

## **French Recipes**

*The French are renowned for their food and most towns and villages still have their weekly or daily markets of fresh foods with the most wonderful selection of meat, fish, cheese and fruit and vegetables. Recipes are often regional and depend on what can be grown in a particular area. However, these days French supermarkets are also overflowing with fresh produce of a very high quality and so the choice is amazing.*

### **Ratatouille – [V]**

*This dish is a good accompaniment for many dishes, including poached or grilled white fish, chicken, and other white meats. Served with crusty bread it can be eaten as a light meal on its own.*

Serves 4

1 red onion  
1 aubergine  
1 yellow pepper  
1 courgette  
2 garlic cloves  
4 tomatoes  
2 tbsp tomato purée  
Oil  
Salt and pepper

Dice the onion, aubergine, pepper and courgette into equal size pieces. Crush the garlic. Quarter the tomatoes, and remove the seeds, then dice the flesh. Warm a little oil in a pan and cook the diced vegetables and garlic for, 4-5 mins, not letting them colour.

Add the chopped tomatoes and purée, and cook for 10 minutes until a sauce like consistency is achieved. Season and serve.

### **Chicken Chasseur**

*Chasseur means 'hunter' and is used for dishes including mushrooms, shallots, and tomatoes. The name refers to the fact that this was originally a recipe for cooking game such as pheasant.*

Serves 4

1 tbsp oil  
60g butter  
1 x 1.6kg chicken, jointed into 8 pieces  
2 French shallots, finely chopped  
125g button mushrooms, sliced  
1 tbsp plain flour  
2 tsp tomato purée  
350ml chicken stock  
2 tsp chopped tarragon  
1 tsp chopped parsley

#### *For the Croutons:*

2 slices bread  
A little sunflower oil

Heat the oil in a sauté pan and add half the butter. When the foaming subsides, add the chicken and sauté in batches on both sides until browned.

Melt the remaining butter in the pan, add the shallots and cook gently until softened but not browned. Add the mushrooms and cook, covered, over a moderate heat for 3 minutes.

Add the flour and cook, stirring constantly, for 1 minute. Stir in the white wine, brandy, tomato paste and stock. Bring to the boil, stirring constantly, then reduce the heat and add the tarragon. Season.

Return the chicken to the pan, cover and simmer for 30 minutes or until the chicken is tender and cooked through. Sprinkle with parsley and serve.

To make the croutons, trim the crusts from the bread and cut the bread into moon shapes with a biscuit cutter. Heat the oil in a frying pan and fry the bread until golden. Drain the croutons on paper towels and serve hot with the chicken.

### **Seafood Pancakes (Crêpes)**

*Crêperies are very popular all over France. The savoury pancakes are known as galettes and often use a type of brown flour. We have included more filling in this recipe than would traditionally be served in France, to suit the British palette.*

Serves 4

*For the pancakes:*

50g plain flour  
50g wholemeal flour  
2 eggs  
300ml milk  
1 tbsp sunflower oil  
Pinch of salt

*For the filling:*

Fish stock (or water)  
200g mixed fish (e.g. cod, salmon, Pollock)  
75g cooked peeled prawns  
150ml crème fraîche  
Zest of ½ lemon  
Chopped dill

Mix the flours together then slowly work in the egg and milk. Whisk in the oil and salt, and leave batter to rest.

Add a little fish stock to a pan and gently poach the fish for 5-7 minutes until just cooked through. Add the prawns, crème fraîche and lemon zest. Cook for a further 2 – 3 minutes. Stir in the dill.

Meanwhile in a pan over a medium heat, cook the pancakes in a little oil.

Lay out a pancake and half fill with some of the fish mix. Fold and serve with a crisp green salad.

### **Piperade**

*This traditional Basque dish is a delicious combination of Ratatouille and eggs. The name is derived from 'piper', meaning red pepper in the local dialect. The eggs can either be cooked more like an omelet or scrambled together as done here.*

Serves 4

2 tbsp olive oil  
1 large onion, thinly sliced  
2 red peppers, seeded and cut into batons  
2 garlic cloves, crushed  
750g tomatoes, peeled  
Pinch cayenne pepper  
8 eggs, lightly beaten  
2 tsp butter  
4 thin slices of ham such as Bayonne

Heat the oil in a large heavy-based frying pan and cook the onion for 3 minutes, or until it has softened. Add the pepper and garlic, cover and cook for 8 minutes to soften, stir frequently and do not allow it to brown.

Chop the tomatoes, discarding the cores. Spoon the chopped tomato and cayenne over the pepper, cover the pan and cook for a further 5 minutes.

Uncover the pan and increase the heat. Cook for 3 minutes or until the juices have evaporated, shaking the pan often. Season with salt and pepper. Add the eggs and scramble into the mixture until they are cooked.

Heat the butter in a small frying pan and fry the ham. Arrange on the piperade and serve at once.

## **Leek and Potato soup**

*This soup can be served hot or chilled. In its hot form, the dish is traditionally French. The chilled version is known as Vichyssoise as it was created by a French chef from Vichy.*

Serves 4

50g butter  
1 onion, finely chopped  
3 leeks, white part only, sliced  
1 garlic clove, finely chopped  
200g potatoes, chopped  
750ml chicken stock  
185ml cream  
2 tbsp chopped chives

Melt the butter in a large saucepan, and add the onion, leeks, celery and garlic. Cover the pan and cook over a low heat. Stir occasionally for 15 minutes.

Add the potatoes and stock, and bring to the boil.  
Reduce the heat and simmer, covered, for 20 Minutes. Allow to cool and blend.

Return to the saucepan and stir in the cream. Season and serve garnished with chives.

## **Salad Niçoise in a roll**

*Pain bagnat literally means 'wet bread' and was originally a salade niçoise to which stale country bread was added to make the meal go further. Either anchovies or tuna can be used but never both!*

Serves 4

4 very large beefsteak tomatoes  
Sea salt  
1 red onion  
1 green or red pepper  
2 hard-boiled eggs, shelled  
4 crisp lettuce leaves  
4 bread rolls

8 anchovy fillets or 200g canned tuna, drained  
12 small black olives, stones removed  
Fresh basil leaves  
Freshly ground pepper  
Extra virgin olive oil

Cut the tomatoes across into thin slices and sprinkle with salt. Peel and finely slice the onion. Cut the pepper in half, remove the seeds and slice the flesh finely. Cut the eggs into slices.

Slice the rolls in half and arrange all the ingredients inside, adding a good sprinkling of black pepper and a generous slug of olive oil. Press the top of the rolls down and wrap tightly in plastic wrap or foil. Leave for a few hours before eating, so that all the flavours mingle.