

95 Val-D'Oise



95 Val-D'Oise is located just north of Paris and is crossed by the river Oise, flanked by the river Seine and home to two regional nature parks, the Vexin Français and the Oise-Pays de France. Composed of a variety of picturesque scenery whose charm has inspired many famous artists, the area also boasts much built and cultural heritage of interest. These include abbeys, châteaux, typical villages, and museums, and offers a wide range of outdoor activities, from walking, horse riding, cycling and golf to water and aerial sports.

The région's fertile loams support the cultivation of wheat, corn (maize), barley, sunflowers, rapeseed, legumes, and sugar beets.

Fruit, vegetables, and flowers are also grown.

In Val-d'Oise between Pontoise and Montmorency, mushrooms are grown on a large scale in limestone caves.

Owing to the great urban sprawl of Paris, agriculture is concentrated in the outer areas of Île-de-France, particularly in the département of Seine-et-Marne. In general, farm holdings are large, highly mechanized, and produce high yields, yet they employ only a very small percentage of the workforce. **Pontoise Cabbage** is a vegetable with an inimitable flavour that was once grown on nearly half of the Cergy-Pontoise plain. It is part of the big Savoy cabbage family, and has a purplish, tender centre. **Montmorency Cherries** are bright red and tender cherry and is ideal accompaniment to meat- and game-based dishes and also perfect for making jam and jelly.

Steak Frites is the quintessential bistrot dish, steak frites, head to one of Paris' atmospheric French brasseries. The simple pairing of a grilled steak with various optional sauces and chips is elevated to serious heights when the meat is well selected and carefully matured, and the potatoes are fresh, hand-cut and double-fried. Choose your cut of beef, your 'cuisson' and a sauce, be it Béarnaise or peppercorn

Rhum Baba is dense cake with rum and vanilla cream.

Duck Confit consists of cooking duck thighs in their own fat, until the meat is spectacularly moist and fork-tender.

The classic side is pommes sarladaises, garlicky potatoes sautéed in duck fat.

Rhum Baba

Preparation time; 1-2 hours, Cooking time; 10 to 30 mins, Serves 4

Ingredients

220g strong flour

1 x 7g sachet fast action yeast

½ tsp salt

50g sugar, plus extra for lining tins

2 medium eggs

70ml milk

100g butter, softened

For the Syrup

250g caster sugar

3-4 tbsp dark rum

For the Chantilly Cream

250ml double cream

100g icing sugar

1 vanilla pod, seeds only

fresh fruit, for garnish

Method

Place the flour in a large bowl.

Place the yeast on one side of the bowl and the salt on the other side.

Make sure the salt is not placed on top of the yeast, as it can kill it, making it inactive.

Add the sugar and stir everything together with a spoon until evenly mixed.

Mix together the milk and eggs until well combined.

Add three-quarters of the combined eggs and milk to the flour and stir to combine.

Mix in the rest of the liquid and knead the dough on a worktop until it's smooth and glossy, this will take approximately 10 minutes.

Add in the softened butter and work it through the dough thoroughly until it's silky and stretchy. This should take approximately six minutes.

Place the dough back into a bowl and cover with cling film. Set the dough aside to rise for at least an hour, until doubled in size.

Grease and sugar the four 11cm/4½in fluted rum baba tins (savarin moulds). (Adding the sugar will help the fragile sponges come out of the moulds).

Turn the dough out of the bowl, and knock it back by kneading it a few times.

Place the dough into a piping bag with a large plain nozzle. Pipe the dough into the four moulds. Try and get them all as equal as possible.

Preheat the oven to 180C (fan 160C) 350F/Gas 4.

Allow to prove for a second time until the dough has expanded almost to the top.

Be careful not to over-prove at this stage, or you will get a muffin top around the edges.

Bake in the preheated oven for about 20-25 minutes.

Meanwhile for the syrup, put the sugar and rum in a small saucepan with 200ml/7fl oz water and bring to a rolling boil.

When the babas are cooked, take them out of the oven and allow to cool a little before carefully removing the cakes from their tins. They will be very fragile.

Place the babas onto a dish and pour over half the syrup.

Allow them to soak up all of the liquid; then turn them over and repeat with the rest of the liquid.

Transfer to the fridge to chill.

Meanwhile for the Chantilly cream, whip the cream with the icing sugar and vanilla seeds.

The cream must be firm enough to pipe and hold its shape on top of the babas.

Transfer the cream to a piping bag and keep in the fridge until needed.

Prepare the fruit as necessary.

To Serve

pipe the Chantilly cream, using a star nozzle, into the middle of the babas.

Garnish with the mixed fruit