



37 Indre-et-Loire is sparsely populated. In terms of economic development, this northern area has proved more dynamic than the south. Agriculture is dominated by arable farming. Cereals are cultivated on large farms that are highly mechanised

Wheat and corn (maize) are the principal grains, with corn more important in the north than in the south, while rapeseed and sunflowers are also widely grown, particularly in the south. The raising of beef cattle is important along the southern borders, while dairying prevails along the western fringe. The major river valleys are where flowers, apples, and grapes are cultivated. Viticulture is particularly prevalent in the Loire valley. Notable wines include the reds of Chinon and the whites of Vouvray and Sancerre. Modern industrial growth has been in along the Orléans-Tours corridor and includes pharmaceuticals, cosmetics, rubber, machinery, electrical and electronic equipment, and automobile components.

Sainte-Maure de Touraine is a soft cheese made of full-fat goat's milk shaped like a log with a slightly salty and nutty taste with a lemony finish. Its rind is thin and smooth, with a blue to grey mould covering it. The interior is creamy in texture and fully white.

Coeur de Touraine is a heart-shaped cheese made with raw goat's milk distinguishable by aromatic ash-covered edible rind. The texture is thick and creamy, while the flavours are goaty, milky, and tangy, with a slightly salty aftertaste.

Bourgueil is a red wine producing light-bodied and fruit-flavoured styles, as well as more powerful variations. It typically display aromas of cherries and strawberries. Bourgueil wines pair well with grilled pork or poultry, while bolder styles may match red meat or game, as well as aged cheese.

Chinon is a well-structured wine that, when grown on gravel soil tends to be lighter while that grown on limestone soils are more complex and tannic

Vouvray is mostly known for their crisp dry wines (sec) and are characterized by their straw yellow colour, vibrant acidity and aromas that typically include floral, citrus, and white fruit notes.

Andouillette de Vouvray is made from pork tripe, seasoned with sea salt, pepper and spices and poached in Vouvray wine for at least 3 hours.

Rillettes de Tours is a spread made from pork meat that has been slowly cooked in a pot of pork fat and is locally called 'pig jam'. It is usually presented in a pot or a jar, where it can be covered with a layer of fat to preserve the product. The meat can be flavoured with white wine during the cooking process, and the result is a golden yellow to brown paste with a rough, coarse texture and a browned-meat taste. Serve it on toasted bread with cornichon pickles to cut the rich taste of this French delicacy, and pair it with a glass of cold white wine.

Chicken en Barbouille

Poulet en Barbouille is a very old recette. It's similar to Coq au Vin. The sauce is finished with blood to thicken it and give a beautiful glossy deep brown colour. Gravy thickening is an alternative. If you do use blood you need to add a drop of vinegar to it and mix it in.

Ingredients:

Chicken parts of 2 chickens marinated in red wine from 12 hours to 2 days.

25mm thick slab of bacon

1 yellow onion

2-3 whole garlic cloves

2 carrots

5 juniper berries lightly crushed

10 black pepper corns lightly crushed

300ml veal stock

2 whole bay leaves

Sprigs of dry thyme

150ml blood with a 1/2 teaspoon of vinegar added

2 tablespoons toasted flour (light brown in colour)

50ml cognac

3 to 4 tablespoons peanut oil for frying chicken

Method

Preheat oven to 200°C (fan 180C) or 400°F

Drain chicken.

Reserve marinade and reheat to a boil on stove.

Skim impurities that float to the top.

Set aside.

In a large oven safe casserole sweat chopped onion and carrots over medium low heat. Be careful not to brown vegetables. Add bay leaf, thyme, and garlic.

Take bacon and blanch it by putting the whole slab into a pot of cold water then boil it.

Skim impurities off the top and remove bacon right after it's boiled.

In a smaller pan brown chicken in the hot peanut oil.

Put chicken in skin side down first.

Once chicken is browned remove and let drain.

Add chicken to sweated onions and carrots over medium heat.

Deglaze pan with cognac.

Once cognac has mostly evaporated and the alcohol burned off, sprinkle toasted flour over and stir to coat vegetables and chicken.

Add veal stock and enough marinade to almost cover the chicken but not quite.

Add peppercorns and crushed juniper berries, and bacon slab.

Cover with lid or parchment paper and cook for 45 minutes.

When chicken is done, decant and keep warm.

Remove rind from bacon and cut into batonets or little pieces, add to chicken and keep warm.

Strain sauce from vegetables into a saucepan.

Heat sauce on medium heat and let reduce a little (not too much, just so it's soupy).

Skim fats from surface.

Pour 2/3rd's of sauce back over chicken.

With the remaining 1/3 add the blood and stir over medium heat.

The colour will change quickly from red to a dark rich brown and thicken.

Pour this over chicken and stir to combine.

Serve immediately.

Notes: If you are making for a dinner party you can cook the chicken in advance and then do the sauce at the last minute.

This dish cannot be reheated.

Loire Shortbread

Preparation Time: 10 mins, Cooking Time: 15 mins, Makes 10

Even an infant could make this recipe

Ingredients

60 g softened butter in small pieces

60 g sugar

1 egg

150 g flour

Vanilla (liquid extract or in a sachet)

Method

Mix the flour with the sugar in a bowl

Add the egg, then the butter.

Knead well.

Add the vanilla (or whatever other flavouring you wish).

If the dough sticks to your fingers too much, add a bit more flour.

Form the dough into large balls and place them on a buttered baking sheet.

Cook in 170°C (fan 150C) 350F oven for 15 minutes.

Hot or cold, these shortbreads are a real delight to the palate.

Beurre Blanc

Beurre blanc is a simple butter-based emulsified sauce that's great with fish or seafood.

A beurre blanc can be flavoured with other things to add interest to a dish. For example citrus, herbs, spices like saffron or even a splash of liqueur.

Preparation time: 5 mins, Cooking time: 10 mins, Serves 2

Ingredients

225ml Dry White Wine

180g Chilled Unsalted Butter (cubed)

60g Shallots (finely chopped)

50ml Lemon Juice

1 tbsp Double Cream

Salt and White Pepper (for seasoning)

Method

Combine the shallots, white wine, and lemon juice in a non-reactive saucepan over high heat and reduce to about 2 tablespoons.

(Avoid using aluminium or copper pans as these will react with the acid and make you sauce look dirty and taste metallic. It will however clean your pan up a treat.)

Add the cream to the reduction.

Once the liquid bubbles, reduce the heat to low.

Add the butter, one cube at a time, whisking first on the heat and then off the heat.

Continue whisking butter into the reduction until the mixture is fully emulsified and has reached a rich sauce consistency.

Season with salt and white pepper.

It is best to serve this sauce straight away as it does not reheat very well.

It is possible however to store in a thermos until ready to serve.