33 HOLIDAY RECIPES

to make your Holidays truly special



Stephanie Tessier

From

FRENCH COOKING
IN AMERICA



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The author does not dispense technical and engineering advice but offers a general view to help readers in their quests for personal renovation success. This book is not designed to be a definitive renovation guide. The reader should refer to the local construction code of their city, region or country. In the event you use the information in this book for yourself, the author assumes no responsibility for your actions.

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Meet the Author



Hi there! I am Stephanie

I grew up in France where the holidays had a rhythm of their own – the kitchen warming up long before the house did, the aroma of simmering sauces drifting into the hallway, and the inevitable clatter of everyone crowding into the same little space... because that's where the magic always happened.

When I moved to North America over twenty years ago, I carried those memories with me, tucked between old handwritten recipes and the feeling of home they brought. And like every French woman suddenly cooking in a new country, I learned quickly how to adapt. Ingredients were different, tools were different, even the shape of the vegetables felt different! But the heart of it all – the joy of gathering, the laughter around the table, and the pleasure of cooking something simple and soulful – stayed the same.

That is how French Cooking in America was born.

Not as a fancy concept, but as a way to share the kind of everyday French dishes that make people feel cared for. Recipes that are simple, warm, and made for real families with real weeknights and real holiday chaos.

During the holidays, especially, I go back to my roots. I think of my grandmother's tiny kitchen where she somehow fed twelve people with one pot and no stress. I think of the clinking glasses, the happy noise, the aroma of roasted chicken or chocolate cooling on the counter. And I think: this is what I want to share – not perfection, but comfort. Not complexity, but flavor. Not restaurant technique, but the joy of cooking for people you love.

In this little Holiday Recipe Book, you'll find the dishes I reach for again and again at this time of year – the starters that open a festive meal, the cozy mains for long nights around the table, the little treats that disappear as fast as you can make them. Everything is written simply, with ingredients you can find anywhere, and that familiar French touch that makes your home feel just a bit more special.

So welcome to my kitchen.

Grab a glass, turn on some music, and let's cook together – the French way, the North American way, the cozy holiday way.

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A French-inspired guide to a stress-free holiday kitchen

The holidays move fast – one moment we're lighting the first candle or hanging the first decoration, and the next we're counting chairs, chopping vegetables, and wondering if we bought enough butter (the answer is always no).

Over the years, cooking in France and then across North America, I learned one important thing: you don't need complicated recipes to create a festive table. You just need a little preparation, a few good ingredients, and a calm, joyful attitude in the kitchen.

This chapter is here to help you get ready the French way – simple, organized, and full of warmth.



I.2. Stock A Holiday Pantry That Works For Any Recipe

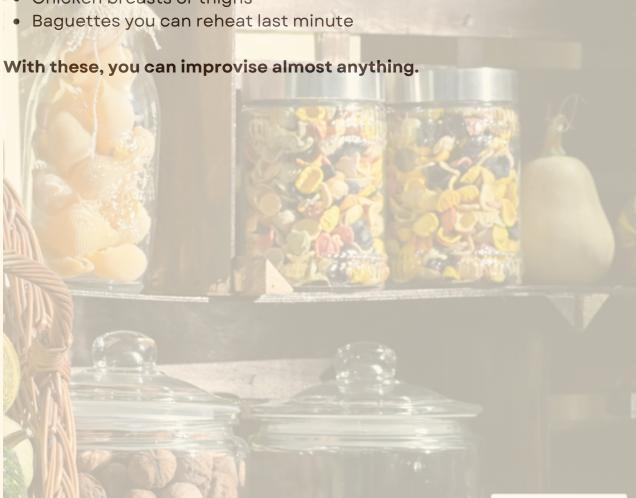
A few key ingredients unlock dozens of French-inspired holiday dishes. Here is what I always keep on hand:

Essential pantry items:

- Good olive oil
- Butter (lots of it!)
- Garlic & onions
- Fresh herbs or dried thyme
- Tomato paste & canned tomatoes
- Broth or bouillon
- Flour, sugar, vanilla
- Spices: paprika, nutmeg, allspice, cinnamon

Useful freezer staples:

- Bagged vegetables for quick sides
- Frozen puff pastry (a holiday lifesaver) I make my own and it freezes really well
- Chicken breasts or thighs



I.3. Set Up A Stress-Free Holiday Kitchen

The secret to peaceful cooking isn't perfection – it's flow.

Here is how I prepare before guests arrive:

- Clear the sink
- Empty the dishwasher
- Place a garbage bowl on the counter to avoid back-and-forth
- Put a candle or soft lights to make the kitchen feel cozy
- Keep a clean towel on your shoulder (very French!) and a clean wet microfiber cloth on a side of you counter to clean any spill.

The goal: Make the kitchen a place where everyone wants to gather – including you.



I.4. Essential Tools That Make Holiday Cooking Easy

You don't need fancy gadgets – just a few solid tools:

- A large pan with lid
- A good Dutch oven
- A kitchen scale
- A reliable ovenproof dish
- A chopper or mini food processor
- A cast-iron pan
- A proofing cloth if you bake
- A long-nose lighter for candles and flambé moments
- A silicone piping bag for desserts
- A toaster (it always comes in handy!)

These simple tools make your recipes easier, faster, and more consistent.



I.5. Plan Your Holiday Menu Like A French Home Cook

Keep it honest, simple, and delicious.

A helpful structure:

- Something for the apéritif
 Olives, nuts, or one small homemade bite.
 This sets the mood.
- A starter
 Light and warm soup or salad or a little savory plate.
- A main dish with a side
 Comforting but not heavy.
 Chicken, seafood, vegetables... keep it balanced.
- A dessert (or two!)
 Something sweet but not fussy.
 Cookies, a chocolate treat, a baked fruit dessert.

When the menu is simple, you enjoy your guests instead of timing everything like a restaurant.



I.6. And Most Important... Give Yourself Permission to Enjoy

Holidays are not exams.

They are moments.

People don't remember if your carrots were cut perfectly – they remember how they felt at your table.

A warm home, simple food, and the pleasure of sharing... that is the French holiday spirit I hope to bring to you in this book.





In France, the apéritif is more than a moment – it's a little celebration all on its own. It's that pause between the bustle of the day and the warmth of the meal, where everyone gathers around small bites, a drink in hand, and the conversation starts to dance.

During the holidays, the apéritif becomes even more special. It's the joyful noise when guests arrive, the clinking glasses, the first flavors that set the tone for the evening. And it doesn't need to be complicated. A few beautiful ingredients, a little color, something warm, something fresh... and suddenly your home feels festive.

This chapter brings together some of my favorite holiday appetizers – vibrant cherry tomato bruschetta, creamy dips, elegant puff-pastry baskets, glossy mini tartes tatin, and little bites that look impressive but stay wonderfully simple. These are the recipes I reach for when I want that French feel at the table: generous, colorful, and made for sharing.

Whether you're hosting a large family gathering or inviting just a couple of friends for a cozy evening, these small bites will make everyone feel welcome the moment they step in.

So pour a little something, set the music low, and let's begin the holiday feast... the French way.



2.1. Mini Tarte Tatin With Tomatoes & Olives

These mini tartes tatin are a savory twist on the French classic. Sweet cherry tomatoes, roasted red pepper, honey, and Italian herbs caramelize beautifully under a golden puff pastry crust.

Once flipped, each little tart reveals glossy tomatoes, olives, and a burst of Mediterranean flavor – elegant, festive, and surprisingly easy to make.

Perfect for holiday apéritif, brunch, or any gathering where you want to impress without stress.



- Makes: 8 mini tartes
- Prep Time: 15-20 min, Cook Time: 20-25 min, Total Time: ~40 min.
- Difficulty: Easy-Medium
- Estimated Cost: ~\$8-10
- Vegetarian: Yes

Approx. 210 kcal \cdot 4 g protein \cdot 14 g fat \cdot 2 g fiber \cdot 3 g sugar

- 400 g cherry tomatoes
- 1 red bell pepper
- 2 tbsp olive oil
- 1tbsp honey
- 1 tsp Italian herb blend
- Red chili flakes, to taste
- Ground black pepper, to taste
- 50 g black olives, sliced
- 1 sheet puff pastry
- 1 egg yolk (for brushing)
- Fresh basil, for garnish



Instructions

1. Prep the vegetables

- Cut the cherry tomatoes in half.
- Dice the red pepper into very small cubes.
- Slice the black olives.

2. Prepare the caramelized base

- On a sheet of wax or parchment paper, mark circles using an emporte-pièce (cookie cutter) to guide the size and placement of each mini tart.
- Inside each marked circle:
- Drizzle a little honey and olive oil.
- Sprinkle Italian herbs, red chili flakes, and black pepper.
- · Scatter a few slices of black olives.
- Place the cherry tomatoes cut side down, filling the entire circle.
- Sprinkle with the diced red pepper.

3. Add the puff pastry

- Use the same cookie cutter to cut 8 circles of puff pastry.
- Place each dough circle on top of the tomato mixture.
- Press gently to adhere.
- Brush the top with egg yolk and pierce with a fork.

Instructions

4. Bake

• Bake at 355°F (180°C) for 20-25 minutes, until the pastry is golden.

5. Flip & serve

- Let cool for a few minutes before flipping each tart carefully.
- Sprinkle with a little salt and pepper.
- Optional toppings: a touch of cheese, fresh basil, or toasted pine nuts.
- Serve warm or at room temperature they are irresistible either way.



Tips & Serving Ideas

- Perfect for apéritif with a glass of white wine.
- You can make them ahead and reheat for a few minutes before serving.
- Add a thin slice of goat cheese on top after flipping for a richer bite.
- For a festive look, garnish with tiny basil leaves or microgreens.

2.2. Cherry Tomato Bruschetta (Ready In Minutes!)

Fresh, vibrant, and bursting with flavor – this Cherry Tomato

Bruschetta is my go-to appetizer when I want something simple but unforgettable.

It's inspired by classic Italian bruschetta but adapted to North American kitchens, using ingredients you can find everywhere and a little French touch in the bread choice.

Juicy cherry tomatoes, fresh basil, and tangy balsamic spooned over crispy toasted baguette... it's like summer on toast, even in the middle of the holidays.



- Makes: 12-14 bruschetta (4-6 servings)
- Prep Time: 10 min, Cook Time: 2-3 min, Total Time: 12-15 min.
- Difficulty: Easy
- Estimated Cost: ~\$4-5
- Vegetarian: Yes

Approx. 180 kcal · 5 g protein · 7 g fat · 2 g fiber · 4 g sugar

- 1 cup cherry tomatoes, quartered or cut into eighths
- 1/4 cup fresh basil, chopped
- 1½ tsp balsamic vinegar
- 1½ tsp olive oil
- 1 garlic clove, crushed
- 1/4 tsp salt
- 1/4 tsp black pepper
- ½ French baguette, sliced and toasted until golden



Instructions

- 1. Slice the baguette and toast until golden.
- 2. Cut cherry tomatoes into quarters or eighths, depending on size.
- 3. In a bowl, combine the tomatoes, basil, balsamic vinegar, olive oil, garlic, salt, and pepper. Mix gently.
- 4. Place 1–2 tablespoons of the tomato mixture on each slice of toasted baguette.
- 5. Serve immediately and enjoy the fresh, intense flavors!



Tips & Serving Ideas

- Add fresh mozzarella or burrata for a heartier bite.
- Use heirloom cherry tomatoes for extra sweetness and color.
- For a gluten-free version, serve over GF baguette slices or seed crackers.

2.3. White Bean Dip (Hummus Pomodoro)

A creamy, proteinrich dip with Italian flavors and a bright, fresh finish – ready in under 10 minutes.

This is one of those appetizers that feels elegant but requires almost no effort. The white beans create a smooth, velvety base, and the tomatoes + basil bring a beautiful burst of freshness. Perfect for apéritif boards, holiday gatherings, or quick weekday snacks.



- Makes: 4-6 servings
- Prep Time: 10 min, Cook Time: 0 min, Total Time: 10 min.
- Difficulty: Very Easy
- Estimated Cost: ~\$4
- Vegetarian & Vegan: Yes, GF: Yes if served with GF crackers
- High Protein: Yes
- Make ahead Friendly: 3 days in the fridge

Approx. 190 kcal \cdot 7 g protein \cdot 11 g fat \cdot 5 g fiber \cdot 2 g sugar

- 1 can white kidney beans, rinsed and drained
- 1/4 cup olive oil
- 1 tbsp lemon juice
- 1 garlic clove
- ½ tsp salt
- ½ tsp black pepper
- 1 medium tomato, chopped
- ¼ cup fresh basil, finely chopped
- Balsamic vinegar, for drizzling



Instructions

- 1. Blend the base
 - In a food processor, combine the white beans, olive oil, lemon juice, garlic, salt, and pepper.
 - Blend until completely smooth and creamy.
- 2. Top the dip
- Transfer the dip to a serving bowl.
- Add the chopped tomatoes and basil on top.
- 3. Finish
 - Drizzle lightly with balsamic vinegar.
- 4. Serve
 - Enjoy with focaccia, crackers, toasted baguette, or fresh veggies.



Tips & Serving Ideas

• For a stronger basil flavor, blend the basil directly with the beans instead of adding it on top.

2.4. Spinach & Pine Nut Weaved Baskets

This recipe is the happy marriage of Greek flavors and French pastry buttery puff dough, creamy feta, and the earthy sweetness of spinach. These elegant mini baskets look impressive, travel well, and are always a favorite during the holidays. Perfect for apéritif, brunch gatherings, or a festive cocktail night.



- Makes: 9 baskets
- Prep Time: 20 min, Cook Time: 20 min, Total Time: ~40 min.
- Difficulty: Medium
- Estimated Cost: ~\$10
- Vegetarian: Yes

Approx. 230 kcal \cdot 6 g protein \cdot 17 g fat \cdot 2 g fiber \cdot 1 g sugar

- 1 sheet of puff pastry (storebought or homemade – see my 10-minute puff pastry recipe)
- 1 bunch spinach, chopped
- Olive oil
- ½ onion, finely chopped
- 2 garlic cloves, crushed
- ¼ tsp chili flakes
- 50 g pine nuts, toasted
- 100 g feta cheese, crumbled
- 1 egg, lightly beaten (for egg wash)
- Salt & pepper to taste



Instructions

1. Prep the spinach

- Blanch the spinach in salted boiling water for 30 seconds.
- Plunge into ice water, drain, and dry very well.

2. Cook the aromatics

• In a little olive oil, sauté the onion and garlic for 3-4 minutes. Set aside.

3. Toast the pine nuts

• Toast in a dry pan for 1-2 minutes until lightly golden.

4. Mix the filling

• Combine the spinach, onions, garlic, chili flakes, salt, and pepper.

5. Shape the baskets

- Roll the puff pastry thin and cut into 9 equal squares.
- Using a small stick or knife, mark a cross on each square, then make the shallow side cuts for weaving (as shown in your video).
- Place a spoonful of the spinach mixture in the center of the untouched portion.
- Add crumbled feta and toasted pine nuts.
- Fold one opposite corner over the filling to close.
- Braid or weave the cut strips over the top, tucking ends underneath to create the basket shape.

Instructions

6. Brush & bake

- Brush with the lightly beaten egg.
- Bake at 350°F (175°C) for 18–20 minutes, until golden, puffed, and flaky.

7. Serve

• Serve warm or at room temperature – perfect with a glass of white wine or a festive cocktail.



Tips & Serving Ideas

- Prepare them the day before
- Store leftovers in an airtight container in the fridge for up to 3 days.
- Reheat in a toaster oven at 325°F for 5–6 minutes to restore crispness.

2.5. Roasted Cherry Tomatoes With Burrata Dip & Garlic Crostinis

This dish is a true showstopper: sweet roasted cherry tomatoes, creamy burrata, fresh herbs, and golden garlic crostinis for dipping. It feels festive and luxurious, yet it's incredibly simple to make. Perfect for guests, a cozy holiday apéritif, or even a comforting snack when you want something warm and full of flavor.



- Makes: 4-6 servings
- Prep Time: 10 min, Cook+ broil Time: 30min, Total Time: ~40 min.
- Difficulty: Easy
- Estimated Cost: ~\$10-12
- Vegetarian: Yes

Approx. 260 kcal · 9 g protein · 16 g fat · 2 g fiber · 4 g sugar

For the Tomato Burrata Dip

- 350 g cherry tomatoes (about 40–50 tomatoes)
- 4 tbsp olive oil
- 4 garlic cloves, crushed
- 1tsp salt
- ½ tsp black pepper
- ½ tsp red pepper flakes
- ⅓ cup fresh parsley, chopped
- 1 tsp dried oregano
- 1 burrata ball (or 3-4 smaller ones)
- 1/4 cup fresh basil, chopped
- 1/3 cup grated parmesan

For the Garlic Crostinis

- 1 baguette
- 100 g salted butter, melted
- ½ tsp garlic powder
- 1/4 tsp salt
- 1/4 tsp black pepper
- ⅓ cup fresh parsley, chopped

Instructions

1. Roast the Tomatoes

- Preheat your oven to 425°F (220°C).
- In a large bowl, combine the cherry tomatoes, olive oil, crushed garlic, parsley, salt, pepper, red pepper flakes, and oregano.
- Spread evenly in a baking dish.
- Roast for 25 minutes, until the tomatoes are soft and slightly caramelized.

2. Prepare the Crostinis

- While the tomatoes roast, slice the baguette into thin rounds.
- In a small bowl, mix the melted butter with garlic powder, parsley, salt, and pepper.
- Dip each slice of bread into the garlic butter and arrange on a baking sheet.
- Broil on low for 5-7 minutes, until golden and crisp.

Instructions

3. Assemble the Dip

- Transfer the roasted tomatoes into a smaller serving dish.
- Tear the burrata into pieces and scatter on top.
- Add the parmesan and basil.
- Gently mix the burrata will melt slightly into the warm tomatoes, creating a luscious, creamy dip.

4. Serve

- Serve immediately with the warm, golden garlic crostinis.
- Dip, scoop, enjoy!

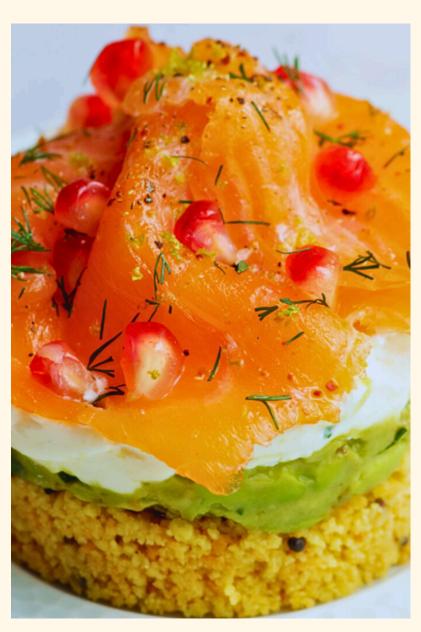


Tips & Serving Ideas

- It can become the most amazing pasta sauce!
- It's very flexible enjoy with crostinis, pita chips, or even tossed with pasta
- Bursting with flavor sweet roasted tomatoes, creamy burrata, fresh basil, and parmesan
- Perfect for sharing a true crowd-pleasing appetizer
- Simple ingredients, big payoff everyday staples, elevated

2.6. Savory Avocado, Fresh Cheese & Smoked Salmon Cheesecake

This elegant no-bake savory "cheesecake" is fresh, colorful, and perfect for the holidays. Creamy avocado, herbed cheese, a buttery cracker crust, and silky smoked salmon come together in beautiful individual portions. They look sophisticated but are surprisingly simple to make - a guaranteed hit for apéritif or festive dinners.



- Makes: 4 cakes
- Prep Time: 20 min, Chill Time: 1 h, Total Time: 1h 20 min.
- Difficulty: Easy
- Estimated Cost: ~\$12-15
- Vegetarian: No

Approx. $320 \text{ kcal} \cdot 11 \text{ g protein} \cdot 27 \text{ g fat} \cdot 3 \text{ g fiber} \cdot 3 \text{ g sugar}$

Crust

- 100 g crackers
- 80 g melted butter

Avocado Layer

- 2 avocados
- Juice of ½ lemon
- A little lemon zest
- Salt & pepper

Cheese Layer

- 150 g Philadelphia cream cheese
- 75 g Boursin or Garlic & Chive Philadelphia
- Fresh chives, finely chopped

Topping

- 6 slices smoked salmon
- Fresh dill, finely chopped
- Lime zest (a little)
- Pomegranate seeds

Tools

4 emporte-pièces (round molds)

Instructions

1. Prepare the crust

- Blend the crackers until reduced to a fine powder.
- Mix with the melted butter.
- Place this mixture at the bottom of each mold and press firmly.
- Refrigerate while you prepare the remaining layers.

2. Make the avocado layer

• Mash the avocados with the lemon juice, lemon zest, salt, and pepper until smooth and creamy.

3. Make the cheese layer

- In a separate bowl, mix the Philadelphia cheese with the Boursin (or chive & garlic cream cheese).
- Add finely chopped fresh chives.

Instructions

4. Assemble

- Remove the molds from the fridge.
- Add a layer of the avocado mixture over the crust and press gently to create an even layer.
- Spread a layer of the cheese mixture on top.
- Place smoked salmon slices over the cheese.
- Finish with a sprinkle of lime zest, chopped dill, and a few pomegranate seeds.

5. Chill and serve

- Refrigerate for 1 hour before serving.
- Gently remove the molds and present as elegant individual cheesecakes.



Tips & Serving Ideas

- For an extra festive look, add a tiny herb sprig or edible flower on top.
- This recipe holds well in the fridge and can be prepared a few hours ahead.
- Serve with toasted baguette slices or small crackers for scooping.

2.6. Tapenade For Toasts

A vibrant blend of green and black olives, capers, parsley, and lemon – this classic-style tapenade is bright, savory, and wonderfully versatile. It takes only a few minutes to prepare and is perfect for apéritif, holiday platters, or simple toasted baguette slices. A small bowl disappears fast!



- Makes: Serve 6-8
- Prep Time: 10 min, Chill Time: 10 min, Total Time: 20 min.
- Difficulty: Very Easy
- Estimated Cost: ~\$5-6
- Vegetarian and Vegan: Yes, GF if served with GF crackers

Approx. 190 kcal \cdot 3 g protein \cdot 17 g fat \cdot 2 g fiber \cdot 1 g sugar

- 1 cup green olives, pitted*
- ½ cup black olives, pitted*
- ¼ cup lightly packed fresh flatleaf parsley
- 1 tablespoon drained capers
- 1/4 cup extra virgin olive oil
- 2 medium garlic cloves, pressed
- 1 tablespoon lemon juice

*If olives are not pitted, remove pits before using



Instructions

1. Combine ingredients

• In the bowl of a food processor, add the green olives, black olives, parsley, capers, olive oil, garlic, and lemon juice.

2. Pulse to desired texture

- Pulse about 10 times, then scrape down the sides.
- Pulse 5-10 more times until well chopped almost a paste but not fully puréed.
- Stop when you reach your ideal texture.

3. Serve

 Enjoy on toasted baguette slices, crackers, or as part of a holiday apéritif platter.



Tips

 Store leftovers in an airtight container in the refrigerator for up to 2 weeks.