



15 Cantal is situated in the Auvergne region of south-central France and within the Massif Central. The centre and north of the department are an area of 'medium' mountains within the "Regional Natural Park of the Volcanoes of Auvergne" and

Auvergne" and the Monts du Cantal, while the rest of the region is mostly still quite hilly.

Along with Lozère and Creuse, Cantal is among the most sparsely populated and geographically isolated departments of France. Aurillac is the departmental capital farthest removed from a major motorway.

The climate being generally too cool and damp for grain, much of Cantal is given over to pasture for Aubrac and Salers cattle, sheep, and, formerly, horses. This in turn supports a dairy industry responsible for butter and Roquefort cheese and the appellation-controlled cheeses Cantal, Salers, and Bleu d'Auvergne. Cantal is the French department with the greatest number of appellation-controlled cheeses. The region's mineral products include coal, copper, lead, iron, antimony, granite, slate and lime, but the department's isolation and poor infrastructure long precluded their exploitation.

Traditionally, many Cantalians travelled France during the year plying humble trades, but now the area's relative lack of industry and development permits tourism. An area has been set aside as the Auvergne Volcanos Regional Park (Parc Regional des Volcans d'Auvergne).

Agriculture is dominated by cattle raising with greater emphasis given in the north to beef and in the south to milk production, which is frequently used for making cheese. In contrast to the upland areas, the plains of Limagne around Clermont-Ferrand and Issoire specialize in cereal production (predominantly wheat but also corn [maize]).

Much of the area is afforested, but only portions have been commercially exploited.

Fed by the terroirs of Auvergne, Cantal and Haute-Loire, Auvergne cuisine is steeped in farming tradition and is famous for cabbage, either served stuffed,

marinated, in a soup, or in a hotpot with different pork preparations. Pork is the meat most often found on tables in Auvergne: either as dried ham, sausage, breaded or grilled pig's feet or salt pork, all with with green lentils from Puy.

Auverge cuisine is also rounded out by the melt-in-your-mouth Charolais beef from Allier and Salers beef from Cantal.

Often "truffade" (potatoes with fresh tomme cheese from Cantal) or aligot (another tomme cheese and potato dish) are served with these dishes.

Springtime fishing adds wild trout, salmon, char, pike, and zander to the menu. In autumn these are replaced by venison, wild boar, waterfowl, and other game. Autumn also means the availability of tasty mushrooms and berries in the forests.

Regional cheeses.

Saint-Nectaire, bleu d'Auvergne, Fourme d'Ambert, Cantal, and Salers, and should always be enjoyed with one of the five local Côtes d'Auvergne crus (vintages) available in red, white, and rosé.

Local Specialities

Aligot, truffade, green lentils from Puy, Auvergne hotpot, stuffed cabbage, Auvergne-style oxtail, blackberry caramels, and galets de la Cère (chocolate-covered almonds) are just a few specialties that you must discover.

bleu des Causses, Cantal, Fourme d'Ambert, Gaperon, Murol, Saint-Nectaire, Salers, and tomme d'Auvergne.

Wines and Spirits

The region produces vins de pays wines such as:

Vin de pays du Bourbonnais

Vin de pays du Puy-de-Dôme

Auvergne Hotpot

Preparation Time: 12 hours, Cooking Time: 3 hours, serves 6

Ingredients:

Meats

500 g salt pork

500 g pork shoulder

300 g slab bacon

1 ham bone

500 g garlic sausage

Vegetables:

1 large cabbage (1.5 kg)

6 nice-looking carrots, peeled

6 turnips, peeled

6 medium-sized potatoes

1 handful dried beans

3 whole garlic cloves (not peeled)

3 bay leaves

peppercorns

Method

Place the meat in a container filled with cold water and let soak for 12 hours, changing the water 2 or 3 times.

Soak the beans overnight starting the night before.

Remove the wilted leaves and stalk from the cabbage.

Cut it in large pieces and blanch it in a large pot of boiling water for 5 minutes with the garlic cloves.

Strain and set aside.

Drop the meat and ham bone in a braising pan containing 3 litres of boiling water.

Skim the water from time to time and let simmer over medium heat for 1 hour.

After 1 hour, add the cabbage and garlic, whole carrots and turnips, dried beans, and a few peppercorns.

Simmer for 1 ½ hours.

Next add the sausage and potatoes.

Simmer for 25 to 30 minutes more.

Serve on a large platter, placing the cut meat at the centre and surrounding it with the drained vegetables and sliced sausage.

Truffade

This is a sort of thick pancake made with thinly sliced potatoes that are slowly cooked in goose or duck fat until tender, then mixed with thin strips of Tome fraiche de Cantal.

This mix is stirred until it sticks together in a sort of thick pastry, sometimes decorated with fresh parsley.

It is not the same as aligot, even though they are from the same area. It is a variation on the same theme with potatoes and cheese.

Preparation Time; 15mins, Cooking Time; 30mins, Serves 4

Ingredients

500 g(approximately) waxy potatoes, such as Charlotte

250 g Tomme fraîche de Cantal cut into thin strips or small cubes

5 gr/3 tbsp Duck or Goose fat (lardon will do if the others are not available)

1 large garlic clove, finely chopped or mashed in a garlic press

salt and pepper

Method

Peel and cut the potatoes into slices.

Sauté until browned and tender in a large pan or casserole dish, and season with garlic, salt, and pepper.

Add the cheese at the end of cooking.

Mix gently with a spatula or wooden spoon until the cheese has melted.

Serve immediately with a green salad and slices of ham.

Bugnes Moelleuses

Bugnes are a doughnut-like pastry sprinkled with icing sugar that hail from Lyon. They're essential to Mardi Gras! Add a little bit of lemon for a unique taste. Sprinkle with icing sugar before serving.

Preparation Time; 30mins, Cooking Time; 2mins, Additional Time; 2hrs, Makes 24

Ingredients

50ml water

10gr active dry yeast

2 1 all-purpose flour

8 eggs

200gr butter, melted

125gr white sugar

2tbs tablespoons white sugar

2 lemons, zested

1.5l vegetable oil for frying

Method

Mix water and yeast together in a small bowl.

Let stand until foamy, about 15 minutes.

Combine flour, eggs, butter, 150gr sugar, and lemon zest in a large bowl

Add yeast mixture.

Knead by hand until dough comes together.

Cover with a clean dish towel.

Let rise in a warm place until doubled, about 2 hours.

Roll out dough into a large rectangle on a lightly floured work surface.

Cut into diamond shapes using a small pastry wheel cutter.

Brush off excess flour.

Heat oil in a deep saucepan or wok.

Cook doughnuts in batches until golden brown, about 1 minute per side.

Drain on a paper towel-lined platter.