



**31 Haute-Garonne** Agriculture is highly varied, reflecting in part the range of different natural conditions found in the area. Beef and dairy cattle raising is concentrated in the upland areas.

Sheep farming, for the production of Roquefort cheese, is practiced in the Pyrenees and Aveyron. Cereals, predominantly corn (maize), are cultivated in the central lowland areas around Toulouse and in Gers. The districts of Fronton in Haute-Garonne and Cahors in Lot specialize in viticulture. Vegetable and fruit cultivation has developed on a large scale in Tarn-et-Garonne, while the fattening of geese and ducks for the production of foie gras is widespread. Toulouse and its suburbs benefit from the large-scale development of the aeronautical and aerospace industries.

**Ail Violet de Cadours** is grown on the limestone and clay slopes around Cadours in the northwest and has a delicate and sweet flavour

**Baskeri** is made from Garonne sheeps' milk and it's usually aged for about 6 months. The texture is semi-soft, buttery, and creamy. The aromas are rich, while the flavours are buttery, mild to medium in intensity, and slightly nutty. Goes well with dry white wines or fruity and full-bodied reds.

**Aubisque Pyrénées** is made from a mixture of cow's and sheep's milk. This semi-hard cheese is usually left to age for 2 months before consumption. The flavours are mild and smooth.

**Toulouse Sausage** consists of coarsely minced pork with salt and pepper. The sausage is commonly used in cassoulets, but it can also be grilled, braised, or fried, then served alongside mashed potatoes and braised vegetables.

## Toulouse-Style Cassoulet

The dish gets its name from the pot it's traditionally baked in, the cassole, which is often shaped like a wide inverted cone to insure the greatest amount of crust.

Preparation and cooking Time; 2hrs 30mins, Total Time; 7hrs, Serves 10 to 12

## **Ingredients**

2 fresh ham hocks

500g boneless pork shoulder, cut into 35mm cubes

200g fresh pork skin with 6mm of fat attached

Salt and freshly ground pepper

1kg dried Tarbais or cannellini beans, picked over and rinsed

75g salt pork, skin removed

75ml duck fat (see Note)

3 small carrots, thinly sliced

2 medium onions, diced

150g piece of pancetta

150g piece of prosciutto

1 head of garlic, unpeeled, plus 4 small garlic cloves, peeled

1 large plum tomato, chopped

3l chicken broth

Bouquet garni: 4 parsley sprigs, 3 small celery ribs, 2 thyme sprigs and 1 bay leaf, tied with string

6 duck confit legs

1 tablespoon vegetable oil

500g French-style fresh pork sausages, such as saucisses de Toulouse, pricked with a fork

50ml fresh bread crumbs

## **Method**

Put the ham hocks, pork shoulder cubes and skin in a large dish; season lightly with salt and pepper.

Cover and refrigerate overnight.

In a bowl, cover the beans with 75mm of water and soak overnight.

The next day, in a medium saucepan, cover the salt pork and the seasoned skin with water.

Bring to a boil, then simmer over moderate heat until the skin is supple, about 30 minutes.

Drain and cool.

Refrigerate the salt pork.

Cut the pork skin into 5 long pieces, roll each piece into a bundle and tie with string.

Dry the ham hocks and pork shoulder cubes with a paper towel.

In a very large heavy casserole, heat the duck fat.

Add half of the pork cubes and cook over moderately high heat until lightly browned all over

Transfer to a plate.

Repeat with the remaining pork cubes.

Add the ham hocks to the casserole and brown them lightly.

Add the carrots and onions and cook over moderate heat, stirring occasionally, until the onions are golden, about 7 minutes.

Add the pancetta and brown it lightly.

Add the prosciutto, the head of garlic and the tomato and cook, stirring, for 1 minute.

Add 2.5l of the broth, the bouquet garni, pork skin bundles and the browned pork and its juices and bring to a boil.

Cover the casserole and gently simmer the ragout over low heat for 1 1/2 hours, stirring occasionally.

Drain the beans.

In a large saucepan, cover the beans with water and bring to a boil over moderate heat.

Simmer the beans for 3 minutes, then drain.

Add the beans to the ragout and simmer until the beans are just tender, about 2 hours.

Let the ragout cool, then refrigerate overnight.

Remove as much of the solidified fat as you can from the surface of the ragout; reserve 50ml of the fat.

Let the ragout return to room temperature.

Pick out the ham hocks, pancetta and prosciutto.

Cut the meats into bite-size pieces; discard the bones, skin and gristle.

Pick out the pork skin bundles and the head of garlic and reserve.

Discard the bouquet garni.

\*Preheat the oven to 200C (fan180C) 400°F.

Bring the ragout to a simmer.

Cut the blanched salt pork into small pieces.

Squeeze the cooked garlic cloves into a food processor.

Add the salt pork and the raw garlic cloves and process to a smooth paste.

Stir the paste into the ragout and simmer over low heat for 15 minutes, stirring occasionally.

Stir in all of the cooked and cured meats.

Meanwhile, arrange the duck confit legs in a baking dish and roast just until heated through, about 15 minutes. Remove the meat from the bones in large pieces.

Cut the skin into strips.

Discard the bones.

Turn the oven down to 160C (fan 140C) 325° F.

Untie and unroll the pork skin bundles.

Line the bottom of a 6l to 7l earthenware casserole with the pork skin, fat side down.

Using a large slotted spoon, transfer half of the ragout to the earthenware casserole.

Top with the duck confit in an even layer, then cover with the rest of the ragout.

Add the remaining 500ml of broth to the cooking liquid in the cast-iron casserole and season lightly with salt and pepper.

Pour the liquid over the ragout and drizzle with 2 tablespoons of the reserved skimmed fat.

Bake the cassoulet for 1 1/2 hours.

Heat the vegetable oil in a medium skillet.

Add the sausages and cook over moderately high heat until browned all over.

Let cool, then cut the sausages into 75mm pieces.

Reduce the oven temperature to 150C (fan 130C) 275°F. Gently stir in the skin that has formed on the cassoulet. Nestle in the sausages and drizzle with the remaining 2 tablespoons of reserved fat.

Sprinkle with the bread crumbs.

Bake the cassoulet for 1 hour longer, until it is richly browned on the surface.

Transfer to a cloth-lined rack and let rest for at least 20 minutes before serving.

### **Make Ahead**

The cassoulet can be prepared up to 3 days ahead.

Let cool, then refrigerate.

Bring the ragout and beans to room temperature before proceeding.

In Toulouse, the locals pour hearty, tannic reds to accompany cassoulet, like the wines of the Collioure region, which lies to the southeast