

# Now is the time to try authentic Belgian cuisine

If you have a friend who seems to possess an overflowing knowledge of almost every type of cuisine, ask him or her to describe the typical foods and specialties of Belgium. Or, go back a step — what do you know about the cuisine of Belgium?

When was the last time you, or anyone that you know, dined in a Belgian-style restaurant (when, of course you weren't in Belgium)? Even the most knowledgeable food enthusiast and cook probably doesn't know a great deal about the cuisine of Belgium, largely because of its physical proximity to France. Like a more successful big brother, France, the culinary mecca, has overshadowed Belgium, with a classic cuisine far more renowned than Belgium's own unique style of cookery.

BUT THANKS to the work of Erid Gordon and Midge Shirley, the foods of Belgium in all their glory and splendor are brought to the American public in a new volume, "The Belgian Cookbook" (Merrimack Printing Co.).

In an effort to explore the unknown delicacies of Belgium, noted region by region, Gordon and Shirley have put together a beautiful counterpart of scrumptious recipes and pictures of the Belgian landscape, which help the reader to understand and get a feel for Belgium and its people, and how these recipes have been a part of their lives for generations.

It is common knowledge abroad that Belgians love to eat and savor their food with intense pleasure. And according to Gordon and Shirley, in recent years a growing sense of regional iden-

tity and a renewal of interest in authentic cooking has led to a reappraisal of the cuisines of the Belgian provinces. Belgian cuisine is known not only for the quality of its dishes but for the quantity. Witness the size of the portions served in restaurants.

THE PROOF that Belgians are very serious when it comes to the matter of food can be found in the street signs of Brussels, where more than 120 streets are named for some kind of foodstuff. The authors of "The Belgian Cookbook" are first to admit that it is almost impossible to describe the cuisine of any country in just a few words of phrases, and the food of the Belgian provinces proved no exception.

There are features that are typical of a particular region or province. In Flanders, for instance, you'll find the velvety sauces made with butter, cream and egg yolks, not unlike those of Normandy.

In Limbourg there remains a tradition of cooking with red wine and, in the Ardennes, there is a predilection for rich, aromatic brown sauces that go well with game.

"The Belgian Cookbook" is not unusual in format, running the gamut of Belgian dishes from soups, stocks and sauces, through drinks, preserves and desserts.

THE RECIPES are written in accordance with the metric system but, for those not adept with metrics, there is a translation table at the back of the book, and the recipes listed have their ounce and pound counterparts listed in parentheses next to the appropriate ingredient.

The manner in which this volume has been written makes discovering Belgian foods all the more enjoyable, and invokes a desire to discover more about this cuisine.

The following recipe for Trout au Vin Rouge (trout simmered in red wine, from the Ardennes), reproduced from "The Belgian Cookbook," is a lovely example of the rich and flavorful sauces from that region.

The recipe is simple, as is the unwritten rule for most Belgian cuisine, but the results are both flavorful and texturally appealing.

**TRUITE AU VIN ROUGE**  
Trout simmered in Red Wine, From the Ardennes

4 trout  
100 g. butter (7 tbsp.)  
3 shallots  
100 g. mushrooms (3.3 ounces)  
2 tbsp. flour  
Juice of one lemon  
1 tbsp. chopped parsley  
¾ liter red wine (approx. 3¼ cup)  
Salt, pepper

(You will need a casserole big enough to hold the fish side by side and deep enough to take the liquid, and which can be used on top of the stove.)

Melt the butter and sauté the finely chopped shallots until they begin to soften. Add the sliced mushrooms.

Brown gently and add the flour. Mix well and, when the flour has been soaked up by the butter, add the wine. Bring slowly to the boil and simmer for 10 minutes.

Clean and wipe the trout dry. Add to the wine, with salt and pepper, and cook very, very gently so that the liquid

is just simmering for 15 minutes.

Place the trout on a warmed serving dish and reduce the sauce to thicken slightly. Check the seasoning.

Away from the heat, add the lemon juice and stir in a walnut-sized piece of butter. Sprinkle with parsley and serve with boiled potatoes.

The following recipe for Carre De Pore Aux Quetches (loin of pork with plums, from the Ardennes) is just another flavorful example sure to entice us all to learn more about this wonderful cuisine.

**CARRE DE PORE AUX QUETCHES**  
Loin of Pork with Plums, From the Ardennes

1 loin of pork (1.2 kg; 2 ½ lbs.)  
750 g. dark purple plums (1 lb. 9 oz.)  
3 shallots  
2 celons  
4 cloves  
100 g. butter (7 tbsp.)  
1 small glass eau-de-vie  
2 tbsp. red currant jelly  
3 tbsp. cream  
½ tsp. flour  
½ tsp. butter  
Salt, pepper

Season the pork with salt and pepper, stick the cloves into the fat of the pork. Melt 50 g. butter (¼ cup) and brown the pork on all sides. Add the chopped onions and shallots, and cook for a further 5 minutes.

Surround the pork with 250 g. of the plums (¾ cup), place in a hot oven and cook for 1 hour 15 minutes or until the meat is cooked.

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## Pita bread is easy to make

Often the most popular snacks are those that are homemade and they don't take a long time to fix, even if it involves baking.

A batch of fresh, savory bread sticks, for example, can be produced in less than 90 minutes with new Fleischmann's RapidRise Yeast.

Or try pita bread, once recognizable only in Middle Eastern cooking. It is becoming the bread of choice for more and more sandwich eaters. Its advocates love the "pocket" that holds taco fillings, hamburgers and sandwich meats. The pocket is formed by baking small flatish rounds of dough at unusually high temperature.

Speaking of baking, consumers with questions about making bread can now call a toll-free number for answers. The number is 1-800-982-7800, and it can be reached Monday through Friday, 9 a.m. to 9 p.m. Eastern Standard Time.

### SAVORY BREAD STICKS

Makes 2 dozen bread sticks

3 cups all-purpose flour  
1 1/2 tsp. sugar  
1 1/2 tsp. dried parsley flakes  
2 tsp. salt  
1 tsp. celery seed  
1 tsp. dried tarragon leaves, crushed  
1 pkg. Fleischmann's RapidRise Yeast  
1 cup water  
2 tsp. margarine  
1 egg white  
1 1/2 cup water  
4 tsp. sesame seed, poppy seed or coarse salt

Set aside 1 cup flour. In large bowl, mix remaining flour, sugar, parsley, salt, celery seed, tarragon and yeast. Heat water until hot to touch (125 to 130 degrees); stir into dry mixture. Mix in enough reserved flour to make soft dough. On lightly floured surface, knead until smooth and elastic, about 5 to 8 minutes. Cover; let rest 10 minutes.

Divide dough into 4 equal pieces; divide each piece in 8 pieces. Roll each piece into an 8-inch rope; place on greased baking sheets. Cover; let rise in warm draft-free place 15 minutes.

Combine egg white and water; brush on bread sticks. Sprinkle with sesame seed, poppy seed or coarse salt. Bake at 400 degrees for 20 minutes or until golden brown. Remove from baking sheets and cool on wire racks.

### PITA BREAD

Makes 12 breads

1 1/2 cup salt  
1 1/2 cup sugar  
1 pkg. Fleischmann's RapidRise Yeast  
1 1/2 cups water  
2 tsp. peanut oil

Set aside 1 cup flour. Mix remaining flour, salt, sugar and Fleischmann's RapidRise Yeast in large bowl. Heat water and peanut oil until hot to touch (125 degrees to 130); stir into dry mixture. Stir in only enough reserved flour to make soft dough. On lightly floured surface, knead until smooth and elastic, about 5 to 10 minutes. Cover; let rise 10 minutes.

Divide dough in half; divide each half into 6 pieces. Shape each into smooth ball; place on baking sheet. Cover; let rise in warm draft-free place for 30 minutes.

On lightly floured surface, roll each ball to 8-inch circle. Place 8 circles on large cooling rack. Set rack on bottom oven rack; bake at 500 degrees for 5 minutes or until puffed and the top just begins to brown. Cool. Repeat with remaining circles.

Whole Wheat Pita: Substitute 2 1/4 cups all-purpose flour and 3 cups whole wheat flour for 5 cups all-purpose flour.

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