

# 83 Var



**83 Var** is a department in the Provence-Alpes-Côte d'Azur region of south eastern France. In the south, its long Mediterranean coast includes the French Riviera, where glamorous resort towns such as Saint-Tropez are known for their beaches, shopping and nightlife

To the west is the resort of Hyères, with a medieval castle. It's the gateway to the Golden Islands, such as Porquerolles, part of Port Cros National Park.

The southern flank of the Alps dominates the région and rises abruptly from the eastern coast, which is the Côte d'Azur.

The plains of Comtat, Crau, and Camargue lie to the west and are drained by the lower Rhône River. Other principal rivers include the Durance, Var, and Verdon. A Mediterranean climate prevails along the coast, but in winter the cold, dry northerly wind known as the Mistral may bring sudden cold spells to a significant portion of the région.

Agriculture is of limited importance in the economy but has become increasingly specialized, with irrigation playing a major role.

The focus is on the production of fruits, vegetables, and wines. Fruits and vegetables are intensively cultivated especially in the Comtat-Venaissin to the east of Avignon, as well as in the major river valleys such as the Durance.

Vineyards cover many of the hillsides of Var and Alpes-Maritimes. The vineyards of the Côtes du Rhône in Vaucluse are renowned for such wines as Châteauneuf-du-Pape. Rice is grown in the marshy delta below Arles, known as the Camargue.

Flower crops, including lavender, roses, and jasmine, are also significant and are used by the perfume-manufacturing industry centred in Grasse.

The raising of sheep and dairy cattle has become less important.

Tomatoes, olive oil, aromatic herbs, thyme, savoury, rosemary, sage, basil, fennel provide a subtle mixture of colours, flavours and good local products. Var is the leading French rosé wine production area, the leading beekeeping department, the French leader for figs and it also represents a quarter of French olive groves.

**Chestnut.** There is a difference between the chestnut and the marron. The chestnut has two or three fruits and the marron is not divided. Produced almost entirely as a fruit for eating.

Good cooking depends on good products. And the Var region is ideal for agriculture, where low-productivity crops favour quality. Fruits, vegetables, oils, honey, here are some of the products of the Var:

**Fig Var** is the leading producer of figs in France.

**Brignoles Plum** has black skin and sweet orange-yellow flesh.

**Chickpea of Rougiers** This yellowish edible seed owes its taste to the soil of the Poulagnié volcano.

Spices Thyme (also called farigoule), basil, parsley, rosemary, garlic, tarragon, chives, fennel, chervil, sage, juniper, wild thyme.

**The Olive and its Oil** Many varieties of olives are grown in Var. The belgentiéroise, picholine and the lucques olives are used for table and confectionery and the aglandau, bouteillan, cayet roux, cayon, salonenque, brun and ribier are used for oil.

**Honey** comes in various flavours depending on the flora available such as lavender, rosemary, heather, chestnut and Provence honey

**Wines** There are four well known appellations - Côtes de Provence, Coteaux-varois-en-Provence, Bandol, Coteaux d'Aix-en-Provence

### **Local Specialties**

**Aiguo Bouldoi Soup** is made from three or four cloves of garlic, boiled for about ten minutes with thyme, bay leaves and lots of sage. Serve with toasted bread slices and a drizzle of olive oil.

**Aïoli** is a thick sauce made of olive oil with egg yolks and garlic puree. It is also the name of a dish called aïoli garni made with cod fillets, potatoes, carrots, green beans, hard-boiled eggs, whelks and aioli.

**Anchoïade** This sauce, is a puree of anchovies and garlic, diluted with olive oil and is ideal with raw vegetable sticks, carrots, celery ribs, fennel and cauliflower bouquets.

**Bouillabaisse** is a thick stock made with fish such as scorpion fish, Saint Pierre, gurnard, conger eel, etc. served whole or in pieces and accompanied by potatoes, mussels, favouilles, rouille and slices of garlic bread

**Bourride** is a soup prepared by diluting aïoli with the broth in which the fish has been boiled, preferably white fish such as monkfish, bass.

**Brouillade de Truffles** Brown the truffle with butter in a pan, add beaten eggs and turn over gently until you obtain a smooth and creamy mixture.

**Beef Stew Provencal Style** is a beef dish that simmers gently for 4 to 5 hours, with onions, garlic, carrots and herbs, flavoured with Côtes-de-Provence red wine.

**Caillette** is a crepinette made with minced Provencal pork, liver, pork fat, green vegetables, parsley, laurel and Provencal herbs

**Fougasse** is a flat bread with holes, soft inside and crusty, made with a dough flavoured with olive oil

**Pistou Soup** is eaten hot or cold and is made of potatoes, zucchini, diced, fresh beans, green beans, celery stalks, cooked in salted water, and accompanied by pasta. It is mixed with pistou, a paste made with basil leaves, garlic, olive oil, grated Parmesan, Gruyere or hard Edam and possibly tomatoes.

**Tapenade** is a paste made from pitted black or green olives, garlic cloves, anchovy fillets and capers, eaten on grilled croutons.

**Tropezian Pie** is a brioche pastry filled with cream.

Thirteen desserts Christmas Eve ends with the tasting of thirteen desserts, in memory of Christ and his twelve apostles. These are dried figs, walnuts, hazelnuts, almonds, white nougat, black nougat, candied fruit,

raisins, fresh fruit, dates and fruit pastes.

## **Aïoli garni**

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

### **Ingredients**

30 cl of semi-skimmed milk

1 kg cod fillet

1 cauliflower

4 carrots

8 potatoes

1 kg of green beans

8 artichoke hearts

3 sprigs of thyme

gross sel

1 pinch of salt

1 pinch of pepper

8 eggs

3 cloves of garlic

20 cl d' huile d'olive

### **Method**

The day before, immerse the cod fillets in water to desalinate them.

Place in a cool place and renew this water regularly for 12 to 24 hours.

#### **For the aioli:**

Place the eggs into a pan of water.

Bring to a boil, and cook for 10 minutes in simmering water.

Leave to cool, peel them and extract the hard yolks.

Peel, wash, degerm and chop the garlic.

In a bowl, combine the garlic and egg yolks, crush and gradually pour in the olive oil.

Season.

Peel and wash carrots and potatoes.

Stalk and wash the beans.

Cook all of these vegetables separately in salted boiling water with coarse salt until tender.

Cut the cauliflower into large florets, wash it.

Blanch it for 5 minutes in boiling water.

Drain, refresh.

Cook it in milk (top up with water) for 10 to 15 minutes.

Meanwhile, peel and wash the fennel.

Rinse the cod under running cold water.

Cook it for 10 minutes in water with the fennel and thyme.

Taste the cod and the vegetables accompanied by  
the aioli!