



44 Loire-Atlantique is a department on the Atlantic coast of western France. It's known for the city of Nantes, home to the ornate, Gothic-style Nantes Cathedral and the Château des Ducs de Bretagne, a restored 15th-century castle. Nearby is Brière

Regional Natural Park, a wetland reserve with canals and rich birdlife. Vineyards near the medieval town of Clisson produce the area's trademark Muscadet white wine. The Loire flows east to west across the région. Other important waterways include the Vilaine, Erdre, Maine, Mayenne, and Sarthe rivers. An oceanic climate prevails.

Animal husbandry dominates agriculture, and the région is a leading producer of milk, beef, pork, and poultry. Dairy farming is particularly important along the région's western fringes in Mayenne and Loire-Atlantique. Fishing ports include La Tourballe and Le Croisic in Loire-Atlantique and Les Sables-d'Olonne in Vendée.

Soils in the région tend to be acid and heavy. Viticulture is concentrated to the south of Nantes, while Muscadet, a dry white wine, is produced primarily on the north banks of the Loire estuary. Cereals (wheat, corn [maize], and barley) are increasingly cultivated, especially in the eastern part of the région, often for use as animal feed.

Sel de Guérande is gray in colour and Fleur de sel de Guérande is white. Fleur de sel is a finishing salt intended for sprinkling over salads, grilled meat and fish, fruit such as melons and pineapples.

Beurre Blanc is a thick, rich, creamy sauce made from butter, white wine, shallots, and white wine vinegar. It has a slightly sweet, tangy flavour that goes well with poached fish, shellfish, and asparagus.

Muscadet Sèvre et Maine is the best-known regional wine either natural or sur lie. They have a golden colour, and a rich, round, and well structured palate, while the aroma is reminiscent of citrus and dried fruit. These wines are best paired with seafood and fish.

Gâteau Nantais is a traditional dish consisting of butter, sugar, flour, eggs, ground almonds, and rum. When baked, the sponge is doused in a rum-infused syrup, and then topped with a white sugar glaze often also spiked with rum. Occasionally, the centre is coated in a layer of apricot jam.

Curé Nantais is a straw-coloured cheese made from cow's milk and has an open, soft, sticky, and supple texture. Its flavour is smoky and slightly spicy.

Mâche Nantaise or lamb's lettuce, as it's called in English, can not be sold directly from the ground, but must be processed to become a finished and washed product ready for consumption.

Volailles d'Ancenis is poultry rich in highly nutritional proteins and low in fat. Enjoy it cooked, roasted or oven baked and paired with creamy potatoes or vegetables.

Bonnotte is a variety of potato grown exclusively, and in small quantities, on the island of Noirmoutier. They are extremely fragile and can only be planted and harvested by hand

Fondant Baulois has a thin, light meringue crust, even fondant texture and chocolatey taste with a hint of salted caramel butter.

Loire-Atlantique Oyster is grown and matured in the plankton-rich water between the bays of Bourgneuf and L'Aiguillon-sur-Mer.

Beurre Blanc

Beurre blanc can sometimes be viewed as tricky to make as without the addition of egg yolk to stabilise the sauce it is prone to split. Ensure that the butter is chilled and added slowly.

Ingredients

240ml of white wine

100ml of white wine vinegar

1 tbsp of banana shallot, chopped

450g of butter, diced

Method

Bring the wine, white wine vinegar and shallots to the boil and reduce until you have 2 tbsp of liquid remaining

Strain the reduction into a clean pan and return to the heat

Add the chilled butter one piece at a time, whisking constantly

Continue to add the butter until 1 or 2 pieces remain then remove from the heat

Whisk in the remaining butter, the sauce should be thick, smooth and glossy

Serve immediately.

Fillet of Roast Zander

Serves 4

Ingredients

- 2 zander fillets (with the skin left on)
- 100g parsley root
- 100g Jerusalem artichokes
- 100g parsnips
- 100g carrots
- 200g Loire eel
- 2 boudin blanc sausages
- 1 bunch of chives
- 1 shallot

- 200ml veal stock
- 50ml truffle oil

Method

Peel and wash the vegetables, then cut them into small 2mm cubes.

Place them in a large amount of water, bring to the boil for several minutes and then leave to cool.

Prepare the Loire Eel

Remove the skin and cut out the fillets; cut them to the same thickness as the vegetables.

Fry slowly all together in olive oil.

Take the boudin blanc sausages, remove the skin and slice thinly.

Cut the zander fillets into 4 equal portions.

Take the portions one by one, slide your knife under the skin in order to separate the flesh from the skin.

Stop 1cm from the edge of each side.

Slip the boudin blanc sausage under the skin, forming a scale-like pattern.

Cook the fish on the skin side to start with, and turn it over after several minutes

Brush with fresh butter to finish cooking it.

Set aside on a hot plate.

Finely chop the shallot and chives.

Mix them into the garnish and add a few drops of truffle oil.

Heat up the veal stock.

Presentation

Arrange the garnish in a circle in the middle of the plate.

Place the zander on top of the garnish, and draw a line of sauce around it.

Sprinkle with a couple of drops of truffle oil.

Decorate with fresh herbs.