



60 Oise is situated in the Picardy region of northern France just a short distance north of Paris, which make the department a popular destination with Parisians escaping the city for the weekend exploring the forests and countryside trails. It is a moderately elevated plateau with pleasant valleys and fine forests, such as those of Compiègne, Ermenonville, Chantilly and Halatte in the south-east. It belongs almost entirely to the basins of the Seine, Somme and Bresle.

The most important river is the Oise with its tributaries Breche, Therain, Aisne, Authonne, Nonette, which irrigates the valley of Senlis and Chantilly. It flows through broad and fertile valleys from north-east to south-west, past the towns of Noyon, Compiègne, Pont St Maxence and Creil. These rivers are separated by ranges of low hills and the climate is very variable, but the range of temperature is moderate.

Pierrefonds, Gouvieux, Chantilly and Fontaine Bonneleau have mineral springs. Wheat, oats and other cereals, potatoes and sugar beet are the chief agricultural crops. Cattle are reared more especially in the western districts, where dairying is actively carried on. Bee-keeping is general. Racing stables are numerous in the neighbourhood of Chantilly and Compiègne. The Chantilly area is known for its lace making.

Pontoise Cabbage is a vegetable with an inimitable flavour that was once grown on nearly half of the Cergy-Pontoise plain. A few reminders of its heyday still remain, such as the famous Quartier du Chou along the Oise.

Montmorency Cherries are small, bright red and tender cherries harvested between mid-June and mid-July. It is the ideal accompaniment to meat and game based dishes. It is also perfect for making jam and jelly. It is used in pastries, cakes, eau de vie and preserves

Baguette Laonnaise is a cheese made from pasteurized cow's milk. Underneath its washed rind, the texture is supple and open. The cheese is shaped into a brick or a baguette.

The aromas are pungent, while the flavour is spicy and similar to Maroilles, and as it ages, it becomes sharper. Pair with a glass of Riesling .

Guerbigny or Coeur de Marie is a cheese made from raw cow's milk. Underneath its sticky washed rind, the texture is soft and smooth. The aromas and flavours are strong. Pair it with a glass of Sancerre.

Prés-Salés de la Baie de Somme lambs are reared on the salt marshes of the Pas-de-Calais and Somme regions in France and fed on sea grass, giving the meat its distinctive flavour and tenderness. The meat is pink with firm, creamy-white fat and retains its juiciness when cooked, producing long-lasting flavours, the taste reminiscent of iodine, sea flora and hazelnuts.

La Flamiche aux Poireaux

Make the crust and blind bake it for 10 minutes to prevent the bottom from getting soggy.

Make the filling by cooking the bacon, sautéing the vegetables until soft, making a roux and adding creme fraiche. Remove from heat, let it cool slightly, and add eggs and cheese.

Ingredients

For the Crust

75g flour, sifted

1/2 teaspoon salt

150g unsalted butter, cubed and chilled

2 to 4 tablespoons ice water

For the Leek and Bacon Filling

150g bacon, diced
50g butter
1 large shallot, chopped
5 large leeks, white and light green part only, rinsed and sliced
80ml white wine
Salt and freshly ground pepper, to taste
A pinch of freshly grated nutmeg
2 tablespoons flour
80ml whole milk
50ml creme fraiche
2 large eggs, lightly beaten
200g shredded Gruyere cheese, divided

Method

Making the Tart Crust:

Combine the flour and salt in a large bowl.
Add the cubed butter and cut the butter into the flour until the mixture resembles coarse sand.
Add the water, one tablespoon at a time, and mix, adding more water as needed, until the dough comes together. Do not overmix!
Turn the dough out onto a lightly floured surface and knead just until it forms a ball.
Transfer the dough onto a piece of parchment paper, flatten into a disk, cover with a second piece of parchment paper, and roll into a 250mm circle.
Carefully transfer the dough to a 250mm tart pan and chill for 30 minutes, or until firm.
Preheat oven to 220C (fan 200C) 425F.
Using a fork, pierce the bottom of the crust.
Cut a square of parchment paper about 100mm larger than the pie plate.
Line the crust with the paper and fill with ceramic pie weights (or dried beans).
Bake in the preheated oven for 10 minutes or until set.
Remove from oven and gently remove the paper and weights.
Reserve the crust

Making the Leek Filling:

In a large frying pan, over medium heat, add the diced bacon and cook until crisp and golden brown.
Using a slotted spoon, remove the bacon to a plate. Reserve.
Discard all but 1 teaspoon of the bacon fat.
Add the butter and, once melted, add the chopped shallot.
Cook until translucent, about 2 minutes.
Add the sliced leeks and stir to coat them with the fat.
Add the white wine, partially cover, and cook, stirring occasionally, until the leeks are soft, about 8 to 10 minutes. Season with salt, pepper and nutmeg.
Add back the bacon.
Stir in the flour and cook, stirring constantly, for a couple of minutes.
Then, add the milk and stir until thickened.
Add the creme fraiche and stir until incorporated.
Remove the pan from the heat and let it cool slightly.
Then, add the eggs and 1 cup of the Gruyere cheese, stirring until combined.

Assembling the Flamiche aux Poireaux:

To assemble the tart, pour the filling mixture into the reserved crust.

Scatter the remaining cheese evenly over the top.

Bake until set and nicely browned, about 35 to 40 minutes.

Let it cool for at least 30 minutes before serving.

Serve warm or at room temperature.