

# La vie des saveurs

The life of flavors



By Annemiek and Lars van Zon  
[levenalsgodinfrankrijk.eu](http://levenalsgodinfrankrijk.eu)

*Note: this book is automatically translated and then corrected by me (Lars). As you will notice I'm not a native English speaker. And looking at the translations, neither is Google. If you find incomprehensible things, or mistakes, please notify us. The advantage of an e-book is that we don't have to wait for a new print to share improvements.*

*Note 2, all measurements are metric. As we don't think this book will be read by a lot of US people, there are no 'Freedom units' in. But when provided with a readable version for our American friends, we will happily share it.*

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# The origins of this book

It was late 2019 when, after a challenging project, I started thinking about how I could retire early. A bit late, perhaps, when you're almost sixty and only then start to think about retiring early... There are better ways.

## To live

The biggest problem was that I couldn't afford it at all, retiring early. Of course, I knew what had gone wrong—we'd moved too often, I'd changed jobs too often—but the biggest problem was that we'd lived too fast. Sailboats, fine wines, you name it. We hadn't denied ourselves anything.

Did I regret how we'd done it? Absolutely not, but now I was faced with a small financial problem if I wanted to retire early.

## Genius

Until I took a closer look at what our money was currently being spent on. My house and boat were two very large expenses. But without a house, living becomes very seasonal. Then I came up with the idea that selling an "expensive" house and buying back a "cheap" one would go a long way. Brilliant, if I do say so myself. But looking at the housing market in the Netherlands, I didn't have such an expensive house at all, and that cheap house isn't easy to find... in the Netherlands.

## Dutch courage

And there lay the solution: buying a house outside the Netherlands.

Great, I had a solution on paper. But how do I tell Annemiek?

I had a solution for that too. It was Valentine's Day 2020, and we were going out for a lovely dinner with a wine pairing. The perfect conditions to share something new in a relaxed setting. It was Annemiek's turn to drive, so I could drink some courage...

Did I mention I was brilliant? Cross that out, there are much better strategies than telling your wife you want to emigrate while half-drunk. Seriously.

## Follow-up

But still, a few days later I discussed it with my boss ("anywhere in Europe is ok as long as we have a branch there") and the boat and house went up for sale.

This book is about what happened next, how we ended up in France, and what we appreciate so much about our new life. The common thread will be Annemiek's cooking, and each story has a recipe. This might be very fitting because it's a regional recipe, or simply because we think it fits the story. So, this is a cookbook with a story, or a report with recipes, or perhaps a free e-book you'll never look back at again.

We, Annemiek and I (Lars), wish you a lot of reading pleasure, but also inspiration to dive into the kitchen yourself and enjoy the good things in life.



# French Spoom

A first recipe must of course have a French touch...

We've now said goodbye to the Netherlands, so an interim stop... And then a Spoom with cognac is a very nice recipe, and the result is also unheard of delicious.

A spoom is a small appetizer to neutralize the taste buds. It's usually served with white wine or sparkling wine and some lemon sorbet ice cream.

Ingredients for 4/6 glasses of pineapple ice cream in cognac:

- 600 grams of cleaned pineapple
- 4 tablespoons of sugar water, this is available ready-made or you can make it yourself with a ratio of 2 parts sugar to 1 part water<sup>1</sup>
- cognac

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<sup>1</sup> I always use very little sugar in my dishes, so I do the same here. After a few weeks, your taste buds get used to it, and then you suddenly find the usual amount of sugar too sweet. But hey, these are my taste buds that I've trained; if you have a sweet tooth, you can always use more.



## Preparation of sorbet and spoom:

- Set aside a small piece of pineapple and process the rest in a food processor until finely chopped. And by fine, I mean really smooth in this case.
- Add the sugar water and stir to combine.
- Chop the remaining pineapple chunk and stir it into the mixture. This will give the ice cream a distinctive pineapple texture and create a better mouthfeel.
- Place the mixture in the ice cream maker
- Leave the ice cream in the freezer for another two hours, then serve with a dash of cognac over the ice cream.

*You can prevent your ice cream from getting too hard with all sorts of additives, but the best flavor comes from fresh ice cream and without them. That's why I don't make the ice cream far in advance.*



# Sauerkraut with duck

I came across sauerkraut in a French grocery store, and since I always used smoked sausage in my sauerkraut dishes, I had to get creative. I prefer to use smoked sausage from the butcher, for example, Livar, a monastery pork I bought in Limburg. France is a foodie paradise, but I won't be finding smoked sausage for sauerkraut and pea soup here. (And I was really mistaken about that. I now know that Montbéliard sausage is a much tastier smoked sausage as a substitute for Dutch smoked sausage.) Luckily, I already had duck in my shopping cart this time, so this combination was quickly made.

## Ingredients for 2 persons:

- 850 grams of potatoes
- salty
- 500 grams of sauerkraut
- sunflower oil
- 100 grams of bacon bits
- 150 grams of mushrooms
- 150 grams cooked chestnuts, can be canned
- 2 cooked duck legs, can also be canned
- milk for the mashed potatoes

## Preparation of the sauerkraut dish with duck:

- Peel the potatoes and boil them in a saucepan with water and salt for 20 minutes until done.
- Cook the sauerkraut for 20 minutes. I like it sour, otherwise rinse it first.
- Heat a little oil in a frying pan and fry the bacon in it.
- Add the sliced mushrooms to the bacon and fry briefly.
- Roughly chop the chestnuts and add them to the bacon.
- Now heat the duck legs in their own fat.
- Drain the potatoes, add some milk and mash.
- Drain the sauerkraut and stir it into the puree.
- The bacon mixture can also be added to the puree.
- Serve the sauerkraut with a duck leg on top.



# The first months

I have described the troubles of our house hunt on the website [levenalsgodinfrankrijk.eu](http://levenalsgodinfrankrijk.eu). Under the heading France. I won't repeat that. What I do want to talk about are our first months in France.

It's quite a feat, burning all your bridges and starting over in a different country. Now, starting over is a bit of an exaggeration; I was still working for the same boss, on the same projects, but still.

## Minimal household

What we did well was reorganize our lives. In one sense, that was made easier, because in a rental, you don't have many worries. All our belongings were in storage, except for what we could fit in one car. And the trunk was reserved for Pippa, the bullmastiff. So, there weren't many material worries.

But it's a different language, different customs, and a different environment. That makes reorganizing your life easier, since a lot of things had to change anyway.

## Joy of living

What's immediately striking about France is their love of life. The French dedicate more time and attention to food, socializing, and culture. Work, homes, and cars are less important. This is reflected in the shops. And we saw it too, because we spent the first few weeks navigating those shops (no chocolate sprinkles, for example). Annemiek quickly discovered that her favorite store was the Auchan near Poitiers. A bit further out, but you could charge your car for free there, so that wasn't so bad. And the Auchan is a serious store, not a neighborhood supermarket.

## Fresh vegetables

Our daily groceries were supplemented by our landlord's vegetable garden (vegetable gardens are very popular in France). Straight from the garden to your plate. What we didn't know at the time was that all the French grow far too many zucchini, and that they all ripen at the same time. And the French really hate throwing away good produce.

So we'd taken care of our daily groceries, and the local café/tobacconist/lottery ticket seller served an excellent (Belgian) beer, which we happened to pass by on our way back from walking the dog. If we were going to be bon vivants, we might as well do it right.

## Fondness

Now, a few years later, we still look back on those first months with fondness. After visiting our winery in the summer, we often stop for a beer in the village square. Just to reminisce.



# Tomato chutney

During the first few months of our stay in France, our landlord gave us a lot from his garden. For example, I made this tomato chutney with his tomatoes.

This chutney pairs wonderfully with meat. Much better than regular ketchup, I might add.

## Ingredients for 500ml chutney

- olive oil and butter for frying
- 2 chopped cloves of garlic
- 1 kilo of nice tomatoes, diced
- 1 tablespoon 4 epices (mixture of ginger, cinnamon, nutmeg and cloves)
- 25 grams of granulated sugar



## Preparing a jar of tomato chutney

- Heat some olive oil and butter in a heavy-bottomed pan.
- Fry the garlic here until brown.
- Add the tomatoes, herbs and sugar and simmer for 40 minutes or until the liquid has evaporated.
- Stay nearby and stir regularly.
- Place the warm jam in a sterile jar.
- Put the lid on and let it cool upside down.
- Keep refrigerated after opening.

Delicious with duck, for example, or on a nice French cheese with a baguette.



# Flemish stew with Grimbergen

For the first few months, I rediscovered my appreciation for beer in the village square in Bonneuil Matours. Huge pots of Grimbergen beer would appear on the table. I immediately realized that three beers was too much, even for walking the short distance to our temporary home. Two is definitely my maximum. This recipe features Grimbergen beer. These days, we live between two Belgian neighbors, and our friends here are Belgian, so there's no shortage of good beer.

The meat I use comes from the Limousin. The Limousin is a breed of cattle that originated in the Massif Central in France. But you'll mainly see this breed here as well. I source the meat from a local farmer.

## Ingredients

- a generous dash of sunflower oil
- 100 grams of unsalted butter
- 1 kg stewing meat, e.g. Limousin
- flour
- salt and pepper
- 250 grams of onions
- 2 tablespoons dark brown caster sugar
- 2 tablespoons vinegar
- 1 large bay leaf
- 750 ml beer, e.g. Grimbergen
- 2 slices of gingerbread

## Instructions

- Heat the oil and butter in an oven-safe frying pan. Sprinkle the meat with flour, salt, and pepper. Once the oil is hot, quickly sear the meat on all sides and remove it from the pan.
- Chop the onion and fry it in the same pan.
- Add the brown caster sugar, vinegar, bay leaf and meat again, pour the beer over it and heat the whole thing up.
- I put the roasting pan in the oven of my wood stove, but 4 hours in an oven at 130/150 degrees Celsius or slowly on the stovetop will also work just fine. The meat should fall apart when it's done.
- At the end, you can add the gingerbread; this binds the moisture.

Serve with mashed potatoes, pasta or rice and possibly a salad.



# Francophile

There are people who are what they call "Francophiles." They love everything French. They drive Citroëns, use plenty of sauce on their meat, and eat snails. So, when these people buy a (second) home in France, no one is surprised.

That story was a bit different for us. Yes, in the early 80s, we once spent a weekend in Paris.

## Romantic

Romantic, you might say. The only romantic thing was the hotel owner, who, somewhere in the noisy building, in the middle of the night, was doing his best to shake his long-depreciated marriage bed to pieces with late-night gymnastics. And whether he did it with his wife, girlfriend, boyfriend, or on a blow-up doll, I don't care, but that hour... And that man was in incredibly good shape...

## Welcome

Besides, everyone knows that Paris consistently ranks near the bottom of lists of "cities where you feel welcome." So no, France wasn't exactly high on our list of "favorite destinations."

Until one day, as a family with young children, we spent a holiday in Portugal and central Spain. On the way back, we even included a week in the Dordogne. And then you really see a different kind of France. That was enough reason to go on holiday to France again years later, with a caravan.

And two photography courses in France were also combined with visits to various regions.

## Countryside

While Paris is the model for the hectic 'urban' culture, in the French countryside, a friendly and convivial atmosphere is much more common.

By the time we were making emigration plans, France was immediately a good candidate. Spain was also an option, but for climate reasons, you'd want to be on the coast. And unfortunately, that means crowds and tourist prices. Hence, France.



# Côte de Boeuf

Côte de Boeuf is a French term used for a thick, round ribeye steak. It's usually a massive steak with plenty of marbling and fat that adds flavor. The meat is taken from the fine rib, which is located at the front of the back, wedged between the loin and neck. The meat is aged and cooked on the bone, which, in addition to the fat, also adds flavor.

For this recipe I use my own mixture for the rub.

At the end of cooking, the meat is seared to retain the juices.

## core/probe thermometer

It's important to use a probe thermometer. The thermometer in an oven or barbecue isn't always placed in the same place and sometimes shows a different temperature. Especially with a barbecue, it's difficult to keep it at a consistent temperature. This makes specifying a cooking time rather difficult.

A simple meat thermometer costs only a few euros. If you're paying for a nice piece of meat, it's a shame to overcook it because you didn't use a meat thermometer. Every piece of meat is different, and cooking conditions can vary, so I'll give an estimate, not an exact time, in this recipe.

We eat our meat rare/medium, which is what the core temperature in this recipe is based on: rare – 50°C, medium rare 52°C, medium 55°C. Anything above 55°C is well-done.

The two of us had plenty of meat left over and we used it the next day in wraps.

## Ingredients

- 1600 grams rib of beef
- 2 tablespoons rub (see below)
- 2 tablespoons olive oil

## Rub

I use the rub not only for this meat but also in other recipes, so I make enough to fill a jar.

- 25 grams of smoked paprika
- 25 grams of salt
- 25 grams of dark brown caster sugar
- 25 grams of garlic powder
- 1 tablespoon herbes de Provence or Italian herbs
- 1 teaspoon aniseed, ground
- 2 teaspoons speculaas spices
- 1 teaspoon chili powder

*In the photo: I'm not Homer Simpson, but I am wearing gloves. Good gloves are a must, at least if you want to play the piano afterward.*





## Instructions

- Remove the meat from the refrigerator and from the vacuum seal at least an hour before use.
- Rub the meat with the rub and oil.
- Prepare the BBQ for indirect barbecuing (deflection stones between the coals and the grill).
- Insert the probe of the thermometer into the meat so that the tip is in the center of the meat. Be careful not to let the tip touch the bone.
- Place the meat on the hot BBQ; 140 degrees.
- At a core temperature of 49 degrees Celsius, we removed the meat from the barbecue and removed the deflector stones. Heat the barbecue as hot as possible. We now have a direct grill, and the meat can go on the grill rack. Turn regularly. We now want a core temperature of 51 degrees Celsius.
- Because the fat now drips directly onto the coals, catching fire, this is called "burnoff". Keep the lid on the barbecue as much as possible; this smothers the flames and prevents your meat from burning.
- Once the meat has reached the desired internal temperature, place it in a dish and let it rest for 10 minutes, covered with aluminum foil. Make sure there's room for air; leave the aluminum foil slightly open, otherwise the meat will continue to cook.

Including resting, it took us 1 hour and 10 minutes, but again, don't focus on time, but on temperature.

# Custard flan

A flan patissier is a traditional French custard pastry. You often see them in cafés and supermarkets in France, and I find them delicious. It's somewhat similar to the flan made as a dessert in Spain or pastel de nata in Portugal. The original recipe calls for a pâte brisée crust, a shortcrust pastry, but I use homemade puff pastry.

Ingredients for a 20 cm springform pan:

- 4/5 slices of puff pastry
- olive oil to grease the pan and baking paper
- 350 ml milk
- 350 ml whipped cream
- 125 grams of sugar
- 1 vanilla pod
- 4 eggs
- 80 grams custard powder



## Preparation of the flan pastry:

- Preheat the oven to 175°C.
- Line the bottom of the tin with baking paper and grease the rest with olive oil.
- Now line the mold with puff pastry.
- Set aside a little milk and put the rest in a pan on the stove with the cream and 75 grams of sugar.
- Scrape the marrow from the vanilla pod and add it to the milk in the pan.
- Now whisk together the eggs, custard powder, and remaining sugar. Add the remaining milk. Beat until smooth.
- When the milk in the pan boils, add the custard mixture, stirring constantly. Keep it simmering but don't let it boil too much.
- Keep stirring well to prevent it from burning and let it simmer gently until the custard has thickened.
- Pour the mixture into the puff pastry lined tin and bake the flan for 40/45 minutes.
- Let it cool for a while and then put it in the refrigerator overnight.

Enjoy it with a cup of coffee or tea or served as a dessert.

# Summer Time

And suddenly you're living in France, and you have no obligations anymore. I had planned to take a lot of photos, but somehow it just didn't work out.

What we did start doing was cycling. We both bought fat bikes, long before they became a fad. And now we use them. Cycling is fine around here, but we avoid the main roads. People sometimes drive very fast, and there are no bike lanes here.

## Off road

Luckily, you can go off the beaten track with a fat bike. And that's really worth it here. Although I get something different out of it than Miek. I enjoy the landscape, the animals on the land, the many birds of prey and other wildlife. Miek goes for the thrill; after a bike ride, she can be covered in mud from head to toe, while I have a few splashes on my shoe. And then we've really ridden the same route.

## Buttock squeezing

I'm riding down the hill with my buttocks clenched, towards the bend and bridge below. The road surface has just been repaired, and there's fresh grit on the asphalt. I think, "Be careful not to skid," and I'm almost blown off the road by the air pressure of a passing Miek. "It can go much faster downhill," she says triumphantly a moment later. It just goes to show who the macho and adrenaline junkie is in our house.

## Bar

One of the first routes we cycled was to the pub 6 km away. The population density in this part of France is very low, which means there aren't many pubs either. But 6 km of back roads and paths is easily manageable.

The first time we were there, the weather was gorgeous. We sat outside in the sunshine and were brought a large, cold beer. A pint, but real ale and really cold, none of that English nonsense.

That could easily have happened because Julie is English. And you see that here more often: English, Belgian, and Dutch people starting small businesses. But at Julie's, all nationalities sit together because it's also the village pub.

## Destination

The first few times, we were convinced it was a great summertime destination. Lovely in the sunshine. But these days, we go there in winter too. It's also a great place to sit by the fire. Especially when you know that Jo, Julie's partner, makes a fantastic hamburger.

What we are more careful with these days is that pint of beer, they taste delicious, but you also have to cycle back home.



# Black Angus Hamburgers

I always make my own hamburgers, but I make sure they're made with good ground beef. After we moved to France, we've always had Black Angus hamburgers with ground beef from La Perriere Aberdeen Angus Beef. I always order packages, and once they're slaughtered and processed, I get a message telling me I can pick up the meat.

Last time I had a luxury package which included a silverside (roast beef) or brisket for the BBQ and a lot of steak-like meat.

My next order is two slow-cooker packages, each with six extra packets of ground meat. I often use ground meat for burgers, Swedish meatballs, or in the bean mix for wraps. And the flavor is palpable. Seriously, I never want ground meat from the supermarket again.

## Local meat

There's also a butcher shop at a nearby farm for pork and lamb. They also slaughter their own animals there. Sad? No, if you eat meat, at least you need to know the animals have had a good life. That no antibiotics are used, at least not unnecessarily. But also not too dogmatic, because if an animal needs to be saved, sometimes antibiotics are necessary.

Duncan and Hannah's Black Angus graze in a beautiful area with herbs in the grass. The calves stay with their mothers, etc. I can taste the love in this meat. Duncan also cuts the meat himself. He does it the English way, but it's excellent.

We served this burger with fries and salad, and because it's beef, and good meat, I cook it quite rare. Adjust that if you prefer it a bit more cooked. Lars always says it should be cooked so the beef just barely trying to walk off your plate.

## Ingredients

- 500 grams of minced meat
- 1 medium sized egg
- salt and pepper
- 1 clove of garlic
- 2 teaspoons smoked paprika
- 1 teaspoon tarragon, not too much, it has a strong flavor
- 1 teaspoon harissa spice
- bread-crumbs
- 4 hamburger buns, toasted in the oven or grill pan
- sunflower oil
- sla
- 1 tomato
- 4 slices of cheddar cheese, I had a piece that I shaved off
- pickled red onion
- BBQ sauce



## Instructions

- Mix the ground beef with the egg, salt, pepper, chopped garlic, herbs, and breadcrumbs. Don't use too much breadcrumbs, but just enough so the burgers don't fall apart during cooking.
- Make 4 flat hamburger patties from the minced meat.
- Meanwhile, toast the rolls in the oven at 150°C (300°F). At least, if you like. I don't like soft rolls as much.
- Heat the sunflower oil and fry the 4 hamburger patties until cooked through and cooked to your liking.
- sunflower oil
- Divide some lettuce between the buns, top with the burger patty, and top with cheddar cheese, pickled onion, and tomato. Garnish with some BBQ sauce or another sauce of your choice.



# Brioche French toast cake

The origins of French toast are unclear. French toast is a sweet bread dish. It's popular for breakfast; slices of bread are briefly soaked in a mixture of milk, eggs, and, in this case, cinnamon and vanilla sugar. It's the perfect way to transform stale bread into a delicious breakfast.

I left out the sugar because brioche is already a bit sweeter, and we don't use much sugar in the kitchen anyway. Normally, they're baked in a frying pan, but I used a loaf pan to make this cake. I serve it with tea, but having it for breakfast is also an option.

A brioche or milk bread is a soft, sweet white bread that originated in France. The recipe for a brioche differs from that of regular bread in that it uses more of sugar, eggs and butter.



## Ingredients

- 500 grams of brioche bread
- 300 ml milk
- 4 eggs
- 7.5 grams of vanilla sugar
- pinch of salt
- 1 teaspoon cinnamon
- 25 grams of grated butter
- optional coconut paste

## Instructions

- Line the cake tin with baking paper.
- Tear the brioche into large pieces and fill the cake tin with them.
- Now beat the milk well with the eggs, vanilla sugar, salt and cinnamon.
- Spread the mixture over the brioche and let it soak in for half an hour.
- Shave the butter over the cake before putting it in the oven.
- Preheat the oven to 180°C and bake the cake for 35 to 40 minutes until cooked through and brown.

Serve the cake in slices and spread with coconut spread if desired.

# Vinkjes✓

Being the structured person I am, I made a list before we started looking at houses. It outlined what we were looking for and what we weren't. For example, it said it had to be a bit warmer than the Netherlands. And a bit less rain, please. So the Limousin was out of the question for us from the start; it was much too wet. That's nice for homesick English people, but not for us.

## Garden

One of the requirements was a garden of about 3,000 square meters. I wanted to retire; I didn't want to be a farmer, but I did want some privacy. And yes, I know, many people have already told me I'm a farmer, but that was about my rough behavior, not my green thumb.

Now, with lists, when you're almost done checking items, there's usually only one small box left. And with a very short description, so no big deal? Well, that last box was called "budget"...

## The last check mark

By the time we'd ticked that box, other ticks had disappeared. Not the climate checkbox, and our "peaceful surroundings" checkbox was also ticked. Just like "no mountains," because once you've pushed a wheelchair up Mont Saint-Michel, you'll look at mountains differently for the rest of your life. No, the missing checkbox was 3,000m<sup>2</sup> of garden.

## Oops

Instead of 3,000, we have one, 1 hectare, to be precise. And "garden" was a very flattering description; meadow or field would be more fitting.

So, over the past few years, we've been slowly transforming our meadow into a park. I wouldn't call it a garden—no pretty flowerbeds with blooming violets, no water features. Now, that last part isn't entirely true; every now and then we get an incontinent cloud that, on its way to the Limousin next door, can't keep it dry. But because we're quite high up on the hill, we only get a puddle that disappears within a few days.

## Park

What we did was plant trees: plane trees, maples, lime trees, sweet chestnuts, walnuts, and more. Hence the park. There's a fence around "the park" so the dogs can play outside. They can romp around in the grass and try to catch moles. And that's where my problem lies: the combination of moles making mounds and dogs digging holes turns my park into a mountainous landscape. Chips, another checkbox I once ticked has disappeared, and did I mention how I feel about mountains these days?



# Kale with parsnip and walnut

As mentioned above, we planted two walnut trees in the garden. They're now about 20 cm tall, and in about ten years we'll have our own walnuts. By then, the walnuts in this recipe will come from our own garden...

## Ingredients for 2 persons:

- 800 grams of parsnips
- 125 grams of chopped kale
- 250 grams of smoked sausage
- 40 grams of walnuts
- 1 teaspoon ras el hanout
- salt and pepper

## Preparation of the mashed potatoes:

- Peel the parsnip and cut it into large pieces.
- Boil the parsnips and kale in a little water for 20 minutes until done.
- I put the smoked sausage on top to as well.
- Drain everything, set the smoked sausage aside.
- Add a splash of milk to the parsnips and mash the parsnips with kale to make a mash.
- Season with ras el hanout and salt and pepper.
- Serve the mashed potatoes with the smoked sausage.

This recipe uses smoked sausage, but if you live in France, that can be hard to find. We use Montbéliard sausage and it's even tastier.





# Mushroom pie with beef and chestnuts

A dish where the ingredients truly evoke autumnal flavors. And let's be honest, the French have a thing for chestnuts.

If you leave out the beef and replace the beef stock with vegetable or mushroom stock, you can easily make the pie vegetarian.

Wine tip: a slightly heavier 100% mencia from Bierzo in Spain is very tasty with this.



## Ingredients:

- 200 grams of flour
- 100 grams of cold butter
- 100 ml cold water
- sunflower oil for frying
- 300 grams of cubed beef steak
- 2 red onions, chopped
- 500 grams chestnut mushrooms, sliced
- 1 red pepper, thinly sliced
- 300 grams sweet potatoes, peeled and cut into very small cubes
- 1 tablespoon ras el hanout
- 1 tablespoon vadouvan
- 1 tablespoon of flour, plus a little to sprinkle on the work surface when rolling out the dough
- 250 ml runderbouillon
- 200 grams of cooked sweet chestnuts
- 25 grams finely chopped chives
- 40 grams of breadcrumbs

## Preparation of the pie:

- Make the dough by mixing the flour and butter, then adding the water.
- Mix until smooth and store in foil in the refrigerator for at least 30 minutes.
- Preheat the oven to 200°C.
- Heat the oil in a large skillet or Dutch oven and briefly sear the steak, about 1 minute at most. Remove the steak from the pan and set aside.
- Fry the onion, mushrooms, pepper, sweet potatoes and herbs in the same oil for 10 minutes.
- Add 1 tablespoon of flour and then the stock. Let it simmer for 10 minutes.
- At the end, add the chopped chives and the cooked chestnuts.
- Let it cool completely and then add the steak.
- Roll out a little over half of the dough into a round on a floured surface.
- Line a 27cm round baking dish with the dough.
- Sprinkle breadcrumbs over the base and put the filling in.
- Now roll out the remaining dough into a round sheet and place it on the filling to close the pie nicely.
- I had some dough left over, so I cut out mushroom shapes and placed them on the pie.
- Beat the egg and brush the top of the pie with it.
- Bake the pie in the oven for 30 minutes.

# These French are crazy

We've been living in France for quite some time now, and judging by the weather, spring is on its way. We've already had our first winter with a heat pump (air conditioning) and a wood stove. And that wasn't bad... Yes, it gets cold in the house, especially if you don't heat a part of it (just a dehumidifier to keep things from getting messy). But when we wake up in the morning, I press a button next to my bed to heat the air conditioning. In no time, it's nice and cozy in the house. Then I fire up the wood stove in the kitchen, and it's on a regular basis even to hot for me..

## These French,

So it'll come as no surprise that we're happy with the air conditioning. And we even managed to get the subsidy, an environmental subsidy for a heat pump. They do that here too. But they do it the French way: you get a check in the mail... These French are crazy.

Most European countries abolished checks so long ago that they're no longer exchangeable. So, I'm being forced, in a roundabout way, to open a French bank account.

## A French bank

Now, opening a bank account sounds simple, of course. But is it? I'd tried it before, almost two years ago, but I'd been stuck because I couldn't produce an energy bill. So, I decided to see if I could get an online account. It's also

much cheaper than an account with a traditional bank, and I'm such a frugal Dutch person.

## Customer friendly hostile

There are quite a few online banks, but I doubt they all want customers. The information the various banks require:

- Income tax assessment from the French tax authorities. Why? I have no idea. I have to file my first tax return soon, so I don't have the paperwork yet. Incidentally, this concerns the French subsidiary of my former employer, ING. I would have preferred that, but it's not working.
- I do have proof of income, but it's in Dutch. And besides, I'm not applying for credit. That's information I don't want to share.
- An existing bank account... uh, strange question. Why would I want to open an account if I already have one? Luckily, I have an account, so I've filled out all the paperwork. And then my account isn't good enough, I need a French bank account to open one. That'll be a lot more difficult. I think I could challenge that under the SEPA rules, but do I want to? I'll keep looking...
- And finally, it worked. I have a French debit card for a French account. At a bank where you can still cash checks.

The latter sounds strange, handing something in at an online bank, but because it is a subsidiary of a national bank/insurer, it works out quite well.

## Spring

Now, I shouldn't complain too much, because we're still very happy here. We've enjoyed a glass of wine on our terrace several times in the middle of winter. And even though we live in the middle of the countryside, eating out is also easy. It's a lot more affordable than in the Netherlands. That doesn't save you money by the way; we just go out more often. 😊

I also have a few days' getaway planned for sometime in April. My last bottle of cognac has been emptied, so it's time to replenish my supply.

I find all these positive aspects much more important than the sometimes strange way things are done here. I can laugh about it; sometimes you have to try a little harder, or take a detour, but I have all the time in the world. And when I talk to my Belgian, English, and Irish neighbors, we all have examples of the excessive regulation in our home countries; the penchant for "rules" isn't typically French.

These Europeans are crazy...

*I really don't know if Asterix and Obelix are popular in the UK, but they are in The Netherlands, in Belgium and in France. And Asterix always says 'these Romans are crazy'*



# Melon Pineau des Charentes

Pineau des Charentes is a locally produced drink from the Cognac region. It's a fortified wine. It pairs wonderfully with melon.

Ingredients for 1 melon, 2 persons:

- 1 melon
- 2 slices of raw ham
- Pineau des Charentes

Preparation of melon with pineau:

- Cut the melon in half lengthwise and into wedges, using a large, sharp knife.
- Remove the seeds from the melon.
- Serve the melon with Pineau des Charentes in the hole and a small piece of raw ham next to it.





# Crêpes with apple and pear in calvados

Lars is our "pancake man," and I absolutely love his crêpes Suzette. When I recently asked him to make dessert, crêpes were on the menu. That morning, I'd accidentally mixed the last of the oranges into a juice. Lars glanced at the fruit bowl and saw a pear and an apple, and that's how this recipe for crêpes with apple, pear, and calvados was born.

## Ingredients

- crêpes -

- 1 egg yolk
- 1 medium egg
- 60 grams of flour
- 4 grams of vanilla sugar
- 1 pinch of salt
- 140 ml milk
- oil for frying

—fruit—

- 1 apple
- 1 pear
- 1 tablespoon of powdered sugar
- 1/2 teaspoon ground anise seed
- 1 teaspoon cinnamon
- 30 cl calvados
- optional vanilla ice cream

## Instructions

- Beat the yolk and egg until smooth. (You're done when the egg mixture becomes noticeably lighter in color.)
- Add the remaining ingredients and make a batter (note: flour and eggs are natural products, so check what you get: if your batter is too thin, add some more flour, if it is too thick, add some milk) You want to get a nice thin batter
- Let the batter rest for 20 minutes to allow gluten to build up.

*The instructions continue after the photo*



— filling —

- While the crêpe batter is resting, start peeling the fruit and dice it. We like it a bit coarser; it doesn't have to be applesauce.
- Place the fruit in a saucepan with a little water and let it simmer gently for 10 minutes.
- Then add the jelly sugar and the spices and let it simmer for another 10 minutes on low heat.
- Meanwhile, your batter is ready. Fry the crêpes in a little oil until browned and cooked through. Keep them nice and thin; the French use a special crêpe pan for this, but if you make your batter nice and thin, a regular frying pan will work just fine.
- Fold the crêpe twice (see photo), add the calvados to the filling and place this on the folded crêpe.
- Serve everything with, for example, a scoop of vanilla ice cream.
  
- Want a bit of a show? Pour a little calvados over your crêpe and light it. Be careful, though; I don't have many readers, so please be careful.

# About swines

Pigs; according to the (Dutch) dictionary, a swine is a pig, or a dirty pig, and you can be 'a lucky pig'.

"Yes, and...?" I hear you say. And that's quite a story. Lieu Dit Thouiller (where we live) is a small hamlet that used to consist of two farms. In the hamlet, we jokingly refer to it as Haut Thouiller (the southern part where Dutch is spoken) and Bas Thouiller, where the main language is English (and a little French). This language border corresponds to the division between those farms.

## Pigsty

There are now eight houses where there used to be only two. All the old stables have been converted into homes. So we live in the (old) pigsty (which, according to the dictionary, means "dirty stuff"). Everyone immediately will understand why I feel so at home here.

It's a beautiful house, with loads of atmosphere. We were thrilled to find it. The interior has been beautifully renovated, of course (by the previous owner). But you can still see a few pig pens in front of the house. And of course, this is the right house for us; I'm a complete slob. But in a pigsty, that's okay.

## Hung like a horse

Had I bought the neighbor's house, I would have lived in a horse stable, which is impossible because I'm not hung like a horse. We wouldn't have felt at home in the cowshed either, looking at the 'huge pile of wood in front of Miek's door'. (Dutch saying about heavy bossoms)

## On a trip

As much as we feel at home here, every now and then we crave a change. Last Christmas, we wanted to spend it with our children and grandchildren. At four o'clock in the morning, we closed the stable door and set off. And although France is much further south than the Netherlands, it's not far enough south for Christmas to fall in the summer. In other words, it was still dark when we left.

## Relationship problems

At ten past four, our journey came to an sudden end. We had a rather intimate encounter with a wild boar.

I didn't dare stop. Despite the boar being the one to initiate this blossoming relationship, I don't think this piglet was particularly pleased with the outcome. He must have had a terrible headache. And I wasn't exactly looking forward to another encounter with a grumpy boar.

"I'll stop in the next village," I thought, to check if I needed to adjust anything quickly. But just as the pig was a bit too big for my liking, so was the damage. The front of the car was a real mess.

At six o'clock we were back home, the car had been taken away, and the only thing we didn't know was what happened to the pig. Everyone kept asking if we hadn't taken the pig with us... But I wasn't keen on that; the relationship wasn't going to work out. It turned out we had conflicting personalities...



# Gin ice cream

For a long time, I didn't drink spirits, but I did enjoy wine, sangria, and mulled wine. But I didn't like cognac, vodka, or gin. Until a few years ago, when Susan Aretz launched her own Holy Unicorn gin. I really enjoyed it pure, with a cinnamon stick. It's also great for baking, like gin Madeleines. And I use it in lots of cocktails, and now also in gin ice cream.

A recipe that will make the English side of the hamlet feel at home.

## Ingredients

- 250 ml room
- 250 ml milk
- 6 egg yolks
- 50 grams of sugar
- 60 ml gin



## Instructions

- Place the milk and cream in a pan with a thick base so that the heat from the flame is well distributed.
- Bring this to the boil while stirring, then let it cool slightly off the heat.
- Mix the egg yolks (egg yolks are added because they improve the structure of the ice cream and make it smoother) with the sugar until fluffy and add it to the warm milk mixture while stirring well (otherwise the egg yolk will curdle).
- Return to the pan and heat, but be careful not to let it boil as the egg yolk will curdle, and keep stirring.
- When it starts to become a bit lumpy, you can remove the pan from the heat.
- Let the mixture cool. For example, fill the sink with cold water and place the pan in it. If you have time, you can refrigerate it for a few hours. The colder the ingredients are, the faster/easier the ice cream will be made.
- After cooling, you can add the gin. If you were to heat this, you would lose most of the gin's flavor.
- Place the mixture in the ice cream maker.

P.S. Don't throw away the egg whites! They can be frozen for recipes that only require egg whites, or you can use them to make a delicious meringue.



# Pork sausages

We were at a fantastic market in Chaillac, on the estate near Château Le Breuil. What a great atmosphere, and there were many local producers. We regularly go to a market, or as they're also called here, a producers' market. That's how I get to know the farmers and growers in my immediate area.

One of these producers was a pig farmer. We bought the pork sausages there, as well as bacon, which I hadn't yet found in France. Hence this pork sausage with rosemary recipe.

## Ingredients for this one-pot dish

- dash of vegetable oil
- 550 grams of (organic) pork sausages, or merguez sausages
- 3 shallots
- 2 onions
- 175 ml white wine
- salt and pepper
- 3 grams of rosemary
- 500 grams of potatoes

## Preparing pork sausages with rosemary

- Heat the oil in a frying pan and brown the sausages on all sides.
- Remove the sausages from the pan.
- Fry the cleaned and chopped shallots and onions in the same oil until brown.
- Add the white wine and plenty of salt and pepper and the finely chopped rosemary.
- Wash the potatoes well, do not peel them, and cut them into fairly small cubes.
- The potatoes can go into the pan, the sausages can go back into the pan too.
- Let the mixture simmer for 40 minutes.



# Hateful? No way

After my encounter with the boar, the car turned out to be a total loss. At least, not according to the garage owner; the damage was a few hundred euros less than the car's replacement value. But that much money for repairs on a 10-year-old car... And I was already thinking about trading it in, so the car was handed over to the body shop, and I started looking for a new one.

I was mad about that. It was 1-0 in favor of the pig.

## The first load

But after a few weeks, the new car stood in front of the house, and we were able to go shopping again with our own transport.

One of the first things we did was contact someone from the hunting club to see if we could buy some wild boar.

Yes, no problem... There was half a wild boar hanging on his father's farm. Skinned and all. So one of the first things we transported in the new car was a wild boar. Or at least, the remains. It was a 1-1 draw.

## Slaughter

Now, I don't know if anyone has ever boned an animal, but I never have, and neither has Annemiek. Luckily, Annemiek had worked at a butcher's shop and in healthcare. She clearly has more experience than I do. And my neighbor, Jos, had owned a brasserie in Leuven. He was happy to help. Working together, Jos and Annemiek managed to chop the boar into steaks, chops, and whatnot. And me? I watched bravely.



# Pig stew

One of the dishes we made with wild boar is this delicious stew. It's a bit trickier to make, as most supermarkets don't have a wide selection of wild boar. But given this dish's history, it's included in this book.

## Ingredients

- oil/butter
- 1100 grams of pork
- flower
- salt and pepper
- 2 onions
- 2 cloves of garlic
- 400 gram carrots
- 350 grams of celery
- 500 ml bouillon
- 25 cl beer
- 1 bay leaf
- 2 cloves
- 1 tablespoon herbs de Provence
- 1 tablespoon coarse mustard

## Instructions

- Cover the meat lightly with flower, salt and pepper.
- Heat the oil and brown the meat on all sides then remove from the pan.
- Chop the onions and garlic and fry them in the remaining fat.
- Peel the carrot and cut it into slices, add the celery and this can go into the pan.
- Then the meat can go back into the pan and the stock and beer can be added.
- I stick the cloves in the bay leaf so I don't lose them and then I put it in the pan.
- Once the herbs and mustard are in the pan, put it in the oven for 3 to 3.5 hours at 125 degrees Celsius. Check if the meat is cooked and falling apart. There are old and young pigs, and that can make a difference.



# Red onion galette

A simple French red onion galette. It's not a quiche or savory tart because of the folding method. If you don't use a springform pan and just fold the edges around the filling, it's a galette. The nice thing about a tart like this is that it can look quite messy—truly handcrafted.

We live in an area known for its goat cheese, which is aged with a layer of charcoal ash. Not only is this the most widely produced goat cheese in France, it also enjoys a protected designation of origin (AOC).

## Red onion galette ingredients:

- 1 round base for a savory pie, or 6 slices of puff pastry
- 3 tablespoons fig chutney
- 1 rode ui
- 1 tablespoon dried thyme, or a few sprigs fresh
- 150 grams of goat cheese that you can cut into slices, I used a local cheese in ashes
- handful of walnuts



## Preparation:

- Preheat the oven to 180 degrees.
- Place the base on baking paper on a baking tray.
- Spread the fig chutney on the base, leaving 2 cm around the edges.
- Peel the onion and cut it in half. Then slice it into very thin half rings.
- Spread the onion over the base and sprinkle the thyme over it.
- Divide the goat cheese slices over the onions and fold the edges inwards.
- Bake the galette in the preheated oven for 30 minutes. Keep an eye on the edges to make sure they don't get too brown. Every oven is different, so check when the galette is ready in your oven.
- Sprinkle the walnuts over the galette and enjoy.



# Native or imported

After several years in the French countryside, I can still see the difference between native French people and imported French people. Let me start by saying that I'm looking for the differences and exaggerating things, but there are differences.

## What is important?

The first difference became apparent when we were still at our temporary address. It was Covid/Coronavirus season, and people were expected to wear face masks. Music was organized in the marketplace in Bonneuil-Matours, along with drinks. The French greeting ceremony was, in our eyes, special. When two French people met, they first said hello, then took off their masks and kissed. And then they put the masks back on. As a down-to-earth, introverted Dutchman, I saw the mask come off just when it could have been useful. Now, a few years later, I understand that better. Personal relationships and friendships are very important to the French. And they're right, actually.

Another difference is the home. For French people, comfort and easy maintenance are important. They are avid DIY enthusiasts (or "bricoleurs" in proper French), but a home must be modern and comfortable. That old building has to be demolished to make room for a beautiful bungalow. French imports are incorrigible romantics; even buildings that were never intended as homes (like our old pigsty) are lovingly renovated and elevated to a home. Full of original details, such as drafty oak stable doors, rising damp in the

natural stone walls, and creaking oak or chestnut roof trusses.

Then, the old building is meticulously maintained, with regular paint repairs, shutter cleaning, and so on. A true Frenchman sees painting as a one-time project; if you move out in twenty years, it's up to the new owners to repaint.

## Doing shopping

These two distinct styles become apparent as I drive toward the shops in Lussac-les-Chateaus. The French take the first right, towards the Bricolage (DIY shop), for a load of concrete blocks. The French imports take the second right, towards the Brocante. Because that characteristic building, of course, has to be filled with old junk.

For example, I recently used an old antique cabinet to camouflage my fuse box. It was so old that I couldn't tell if the holes were from old or new woodworms. So I re-treated the entire cabinet before I could install it. Oh, and I sawed out the back, because installing old junk is crazy enough. But I'm not so crazy as to think that moving a cabinet when a fuse has blown is a good idea. Now I just have to open the cabinet door.



# Trifle with cannelles, vanilla custard and peach

I wanted to bake cannelle for dessert. For inspiration, I sometimes type keywords into the search bar. This time, "unfortunately," no results came up, so I had to think about it a bit more. A tiramisu wouldn't work with cannelle, but then I thought about a trifle, and cannelle instead of cake would work just fine. And that's how this recipe came about: making vanilla custard, and I still had peaches. It's that easy.

One more note, the cannelle batter needs to be refrigerated for 24 hours, so start a day in advance.

## Ingredients for 6 cannelles:

- 250 ml whole milk
- 13 grams of butter
- 1/2 teaspoon vanilla extract
- 125 grams of sugar
- 75 grams of self-raising flour
- 1 medium sized egg
- 1 egg yolk
- 4 tablespoons rum

## Preparation of cannelle:

- Boil the milk with the butter and the vanilla extract.
- Mix the sugar and self-raising flour.
- Add the egg and then the egg yolk.
- Mix well.

- Then add the warm milk to the mixture little by little and stir well.
- Add the rum.
- Let it cool and refrigerate for 24 hours.
- Preheat the oven to 200°C.
- Fill the molds with the mixture.
- Bake for 35 minutes.
- Let the cannelés cool and then remove them from the mold.

### Ingredients for 500 ml vanilla custard:

- 1/2 liter of milk
- 1 teaspoon good vanilla extract, or use a cut open vanilla pod
- 50 grams of sugar, we don't like it super sweet
- 1 bag of vanilla sugar
- 20 grams cornstarch
- 2 egg yolks

### Preparation of vanilla custard:

- Set aside five tablespoons of milk (you will need it later)
- Heat the rest of the milk with the vanilla extract until almost boiling.
- Stir the sugar and vanilla sugar into the milk.
- Mix the cornflour with a little milk to form a paste.
- Mix the egg yolks with the cornstarch and stir into the milk.
- Don't let the milk boil, otherwise the egg yolks will curdle and you don't want that.

- Stir until almost custard consistency, it will thicken as it cools.
- You'll also need 4 peeled peaches. Now it's just a matter of filling them into pretty glasses.

### Build 4 trifles:

- Cut 4 cannelloni into cubes and divide them over the base.
- Spread the vanilla custard over this.
- Place a sliced peach on top of each glass.
- Now cut the last 2 cannelloni into cubes to put on top to divide.



# Calvados apple pie

I wanted something delicious to go with coffee without spending too much time on it. I achieved that with this calvados apple pie. We enjoyed it immensely. The calvados added a little something extra and immediately gave the pie a French touch. I used ready-made sweet pie crusts; I think they're also available in the Netherlands. Alternatively, it can be made with round puff pastry crusts.

## Calvados

Calvados is made differently than cognac. Calvados is made from apples/cider in the Calvados department in Normandy. Cognac is made from grapes and comes from the commune of Cognac in the Charente. Both are brandies, though. I use calvados in cooking because using Lars's cognac would be a real waste. Besides, he won't appreciate it if I use his cognac in cooking.

And while calvados and cognac may be truly French drinks, brandy is truly a Dutch invention. It derives from "brandewijn" (burned wine), the distillation of wine to preserve it. You can also use malt, but then you get whisky.

## The result

It turned out to be a fairly flat calvados apple pie because I only used two (large) apples. If you want it a bit thicker, you can use more apples, but adjust the amount of calvados and brown sugar accordingly.



You can serve this cake cold with coffee, but it is also delicious served warm with a scoop of vanilla ice cream for dessert.

## Ingredients

- 2 to 3 golden delicious apples
- 20 grams calvados
- 2 tablespoons brown caster sugar
- 2 round bases for sweet tart
- 2 tablespoons breadcrumbs
- 10 grams of melted butter
- 1 tablespoon granulated sugar



## Instructions

- Preheat the oven to 180 degrees.
- Cut the apples into quarters, peel them and cut the quarters into four slices.
- Place the calvados in a bowl, along with the apples and brown sugar. Let it steep for 10 minutes, stirring regularly.
- Meanwhile, place a base on baking paper on an oven rack and spread the breadcrumbs over it.
- Spread the apple slices over the base, including any remaining liquid for flavor.
- Now place the other base on top and fold the edge in half 1 cm. Press the edge with a fork to seal it. This prevents any moisture from leaking out.
- Poke a few holes in the top crust with a fork. This will prevent it from bulging.
- Brush the top with the melted butter and sprinkle the granulated sugar over it.
- Bake the cake in the preheated oven for 30 minutes.
- Serve warm or cold, possibly with a scoop of vanilla ice cream.

# Always belonged to an old lady

Holidays, in the Netherlands, it's not uncommon to leave your own country quickly. A holiday is only truly a holiday when it's far away. In France, it's different; France is much larger. And if you live in the Alps, a beach holiday on the coast is naturally different.

When in France, do as the French do. We visit as many different regions as possible.

## Camping?

We started with a tent, but because we often want to go outside the holidays due to the crowds, we're often very early or very late in the season. And that has consequences for the weather. Another good option is to simply rent a gite or apartment. In the city, so you can get everywhere quickly. We sometimes combine that with a "reason." We celebrate our wedding anniversary "somewhere else." Or Miek's birthday, which is also a good reason in early spring.

## Range

One of the places we visited was Pau. Not too far away, but still a region we'd driven through before, but never actually visited.

Pau is really worth a visit. We had an apartment right in the center and could walk everywhere. Miek's walking distance isn't that great, but luckily Pau isn't either. As a bonus, we were right next to the covered market, and when I went to pick up breakfast supplies that morning, it turned out there was also a local producers' market. After devouring our

croissants, we quickly headed back there to pick up some fantastic Brebis cheeses.

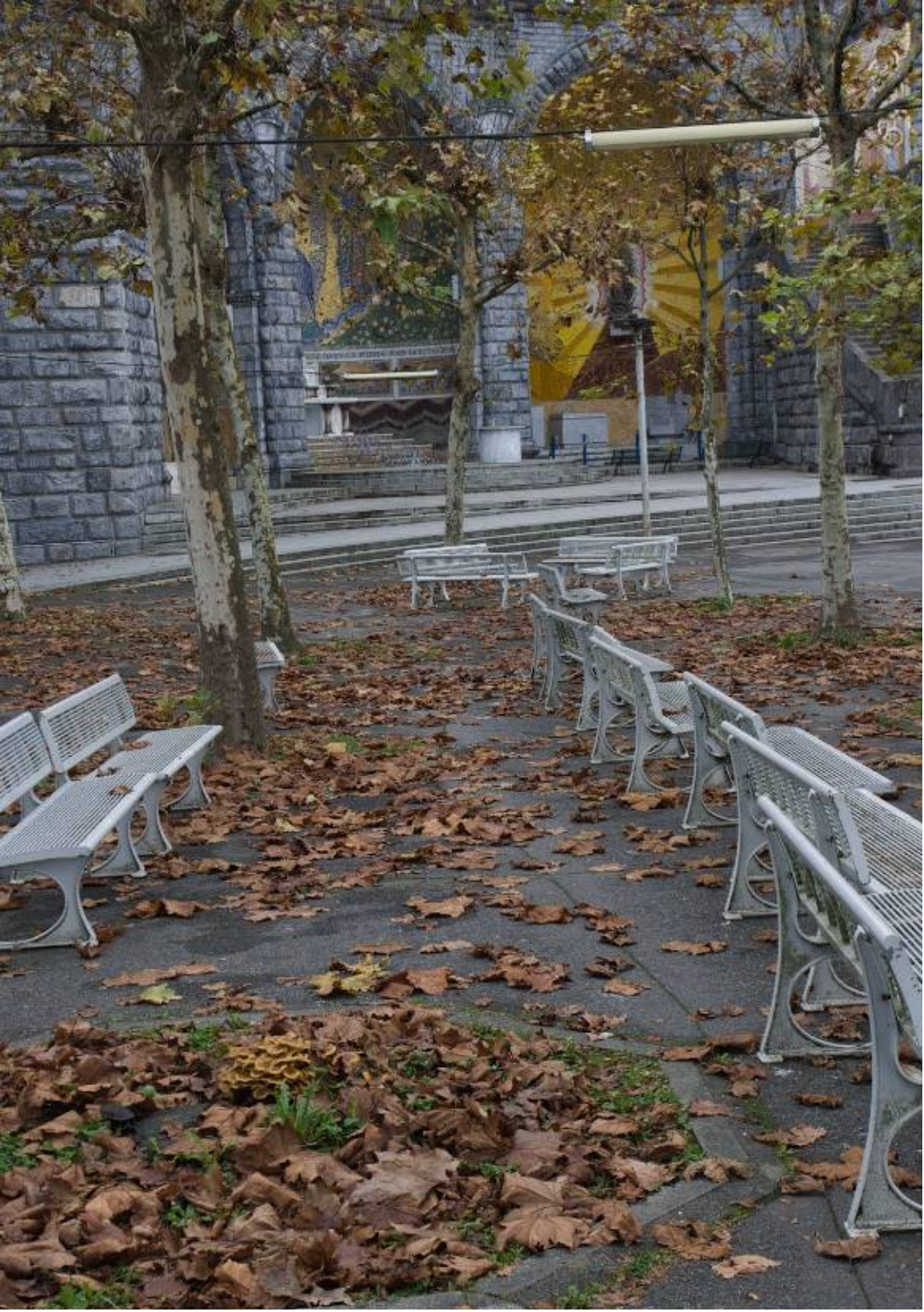
## Lourdes

Now, besides Pau, France also has a few larger cities. And Miek's mentioned range isn't really that practical there. But, clever as I am, I had a plan. Since we were in Pau anyway, we could also visit Lourdes. Not that I was expecting a miracle, but I secretly assumed that all those people rolling into and out of Lourdes would create a lively used wheelchair market. So, among all the cheap trinket shops—because Lourdes is truly from a bygone era—I was looking for a man with lots of gold chains and his shirt just a little too open. A used wheelchair dealer. And then I'd snag a wheelchair that had always belonged to an old lady.

## Disappointment

Alas, it was a huge disappointment. I saw several nuns from all over the world, and an endless number of plastic crosses and statues of the Virgin Mary, but not a single secondhand wheelchair. Not even a walker was to be found. Now, I'm lying, because some of the nuns did have walkers, but they were still in use. And to rob a nun of her walker in broad daylight is beyond even me (I have less of a problem with that at night, but all those nuns wear some kind of camouflage suit that's not so easy to spot at night).

To make up for it, we drove back through the mountains. There we were treated to a magnificent view. We still had a day well spent.



# Clafoutis with cherries and pastis

A clafoutis is a French pastry with cherries that is eaten as a dessert. But I also make it with grapes or as a clafoutis with blackberries.

The cherries or other fruit are placed in a frying pan or baking dish and then covered with a batter of eggs, milk, flour, and sugar. I've also used butter and vanilla sugar. Some variations also contain melted butter or cream. Serve warm or lukewarm, with or without a scoop of ice cream. A dusting of powdered sugar before serving is also an option. I always try to keep the amount of sugar low, but because tastes vary, powdered sugar is a good way to add a little extra sweetness.

## Ingredients

- butter to grease the mold
- 300 grams of cherries
- 215 ml milk
- 3 eggs size M
- 85 grams of sugar
- 8 grams of vanilla sugar = 1 bag
- 2 tablespoons melted butter
- 75 grams of flour
- 60 ml pastis

## Instructions

- Preheat the oven to 180 degrees.
- Grease the baking dish.
- Pit the cherries and spread them over the bottom of the dish.
- Make the batter by mixing all the ingredients.
- Pour the batter over the cherries.
- Bake the clafoutis for 40 minutes until cooked through and brown.the batter will remain slightly soft, this is the intention.
- Serve the clafoutis warm, lukewarm or cold with, for example, a scoop of vanilla ice cream.



# Madeleines

Madeleines are typical French cookies, and I'd never baked them before. And that's obviously not possible when you live in France. I'd long thought about adding lavender. Subtle, but still noticeable. So I blindly assumed I'd be able to eat all nine. This is because my husband thinks most things with lavender taste like soap. We've discussed it before. You either love it or you hate it. I haven't found a middle ground yet.

But besides lavender, I now bake them with gin, pastis, espresso, etc. They're just cupcakes, so anything goes. I list the quantities of my creations instead of lavender in the recipe.

The quantities are precisely calculated for 9 cookies. Therefore, the quantities aren't in nice round numbers this time.

## Ingredients for flavor variations

- Lemon madeleines, lemon zest of 1 lemon
- Espresso, 1 teaspoon coffee extract
- Speculaas spices, 1 teaspoon
- Pastis, 2 tablespoons
- Gin, 3 tablespoons



## Ingredients for 9 cookies

- 1 medium sized egg
- 42 grams of sugar
- 14 grams of milk
- 56.5 grams of flour
- 2.5 grams of baking powder
- 28 grams of melted butter
- 3/4 teaspoon finely chopped lavender. I used fresh from the garden, but dried is also fine (note: you may need to adjust the amount, as dried lavender can have a much stronger flavor).

## Preparation of the cookies:

Preheat the oven to 180°C.

- Mix the egg with the sugar until the mixture turns white.
- Beat the milk into the mixture.
- Now beat in the flour and baking powder.
- Finally, beat in the butter and lavender. Taste to see how much lavender you like.
- Let the dough rest for 15 minutes.
- Butter the Madeleine molds and pour the mixture in (but not all the way to the top, as the Madeleines will rise).
- Place the pan in a preheated oven.
- Bake the cookies for 12 minutes until done and brown.
- Let them cool, but be careful of drafts. They're cupcakes and can deflate.





# Chicken and artichoke galette

To conclude, a recipe with real French ingredients, a delicious dish that we prepare often.

## Ingredients

- sunflower oil
- 300 grams of chicken fillet
- salt and pepper
- 1 tablespoon harissa
- 3 cloves of garlic
- 210 grams of artichoke bottoms, canned or fresh
- 100 ml room
- Parmesan cheese
- savory pie base



## Instructions

- Preheat the oven to 180 degrees.
- Heat the oil and fry the chicken fillet which is cut into strips for 8 minutes with salt, pepper and harissa.
- Chop the garlic and fry it briefly with the chicken at the end.
- Cut the artichoke into cubes.
- Mix the cream with enough grated cheese.
- I now place the base on baking paper, in a 26 cm greased springform pan.
- I then add the fried chicken and artichoke. I pour the cream and cheese over it and fold the edges inward to create a galette.
- Bake this galette in the preheated oven for 30 minutes.
- Serve it with a nice salad.

