



47 Lot-et-Garonne is perhaps the France that you always hoped existed but could never quite find - medieval villages and sunflower fields, quiet roads and small farms in gently rolling countryside

The Lot-et-Garonne department is in south-west France to the south of the Dordogne and north of Gascony, where it forms part of the Aquitaine region of France. The landscape of the north-eastern Lot-et-Garonne department is similar in appearance to the Dordogne region to the north, with a mix of wooded slopes, small scale farming and some forested areas. To the south it becomes more like Gascony, with gently rolling fields. Everywhere in the department you will find fields of sunflowers, traditional market towns and small picturesque villages, and orchards - typically of plum trees grown for the delicious pruneaux d'Agen, a local speciality.

Traditionally, agricultural activity was associated with polyculture (the raising of fish and aquatic plants), but modernization led to far greater specialization in aquaculture. Farm production is dominated by corn (maize) and fruits, particularly grapes, which are used to produce the wines of the Bordeaux region. Vegetable crops are also important. Walnuts are extensively cultivated in Dordogne, and Lot-et-Garonne is one of France's main tobacco-growing areas. Livestock is raised mainly for meat. A significant number of farms raise ducks and geese for the production of foie gras.

There is a great variety of fruit and vegetables with dishes that are well balanced for a healthy diet. Each dish can be served with the appropriate wine as the Lot and Garonne offers a great range of grape varieties.

Agen prune. The prune perfectly complements sweet and salty dishes.

Marmande Tomato has a fleshy pulp that can be eaten raw or cooked.

Garriguettes Strawberries makes excellent strawberry tarts, strawberry charlottes and strawberry cakes.

Tourtière aux Pruneaux (prune tart), or Armagnac flavoured apple tart, is also a traditional dessert.

Asparagus, Courgettes, Green Beans and Melons are exceptional in season.

Confits and Magrets de Canard (breast and leg of duck) are used in many exciting recipes.

Bœuf Blond d'Aquitaine is a savoury and tasty meat and can be eaten grilled, fried, stewed or roasted.

Bavette Blonde d'Aquitaine et Beurre aux Herbes

Preparation Time 35 mins, Cooking Time; 35 mins, Rest; 2 min, Serves 4

Ingredients

4 pieces of Blonde d'Aquitaine beef flank steak

800g baby potatoes

120g mixed arugula and lamb's lettuce

50g breadcrumbs

20g fresh curly parsley

8 tomatoes

120ml olive oil + 2 tbsp. extra virgin olive oil

4 garlic cloves

4 tbsp. teaspoon chopped Italian herbs

4 tbsp. butter

2 tbsp. teaspoon red wine vinegar

2 tbsp. mustard

1 shallot

Salt pepper

Method

Preheat the oven to 200°C(fan 180C).

Take the meat out of the fridge to bring it to room temperature.

Wash and cut the potatoes in half

Spread them on baking sheet covered with baking paper, salt, pepper and sprinkle with 4 tbsp. olive oil.

Bake for about 30 minutes, flipping the potatoes halfway through cooking.

Cut each tomato in half and place in a baking tray lined with parchment paper, skin side down.

Peel and mince the shallot and the garlic.

Wash and chop the fresh parsley.

Mix half the garlic, one third of the parsley, 4 tbsp. Italian herbs and 4 tbsp. olive oil with salt and pepper.

Spread this mixture on the cut side of the tomatoes and bake for 15 minutes

Mix the butter, remaining garlic and half of the remaining parsley, salt and pepper to make a herb butter.

Salt and pepper each piece of meat.

Start cooking them when there is 7 minutes left in the oven.

Heat 4 tbsp. olive oil in a frying pan over high heat.

Sear the steak for 1 to 2 minutes on each side, depending on taste, then set aside in foil for 2 minutes.

Meanwhile, mix the virgin olive oil with the wine vinegar, the chopped shallot and the mustard in a salad bowl.

Add the salad and mix well.

Serve the sliced meat topped with knobs of herb butter, potatoes and tomatoes garnished with the remaining parsley.