



22 Côtes-d'Armor The capital of this north western department is Saint-Brieux. The coast here is characteristic of Brittany, jagged granite rocks, spectacular capes and deep inlets (rias). The interior is hilly with many narrow and deep roads, surrounded by hedges (bocage).

A striking feature is the extensive funnel-shaped river mouth (estuary) of the Rance; at high tide the sea penetrates far inland, at low tide a blue-grey mud flat is revealed. This is the site of the world's first tidal powered electricity generating plant.

The coastal part between the capital Saint-Brieux and Morlaix is called Côte de Granit-Rose; in the evening light, the rusty-brown rocks seem to change colour to a pinkish hue, but also brown-grey, red, purple, and blue from the sunlight reflecting off the quartz and feldspar.

In terms of local gastronomy, Brittany is most famous for local Clafoutis, "Far Breton", crêpes and galettes, washed down with local Breton cider.

The Côte d'Emeraude produces France's finest oysters and shellfish - according to the locals!.

l'Armoricaine Sauce is a traditional French recipe from coastal Brittany where it is most commonly prepared with shellfish, or used to flavour firm white-fleshed fish such as La Lotte or Monkfish

Homard Bleu is a live Blue Lobster from Brittany, used traditionally as a replacement for the traditional lobster- thus the name "poor man`s lobster".

Lotte Armoricaine A relatively simple dish, the sauce is quick to prepare and the fish is cooked twice- first coated in flour, pan fried in butter and then flambéed in cognac.

Crêpes are the region's gastronomic speciality. They are made with white flour, sugar, butter, eggs and milk, served with jam, honey, ice cream or salted butter.

Galettes are made with buckwheat flour, eggs, butter, salt and water and are mostly served with savoury fillings. The galette complète (with egg, ham and cheese) is a true classic. Delicious, especially when served with a good local cider!

Breton Far a typical Breton cake made with milk, flour, eggs, salt, sugar, salted butter and prunes.

Saint-Brieuc Scallops have many excellent nutritional benefits. They are enjoyed marinated, fried, in a casserole or simply poached, with a chilled white wine.

Chouchenis is an alcoholic drink made from honey and apple juice fermented in water. It is allowed to mature for at least a year. Traditionally it is served well-chilled as an apéritif or digestif.

Kouign-Amann is a dessert from the town of Douarnenez. It is a bread dough covered in a butter-sugar mixture and folded into layers and baked. Often taken with local cider

Galette Bretonne is made of wheat flour, butter, sugar and eggs. This round and crunchy shortbread biscuit is often enjoyed with dessert or as an afternoon snack, with a glass of cider.

Gateau Breton is a large, round, dense biscuit with a golden crust made with slightly-salted butter, sugar, flour and egg yolk. Rum, bergamot and red berry flavours are available.

Palet Breton is a thick biscuit made from slightly-salted butter, flour, sugar, eggs and vanilla

Craquelin Breton is a hollow, light crispbread made from flour, eggs and milk. It is a sort of Breton crispbread biscuit often enjoyed at teatime or for breakfast, with slightly-salted butter and honey or jam.

Lotte à l'Armoricaine'

Serves 4

Ingredients

1.2 kg fresh Monkfish fillets (or substitute for other firm white fish)

50 grams salted butter.

3 tbsp olive oil

1 standard tin of peeled tomato puree

1 tbsp tomato puree (concentrate)

1 white onion

2 shallots

Dried herbs de Provence (parsley, thyme, bay leaves)

2 cloves garlic

2 tablespoons of plain white flour

Half a bottle dry white wine

250 ml fish stock

50 ml cognac

1 handful fresh coriander

Small pinch piment d'espelette (a special Basque-country, dried spice). (The closest substitute is cayenne pepper)

3-4 threads saffron

Sea salt and pepper to taste

Juice of half a lemon

Method

The monkfish is a tricky fish to prepare by yourself so it's much easier to have the monkfish prepared and cut into medallions by your fishmonger.

Coat the fish fillets lightly in flour.

In a heavy-based pan, melt the butter and add the olive oil so that the butter does not burn.

Place the monkfish fillets in the pan then add the cognac.

Light the cognac and flambé.

Take the pan off the heat, place the fish aside to rest.

Finely dice the garlic, onion and shallots.

Gently cook the garlic and onions in the flambéed saucepan for a few minutes

Add the tomatoes, fish stock, white wine, piment d'espelette and herbs de Provence.

Allow to simmer gently until the sauce has reduced and concentrated in flavour, for at least 20 minutes.

Finally, add the pieces of fish to the sauce in the pan and cook for only a further 5 or so minutes.

Just before serving, add fresh coriander and saffron, salt and pepper to taste.

Serve with rice.

Now close your eyes, pour a glass of wine and imagine yourself on the coast of Brittany

Breton Far

Ingredients

120g flour

80g caster sugar

2 eggs

500ml of milk at room temperature

1 packet of vanilla sugar.

Method

Preheat oven to 180 °C (fan 160C), gas mark 6.

Put a knob of salted butter in a pan and heat for 3-5 mins until the butter is just brown

Mix the eggs and sugar, then add the flour little by little sifting well.

After obtaining a mixture without lumps, add the milk in small amounts, stirring well with each addition.

If you wish, you can add drained raisins or prunes at the end of preparation of the dough.

It only remains to pour the batter into the dish in the oven for 45 to 50 minutes.

Cool for an hour or so

Variation:

You can add an apple diced, rolled in the brown sugar together with the melted butter.