

85 Vendée



85 Vendée is a department in western France. It's known for its long coastline and sandy beaches, like those in the towns of Saint-Jean-de-Monts and Les Sables-d'Olonne.

Here, the Zoo des Sables focuses on environmental protection, and is home to lions, monkeys and anteaters. The department's islands include Noirmoutier, with a centuries-old castle, and Île d'Yeu, with sand dunes, coves, moorlands and headlands.

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The Massif Armoricaïn extends into the *départements* of Mayenne and Loire-Atlantique and the northern fringes of Vendée and Maine-et-Loire.

Sarthe and eastern Maine-et-Loire belong to the Paris Basin. The massif of Vendée rises in the south. Two ancient massifs rise in the north, where elevations reach 340 metres in the picturesque Perseigne Forest. The Loire River flows east to west across the région. Other important waterways include the Vilaine, Erdre, Maine, Mayenne, and Sarthe rivers.

Animal husbandry dominates agriculture, and the région is a leading producer of milk, beef, pork, and poultry.

Dairy farming is particularly important along the région's western fringes in Mayenne and Loire-Atlantique. Fishing ports include La Tourballe and Le Croisic in Loire-Atlantique and Les Sables-d'Olonne in Vendée. Soils in the *région* tend to be acid and heavy, and lime and fertilizers are widely used. Viticulture is concentrated around Saumur and Angers and in Loire-Atlantique to the south of Nantes, where muscadet, a dry white wine, is produced.

Cereals (wheat, corn [maize], and barley) are increasingly cultivated, especially in the eastern part of the région, often for use as animal feed.

The Préfou is unleavened bread garnished with butter and garlic.

La Grimâte is pork offal deep fried in the pigs intestines until crisp and enjoyed as an aperitif, with a few oysters and a white wine

Mouclade includes mussels and a sauce made from white wine, crème fraîche, egg yolk and curry.

Vendée Hotpot consists of green cabbage, carrots, onions and Noirmoutier potatoes.

Boudine is an andouille from the bocages, made with pork rinds. You can simply grill or fry it with green pumpkin, Noirmoutier potatoes and Vendée mogettes

Fressure is a kind of pâté containing blood, offal and pig's head, slowly cooked in several stages and finely chopped and can be eaten with sauces as a starter with a salad, as a main course with potatoes, in mince pie

La Bignaie is a savory crepe garnished with bacon.

Halbran is a cheese made from cow's milk, with a fairly mild taste.

La Mizotte is a cheese made from cows milk and refined with the wine of Mareuil with a strong taste and smell

Tomme des Chouans is a cows milk cheese with a fragrant and delicate flavour.

La Gâche is a Vendée brioche composed of butter, cream and eggs, it is delicious, with a tight crumb.

Tourtisseaux are Vendée donuts flavoured with rum or a little local brandy

La Fouace or Fouasse is a pastry between a brioche and a cake scented with orange blossom, vanilla or brandy.

Fion is a traditional flan made with a mixture of eggs, milk, cinnamon, vanilla and baked custard.

Betchet is a soft cake, if eaten fresh.

Prune tart is a dessert served at weddings on the île d'Yeu.

Boudine en Cocotte de Légumes

Serves 2

Ingredients

1 boudine (for two people)

250 g Jerusalem artichokes

250g turnips

1/4 kale

20 cl chicken broth

1 onion

1 shallot

3 cloves of garlic

2/3 bay leaves

1 sprig of thyme

Salt (slightly because of the already salty chicken broth)

Pepper

Method

The vegetables

Peel the Jerusalem artichokes, cut them into large chunks, rinse them thoroughly.

Peel the turnips, cut them into large wedges.

Remove the large leaves and the central tough part of the cabbage.

Cut it into strips.

Reserve 2 large leaves.

The Assembly of the Casserole

In an earthenware dish, arrange the strips of onions and the chopped shallots in the bottom.

Place the vegetables on top, add the boudine cut into two pieces, and cover with the broth.

Salt very lightly, pepper generously, cover with the two cabbage leaves and put an airtight lid.

Preheat the oven at 180° for 5 minutes, then lower to 150° and bake the dish for 2 hours.

And that is all.

All you have to do is taste.

Boudin (boudain), a pork and rice Cajun sausage

Serves 20

Ingredients

1kg pork shoulder, cut into 25mm pieces

1 celery rib, diced 1 medium yellow onion, chopped

4 cloves garlic, minced

1 bell pepper, seeded and chopped

1 tablespoon kosher salt

250g chicken livers

500ml cooked rice

2 jalapeños, seeded and chopped

1 teaspoon dried thyme

1 teaspoon dried oregano

1 teaspoon paprika

2 green onions, chopped (green part only)

125ml parsley, finely chopped

1 teaspoon black pepper

1/2 teaspoon cayenne

For the Stuffed Sausage

1200mm of hog casing, sized 32/35mm

1 tablespoon vegetable oil

A sausage stuffer

Method

Place the pork shoulder, celery, onion, garlic, bell pepper, and salt into a large pot. Cover with 50mm of water, bring to a boil and then turn down the heat and simmer uncovered for 1 hour. After an hour, add the chicken liver to the pot and continue to cook for 45 more minutes or until the pork is tender.

Strain the meat and vegetables, reserving the liquid.

Finely dice the meat and vegetables with a knife, in a food processor or in a meat grinder set for a coarse grind. Once diced, place meat and vegetables in a bowl.

Add to the bowl the cooked rice, jalapeños, thyme, oregano, paprika, green onions parsley, black pepper, and cayenne.

Stir in 250mm of the reserved cooking liquid and combine until the filling is moist and slightly sticky. If it appears too dry, add more of the reserved liquid.

Taste and adjust seasonings, if needed.

To stuff into casings for sausage, first rinse the outside of the casing and then place it in a bowl of water for 30 minutes to soften.

Drain the soaking water and then rinse the inside of the casing by placing one end on the kitchen faucet, turn the water on low and allow it to flow through the casing.

The casing will blow up like a balloon—this is fine.

Lightly oil the stuffing horn on your sausage stuffer with vegetable oil.

Tie a knot at one end of the casing.

Take the other end and gently slide the entire casing onto the horn, leaving the knot plus an additional 100mm hanging off the end of the horn.

Place the filling into the feeder and push it through until it starts to fill the casing. Go slowly at first and note that you'll need to massage the casing as the meat goes through it so it fills the casing evenly.

Once you've filled the casing, to form links, pinch it every 125mm and then twist it until it's secure. You can then cut the casing to form individual sausages.

To cook, poke holes into the casing then then poach in boiling water for 10 minutes. You can also grill or smoke the boudin.

Alternatively, you can either serve the filling as a dressing, or you can roll it into walnut-sized balls, dip into finely crushed crackers and fry in 180C (350 F) oil for 2 minutes or until brown to make boudin balls.