



66 Pyrénées-Orientales is a department on France's Mediterranean coast, along the Spanish border. The main city, Perpignan, is known for its Catalan culture and 13th-century Palace of the Kings of Majorca. South is the fishing town of Collioure, with its medieval Royal Castle, and the long beach at Argelès-sur-Mer.

winter

The Pyrénées-Orientales is the southernmost point

in France, the hottest, and the driest and while the Atlantic coast has some lovely beaches, both the air and water are much warmer on the Pyrénées-Orientales' side. The Mediterranean near Spain offers blue skies even during the winter.

Agriculture in the western upland areas revolves around the raising of beef cattle and sheep (notably in the Cévennes). Forests are exploited commercially also. Traditionally, viticulture has been the dominant activity in the foothills and coastal plains; the wine produced, however, was not of high quality. Since the mid-20th century, however, irrigation has aided diversification and production. Fewer vineyards now exist, but better quality wines are produced. Fruits and vegetables (including apples, peaches, and tomatoes) are now cultivated widely.

Anchois de Collioure can be sold salted, as fillets in oil and as fillets in brine. The fillets are dark brown, with a soft texture and a smell reminiscent of mountain ham. Anchois de Collioure can be enjoyed with braised rabbit and mint or paired with pasta and pine nuts.

Abricots Rouges du Roussillon are extremely aromatic apricots with quite low acidity levels and a delicate, fragrant flavour. They are particularly juicy and sweet and can be enjoyed fresh, dried, candied, or used for preparing various jams, tarts, and pastries.

Artichaut du Roussillon have a mild taste and a tender, not too fibrous texture. They can be eaten raw. Prepare this highly praised artichoke with salt, steamed, poached or sautéed in a saucepan.

Rosée des Pyrénées Catalanes is white veal meat, tender and its colour ranges from pink to light red and it is very rich in iron and low in fat.

Boles de Picolat is a traditional Catalan dish in which meatballs and olives are simmered in a rich sauce with carrots, garlic, ceps mushrooms, tomato purée, and olive oil. The meatballs are often prepared with a combination of pork and beef mince, flour, eggs, and onions, fried in olive oil, then combined with the sauce. Once prepared, the dish is served with white beans, chickpeas, or rice on the side.

Perdreau à la Catalane is made with partridges, onions, garlic, flour, tomatoes, salt, pepper, olive oil, and bitter Seville oranges. The partridges are cut in half, browned in olive oil while the onions and garlic are sautéed, mixed with flour, water, tomatoes, salt, and pepper, simmered and the partridge halves are returned to the pan. The dish is cooked over low heat for about an hour when the oranges are added to the sauce The dish can also be made with pigeons or pork tenderloin.

Boles de Picolat (Boulettes de Viande à la Catalane)

Preparation Time; 40mins, Rest, Cooking Time; 30mins, Serves 6

Ingredients

pepper
salt
garlic

parsley
3 onions
5 tomatoes (or 1/2 litre of tomato pulp)
6 potatoes
1kg white beans (ingots) soaked the day before
600g sausage meat (minced pork)
400g minced beef
1 slice dry bread _
2 eggs
2 tbsp dried porcini mushrooms

Utensils

1 bowl
1 salad bowl
1 wooden spoon
1 cast iron casserole dish

Method

Soak the white beans the night before.

Soak the porcini mushrooms in a bowl of lukewarm milk.

When they have softened, remove them and soak the dry bread in this same milk.

In a salad bowl, hand mix the minced meat, the drained breadcrumbs, the eggs, 3 tablespoons of a garlic and chopped parsley mixture (in equal proportion), season with salt and pepper.

Form the stuffing balls, they must be as round as possible and be about 5 or 6 cm in diameter. You can form the 'boles' (balls) with slightly wet hands, which avoids flouring them.

Flour them (or not) and brown them one after the other in a casserole dish.

Turn them over to cook them on all sides.

As the 'boles' take on a red colour, set them aside.

They must be brown and cooked on the surface.

In a large casserole dish, or Dutch oven, brown the 3 sliced onions in oil. Stir.

Add the peeled, seeded tomatoes or tomato pulp.

Let this mixture reduce so that it melts and thickens.

Add the boles, porcini mushrooms, 2 or 3 carrots cut into sections, salt and pepper, then moisten with water.

The liquid should cover the boles.

After 20 to 25 minutes, remove the boles and add the beans.

Let them cook slowly.

When they are almost cooked, put the boles back, then the green olives previously rinsed and boiled.

Add some peeled and quartered potatoes.

Monitor cooking.

There should be enough juice in the pan for the beans to cook without sticking.

This dish must be quite spicy, you have to have a little heavy hand on the pepper.

Perdreau à la Catalane (Catalan-Style Partridges)

The flavours of the south accompany the partridges in this dish, the aromatic herbs, the garlic and the tomatoes. Slices of orange to give acidity and cooking in a casserole dish. A simple dish but so tasty.

Preparation Time; 40mins, Cooking Time; 15mins, Serves 4

Ingredients

2 partridges
2 rashers of bacon
3 tbsp olive oil
1 bouquet garni (thyme, bay leaf, parsley)
2 tbsp tomato puree
6 garlic cloves
1 untreated orange
Fine salt
Ground pepper

Method

Salt and pepper the inside of the partridges.
Bride the partridges and surround them with a bacon rasher, tie up.
Peel the garlic cloves and blanch them in boiling water.
Drain and reserve.
Wash the orange and cut it into slices, collecting the juice.

Preparation

In a casserole dish, brown the partridges in the butter.
Add the bouquet garni, cover and cook over medium heat for 10 minutes.
Remove the cooking fat, and replace with the tomato purée.
Add the garlic cloves and orange slices.
Let boil for 3 minutes.
Check the seasoning.
Serve very hot in the casserole.