



30 Gard is a department in southern France. It's known for the famed Pont du Gard, a Roman aqueduct on the Gardon River. The city of Nîmes is home to well-preserved Roman structures including the Arena of Nîmes and the

Maison Carrée temple. Uzès offers an arcaded town square and a lively produce market.

Gard has always been an important textile centre (the cloth for Denim jeans came from Nimes - de Nimes became Denim) and during the 19th Century it also became an important railway junction.

Gard contains many vineyards.

The Perrier spring is at Vergèze, only a few kilometres from Nîmes.

Agriculture in the western upland areas revolves around the raising of beef cattle and sheep. Forests are also exploited commercially. Traditionally, viticulture has been the dominant activity in the foothills and coastal plains; the wine produced, however, was not of high quality. Since the mid-20th century, however, irrigation has aided diversification and production. Fewer vineyards now exist, but better quality wines are produced. Fruits and vegetables (including apples, peaches, and tomatoes) are now cultivated widely.

Local produce includes Pélardon, Olives and Olive Oil from Nîmes, sweet onion, chicken, capons and chestnut honey from Cévennes, strawberries from Nîmes, rice and beef from Camargue.

Other specialties from Gard include truffles and boletus mushrooms, asparagus, Reinettes apples from Le Vigan, traditional codfish paste “brandade de morue”, tapenade and countless Mediterranean fruits and vegetables.

Tavel is a dry, full-bodied and aromatic rosé made with Grenache Noir as the principal grape, but also with Cinsault, Bourboulenc, Clairette, Mourvèdre, Picpoul, and Syrah. Young Tavel wines are usually pink, but with age, they tend to become deep pink with gold or amber hues. They are fruity and floral, with notes and aromas that are reminiscent of red berries, stone fruits, and sometimes subtle almond nuances.

Tavel wines pair well with various savoury dishes, especially seafood, chicken, pork, or duck. These wines can be aged for a maximum of three years.

Oignon Doux des Cévennes is a unique sweet onion, pearly white to almost copper in colour with an elongated bulb and delicate, translucent skin.

On the inside, there is a firm, juicy, crunchy flesh with balanced flavours. The flavours are sweet and mild with hints of honey when the onion is consumed raw. It is just as good for cooking, making a great onion tart or a savoury, thick onion soup with bread, pepper, olive oil and Gruyère cheese.

For a signature dish of the region, try caramelized sweet onions with anchovies.

Fraises de Nîmes are moderately firm and the flavour is a balance of sweetness and tartness. As the soil on which they grow is warm and well-drained, this helps the early maturity of the juicy strawberries and they are the first spring strawberries in France.

For a tasty appetizer, try roughly cut Nîmes strawberries with a drizzle of olive oil and a sprinkle of pepper.

Tielle Sétoise is a savoury pie with a buttery crust filled with a mouth-watering mixture of octopus cooked in white wine, tomato paste, black olives, onions, garlic, parsley, and thyme. Pair tielle sétoise with a local rosé made from a blend of Grenache and Cinsault, offering the complexity and acidity to match the flavours of this dish.

Petit Pâté de Pézenas are sweet and savoury mutton-filled pies wrapped in a shortcrust pastry. They're easily recognizable, as they're made in the shape of a cotton reel. A local Syrah or rosé from predominantly Syrah would complement the savoury, meaty flavours of these lamb meat pies deliciously.

Aligot is a hearty, cheese-based dish from the rich, no-fuss mountain cuisine of Lozère. To prepare the aligot, first cream and butter are heated together, then, boiled potatoes and garlic are passed through a vegetable mill into the same pot to form a thick purée. Next, over low heat, strips of Tomme, a local cow's milk cheese, are added and stirred until the cheese has completely melted. The aligot is then stirred and repeatedly stretched until it reaches a highly elastic texture and is served hot. Alsatian Riesling is a mouth-watering match for aligot

Cassoulet is a slowly cooked stew prepared with white beans, Toulouse sausage, duck or goose legs, onions, carrots, celery, garlic, and tomato. All the ingredients simmer for hours with broth, pork ribs, and ham hock added for flavour. This dish pairs best with medium-bodied full-flavoured red wines from Corbières, Bandol, or Cahors

Stuffed Squid, Mussels, or Cuttlefish à la Sétoise is seafood is stuffed with a mixture of sausage, milk-soaked bread, egg, parsley, and garlic, then simmered in a tomato sauce flavoured with aromatics. Of course, there's no better match for seafood à la Sétoise than a Pays d'Oc Rosé.

Bourride is made with white fish like mullet, sea bass, monkfish, or mackerel and mussels or scallops. Bourride is flavoured with onions, leeks, celery, and carrots. The seafood stew is enriched with aioli, a creamy sauce of olive oil, egg yolks, and garlic. A local Viognier or one from Condrieu whose round palate will match the dish's creaminess.

Other local Dishes include

Limoux pork fricassée

Boles de picolat

Clapassade

Encornets farcis (a different version of stuffed squid)

Crème Catalane is made from milk infused with lemon zest and cinnamon and is slowly whisked into a mixture of eggs, sugar, and a bit of corn starch. This mixture is stirred over low heat until a cream forms, then left to cool. Before serving, Crème Catalane is topped with sugar that's caramelized with a blow torch.

Rousquilles du Vallespir are round, flat-shaped cookies flavoured with lemon zest or anise. Rousquilles have a melt-in-your-mouth texture and are typically doused in a glaze of egg whites and sugar.

Croquant de Mende are elongated biscuits made with almonds, and hazelnuts and are frequently enjoyed with tea or coffee at the end of a meal.

Cod Bandade

Serves 10

Ingredients

1.5kg salt cod, nice and white and not too thick

250 ml olive oil

250 ml milk

3 cloves of garlic

1 lemon

Ground nutmeg

Bay leaf

Pepper

Method

Put the cod to de-salt for 12 hours.

Make sure it retains a slightly salty taste.

Cut into even pieces.

In a casserole, cover the cod with cold water

Add garlic, lemon, nutmeg, pepper and a bay leaf.

Heat the casserole on a stove.

When a white foam appears, remove from heat, carefully drain the cod and remove any bones.

Keep the cod warm

Heat the milk in one casserole and the oil in another without letting them boil.

Put the cod in a casserole over low heat and press it against the sides of the casserole

Add in turns the milk and the oil to obtains a purée.

Remove from heat.

Serve on slices of toast or French loaf.

You can also sprinkle grated cheese on the cod brandade and grill to melt.

Bourride

Ingredients

50ml olive oil

1 small yellow onion, diced

1 small fennel bulb, diced

2 celery stalks, diced

2 small leeks (white parts only), chopped

2 garlic cloves, minced

1 bay leaf

375ml dry white wine

500ml fish or seafood stock

500ml water

250g potatoes, halved lengthwise

1kg boneless, skinless halibut or other thick, white fish fillets, cut into 1-inch chunks

375ml Aioli (recipe follows), divided

Salt

Freshly ground black pepper

Garnish with chopped flat-leaf parsley and dry sherry (optional)

Serve with toasted slices of rustic bread and the remaining Aioli

Aioli

Ingredients

2 garlic cloves, finely chopped

2 large egg yolks, at room temperature

2tsp fresh lemon juice

2tsp Dijon mustard

375ml extra-virgin olive oil

Salt

Method

For the fish stew:

In a large, heavy pot over medium heat, warm the oil.

Stir in the onion, fennel, celery, leeks, garlic, and bay leaf and cook, stirring often, until tender but not browned, 10 to 15 minutes.

Stir in the wine and simmer until reduced by half, about 15 minutes.

Stir in the stock and water and bring to a boil.

Add the potatoes and cook until tender, about 10 minutes.

Strain and reserve the broth and set aside the vegetables.

Return the broth to the pot and add the fish.

Simmer until firm, 2 to 3 minutes.

Divide the fish among the serving bowls.

In a small bowl, whisk together 125ml of the aioli with 50ml of hot broth to temper it. Whisk the tempered aioli into the pot of broth.

Return the reserve vegetables to the broth and re-warm over low heat.

Season with salt and pepper.

Ladle over the fish.

Garnish with parsley and a splash of sherry, if using.

Serve hot with toast and the remaining aioli.

For the Aioli:

In a medium bowl, whisk together the garlic, egg yolks, lemon juice, and mustard until smooth.

Whisking constantly, add in the oil in slow, steady stream, whisking until emulsified.

Season with salt.