

Classic French Bistro Recipes

Moules Marinières (Mussels with White Wine)

Cook Time: 15 minutes

Prep Time: 10 minutes

Serves: 6 as an appetizer

Ingredients:

- 2 pounds mussels, washed, with beards removed
- ¼ cup butter
- 4 cloves garlic, crushed and minced
- ½ cup dry white wine
- 2 teaspoons sherry vinegar
- ¼ cup fresh parsley, chopped
- 1 tablespoon fresh thyme, chopped
- 1 teaspoon cornstarch
- ½ teaspoon salt
- 1 teaspoon coarse ground black pepper

Directions:

1. Heat the butter in a deep skillet over medium heat.
2. Once the butter has melted, add the garlic and sauté until for 2 minutes.
3. Add the white wine, sherry vinegar, parsley, and thyme. Stir lightly until mixed.
4. Add the mussels to the skillet and increase the heat to medium-high. Bring the liquid to a boil and cook until the mussel shells open, approximately 5 minutes.
5. Remove the opened mussels and place them on a serving platter. Discard any mussels that have not opened.
6. Place the cornstarch in a small cup and add a bit of the cooking liquid. Whisk until a thin paste forms. Add the cornstarch paste to the cooking liquid and whisk gently.
7. Cook, while stirring, until the sauce thickens just slightly.
8. Season the sauce with salt and black pepper.
9. Pour the sauce over the mussels and serve immediately.

Croque Monsieur

Cook Time: 15 minutes

Prep Time: 10 minutes

Serves: 4

Ingredients:

- 2 tablespoons butter
- 2 tablespoons flour
- 1 ½ cups milk, heated
- 3 cups Gruyere cheese, divided
- 1 teaspoon salt
- 1 teaspoon coarse ground black pepper
- ½ teaspoon nutmeg
- 8 slices thick white bread, crusts trimmed, toasted
- 1 tablespoon champagne mustard
- ½ pound smoked ham, sliced thin
- ½ cup Brie cheese, slice
- 1 tablespoon fresh chives, chopped

Directions:

1. Preheat the oven to 400°F. Line a baking sheet with parchment paper.
2. In a saucepan, heat the butter over medium heat. Sprinkle in the flour and whisk until a paste forms.
3. Slowly add the warm milk, whisking constantly until creamy. Season with salt, pepper, and nutmeg. Continue cooking, stirring constantly, until the sauce thickens.
4. Remove from the heat and add 2 cups of Gruyere cheese.
5. On each piece of bread, spread a little champagne mustard and then make sandwiches with a layer of ham and brie cheese.
6. Coat each of the sandwiches with the cream sauce on both sides. With a spatula, transfer the sandwiches to the baking sheet. Sprinkle the sandwiches with half of the remaining Gruyere cheese.
7. Place the sandwiches in the oven and bake for 7 minutes. Remove from the oven and turn over using a spatula.
8. Sprinkle the remaining Gruyere cheese on the sandwiches and bake for an additional 5 minutes.
9. Turn the broiler on high, and place the sandwiches under it until they are golden and crispy, approximately 1-2 minutes.
10. Remove from the oven and serve immediately, garnished with fresh chives.

Beef Bourguignon

Cook Time: 1 ½ hours

Prep Time: 10 minutes

Serves: 6-8

Ingredients:

- 2 pounds beef roast, cubed
- ½ pound pancetta, cubed
- 1 teaspoon salt
- 1 teaspoon coarse ground black pepper
- ½ teaspoon onion powder
- ½ teaspoon paprika
- 2 tablespoons flour
- 1 tablespoon olive oil
- 2 cups pearl onions
- 3 cups carrots, peeled and sliced
- 3 cups mushrooms, sliced
- 4 cloves garlic, crushed and minced
- 4 cups dry red wine
- 2 cups homemade beef stock
- 1 tablespoon tomato paste
- 1 sprig fresh rosemary
- 1 sprig fresh thyme
- 1 bay leaf

Directions:

1. Preheat the oven to 325°F
2. Place the pancetta in a Dutch oven or large oven proof skillet and heat over medium. Cook until the pancetta is nicely browned, approximately 5 minutes.
3. Season the beef with salt, black pepper, onion powder, and paprika and sprinkle lightly with the flour.
4. Add the beef to the skillet and cook until browned on all sides, approximately 5 minutes.
5. Remove the beef and pancetta from the skillet and add the olive oil to the pan.
6. Add the onions and carrots. Cook, stirring frequently, for 5 minutes. Add the mushrooms and garlic. Cook, while stirring, for 2 minutes.
7. Add the beef and pancetta back into the pan, along with the red wine and beef stock. Stir in the tomato paste.
8. Using kitchen twine, tie together the rosemary, thyme, and bay leaf and place them in the pot.
9. Bring the liquid to a boil before removing from the burner, covering, and placing in the oven.
10. Bake for 1 hour, or until the meat is cooked through and tender.
11. Let rest 10 minutes before serving.

Sole Meunière

Cook Time: 15 minutes

Prep Time: 10 minutes

Serves: 4

Ingredients:

- 4 sole fillets, about 4 ounces each
- ½ cup all-purpose flour
- 3 tablespoons olive oil
- 3 tablespoons butter
- ½ teaspoon salt
- Freshly ground pepper
- Lemon wedges for serving

Sauce

- ½ cup unsalted butter
- 2 tablespoons fresh lemon juice
- ½ teaspoon lemon zest
- ¼ cup fresh parsley, chopped

Directions:

1. Rinse the fish fillets and pat dry with paper towels.
2. In a shallow dish, add the flour, salt and pepper. Stir to combine. Dredge each fillet with the seasoned flour on both side. Shake to remove the excess flour. Set aside.
3. Heat the olive oil and butter in a large heavy bottomed skillet over medium heat.
4. Add the sole fillets and cook for 3 minutes before turning over and cooking for 1-2 minutes more until the fish is cooked through and golden. Remove fish from skillet and loosely cover with foil to keep warm. Discard excess fat and drippings from the skillet.
5. To the skillet, add unsalted butter and let melt. Stir occasionally to free the bits and pieces from the bottom of the pan. Cook 1-2 minutes until the butter start bubbling and becoming golden. Add the lemon juice, zest, and parsley. Stir a few times to combine well. Remove from heat.
6. Place fillets on serving plates. Evenly add the sauce over each sole. Serve with lemon wedges.

French Ratatouille

Cook Time: 1 hour

Prep Time: 30 minutes

Serves: 4-6

Ingredients:

- ¼ cup olive oil
- 1 cup sweet yellow onion, sliced thick
- 4 cups eggplant, cut into large cubes
- 4 cloves garlic, crushed and minced
- 4 cups zucchini, cubed
- 1 cup yellow bell pepper, cubed
- ½ cup celery, chopped
- 4 cups ripe tomatoes, blanched, peeled and quartered
- 1 teaspoon salt
- 1 teaspoon black pepper
- 1 tablespoon fresh thyme
- 1 tablespoon fresh tarragon
- ¼ cup fresh parsley, chopped
- 1 sprig fresh rosemary

Directions:

1. Slice all vegetables in similar sizes.
2. Preheat the oven to 350°F.
3. Place the olive oil in a large, deep, oven proof skillet and heat over medium.
4. Add the onions and sauté until just tender, approximately 3 minutes.
5. Add the eggplant and cook for 5 minutes.
6. Next add the garlic, zucchini, bell peppers, and celery. Cook, stirring occasionally, for 5 minutes.
7. Add the tomatoes, along with any juice that they have produced, to the skillet along with the salt, black pepper, fresh thyme, tarragon, parsley, and rosemary. Toss gently to mix.
8. Cover, and place the skillet in the oven for 45 minutes, or until the vegetables are tender and fragrant.
9. Serve warm or chilled.

Mille-Feuilles

Cook Time: 20 minutes

Prep Time: 15 minutes plus chilling time

Serves: 6-8

Ingredients:

- 1 6-ounce package refrigerated puff pastry dough
- 4 cups whole milk
- 2 vanilla beans, scraped
- 1 $\frac{1}{3}$ cups sugar
- $\frac{2}{3}$ cup all-purpose flour
- 4 eggs, lightly beaten
- 1 cup confectioner's sugar
- $\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoon lemon juice
- 2 teaspoons water
- $\frac{1}{4}$ cup dark chocolate, chopped

Directions:

1. Preheat the oven to 400°F and line a baking sheet with parchment paper.
2. Roll the puff pastry dough out into a rectangle measuring approximately 8x16 inches. Cut the pastry into equal thirds.
3. Place the pastry pieces on the baking sheet and lightly poke with a fork over the entire surface. Place the pastry in the oven and bake for 10-15 minutes, or until golden brown. Remove from the oven and let cool.
4. Combine the sugar, flour, and eggs in a saucepan. Whisk until well blended.
5. In a separate small saucepan, heat the milk and vanilla over low heat until steamy. Take $\frac{1}{4}$ cup of the hot milk and pour it into the sugar and egg mixture, whisking quickly to temper the eggs in the pan.
6. Reduce the heat to low, and slowly add the remaining hot milk, whisking the entire time.
7. Increase the heat to medium and continue to cook, stirring constantly, until the sauce begins to thicken and comes to a very low boil.
8. Remove the custard from the heat and transfer to a bowl. Cover the custard with plastic wrap touching the surface to prevent any air getting to it and forming a skin. Place in the refrigerator and chill for 4 hours.
9. Once the custard has chilled, combine the confectioner's sugar, lemon juice and water in a bowl. Mix until a creamy, but somewhat thin, frosting has formed.
10. Place the chocolate in a small bowl and microwave for 10 seconds to melt, or use a double boiler over low heat.
11. Lay out a third of the pastry dough on a serving dish. Top with half of the custard, followed by a second sheet of pastry.
12. Add the remaining custard on top of the second sheet of pastry and top with the third and final piece of pastry.
13. Spread the frosting over the top of the pastry, letting a little drip down the sides, if desired.
14. Stir the melted chocolate with a knife or thin spatula, and drizzle it in thin parallel lines over the frosting.
15. Using a clean sharp knife or pointed utensil, run a line through the chocolate stripes downward, creating a peaked chocolate pattern over the top of the frosting.
16. Chill if desired, or cut into squares and serve immediately.

***These recipes and more are found in Sarah Spencer's *French Bistro Cooking: Easy Classic French Cuisine Recipes to Make at Home*. To get your copy, click on the cover below or click [here](#).

