

Tarn-et-Garonne



Tarn-et-Garonne With the three major rivers, the Aveyron, the Tarn and the Garonne running through it, the department of Tarn-et-Garonne, known for its pleasant way of life, offers a range of varied landscapes, alternating between plains and hills scattered with fields and orchards, wild gorges, limestone plateaus and sloping vineyards

Its pleasant countryside, dotted with many dovecotes, invites fans of outdoor activities to explore it by taking a walk, horse ride, cycle tour or mountain bike ride. As well as these natural attractions there are the mediaeval towns of Bruniquel, Caylus, Saint-Antonin-Noble-Val and Montauban the chef-lieu. A stay in Tarn-et-Garonne is also an opportunity to taste delicious local produce, like the famous Chasselas grape and duck specialities.

The variety of produce in this department is extensive ranging from apples, prunes, peaches, nectarines, cherries and kiwis, to garlic, especially l'ail de Lomagne, black truffles and vegetables, the familiar dishes featuring duck and goose, patés, terrines, cassoulet and a variety of wonderful meat dishes, wines, cheeses, snails and fish.

Agriculture is highly varied, reflecting in part the range of different natural conditions found in the area. Beef and dairy cattle raising are predominately carried out in the Pyrenees. Cereals, predominantly corn (maize), are cultivated in the central lowland areas around Toulouse and in Gers. The districts of Fronton in Haute-Garonne and Cahorsin Lot specialize in viticulture

The Chasselas de Moissac Grape is grown on the clay and limestone plateau areas of north Tarn-et-Garonne and south Lot. It is popular for its sweet aromas and its firm flesh.

Cabécou is a cheese found everywhere in south-west France, the one from Autan being the most popular. It is a small disc of unpasteurised goats' milk cheese, soft inside and with a bloomy rind and a very delicate aroma of hazelnut. Usually eaten with a slice of bread and a glass of local white wine.

Stuffed Chicken consists of stuffed chicken cooked with onions studded with cloves, bouquet garni, leeks, carrots, turnips and a stick of celery. The stuffing is made of sausage meat, chicken liver and heart, parsley, garlic, egg, breadcrumbs and milk.

Saffron is used in very small quantities to flavour sweet and savoury dishes. It is added to delicate dishes, such as foie-gras, scallops, etc. It is added to pasta water when cooking Tagliatelles aux Coques for example. It can be found in tajines, couscous, paëlla. In sweet food, it is used in syrups, jams, jellies. It can be added to scrambled eggs, creams, and brioches.

Pears, Apples and Plums

Tarn & Garonne is the orchard of the Occitanie. With its three large rivers (the Tarn, the Garonne and the Aveyron), the alluvial basin is large and orchards benefit from the sun. Here, they produce more

than 80% of pears, apples and plums in the region. There are also kiwi fruit, table grape, melon, apricot and peach.

In Tarn & Garonne, there are also cep mushrooms, Gascony beef, lavender, honey and lamb. The Croustade is made with a fine puff pastry and is found everywhere in Gascony. It is an alternative to apple pie and is made with Armagnac or prunes.

Nut Bread and Cakes.

The walnut trees in Quercy provide the nuts to sprinkle on cakes and bread with.. They are delicious with a good Cabécou goats' cheese.

Cassoulet is a Toulousain dish that can also be found in Tarn & Garonne. Made with tarbais beans, pork rind, tomato puree, sausages of course, it provides a hearty meal.

Foie-Gras can be prepared as a mousse, pate, pan fried, “mi-cuit” (cooked between 70C to 85C). It can be eaten in various ways; as a starter, sometimes in risottos, in nuggets in a tart or served with a jelly of saffron.

Confit and Duck Magret are two dishes that can often be found on restaurant menus in the region.

Brioche or Coque Quercynoise is flavoured with orange blossom and traditionally consumed at Easter. It is ball shaped, with a beautiful soft light yellow crumb and a golden top.

Mountalbane is a brioche found in the region of Montauban with Vanilla, rum, orange blossom, fresh eggs, butter and candied fruits as some of the ingredients.

Poule Farcie

The preparation of a *poule farcie* is relatively long, but simple, and much of it can be done in advance. Here is a standard recipe, which serves around 8 people.

Ingredients:

1 large chicken (3.5 kg)

3 large carrots

2 leeks

2 turnips

For the Bouillon:

1 onion peeled and studded with 3 cloves

1 stick of celery

Bouquet garni

1 tsp sea salt

1 tsp black peppercorns

2 l water

For the stuffing:

200 g sausage meat or ham, chopped

The liver and heart of the chicken, chopped

2 cloves garlic, finely chopped

200 g stale bread, crumbled

Bunch of parsley, finely chopped

2 eggs, beaten

Method

Mix all the stuffing ingredients in a bowl.

Wet with milk to bind.

Stuff and seal the chicken with kitchen twine.

Bring the water to the boil in a large casserole, add the chicken, the onion, the bouquet garni, the celery, peppercorns and salt.

Cover and simmer for 1½ to 2 hours.

Skim the fat from the surface from time to time.

Cut the carrots, leeks and turnips into chunks and add to the pot.

Cook for a further 45 minutes.

Remove the chicken and vegetables and keep warm.

Serve the *bouillon*

Cut the chicken into pieces, place on a serving dish and surround with the vegetables and the stuffing cut into slices.

Sometimes served with rice as well.

If you prefer to serve the *bouillon* as a sauce, you can thicken it with a *beurre manié* (butter and flour).