



32 Gers is one of the most rural regions in all of France. It is easy to feel like you've stepped back in time with sweeping panoramas, undulating fields of sunflowers, corn and rapeseed.

Vineyards lazing under the sun alongside lush grazing pastures dotted with wildflowers. Hedgerows stuffed with hawthorne, broom and honeysuckle hug fields and forests. Gers is not France's most sparsely populated district in France, it is the most agricultural. Gers has more of its land under cultivation than any other French Département.

The gastronomy in the Gers is exceptional in its quality and quantity. Local products and specialities have unrivalled flavours like foie-gras, confits of duck, duck fillets, rillettes, chicken, melons, white garlic, kiwis ...

Foie-Gras is made from goose or duck liver. Goose foie-gras has a fine, delicate flavour, silky and refined. Duck foie-gras is more rustic. It has a distinctive taste and character. Foie-gras can be eaten raw, cooked in a pan, or half-cooked. There are many recipes to be found from using it for a starter, in desserts or simply on toast.

Gers Poultry is used to make foie-gras with duck and goose livers, duck fillets, confit, duck wings, legs, neck, the carcass (for soup). Other poultry of the area include yellow chicken, turkey, guinea fowl, poulard and capon

Gers Game includes quail, woodpigeon, woodcock and partridge.

Lamb and Sheep are traditional produce of this agricultural area

Rosé Veal comes from calves that stay with their mothers to guarantee good health and well being.

Gascon Black Pork is used to make black ham which melts in the mouth with subtle yet strong flavours.

Gers Fish. Good freshwater fish is available from the Gers and Adour rivers including trout, salmon, pike, pikeperch, perch and black-bass. The sturgeon of the Adour River produce of high quality caviar.

White Garlic of Lomagne is big in size, fleshy and perfumed, sometimes with purple stripes.

Purple garlic of Cadours is purple on the outside and sometimes on the inside It tastes spicy with a hint of sweetness

Tarbais Bean is a white bean, with a fine skin, and soft flesh.

Adour Kiwi represents a quarter of the national production of kiwi fruit and has a tangy taste. Best served with sweet food, but goes well with seafood (crab, smoked salmon, prawns).

Lectoure Melon is harvested from June to mid-September, depending on the weather. It is best served with a Floc de Gascogne wine and dry cured ham.

Other Local Products include goat's cheese and cow's cheese, prunes, honey, pears, apples and saffron!

A Typical Meal

Entrée

Aïgo Boulido - Garlic Soup

This soup will please your guests either as a starter or main course. Serve it with bread.

Ingredients:

1litre water

5 garlic cloves (white or purple!)

4 sage leaves

2 thyme branches

1 bay leaf

Method

Place the water and garlic in a large pot.

Cover and bring to the boil.

Boil for 20 minutes.

Remove from the heat, add the sage, thyme and bay leaf.

Do not let it boil again.

Simmer for 20 minutes.

Place the bread and 1 tablespoon of olive oil on plates.

Sieve the stock (or not!) and serve it hot.

Main Course

L`Alicuit de Canard

This is a typical Gersois dish; it is economical and filling. Duck is not only used for its fillets, foie-gras and legs, other parts can also be enjoyed and the Alicuit uses the "cheap cuts", which can be extremely tasty. It can be eaten with fingers, casually, and in a relaxed way. "Al y cot" in the Gascon language means the "wings and the neck"

Ingredients:

Various ducks pieces such as wings, neck, feet, rump, gizzard, heart... about 15 pieces are needed for the dish.

1 onion

5 carrots

1 turnip

5 potatoes (or pasta)

Few mushrooms

Some flour

Few black olives

Some dry white wine

750ml vegetable stock

One bouquet garni

3 tablespoon of duck or goose fat (or butter)

Method

Peel and chop all the vegetables.

Melt the duck fat in a casserole and brown the duck offal.

Add the vegetables, apart from the mushrooms and potatoes.

Let everything brown, sprinkle with flour (to thicken the sauce) and mix.

Add the mushrooms and olives (stoned, preferably).

Add the white wine and stock.

Add the bouquet garni, salt and pepper.

Cover and let it simmer for 1 hour.

Add the chopped diced potatoes or pasta.

Cook until the potatoes are soft. Serve hot!

This stew can be served with a robust red wine, like the Madiran. Serve with garlic croutons.

or

Seven Hour Leg of Lamb(or Shoulder) with Tarbais Beans

The meat is soft and melts in your mouth, it is almost caramelised and delicious. Start preparation the day before you want to eat it. This kind of dish is always best reheated! To make this dish, traditionally, the casserole is sealed. A bread dough is prepared which goes on the top of the casserole to hermetically seal it. This prevents the sauce evaporating. It is a fussy step that can be skipped. Just make sure you add a bit of extra stock if the sauce appears too thick during cooking!

Ingredients:

1 leg or shoulder of Gers lamb

Olive oil

Rosemary and thyme

2 carrots

2 onions

1 Lomagne white or purple garlic clove

2 slices of black Gascony pork belly

250ml veal stock

Dry white wine

Bouquet garni,

Salt and pepper

Method

In the morning, remove the fat from the meat and brush it with olive oil, rosemary and thyme.

Leave to marinate all day (lamb + pork).

In the evening drain the meat, keep the flavoured oil.

In a large casserole, brown the meat with a bit of this oil.

Remove the meat, add 1 onion and the chopped carrots, deglaze the pan with the dry white wine.

Reduce the liquid a bit; add the meat and the veal stock.

Place the meat in a casserole dish, with the other chopped onion, the bouquet garni and the salt and pepper.

Heat oven to 120C (fan100C) 250F

Put the lid on and pop it in the oven for 6 hrs 30 mins to 7 hrs (all night!).

Add a bit of water if necessary during the cooking process (yes, in the middle of the night...).

The following day, remove the meat carefully, as well as the herbs.

Reduce the sauce and put it to one side.

Serve hot, with a rocket salad and the famous Tarbais beans.

Blanch the dried beans the day before, then throw them in a pan with goose fat (or butter), add a thyme infusion and cook for 1 hour, seasoning it in the middle of the cooking time.

Dessert

Croustarde aux Pommes

To make it, the recipe is always the same: thin layers of dough (puff, short crust, filo pastries ... you can choose the one you prefer) are laid alternately with the filling. Finally other layers of pastry are crumbled on top to give some volume. The main difficulty with the traditional recipe is the making of the pastry, as it needs to be stretched until it is almost transparent, to guarantee the dessert is light and tasty.

Ingredients:

3 sweet apples

140 ml of Armagnac

10 to 12 sheets of filo pastry

100g of melted butter

4 sachets of vanilla sugar

Method

Peel and cut the apples into thin wedges, add the Armagnac, mix and leave to marinate overnight.

The following day, add sachet of vanilla sugar to the marinated apples.

In a buttered tart plate, layer 7 sheets of filo pastry, buttering each sheet well and sprinkling with vanilla sugar

Place the marinated apples on the 7 layers of filo.

Take 3 more layers of pastry (buttered and sugared) and crumbled them to give them volume and an airy effect.

Cook at 160°C (fan 140C) for 10 minutes in the middle of the oven, then cook for an additional 20 minutes at the bottom of the oven.