



12 Aveyron known as la France profonde - a little-known region sprawled across the southern edge of the rugged Massif Central -, the deepest of deep heartlands of France. Although only a couple of hours' drive north of Toulouse and Montpellier, it is sparsely populated

and seemingly impervious to change, a land of secret valleys, wild pastures and craggy peaks. It is an area described as being lost in the middle of nowhere.

Aveyron is a place of villages. It has more official Les Plus Beaux Villages than any other region. There are ancient hamlets balanced on ridges, villages pressed into the sides of valleys, settlements wedged into the rippling green hillsides.

Aubrac cattle produce richly marbled meat and the milk for rounds of Laguiole cheese, often stirred into mashed potato to create aligots, the garlicky local dish served at rustic buron restaurants.

Aligot is a speciality from the north Aveyron, also called the ruban de l'amitié and is a mix of mashed potatoes and tome fraîche cheese.

Roquefort Cheese is made from unpasteurised sheep's milk in Roquefort-sur-Soulzon.

Farçons are little pancakes made with herbs and swiss chard for the vegetarian version, but traditionally with porc meat (sausage, bacon, etc.)

Tripous is a traditional morning snack eaten in lieu of breakfast during village fêtes. It is composed of calf or lamb stomach, ham stuffing, garlic and parsley.

Estofinado is the traditional dish of the boatmen on the river Lot based on stockfish (dried cod), potatoes, eggs, garlic and parsley.

Stockfish is dried fish and arrived in Aveyron via the boatmen who it towed behind their boats giving it time to re-hydrate.

Gâteau à la Broche is a traditional sweet dessert

Fouace is a very old traditional cake, part of daily local food, eaten as a snack or for breakfast.

Echaudé is an aniseed flavoured biscuit, first boiled and then baked in an oven. It can be eaten as a snack or dunked in coffee or hot chocolate.

Soupe au Fromage is a thick cheese soup

Flaune is the dessert from Millau made with recuite (clotted cream ewe`s cream).

Gateau à la Broche,

This is a truly unique cake, characteristically conical in shape and cooked on a spit, with a long and complex preparation process that involves a gradual addition of different layers.

To make this cake it is necessary to have an open fire, such as a BBQ with a rotating spit

Also essential, is a conical wooden former about 1000mm tall and a base of 150mm diameter. The spit skewer is then passed through this, end to end.

Ingredients

For a 2 kg cake or 30 servings

750 gr of flour

750 gr of sugar

600 gr of butter

18 eggs

15 cl of rum

5 cl of orange blossom water

A few orange zests

6 gr of salt

1 teaspoon of cinnamon

Method

Prepare the Paste

Whisk the egg yolks with 600 g of sugar

Add the rum and orange blossom water

Fold in the sifted flour and the butter.

Beat the egg whites until stiff and add the rest of the sugar.

Fold the whites in gently and leave to stand for at least one hour.

Prepare the Wooden Former

To ensure easy removal of cake from the cone former on completion, cover the former in baking paper, foil or non-stick tray liner

Cooking

Place the skewer over the fire and leave it to warm

Once the former is prepared the first layer of paste is poured, to which the next seven or eight will gradually be added.

Begin adding the paste.

At first, pour just a little paste and allow it to cook to obtain a solid base.

Little by little, slowly cover the whole skewer with paste.

The principle behind the gâteau à la broche is to cook each layer before adding the next.

N.B. Remember that as you pour each layer of past you cool down the previous layers.

As these need to carry on cooking, patience is essential in pouring each layer