



71 Saône-et-Loire, stretching between Lyon and Dijon, is the southernmost of Burgundy-Franche-Comté's departments.

Burgundy links the Paris Basin to the Saône River corridor and has a diverse physical structure. In the northwest the undulating lowlands of the Paris Basin give way progressively

to plateaus of Jurassic origin that stretch in a broad arc from the Nivernais Plateau in the west to the Langres Plateau in the east. These different upland areas are cut by a series of depressions and river valleys that form an important watershed. The Loire and Seine rivers flow northward to the Atlantic Ocean, whereas the Saône has its outlet in the Rhône and ultimately the Mediterranean.

Agriculture is varied. Beef cattle are raised in the upland areas in Nièvre and the western part of Saône-et-Loire. Dairy cattle are raised in the east. Large-scale cereal farming is practiced in Yonne and the northern portion of Côte-d'Or.

Along the lower slopes of the Côte-d'Or is Burgundy's premier wine-producing district. The vineyards, comprising the two main groups of Beaune and Nuits, produce the most celebrated Burgundy wines, including Clos-Vougeot, Gevrey-Chambertin, Nuits-Saint-Georges, and Pommard. The Yonne valley also produces fine wines, especially those of Chablis, east of Auxerre.

Bresse Bleu is a blue cheese with a soft and creamy texture underneath its bloomy white rind. The aroma is fresh and mushroomy, while the flavour is buttery and very rich.

Pouilly-Fuissé is an appellation for Chardonnay-based white wines with a rich texture and aromatic complexity. They range from pale to deep gold with green highlights. Typical aromas include hazelnuts, almonds, citrus, white fruit, honey and brioche.

Montrachet is made by only one cheesemaker in Saint-Gengoux-le-National. The cheese is made from raw goat's milk and is wrapped in chestnut leaves, keeping it moist. The texture is clay-like, the aromas fresh and goaty, while the flavours are mild, sweet, and slightly sour. Pairs well with white Burgundy.

Parsleyed Ham is made of ham cubes and pork shoulder coated in parsley jelly, flavoured with white wine.

Eggs Meurette consists of poached eggs with a meurette sauce, made with red wine, lardons, onions and shallots fried in butter. This starter is generally served with toasted garlic bread and a glass of red Burgundy wine.

Boeuf Bourguignon is a rich dish featuring beef, mushrooms, bacon, a red wine sauce and shallots. This dish shows the importance of using good wine in cooking and good cuts of beef to ensure that this stew has a full, rich flavour.

Coq au Vin is a traditional dish featuring chicken, wine, lardons, garlic and mushrooms. Slowly cooked, this is a dish that's perfect for the autumn and winter seasons, and along with boeuf bourguignon, is a great example of the heavy use of wild mushrooms in Burgundy cuisine.

Gougère is and a type of choux pastry stuffed with mixed cheeses, mushrooms, ham and beef. Often served chilled during wine tastings, gougères can also be enjoyed as a delightful appetiser

Oeufs en Meurette (Eggs Meurette)

Preparation Time; 2 hrs, Serves 4

Ingredients

4 thick slices bacon, cut crosswise into 12mm wide strips (lardons)

10 to 12 pearl onions, peeled and trimmed

200g button mushrooms, trimmed and thickly sliced

1 clove garlic, crushed

750ml red wine, such as a Burgundy

1 teaspoon sugar

1 teaspoon fresh thyme leaves, roughly chopped

50ml good quality red wine vinegar

50ml extra-virgin olive oil

4 slices white bread

Salt and freshly ground black pepper, to taste

4 eggs

2 sprigs parsley, leaves chopped, for garnish (optional)

Method

Add bacon to a large saucepan over medium heat, stirring occasionally until it's cooked through and browning slightly at the edges, about 6 minutes.

Remove from pan and set aside. If a lot of fat has rendered in the pan, pour some out, leaving about 2 tablespoons in the pan.

Add onions and mushrooms and cook until the water from the mushrooms has evaporated, about 6 minutes.

Add garlic and cook, stirring occasionally, until it no longer smells raw, about 2 minutes.

Add red wine, sugar and thyme.

Simmer for 30 minutes, or until the wine has reduced by a third.

Add red wine vinegar and 50ml water, simmer on low until the sauce has reduced by a third, about 20 minutes. The sauce should taste bright and tangy.

In a sauté pan over medium heat, add the olive oil.

When hot, gently fry the bread on both sides until lightly golden brown, about 2 minutes on each side.

Cut the bread into strips, lightly season with salt and set aside on a paper towel.

Fill a deep saucepan with enough water to completely cover an egg.

Bring to a boil, then reduce heat so the water is at a gentle simmer.

Working with one egg at a time, break the eggs into a ramekin and gently slide them into the water, using a spoon to direct their shape in the water.

Poach for about 3 to 4 minutes, until the whites are set but the yolks are still soft and runny.

Fill 4 ramekins with the mushrooms, onions and red wine sauce.

Add a poached egg to each, sprinkle the bacon and parsley (if using) over the top and serve the fried bread on the side.

Top the eggs with freshly ground black pepper.

Boeuf Bourguignon

Preparation time: 1 hour, Cooking time: 4 hours, Serves 4

Ingredients

4 Onions sliced

3 Garlic cloves crushed

150g Mushrooms

4 Carrots chopped

100g Butter

600g Beef

120g Bacon cubed

500ml Beef Stock

1 Bottle of red wine

Bouquet Garni

Salt

Pepper

Method

Cut the meat into 3 cm cubes, remove the large pieces of fat

Cut the onion into slices.

Brown onions and bacon in a saute pan with butter.

Once transparent, place them in a heavy casserole dish

Do the same with the meat and carrots, but in batches, until all the pieces are cooked.

Gradually add them to the onions .Add butter between each batch if needed

When all the meat is in the casserole, deglaze the pan with the stock and bring to the boil, scraping to recover the juice.

Add salt and pepper

Cover everything with some of the wine and simmer for a few hours with the bouquet garni and the sliced carrots.

The next day, simmer for at least 2 hours in batches, adding wine or water if necessary.

NB. The secret is to brown the meat well over high heat so that it is very golden or even almost black.

The more the dish will have simmered very gently the better it will be (3 days is even better).

Coq au Vin

Preparation Time: 25 mins, Cooking Time: 1 hr and 20 mins, Serves 6

Ingredients

- 1½ tbsp olive oil
- 3 rashers (100g) dry-cured, smoked back bacon, fat trimmed, chopped
- 12 small shallots, peeled
- 2 free-range chicken legs (460g), skin removed
- 4 free-range chicken thighs with bone and skin (650g), skin removed
- 2 free-range, skinless, boneless chicken breasts (280g)
- 3 garlic cloves, finely chopped
- 3 tbsp brandy or Cognac
- 600ml red wine
- 150ml good-quality chicken stock
- 2 tsp tomato purée
- 3 thyme sprigs, 2 rosemary sprigs and 2 bay leaves, to make a bouquet garni
- small handful chopped flat-leaf parsley, to garnish
- **For the mushrooms**
- 1½ tbsp olive oil
- 250g chestnut mushrooms, halved if large
- **For the thickener**
- 2 tbsp plain flour
- 1½ tsp olive oil
- 1 tsp softened butter

Method

Heat 1 tbsp olive oil in a large, heavy-based saucepan or flameproof dish.

Tip in 3 trimmed and chopped smoked back bacon rashers and fry until crisp.

Remove and drain on kitchen paper.

Add 12 peeled shallots to the pan and fry, stirring or shaking the pan often, for 5-8 mins until well browned all over.

Remove and set aside with the bacon.

Take 2 chicken legs, 4 chicken thighs and 2 boneless chicken breasts, all with skin removed and pat dry with kitchen paper.

Pour ½ tbsp olive oil into the pan, then fry half the chicken pieces, turning regularly, for 5-8 mins until well browned.

Remove, then repeat with the remaining chicken.

Remove and set aside.

Scatter in 3 finely chopped garlic cloves and fry briefly, then, with the heat medium-high, pour in 3 tbsp brandy or Cognac, stirring the bottom of the pan to deglaze.

The alcohol should sizzle and start to evaporate so there is not much left.

Return the chicken legs and thighs to the pan along with any juices, then pour in a little of 600ml red wine, stirring the bottom of the pan again.

Stir in the rest of the wine, 150ml good-quality chicken stock and 2 tsp tomato purée.

Drop in 3 thyme sprigs, 2 rosemary sprigs and 2 bay leaves to make a bouquet garni, season with pepper and a pinch of salt, then return the bacon and shallots to the pan.

Cover, lower the heat to a gentle simmer, add the chicken breasts and cook for 50 mins - 1hr. Just before ready to serve, heat 1 ½ tbsp olive oil in a large non-stick frying pan.

Add 250g chestnut mushrooms, halved if large, and fry over a high heat for a few mins until golden.

Remove and keep warm.

Lift the chicken, shallots and bacon from the pan and transfer to a warmed serving dish.

Remove the bouquet garni.

To make the thickener, mix 2 tbsp plain flour, 1 ½ tsp olive oil and 1 tsp softened butter in a small bowl using the back of a teaspoon.

Bring the wine mixture to a gentle boil, then gradually drop in small pieces of the thickener, whisking each piece in using a wire whisk. Simmer for 1-2 mins.

Scatter the mushrooms over the chicken, then pour over the wine sauce.

Garnish with a handful of chopped flat-leaf parsley.