. Reserve ½ cup cooking liquid, then drain lentils.

▶ While lentils cook, chop leeks, then wash (see Tips, page 143). Cook leeks in butter in a heavy medium skillet over medium-low heat, stirring occasionally, until softened, 6 to 8 minutes.

▶ Add lentils with reserved cooking liquid to leeks along with 3 tablespoons mustard-herb butter and cook, stirring, until lentils are heated through and butter is melted. Add lemon juice and salt and pepper to taste. Remove from heat and keep warm, covered.

SAUTÉ SALMON WHILE LEEKS COOK: Pat salmon dry and sprinkle with ½ teaspoon salt and ¼ teaspoon pepper (total).

▶ Heat butter in a large nonstick skillet over medium-high heat until foam subsides, then sauté salmon, turning once, until golden and just cooked through, 6 to 8 minutes total.

▶ Serve salmon, topped with remaining mustard-herb butter, over lentils.

COOKS' NOTES: Mustard-herb butter can be made 1 day ahead and chilled, covered. Soften at room temperature before using (1 hour).

- Lentils can be cooked (but not drained) 1 day ahead and chilled in cooking liquid, covered (once cool).

PROFITEROLES WITH COFFEE ICE CREAM AND CHOCOLATE SAUCE

SERVES 6

ACTIVE TIME: 45 MIN START TO FINISH: 1¼ HR

Leave it to the French to come up with the classiest way of doing an ice cream sundae. Hide the grown-up coffee ice cream inside a crisp puff of pastry (the same dough that cream puffs are made from), then drizzle it with full-bodied chocolate sauce. For tips on making great profiteroles, see Kitchen Notebook, page 133.

FOR PROFITEROLES

- 1 qt coffee ice cream
- ¾ stick unsalted butter, cut into pieces
- ¾ cup water
- ¼ teaspoon salt
- ¾ cup all-purpose flour
- 3 large eggs

FOR CHOCOLATE SAUCE

- ½ cup sugar
- 1 cup heavy cream
- 7 oz fine-quality bittersweet chocolate (no more than 60% cacao if marked), finely chopped
- ½ teaspoon pure vanilla extract
- 1 tablespoon Cognac or brandy (optional)

EQUIPMENT: a small (about 1½-inch) ice cream scoop; a large pastry bag fitted with a ¾-inch plain tip

MAKE PROFITEROLES: Chill a small metal baking pan in freezer. Form 18 ice cream balls with scoop and freeze in chilled pan at least 1 hour (this will make serving faster).

▶ Preheat oven to 425°F with rack in middle. Butter a large baking sheet.

▶ Bring butter, water, and salt to a boil in a small heavy saucepan, stirring until butter is melted. Reduce heat to medium, then add flour all at once and cook, beating with a wooden spoon, until mixture pulls away from side of pan and forms a ball, about 30 seconds. Transfer mixture to a bowl and cool slightly, 2 to 3 minutes.

▶ Add eggs 1 at a time, beating well with an electric mixer after each addition.

▶ Transfer warm mixture to pastry bag and pipe 18 mounds (about 1¼ inches wide and 1 inch high) 1 inch apart on baking sheet.

▶ Bake until puffed and golden brown, 20 to 25 minutes total. Prick each profiterole once with a skewer, then return to oven to dry, propping oven door slightly ajar, 3 minutes. Cool on sheet on a rack.

MAKE CHOCOLATE SAUCE: Heat sugar in a 2-quart heavy saucepan over medium heat, stirring with a fork to heat sugar evenly, until it starts to melt, then stop stirring and cook, swirling pan occasionally so sugar melts evenly, until it is dark amber.

▶ Remove from heat, then add cream and a pinch of salt (mixture will bubble and steam). Return to heat and cook, stirring, until caramel has dissolved. ▶ Remove from heat and add chocolate, whisking until melted, then whisk in vanilla and Cognac (if using). Keep warm, covered.

SERVE PROFITEROLES: Halve profiteroles horizontally, then fill each with a ball of ice cream. Put 3 profiteroles on each plate and drizzle generously with warm chocolate sauce.

COOKS' NOTES: Ice cream balls can be frozen up to 1 day (cover with plastic wrap after 1 hour).

• Profiteroles can be baked 1 day ahead and cooled completely, then kept in an airtight container at room temperature. Recrisp on a baking sheet in a 375°F oven 5 minutes. Cool before filling. 🍴



Winter whites: Crisp endive sparkles with an herb vinaigrette; chicken and vegetables cooked in Riesling, opposite, are deliciously soothing.

Alsatian Sensation

The combination of German heartiness and French delicacy that characterizes Alsatian food also happens to be exactly what tastes right as winter mingles with spring—rich and luxurious, but with a brightness that hints at the season ahead. Recipes by Ruth Cousineau Photographs by Marcus Nilsson



MENU SERVES 4

TROUT CHOUCROUTE

Meyer-Fonné Vieilles Vignes Pinot Blanc '06

CHICKEN IN RIESLING

RED AND WHITE ENDIVE SALAD

Meyer-Fonné Pfoeller Riesling '06

PEAR AND ALMOND TART

Ostertag Fronholz Sélection de Grains Nobles

Gewürztraminer '05

TROUT CHOUCROUTE

SERVES 4 (FIRST COURSE)

ACTIVE TIME: 30 MIN START TO FINISH: 1¼ HR

This dish takes the best of traditional choucroute garni—smoked pork married to sauerkraut that's had its bite removed by being simmered in wine with bay and juniper—and lightens it up, pairing it with another Alsatian favorite, trout, and transforming a stick-to-the-ribs dish into something fit for a first course. You'll be pleasantly surprised at how the slight acidity of the kraut and the smokiness of the bacon play up, rather than dominate, the fish's clean flavor.

- 4 bacon slices
- 1 large onion, halved lengthwise and thinly sliced
- 3 tablespoons unsalted butter
- 1 lb sauerkraut, drained, rinsed, and squeezed dry
- 2 juniper berries (see cooks' note, below), slightly crushed
- 1 Turkish or ½ California bay leaf
- 1½ teaspoons sugar
- ⅔ cup dry white wine (preferably Alsatian Riesling)
- ¾ cup water
- 4 (4- to 5-oz) trout fillets with skin, pin bones removed

▶ Cook bacon in a 10-inch nonreactive heavy skillet (see Tips, page 143) over medium-low heat, turning occasionally, until lightly browned but still flexible. Drain on paper towels.

▶ Pour off all but 2 tablespoons fat from skillet, then cook onion with butter in skillet over medium heat, stirring occasionally, until golden, 10 to 15 minutes. Stir in remaining ingredients, except trout, and ½ teaspoon each of salt and pepper and simmer, covered, stirring occasionally, until liquid is absorbed and mixture is tender and lightly browned, 25 to 35 minutes.

▶ While sauerkraut mixture cooks, put trout, skin sides down, on a work surface. Pat fillets dry and lightly season with salt and pepper, then put a strip of bacon on each. Roll up fillets from wider end, enclosing bacon and securing each with a wooden pick.

▶ Arrange rolls, wider spiral sides up, on sauerkraut mixture and cover with a round of buttered parchment paper, then with a lid. Cook, covered, over medium heat until fish is just cooked through, 10 to 12 minutes. Discard bay leaf, juniper berries, and wooden picks. Serve trout on sauerkraut.

COOKS' NOTES: Juniper berries can be found in the spice aisle at most supermarkets.

• Bacon and sauerkraut can be made 1 day ahead and chilled separately, covered. Reheat before using.

CHICKEN IN RIESLING

SERVES 4

ACTIVE TIME: 30 MIN START TO FINISH: 1 HR

Though coq au vin made with red wine is perhaps the best-known incarnation of the French dish in this country, most regions of France have unique versions that take advantage of local wines. Alsace's dry Riesling lends a gentle richness to this creamy, comforting meal.

- 1 whole chicken (about 3½ lb), backbone discarded and chicken cut French style into 8 pieces (see cooks' note, below)
- 1 tablespoon vegetable oil
- 3 tablespoons unsalted butter, divided
- 4 medium leeks (white and pale green parts only), finely chopped (2 cups)
- 2 tablespoons finely chopped shallot
- 4 medium carrots, halved diagonally
- 1 cup dry white wine (preferably Alsatian Riesling)
- 1½ lb small (2-inch) red potatoes
- 2 tablespoons finely chopped flat-leaf parsley
- ½ cup crème fraîche or heavy cream
- Fresh lemon juice to taste

▶ Preheat oven to 350°F with rack in middle.

▶ Pat chicken dry and sprinkle with 1 teaspoon salt and a rounded ¾ teaspoon pepper. Heat oil with 1 tablespoon butter in a wide 3½- to 5-quart heavy ovenproof pot over medium-high heat until foam subsides, then brown chicken in 2 batches, turning once, about 10 minutes total per batch. Transfer to a plate.

▶ Meanwhile, wash leeks (see Tips, page 143) and pat dry.

▶ Pour off fat from pot, then cook leeks, shallot, and ¼ teaspoon salt in remaining 2 tablespoons butter, covered, over medium-low heat, stirring occasionally, until leeks are pale golden, 5 to 7 minutes. Add chicken, skin sides up, with any juices from plate, carrots, and wine and boil until liquid is reduced by half, 3 to 4 minutes. Cover pot and braise chicken in oven until cooked through, 20 to 25 minutes.

▶ While chicken braises, peel potatoes, then generously cover with cold water in a 2- to 3-quart saucepan and add 1½ teaspoons salt. Bring to a boil, then simmer until potatoes are just tender, about 15 minutes. Drain in a colander, then return to saucepan. Add parsley and shake to coat.

▶ Stir crème fraîche into chicken mixture and season with salt, pepper, and lemon juice, then add potatoes.

COOKS' NOTE: A chicken cut French style yields 2 breast halves with wings attached, halved crosswise for a total of 4 breast pieces, 2 drumsticks, and 2 thighs. If you don't want to cut up a whole chicken, you can use 3 pounds chicken parts.

RED AND WHITE ENDIVE SALAD

SERVES 4

ACTIVE TIME: 15 MIN START TO FINISH: 15 MIN

This salad shows how bitterness, punctuated with a zingy vinaigrette, can be supremely refreshing.

- 1½ tablespoons white-wine or Champagne vinegar
- 2 teaspoons finely chopped shallot
- ½ teaspoon Dijon mustard
- ¼ cup extra-virgin olive oil (preferably French or mild)
- 1 lb Belgian endives (preferably half red and half white), cut crosswise into 1½-inch pieces and separated
- 1½ tablespoons finely chopped chervil or flat-leaf parsley
- 1 tablespoon finely chopped chives

▶ Whisk together vinegar, shallot, mustard, ¼ teaspoon salt, and ½ teaspoon pepper in a large bowl, then add oil in a slow stream, whisking until combined. ▶ Just before serving, add endives and herbs, tossing to coat.

COOKS' NOTE: Endives can be washed and dried 1 day ahead and chilled in sealed bags lined with paper towels.

For the PEAR AND ALMOND TART recipe, see page 138.

WINE ADVICE is on page 54.



This luscious dish gives the cook a secret advantage: It has all the depth of a slowly simmered stew but is ready in just an hour.





A lovable trio: Crisp sugared almonds provide a textural contrast for the sliced pears and eau-de-vie-spiked custard that lie beneath.

SMALL WORLD

Is it possible to both resist globalization and profit from it? In Normandy, a handful of local heroes think so—and are proving it with an ancient tradition and a great baguette.

BY BILL MCKIBBEN PHOTOGRAPHS BY MARIE HENNECHART



The remote province of Perche is one of France's best-kept secrets. Opposite: David Lambert's baguettes kick-started a local-food movement.





Philippe Gallioz and Jean Larrivière's flour, produced at a centuries-old mill, links farmers with the bakers of *baguettes du Perche*.







Residents of the stone villages of Perche decided that their small-scale way of life—and food with home-grown flavor—are worth fighting for.



Once you go past raw, it's hard to imagine a food much simpler than a baguette—flour, water, yeast, heat, essentially the same since before remembering began. But if you want one single bite that summons all the politics, and all the possibility, of food right now (or even if all you want is breakfast), you might as well tear off a hunk of *baguette du Perche*.

First, Perche. A part of France you may not know, a subregion of Normandy, in from the coast, perhaps 100 miles southwest of Paris, a stop or two past Chartres on the train. Not particularly good soil, and filled with tiny valleys and small ridges—it looks more than a little like New England, and was settled in much the same way: small farms, fieldstone walls, hundreds of smallish manors for smallish gentry. And like New England, it's known for apples—hard cider, Calvados. No wine, but a mix of other crops: wheat, oilseed, corn. And grass, to feed the mighty Percheron horses that once worked these sloping fields. The place functioned just fine for a long time, to judge by the churches that have been sitting there, oh, a millennium.

But it wasn't the kind of region likely to prosper in an era of industrialized agriculture. When the Europeans, like the Americans, began to subsidize farming in the postwar years, growers in Perche tried to adapt. To eyes attuned to Kansas cropland, their fields still look quaint, but older residents say the average farm doubled in size, from 75 to 150 acres. Many of the glorious hedgerows, 15 feet high and centuries old, were ripped out to give farmers a few more meters in each field. And even that wasn't enough: More and more cultivated land went under, the homes sold to Parisian weekenders or British expats.

Enter a couple of guys with an idea. Philippe Gallioz, who brokered wheat sold for animal feed, and his partner, Jean Larrivière, had made good money in this new agricultural world, but they wanted out—wanted to do something more real. One day, scouting in the countryside, they came across a 400-year-old mill near the town of Mortagne-au-Perche. They knew enough about grain to realize there was no reason the local wheat needed to be fed to cows; the mill could grind perfectly good flour if only they could find a market for it. First they contracted with a few nearby farmers to have them grow much of their grain organically—*bio*, as the French would say. And they found buyers for their flour, but not enough. So they hatched the next plan: a bread of their own. A baguette.

For the French, of course, bread is more central than it is for almost any other nation—“the rest of our cuisine is so there will be something to accompany the *pain*,” as one chef said at the end of a meal that saw the basket emptied and filled at least as often as the wineglass. It's true that the relentless rise of the *hypermarché* has turned many of the suburban French into the same race of bagged-bread eaters that inhabit our continent; but in the cities, you can stand on any corner in the morning and watch dozens of residents walking home to breakfast,

baguette in hand. And in the countryside, even more so: The 11,000 residents of Nogent-le-Rotrou, one of the principal towns of Perche, support 13 bread bakeries.

So a baguette was an obvious plan. But every bakery was already making one. How to stand out? And how to produce something that would command an extra 20 centimes to pay for the local wheat and mill? The first answer was a new recipe. Because the French rank everything and everyone, there was a national breadmaster, to whom they could turn for help. He came up with a formula—secret, but involving a 14-hour rise in the refrigerator—that took full advantage of the superior flour the little mill was now churning out. Colette Ros-sant, a well-known food writer who left New York a few years ago to settle in Perche, drives five miles every morning for her loaf—it's beige instead of the typical white, with a slight sour tang of fermentation. A bread worth trading continents for.

But the bread itself, delicious as it is, makes up only half the story. Gallioz and Larrivière, remember, were millers, not bakers. They wanted to sell flour, not bread. And they felt a commitment to the fraying landscape, both physical and social, of Perche. A commitment, as it happens, shared by the national government. On the one hand, France and every other country in the European Union have subsidized the kind of oversize farming that threatens Perche (and that helps impoverish poor nations, whose farmers can't compete). But at the same time, unlike the United States, France has also tried to protect the countryside. Perche is one of 45 regions protected as a *Parc naturel*, which is nothing like a national park in this country, with its sharp boundaries between people and nature. Instead, in these areas the government nurtures the social, economic, and ecological fabric that prevailed for centuries. “It's for regions with an endangered heritage, be it natural, cultural, or historical,” says Jacques Dussutour, who heads the program in Perche from a 15th-century manorial estate.

In practice, that lofty goal involves things like subsidizing farmers to replant the hedgerows or promoting the networks of rental cottages (*gîtes*) that provide needed extra income for many residents. “We are a locomotive for development that is long-term,” says Dussutour. “It's very important to keep things at the scale they are now. It's the small villages that make this region special.” Imagine, if you will, an endangered-species act that counted small farms and small farmers as species worth protecting. Imagine a Yellowstone not just for bears but for bakers, too.

Which is where the *baguette du Perche* comes in. When the millers came to park officials with their idea, the officials were willing to help make it work. And one of the tools at their disposal was a peculiarly French law allowing them to tab it as a “*produit du Parc naturel du Perche*,” a designation akin to the more prominent AOC (*appellation d'origine contrôlée*) designation for wine. (Even Americans who think they've never heard of it actually have—it's why Champagne comes from Champagne, and everything else that bubbles can say, at most, that it was made using *la méthode champenoise*.) There are also AOC cheeses—Roquefort, for instance, and Comté; it's a kind of trademark, a way to keep from cheapening the identity of products that stretch back centuries.

The rationale for these monopolies is the idea of *terroir*, one of those French words for which there's no exact translation. But it implies the precise opposite of the modern idea that food can be homogenized, that an apple or a grape or a loaf of bread is a commodity. Instead, *terroir* insists that place matters above all—that some combination of soil and sun and method enshrined in a particular spot produces a food whose distinctiveness shows up clearly when you stick it in your mouth. There's

THE DETAILS

STAYING THERE

Le Château & Le Moulin de Villeray (Condeau; 011-33-2-33-73-30-22; domainedevilleray.com; doubles from \$140).

EATING THERE

Le Trou Normand (5 Place St.-Ouen, Verrières; 02-33-73-82-31). Auberge des Trois J (1 Place Docteur Gireaux, Nocé; 02-33-73-41-03). Villa Fol Avril (2 Rue des Fers Chauds, Moutiers-au-Perche; 02-33-83-22-67; www.villafolavril.fr). Pick up your daily *baguette du Perche* at David Lambert's Les Fleurs du Perche (1 Rue Garreau, Bretoncelles; 02-37-37-22-77).

something genuine about it, and something slightly mystical, too, and the combination results in a series of what amount to brands with definite economic value. But they're not—and this is key—brands in the corporate sense of the word. They belong to whoever owns the land and follows the prescribed rules. And the French police both the producers (inspectors drop by to make sure you're using the grapes from your own vineyard, for instance) and the market (just try labeling something “Cham-pagne” and see how long it takes for a lawsuit to follow).

The *baguette du Perche*, however, was a stretch. It wasn't a time-hallowed recipe but a new invention. And while the bread tasted great, it was hard to argue that you wouldn't be able to make pretty much the same thing any place else in France where you could grow the same varieties of wheat. In this case, in other words, the terroir was as much about the small-scale way of life in Perche as it was about flavor; the good taste in your mouth came from the baguette and also from the mission.

“Right from the beginning,” says Gallioz, “our idea was to link the farmer, the miller, and the baker. For centuries that link existed, but in modern times it didn't.” The baker bought his flour from some distant warehouse; the farmer sold his wheat for animal feed; the mill stood idle. “We needed to make the customer understand the work of those three people,” Gallioz continues. He needed to make them care about the revival of those links. “It took lots of meetings,” he adds with a slightly weary sigh. “We took bakers out to the fields, and farmers to the bakeries, and everyone to the mill. They weren't used to sharing information, about how much money they made, what they were paying. Very hard work.”

But it seems to be paying off. Stand, for instance, in David Lambert's small bakery, one of two in the tiny, charming town of Bretoncelles. (*Charming* is a redundant adjective in this part of the world, so stocked with ancient rose-hung walls and stone steeples rising above the hills.) Lambert was one of the first to sign the *Parc naturel* contract, and now he sells 100 loaves a day—half his total baguette business despite the high-

er retail price. (The remaining baguettes are made with flour that isn't from Perche.) He mixes each day's dough at ten in the morning, then lets it sit until four the next morning, when he forms the loaves and starts to bake. “If I didn't have it, my customers would go to the bakery that did,” he says.

But Lambert has also developed a way for his weekend Parisians to take the taste of Perche back home: He uses the same dough to bake huge five-kilo loaves that he sells in big pieces that last a week. “I wanted to do my part to help the farmers and millers grow the enterprise,” he says. “The French have been losing their taste buds because everything is industrial, everything tastes the same. If we lose any more, we might as well just eat a pill.”

Indeed, the *baguette du Perche* has helped kick off a regional renaissance of local food. You can find everything from farmsteads stocking foie gras and confit and Calvados to a former *hypermarché* manager who has opened an escargot farm where 400,000 snails contentedly slime their way around a greenhouse. (Escargots had been endangered by the loss of hedges, their preferred habitat; but open house at the snail farm now draws droves of people who leave with *sous vide* bags full of the slow-moving protein.) Enthusiasts like Colette Rossant push for an ever-deeper revival: She's running for her town council because “someone has to say, ‘Don't go to the supermarket, go to your neighbors.’ ”

The success of the whole idea—and of this movement all around the world—depends on what park director Dussoutour calls “revalorizing” the small farmer, turning him from victim of the global economy into local hero. *Parc naturel* status, with all its inspections and shared recipes and rustic glamour, is, above all, a way of doing just that. It adds a little economic value to the enterprise, the few centimes that might make the difference between keeping tradition alive and selling your farm to someone who wants a second home. But it doesn't make you rich. Instead, says Rossant, “It makes you somebody. It means your product is the best. It means you are the noble.”

SNAILS AND MUSHROOMS IN HERBED CREAM

SERVES 4 (FIRST COURSE)

ACTIVE TIME: 20 MIN START TO FINISH: 20 MIN

Rough-hewn elegance is the name of the game here. The mild, clean-tasting snails and the bosky mushrooms share a yielding texture, and the cream sauce (relax, you're in Normandy, remember?) sparkles with fresh herbs.

- $\frac{2}{3}$ cup crème fraîche
- 5 oz small white or cremini mushrooms, trimmed and halved or quartered
- $1\frac{1}{2}$ tablespoons minced shallot
- 1 teaspoon minced garlic
- 1 (7-oz) can imported medium escargots (18 to 24 snails), rinsed and drained
- 1 tablespoon finely chopped parsley or chervil
- 1 tablespoon finely chopped chives
- 1 teaspoon finely chopped tarragon
- 1 tablespoon unsalted butter

ACCOMPANIMENT: toasted baguette slices

- ▶ Simmer crème fraîche with mushrooms, shallot, garlic, and $\frac{1}{4}$ teaspoon each of salt and pepper in a heavy medium saucepan, uncovered, stirring occasionally, until mushrooms are tender and sauce is thickened, about 10 minutes.
- ▶ Reduce heat to low, then add snails, herbs, and butter and cook,

stirring, until snails are heated through and butter is incorporated, 1 to 2 minutes. Season with salt and pepper. Serve in small ramekins.

CALVADOS SORBET

MAKES ABOUT 3 CUPS

ACTIVE TIME: 10 MIN START TO FINISH: 3 HR (INCLUDES FREEZING)

Calvados—Normandy's celebrated apple-cider brandy—is heady stuff, and by that we mean it has the power to transport you to a French bistro or farmhouse kitchen. This digestif-and-dessert combination would be sensational after a roast pork dinner.

- $\frac{2}{3}$ cup water
- $\frac{1}{2}$ cup sugar
- $1\frac{1}{2}$ cups nonalcoholic sparkling cider
- $\frac{1}{3}$ cup Calvados

EQUIPMENT: an ice cream maker

- ▶ Bring water and sugar to a boil in a small saucepan, stirring until sugar has dissolved, then simmer 5 minutes. Transfer to a metal bowl set into an ice bath, then stir in cider and Calvados and quick-chill, stirring occasionally, until very cold, 15 to 30 minutes.
- ▶ Freeze sorbet in ice cream maker, then transfer to an airtight container and put in freezer until soft-frozen, at least 2 hours. Stir before serving if separated.

COOKS' NOTE: Sorbet keeps 1 week.👍

what we learned this month ... behind the scenes

KITCHEN NOTEBOOK

MANY AMERICANS TEND TO THINK OF A SOUFFLÉ AS FANCY (READ 'STUFFY') FRENCH FOOD, BUT NOTHING COULD BE FURTHER FROM THE TRUTH. IN PROVENCE, IT'S THE IDEAL VEHICLE FOR THE RUSTIC, DECIDEDLY UNSTUFFY FLAVOR OF ROASTED GARLIC. TIME TO RISE TO THE OCCASION ...



SOUFFLÉ SECRETS

There's something about serving a soufflé as a side dish rather than as a showstopping main course or dessert that ratchets down the anxiety level. The beauty of the one on page 101, developed by food editor and stylist Paul Grimes, is twofold: Diluting the rich, earthy flavor of roasted garlic with beaten egg whites turns it into something lighter, more soigné—and you can roast the garlic and make the béchamel ahead of time. A soufflé, almost by definition, involves a measure of suspense: Is it going to rise? Is it going to rise *enough*? As a consequence, much has been written about beating the egg whites properly and then knowing when to stop: The whites must stay elastic so the air bubbles trapped inside them can expand without bursting. The technique of folding is also important, though, and it's one that many home cooks find difficult, since it's not a bit like stirring. A big, wide rubber spatula is key; it's far more efficient than a smaller one. A preliminary step to folding anything, by the way, is called lightening: stirring some beaten whites into the heavier base (in this case, primarily a mixture of egg yolks and parmesan), so that the densities of the two are a little more comparable; they will combine more easily that way. In the photo at top

left, Grimes, after lightening the mixture and folding in the Gruyère, is folding in the remaining whites. "Dig deep into the center," Grimes says, as he pulls the spatula toward him. He learned his technique from the queen of soufflés—Simone "Simca" Beck, who coauthored *Mastering the Art of French Cooking* with Julia Child. "Lift up the yolk mixture from the bottom of the bowl and sweep around the side, then drag the spatula across the surface," Grimes continues, as he rhythmically turns the bowl in the opposite direction with the other hand. "You'll immediately notice a change in density. It's like blending with a palette knife." With that one image, we're reminded that Grimes was once an artist—and still is. "Simca taught me that you don't need a tall soufflé dish with a chimney-shaped collar made out of parchment paper," he explains. "A gratin dish works well, too, especially if you're serving six or eight people." Coating the inside of the dish with butter and bread crumbs (see photo at top right) simply makes the soufflé easy to spoon out. (According to food scientist Harold McGee, the claim that the crumbs give a soufflé something to hold on to as it rises isn't true.) —Jane Daniels Lear

ROMULO YANES FOOD STYLING: LILLIAN CHOU

PROFITEROLES

You might think that profiteroles—those crisp, hollow pastry puffs filled with ice cream (page 117)—are a complicated dessert because they're mostly found in restaurants, but you'd be wrong. In fact, *pâte à choux*—the egg-rich dough profiteroles are made from—is the dirty little secret of the pastry world because it's so quick, easy, and versatile. (It's also used for *éclairs* and cheesy *gougères*.) Neither finicky nor delicate, it's a dough that requires a vigorous beating over heat; the mixture will look loose and lumpy, but it will coalesce into a smooth mass that pulls away from the side of the pan, which tells you that step is complete. A pastry bag is the most efficient way to ensure even mounds of dough. However, pointy peaks, which tend to burn, will form on top of each mound, so tap them down with a finger dipped in water (to prevent sticking) before baking. —J.D.L.



SAUCE PRIMER These French classics don't take days of preparation or years of experience. In fact, with a basic understanding of a few principles, you can turn a weekday meal into a special occasion in no time at all ...



BÉARNAISE SAUCE

All sauces are essentially a balancing act between acid, fat, and aromatics. Take the béarnaise shown here. Its eggy, buttery richness is tempered by lemon juice and white wine, and it's flavored with tarragon—added at the beginning of cooking to give resonance, as well as at the end, for a burst of freshness—and sweet shallots. Béarnaise, like its cousin hollandaise, is an **emulsion**: The yolks are whisked (to incorporate air) into the vinegar mixture over low heat, and butter is added bit by bit, making the resulting sauce light and satiny. It adds a sleek, chic elegance to steaks (page 112), lamb, or grilled vegetables.



DIJON PAN SAUCE

Once you get the hang of a quick pan sauce, you'll soon become adept at improvising, since the brown bits of sticky caramelized juices left behind when meat—any meat—is cooked are instant bullets of flavor. The technique used here is called **deglazing**. After removing the cooked meat from the pan, add liquid (we rely on a combination of white wine and broth for the chicken recipe on page 80) and boil for two or three minutes, scraping up the brown bits with a wooden spatula to help them dissolve. Finishing the sauce with cream smooths it out, and a dollop of Dijon mustard gives it brightness and body.



RED-WINE SAUCE

In Burgundy, *sauce meurette* is commonly served over poached eggs (page 112), but it's also delicious on meat and roasted fish. It's what's known as a **reduction**: Shallots and other aromatics are boiled in red wine until the mixture is reduced, often to the consistency of syrup. The key to success is the addition of ham, bacon, and/or demi-glace (concentrated meat stock). Those proteins counteract the assertive tannins in the wine; without them, the sauce will be sour. This one is thickened and made even more mellow by a *beurre manié*, a butter-flour mixture that's whisked into the sauce toward the end of cooking. —J.D.L.

UP FIRST

Continued from page 30

FROZEN APRICOT SOUFFLÉ

SERVES 8 TO 10

ACTIVE TIME: 40 MIN START TO FINISH: 9 HR
(INCLUDES FREEZING)

We like to use California apricots (sometimes labeled "Pacific") in this dessert. They tend to be a deeper orange, and they have a tang that's sometimes lacking in the Turkish or Mediterranean varieties.

½ lb dried California (Pacific) apricots

1 cup water

1 cup sugar

6 large egg whites, at room temperature 30 minutes

2 cups chilled heavy cream

½ teaspoon pure almond extract

¼ teaspoon pure vanilla extract

EQUIPMENT: a 1½-qt soufflé dish; kitchen string; a candy thermometer

GARNISH: unsweetened cocoa powder and confectioners sugar for dusting

► Wrap a collar of parchment paper or foil around soufflé dish to extend 3 inches above rim of dish and secure with kitchen string.

► Simmer apricots with water in a small saucepan, covered, until very tender, 6 to 8 minutes. Drain, reserving cooking liquid. Purée apricots in a food processor (mixture will not be completely smooth), then transfer to a large bowl.

► Cook sugar with reserved cooking liquid in a small heavy saucepan over low heat, stirring, until sugar has dissolved. Boil, without stirring, washing down any sugar crystals from side of pan with a pastry brush dipped in cold water, until syrup registers 238°F (soft-ball stage), about 10 minutes.

► Meanwhile, beat egg whites with an electric mixer at medium-high speed until they just hold stiff peaks. While continuing to beat, gradually pour hot syrup in a thin stream down side of bowl into whites (be careful not to let syrup touch beaters, or it will spatter and harden), then continue to beat until meringue has cooled to room temperature, about 5 minutes.

► Beat cream with extracts in another bowl using cleaned beaters until it just holds soft peaks.

► Whisk about one third of meringue into apricot purée to lighten, then fold in remaining meringue.

► Fold whipped cream into apricot mixture gently but thoroughly, then spoon into soufflé dish, smoothing top. Cover surface with plastic wrap and freeze until firm, at least 8 hours.

► Let soufflé stand at room temperature to soften slightly before serving, about 15 minutes. Remove collar and dust top of soufflé with cocoa powder, coating it completely, then dust very lightly with confectioners sugar.

COOKS' NOTES: The egg whites in this recipe may not be fully cooked.

• Soufflé, without dusting, can be frozen up to 2 days.

For information on making a hot soufflé, see **KITCHEN NOTEBOOK**, page 132.

ALSATIAN SENSATION

Continued from page 120

PEAR AND ALMOND TART

SERVES 4 WITH LEFTOVERS

ACTIVE TIME: 1 HR START TO FINISH: 4 HR
(INCLUDES MAKING PASTRY AND COOLING)

Eau-de-vie, or fruit brandy, an Alsatian specialty, is used to great effect in this dish, bringing out the subtle nuances in the pears. A custardy, brandied layer over the tender fruit, along with a nutty topping, gives this tart a complex yet homey air.

FOR PASTRY DOUGH

1¼ cups all-purpose flour

1½ tablespoons sugar

¼ teaspoon salt

7 tablespoons cold unsalted butter, cut into ½-inch cubes

1 large egg yolk

2½ tablespoons cold water

FOR FILLING

2 firm-ripe Anjou or Bartlett pears (1 lb total)

2½ tablespoons *poire William* (French pear brandy) or Cognac, divided

2 large eggs plus 1 large yolk

3 tablespoons sugar

¼ teaspoon pure vanilla extract

⅔ cup crème fraîche or heavy cream

FOR TOPPING

1 cup sliced almonds with skins (3½ oz)

¼ cup sugar

1 large egg white

EQUIPMENT: a 9- to 9½-inch fluted round tart pan with removable bottom; pie weights or raw rice

MAKE DOUGH: Whisk together flour, sugar, and salt in a large bowl. Blend in butter with your fingertips or a pastry blender until mixture resembles coarse meal with some

small (roughly pea-size) butter lumps. Beat together yolk and water with a fork and stir into flour mixture until combined well.

► Knead mixture gently in bowl with floured hands just until a dough forms. Turn dough out onto a lightly floured surface and knead gently 4 or 5 times more. Form dough into a ball, then flatten into a 5-inch disk.

► Chill, wrapped tightly in plastic wrap, at least 1 hour.

MAKE TART SHELL: Preheat oven to 350°F with rack in middle.

► Roll out dough on a lightly floured surface with a floured rolling pin into a 13-inch round.

► Slide bottom of tart pan (separate from rim) under dough and set into rim of tart pan. Cut off excess dough, leaving ½-inch overhang, and fold overhang inward. Press dough against side of pan, pushing dough ¼ inch above rim.

Lightly prick bottom of shell all over with a fork and chill until firm, 10 to 15 minutes.

► Line shell with foil and fill with pie weights. Bake until side is set and edge is pale golden, 20 to 30 minutes.

► Carefully remove weights and foil and bake shell until golden, 15 to 25 minutes more. Leave oven on.

MAKE FILLING AND BAKE TART: Put a heavy baking sheet in oven. Peel and core pears, then cut lengthwise into ¼-inch slices. Toss pears with 1 tablespoon pear brandy in a bowl, then arrange, overlapping, in tart shell. Put a pie shield on tart pan or cover rim with foil and transfer to baking sheet in oven. Bake just until pears are barely tender, 10 to 12 minutes. Leave oven on.

► Whisk together eggs, yolk, sugar, vanilla, crème fraîche, a pinch of salt, and remaining 1½ tablespoons pear brandy until smooth. Pour over pears.

► Bake until custard is just set 2 inches from edge, about 18 minutes. Remove from oven and remove pie shield.

MAKE TOPPING AND FINISH BAKING TART: Stir together all topping ingredients, then gently sprinkle over custard and bake until top is pale golden, about 15 minutes more. Cool tart to warm or room temperature in pan on a rack.

COOKS' NOTES: Dough can be chilled up to 2 days.

• Tart shell can be baked 1 day ahead and cooled completely, uncovered, then kept, wrapped in plastic wrap, at room temperature.

• Tart can be baked 8 hours ahead and chilled, uncovered, until cool, then covered. Bring to room temperature before serving.

SPRING AWAKENING

Continued from page 101

- 3 large heads garlic, left whole, plus 3 garlic cloves, smashed
- 1 tablespoon olive oil
- 2½ cups whole milk
- 1 medium onion, sliced
- 3 large thyme sprigs plus 1 teaspoon thyme leaves
- 1 California bay leaf or 2 Turkish bay leaves
- 1 whole clove
- ⅛ teaspoon black peppercorns
- 7 tablespoons unsalted butter, divided
- 1½ tablespoons fine dry bread crumbs
- 5 tablespoons all-purpose flour
- 4 large eggs, separated, plus 4 additional egg whites
- 1½ cups grated Parmigiano-Reggiano (3 oz)
- ¼ teaspoon grated nutmeg
- ¾ cup grated Gruyère (2 oz)

► Preheat oven to 400°F with rack in middle.

► Trim ¼ inch from tops of whole heads of garlic, then put heads on a large sheet of foil and drizzle each with 1 teaspoon oil. Wrap heads together in foil and roast until very tender, 50 minutes to 1 hour. Cool to warm, then squeeze garlic from skins.

► Meanwhile, bring milk, smashed garlic cloves, onion, thyme sprigs, bay leaf, clove, and peppercorns just to a boil in a medium saucepan, then remove from heat and cover. Let steep 30 minutes.

► Butter a 12-inch oval (2-quart) gratin dish with 1 tablespoon butter, then sprinkle bottom and side with bread crumbs and chill until ready to use. ► Melt remaining 6 tablespoons butter in a heavy medium saucepan and whisk in flour. Cook roux over low heat, whisking constantly, 5 minutes.

► Strain milk mixture through a fine-mesh sieve, then add to roux, whisking until smooth. Bring to a boil, whisking, then simmer béchamel, whisking, 3 minutes. Remove from heat and vigorously whisk in yolks 1 at a time. Whisk in roasted garlic, parmesan, nutmeg, ¾ teaspoon salt, and ¼ teaspoon pepper and transfer to a bowl.

► Beat egg whites with a pinch of salt using an electric mixer until they just hold stiff peaks, then stir one third of egg whites into yolk mixture. Fold in Gruyère, then remaining whites. Transfer mixture to gratin dish, smoothing top, and sprinkle with thyme leaves. ► Bake soufflé until set and browned on top, 20 to 25 minutes.

COOKS' NOTES: Garlic heads can be roasted 2 days ahead, then chilled in foil. Squeeze from skins just before using.

- Béchamel can be made 1 day ahead and chilled, its surface covered with buttered wax paper. Reheat (uncovered) before proceeding with recipe.

MEYER LEMON CAKE WITH LAVENDER CREAM

SERVES 8

ACTIVE TIME: 1¼ HR START TO FINISH: 3 HR

The floral notes of Meyer lemons meld with lavender in the most heavenly way in this light, golden cake. The secret to the moistness of the tender layers is olive oil—a common ingredient in Provençal cakes—and they take well to the bright lemon curd and loose billows of lavender-honey cream.

FOR CAKE

- 2 tablespoons unsalted butter, melted, for brushing pan
- 5 large eggs, separated
- ¾ cup sugar, divided
- ¾ cup extra-virgin olive oil
- 1 tablespoon grated Meyer lemon zest plus 3 tablespoons Meyer lemon juice (see cooks' note, below)
- 1 cup cake flour (not self-rising)
- ½ teaspoon salt

FOR FILLING

- ½ cup plus 1 tablespoon sugar
- 3 tablespoons all-purpose flour
- ½ teaspoon salt
- 1 teaspoon grated Meyer lemon zest plus ¾ cup Meyer lemon juice
- 1 large egg yolk
- 1 tablespoon unsalted butter

FOR LAVENDER CREAM

- 1½ cups heavy cream
- 3 tablespoons mild honey
- ½ teaspoon dried lavender blossoms

EQUIPMENT: an 8-inch springform pan

GARNISH: confectioners sugar

MAKE CAKE: Preheat oven to 325°F with rack in middle.

► Invert bottom of springform pan and lock on side. Brush pan with melted butter, then chill 2 minutes to set. Line bottom of pan with a round of parchment paper, then brush pan and parchment with another layer of melted butter and chill 2 minutes more. Dust with flour, knocking out excess.

► Beat together yolks and ½ cup sugar in a large bowl with an electric mixer at high speed until pale and thick, about 3 minutes. At medium speed, beat in oil and lemon zest and juice until just combined. Sift in flour and mix at low speed until just combined.

► Beat whites with salt in another large bowl with cleaned beaters at medium-high speed until foamy, then add remaining ¼ cup sugar a little at a time, beating, and continue to beat until whites just hold soft peaks. Gently fold one third of whites into yolk mixture to lighten, then fold in

remaining whites gently but thoroughly. Transfer batter to springform pan, smoothing top, and gently rap against counter once or twice to eliminate any air bubbles. Bake until golden brown (top will crack slightly) and a wooden pick inserted in center of cake comes out clean, 40 to 50 minutes. Cool in pan on a rack 10 minutes, then remove side of pan and cool cake to room temperature, about 1 hour (sides will cave in a little).

MAKE FILLING WHILE CAKE COOLS: Whisk together sugar, flour, and salt in a small heavy saucepan, then add lemon juice in a slow stream, whisking until combined. Bring to a boil, whisking constantly, then simmer, whisking, until thickened, about 3 minutes. Remove from heat.

► Whisk yolk in a small bowl, then add about one fourth of lemon-juice mixture, whisking vigorously. Whisk into remaining lemon-juice mixture and gently boil, whisking, 1 minute. Remove from heat and stir in butter and zest. Transfer filling to a bowl and cover surface with buttered parchment paper. Chill until cool, at least 30 minutes.

MAKE LAVENDER CREAM WHILE FILLING CHILLS: Bring cream, honey, and lavender blossoms just to a boil in a small saucepan, then remove from heat and let steep, covered, 30 minutes. Strain through a fine-mesh sieve into a bowl, discarding solids, and chill lavender cream, covered, until cold.

ASSEMBLE CAKE: Invert cake and discard parchment. Cut cake horizontally into 3 even layers with a long serrated knife. Transfer 1 layer, cut side up, to a cake plate. Lightly whisk filling to loosen, then spread half of filling evenly over cake layer on plate, leaving a ½-inch border around edge. Place a second cake layer over filling and spread with remaining filling in same manner. Top with remaining cake layer, cut side down, pressing gently so that filling is spread to edge of cake. ► Just before serving, beat lavender cream with a whisk until it is thickened and barely holds soft peaks. Dust cake with confectioners sugar and serve with lavender cream.

COOKS' NOTES: If you can't get Meyer lemons, you can use regular lemons.

- Cake, uncut and without filling, can be made 2 days ahead and kept in an airtight container at room temperature.

- Filling can be made 1 day ahead and chilled, covered. 🍷

WINE ADVICE is on page 54.

For more information about the specialty ingredients called for in this menu, see **SHOPPING LIST**, page 142.

TECHNIQUES

Continued from page 60

BACON "PASTRY SLICES"

Adapted from *Dough: Simple Contemporary Bread*

by Richard Bertinet

MAKES 12 SAVORY PASTRIES

ACTIVE TIME: 45 MIN START TO FINISH: 2¾ HR

Give brunch or supper a brilliant twist with Bertinet's take on croque-monsieur. He uses streaky bacon (unavailable in the United States), but pancetta also does the trick.

- Sweet dough (page 60), risen
- 2 tablespoons unsalted butter
- 2½ tablespoons all-purpose flour
- 1 cup whole milk
- Pinch of grated nutmeg
- ¼ lb Gruyère, finely shredded with a rasp (about 2 cups), divided
- 12 thin slices pancetta (about ¼ lb)
- 1 large egg, beaten with a pinch of salt

MAKE BÉCHAMEL WHILE DOUGH IS RISING:

Heat butter in a small heavy saucepan until melted and bubbling. Remove from heat and whisk in flour. Slowly whisk in milk until smooth. Return to medium-low heat and bring to a gentle simmer, whisking. Cook, whisking, 1 minute. Remove from heat and stir in nutmeg and half of cheese. Season with salt and pepper, then cover surface with wax paper. Cool, whisking occasionally.

FORM AND BAKE PASTRIES: Gently release dough from bowl with scraper onto a lightly floured surface (do not punch down). Roll out into a rectangle slightly larger than 20 by 15 inches. Trim edges, then cut into 12 (5-inch) squares by cutting dough crosswise into 4 strips and lengthwise into 3 strips. ▶ Spoon a tablespoon of béchamel into center of a square and fold 2 opposite corners over it, overlapping them slightly. Place a pancetta slice on top and transfer with a spatula to a baking sheet. Assemble remaining pastries, dividing them between 2 baking sheets. Cover with wax paper and a kitchen towel and let rise in a draft-free place at warm room temperature until puffy, about 45 minutes.

▶ Preheat oven to 400°F with racks in upper and lower thirds.

▶ Lightly brush dough with egg and sprinkle remaining cheese over pastries. Bake, switching position of sheets halfway through baking, until deep golden, about 15 minutes. Cool to warm on a rack.

COOKS' NOTE: Bacon squares can be assembled and let to rise 1 day ahead, then chilled, covered; they can be baked chilled.

For another SWEET DOUGH recipe (and to watch a video), visit gourmet.com.

SHOPPING LIST

FOOD

BREADWINNER

Page 60: Flexible plastic bowl scraper—Kitchen Krafts (800-776-0575; kitchenkrafts.com).

JURA THE OBSCURE

Page 108: Dried morel mushrooms—specialty foods shops and D'Artagnan (800-327-8246; dartagnan.com).

BIENVENUE

Page 112: Veal demi-glace—specialty foods shops and Citarella (212-874-0383).

SPRING AWAKENING

Page 141: Dried lavender blossoms—Kalustyan's (800-352-3451; kalustyans.com).

OTHER THINGS

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GOOD LIVING

Page 48: White poplin double-cuff shirt—Turnbull & Asser (877-887-6825; turnbullandasser.com).

SPRING AWAKENING

Pages 94–95: Wooden vases and glass tumblers—Michele Varian (212-343-0033).

BIENVENUE

Page 110: Antique Chinese cabinet—Abhaya Tribeca (212-431-6931).

Page 114: Eighteenth-century French oak table—Les Pierre Antiques.

ALSATIAN SENSATION

Page 118: Sweater—Tse (917-606-6700).

Necklace—Dean Harris (212-684-9857).

Bangles—Lee Angel (leeangel.com).

Page 122: Espresso cup—OCHRE (212-414-4332).

GOOD LIVING STATISTICAL SOURCES

Page 46: Top to bottom, left to right: *Encyclopedia of Southern Culture*; *The Oxford Companion to Food*; pouletbresse.com; Dr. David W. Kraus, University of Alabama at Birmingham; USDA Economic Research Service; *Petits Propos Culinaires*, November 2001; "The Ecology of Eating: Smaller Portion Sizes in France Than in the United States Help Explain the French Paradox," *Psychological Science*, September 2003. 📄

COMING NEXT MONTH

SPECIAL ITALIAN ISSUE

- Rustic but sophisticated entertaining menus from Puglia and Umbria
- 5 great recipes featuring fresh ricotta
- Venice's newest restaurant haven
- Roast pork the Umbrian way
- Ferrara—Italy's most surprising city
- Innovative Passover dishes

RECIPE INDEX MARCH

COOKING TIPS

Measure liquids in glass or clear plastic liquid-measuring cups and **dry ingredients** in nesting dry-measuring cups that can be leveled off with a knife.

Measure flour by spooning (not scooping) it into a dry-measuring cup and leveling off with a knife; do not tap or shake cup.

Do not sift flour unless specified in recipe. If sifted flour is called for, sift before measuring. (Disregard "presifted" on the label.)

Salt: Measurements are for table salt unless otherwise specified.

Black pepper is always freshly ground.

Spices: Store away from heat and light; buy in small quantities.

Toast whole spices in a dry heavy skillet over medium heat, stirring, until fragrant and a shade darker, 3 to 5 minutes. **Toast nuts** in a shallow baking pan in a 350°F oven until golden, 5 to 15 minutes. **Toast seeds** either way.

Melt chocolate in a metal bowl set over barely simmering water, stirring; or microwave at low to medium power for short intervals (30 seconds or less; stir to check consistency).

Baking pans: We prefer light-colored metal. (If you are using dark metal, including nonstick, your baked goods may brown more, and the cooking times may be shorter. Lower oven temperature 25°F to compensate.)

Nonreactive cookware includes stainless steel, glass, and enameled cast iron; avoid pure aluminum and uncoated iron, which can impart an unpleasant taste and color to recipes with acidic ingredients.

Water bath for baking: Put filled pan in a larger pan and place in oven, then add enough boiling-hot water to reach halfway up side of smaller pan.

Produce: Wash and dry before using.

Greens and chopped/sliced leeks: Wash in a large bowl of water, agitating them, then lift out and drain.

Fresh herbs or greens: Use only the leaves and tender stems.

Citrus zest: Remove the colored part of the rind only (avoid the bitter white pith). For strips, use a vegetable peeler. For grating, we prefer a rasplike Microplane zester, which results in fluffier zest, so pack to measure.

Chiles: Wear protective gloves when handling.

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THE LAST TOUCH

The Dynamic Duo Butter and sugar are two simple ingredients that, when mixed together with a dash of classic culinary know-how, become superior to, well, just about anything.

RECIPES BY IAN KNAUER

BUTTER-SUGAR CRÊPES

SERVES 4

ACTIVE TIME: 25 MIN START TO FINISH: 1 HR

- 7 tablespoons unsalted butter, melted and cooled, divided
- 1 cup whole milk
- 1 cup all-purpose flour
- 2 large eggs
- 6 tablespoons sugar, divided

- ▶ Reserve 1 tablespoon melted butter for brushing skillet.
- ▶ Blend milk, flour, eggs, 2 tablespoons sugar, 2 tablespoons butter, and ¼ teaspoon salt in a blender until smooth, then chill, covered, 30 minutes.
- ▶ Lightly brush a 10-inch nonstick skillet with some of reserved butter and heat over medium heat until hot. Pour in ¼ cup batter, immediately tilting and rotating skillet to coat bottom, and cook crêpe, turning once, until just set and golden, about 1 minute total. Transfer to a plate. Make 7 more crêpes, stacking them.
- ▶ Brush each crêpe with 1 teaspoon butter and sprinkle with 1 teaspoon sugar, then fold twice to form a triangle.
- ▶ Heat 2 teaspoons each of butter and sugar with a pinch of salt in skillet until sugar has dissolved, then cook 4 crêpes, turning once, until golden-brown. Repeat with remaining butter, sugar, and crêpes.

BUTTER CAKE

SERVES 6 TO 8

ACTIVE TIME: 15 MIN START TO FINISH: 1½ HR (INCLUDES COOLING)

- 1¾ cups all-purpose flour
- 1½ teaspoons baking powder
- Scant ½ teaspoon salt
- 1½ sticks unsalted butter, softened
- 1 cup sugar
- 1 whole large egg plus 1 large egg yolk
- 1½ teaspoons grated orange zest
- 1½ teaspoons pure vanilla extract
- ¾ cup whole milk

GARNISH: confectioners sugar

- ▶ Preheat oven to 375°F with rack in middle. Butter a 9-inch round cake pan, then line bottom with a round of parchment paper and butter parchment. Lightly dust with flour.
- ▶ Whisk together flour (1¾ cups), baking powder, and salt. ▶ Beat together butter and sugar with an electric mixer until pale and fluffy, about 5 minutes. Add whole egg, yolk, zest, and vanilla and beat 1 minute. At low speed, mix in flour mixture and milk alternately in batches.
- ▶ Spread batter in cake pan and bake until golden-brown and a wooden pick inserted in center comes out clean, 35 to 40 minutes. Cool cake in pan 10 minutes, then turn out onto a rack.

LEMON-SUGAR GALETTE

SERVES 4 TO 6

ACTIVE TIME: 10 MIN START TO FINISH: 30 MIN

- ½ lb pizza dough, thawed if frozen
- 2 tablespoons unsalted butter, melted
- 2 tablespoons sugar
- ½ teaspoon grated lemon zest

- ▶ Preheat oven to 500°F with rack in upper third.
- ▶ Roll out dough into a 15- by 12-inch rectangle on a lightly floured surface with a floured rolling pin. Transfer to a buttered 17- by 13-inch baking sheet and stretch to edges. Let stand 10 minutes.
- ▶ Brush dough with butter, then stir together sugar and zest and sprinkle over dough. Bake, rotating sheet halfway through baking, until golden in spots and crisp, 7 to 10 minutes. Break into pieces.

BUTTER-ALMOND ICE CREAM

MAKES ABOUT 1 QUART

ACTIVE TIME: 30 MIN START TO FINISH: 12 HR

- 2 cups heavy cream
- 1 cup whole milk
- ¾ cup sugar
- 2 large eggs
- 1 cup sliced almonds
- 3 tablespoons unsalted butter

EQUIPMENT: an ice cream maker

- ▶ Whisk together cream, milk, sugar, and eggs in a heavy medium saucepan, then cook over medium-low heat, stirring constantly with a wooden spoon, until custard is thick enough to coat back of a spoon and registers 175°F on an instant-read thermometer. Strain custard through a fine-mesh sieve into a bowl. Cool completely, stirring frequently, then chill, covered, until very cold, at least 8 hours.
- ▶ Meanwhile, cook almonds in butter with a scant ¼ teaspoon salt in a heavy skillet over medium heat, stirring, until butter and almonds are pale golden, about 6 minutes. Remove from heat and cool.
- ▶ Freeze custard in ice cream maker, then fold in almonds with butter. Transfer to an airtight container and put in freezer to harden. 🍷

