4.6. Classic French Potato Gratin (Gratin Dauphinois)

This iconic recipe from the Dauphiné region in France is pure comfort. Soft, creamy potatoes baked slowly in rich cream... simple, rustic, and absolutely delicious.

Perfect for holiday meals, cozy weekends, or any dinner where you want something warm and irresistible on the table.



- Makes: 6 servings
- Prep Time: 15 min , Cook Time: 1h 30 min, Total Time: 1h 45 min
- Difficulty: Easy,
- Estimated Cost: ~ \$6-8
- Vegetarian: Yes

Approx. 250 kcal \cdot 5 g protein \cdot 15 g fat \cdot 2 g fiber \cdot 2 g sugar

- 2.5 lbs potatoes, peeled
- 1 cup heavy cream
- 50 g salted butter
- 3 garlic cloves, minced
- Salt & black pepper, to taste



Instructions

- 1- Preheat your oven to 350°F (180°C).
- 2-Generously butter a round baking dish.
- 3-Slice the potatoes very thinly using a knife, mandoline, or slicer.
- 4-Pat the slices dry, then season with salt, pepper, and the minced garlic.
- 5-Arrange the potatoes vertically around the dish, then fill the center it should look like a little potato flower.
- 6-Add any remaining garlic and pour the cream evenly over the potatoes.
- 7-Dot the top with pieces of butter.
- 8-Bake for 1 hour 30 minutes, until the top is lightly golden and the potatoes are completely tender.
 - Let the gratin rest for 5 minutes before serving so the layers hold together beautifully



- Pairs perfectly with:
 - o Steak Bearnaise, Roasted chicken
 - A simple green salad (a classic French pairing!)

Confit Byaldi (Elegant Ratatouille Bake)

Light • Flavorful • A taste of Provence

This Confit Byaldi brings together everything we love about classic ratatouille – the warmth of roasted vegetables, the aroma of thyme, and the bright depth of tomatoes – but with a beautiful, layered presentation that feels festive and elegant.

It looks like something you'd find in a sunny Provençal village, yet it is reassuringly simple: about 25 minutes of hands-on prep, and then the oven does all the work.

Even better: this dish tastes even more incredible the next day, after a quick 15-minute reheat in the oven.

Perfect for gatherings, holiday meals, or anytime you want something flavorful and visually stunning without fuss.



- Makes: 6 servings
- Prep Time: 25 min, Cook Time: 1h 40 min, Total Time: 2h
- Difficulty: Easy,
- Estimated Cost: ~ \$6-8
- Vegetarian and Vegan: Yes

Approx. 190 kcal · 4 g protein · 10 g fat · 5 g fiber · 8 g sugar

For the Piperade Sauce

- 5 tbsp olive oil
- 1 small onion
- 4 garlic cloves
- 1 red pepper, peeled, seeded & diced
- 1 yellow pepper, peeled, seeded & diced
- 1 can (14 oz) diced tomatoes
- 3 tbsp tomato paste
- 6-7 sprigs fresh thyme
- Coarse salt & pepper, to taste

For the Vegetable Layers

- 2 baby eggplants, thinly sliced
- 6 Roma tomatoes, thinly sliced
- 2 yellow squash, thinly sliced
- 2 zucchinis, thinly sliced
- Olive oil, for drizzling



Instructions

1- Make the Piperade

- Cook the chopped onion in olive oil for 10 minutes; season with salt.
- Add the garlic, diced peppers, and thyme → sauté 5 minutes.
- Stir in the diced tomatoes and tomato paste.
- Season and cook 15-20 minutes.
- Blend until smooth.
- Pour into a 10-inch wide deep baking dish.

2- Slice + Arrange the Vegetables

- Slice the eggplants, tomatoes, zucchini, and yellow squash very thin.
- Arrange the slices vertically around the outer edge of the dish, alternating colors:
- tomato → zucchini → squash → eggplant → repeat
- Fill the center more loosely, fanning slices like petals.
- Drizzle lightly with olive oil.

3- Bake

- Cover with foil and bake at 325°F (160°C) for 65 minutes.
- Uncover and bake 35 minutes more, until the vegetables are soft and full of flavor.



- Serve warm or at room temperature.
- Even better reheated the next day!
- Delicious with roasted chicken or good crusty bread.

4.8. Garlic & Parmesan Potatoes (Air-Fryer Bites)

These little garlic-parmesan potato bites are crispy on the outside, soft inside, and full of flavor. They make an irresistible side dish for roasted meats, poultry, or any holiday dinner – and thanks to the air fryer, they're ready in minutes with almost no effort.

Perfect when you want something fun, fragrant, and family-friendly.



- Makes: 3-4 servings
- Prep Time: 10 min , Cook Time: 25 min, Total Time: 35 min
- Difficulty: Easy,
- Estimated Cost: ~ \$2-3
- Vegetarian: Yes

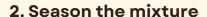
Approx. 200 $kcal \cdot 6$ g protein $\cdot 9$ g fat $\cdot 2$ g fiber $\cdot 1$ g sugar

- 3 potatoes
- 2 tbsp cornstarch
- 1 small bunch parsley, finely chopped
- 60 g parmesan, grated
- 2 garlic cloves, pressed
- 10 g butter, melted
- 1 tbsp olive oil



1. Cook the potatoes

- Peel and cut the potatoes roughly.
- Boil in water for 15 minutes, until tender.



- Crush the cooked potatoes.
- Add:
 - o Grated parmesan
 - Chopped parsley
 - Cornstarch
 - Pressed garlic
- Mix until well combined.

3. Shape

- Using your hands, form small potato balls.
- Brush each one with melted butter.

4. Air-fry

- Lightly brush the basket with 1 tbsp olive oil.
- Place the potato bites inside.
- Air-fry at 400°F (200°C) for 10–12 minutes, turning halfway through.
- Serve hot crispy, golden, and delicious!



- Use a cheese blend (parmesan + pecorino) for extra depth.
- Add chili flakes for a spicy version.
- Serve with roasted chicken, duck, or steak.



4.9. Tatin Leek Pie With Goat Cheese & Italian Ham

French winter comfort – simple, savory, and full of character.

In France, leeks are one of our most beloved winter vegetables. Affordable, soft, and gently sweet, they bring natural creaminess to everything they touch. This rustic-but-elegant tarte tatin is one of my favorite ways to use them.

The leeks caramelize in honey and olive oil as the puff pastry turns golden and crisp. When you flip the pies, you reveal tender leeks, creamy cheese, and salty Italian ham... a combination that always surprises guests. It works beautifully as a quick weeknight dinner or as a stunning side dish for a holiday meal.



- Makes: 4-6 servings
- Prep Time: 15 min , Cook Time: 32 min, Total Time: 50 min
- Difficulty: Easy,
- Estimated Cost: ~ \$12
- Vegetarian: No

Approx. $320 \, \text{kcal} \cdot 10 \, \text{g}$ protein $\cdot 24 \, \text{g}$ fat $\cdot 2 \, \text{g}$ fiber $\cdot 3 \, \text{g}$ sugar

- 2 leek stalks (white part only)
- 1tbsp honey
- Olive oil
- Fresh goat cheese, crumbled
- 1 puff pastry dough
- Salt & pepper
- 1 egg yolk
- 4 slices Italian ham
- Parmesan, for sprinkling
- 1tsp thyme



Instructions

- 1. Line a baking sheet with wax paper.
- 2. Drizzle olive oil and sprinkle honey where each pie will sit.
- 3. Cut the leeks in half lengthwise.
- 4. Place them cut-side down, side by side, on top of the honey and oil.
- 5. Sprinkle most of the crumbled goat cheese over the leeks.
- 6. Add the thyme.
- 7. Lay the Italian ham on top (about 2 slices per pie).
- 8. Sprinkle a little more goat cheese.
- 9. Add salt and pepper.
- 10. Roll out your puff pastry.
- 11.1Cut two rectangles large enough to cover each leek preparation.
- 12. Place one pastry rectangle on top of each section.
- 13. Tuck the dough all around so it hugs the filling.
- 14. Brush the top with the beaten egg yolk.
- 15. Pierce a few holes with a fork.
- 16. Bake at 355°F (180°C) for 30 minutes.
- 17. Carefully flip each pie upside down using a spatula.
- 18. Sprinkle with parmesan.
- 19. Grill for 2 minutes until lightly golden.
- 20. Serve hot.



- You can substitute gruyère or mozzarella for the parmesan.
- Leeks bring a natural creaminess without using heavy cream.

4.10. Duchess Potatoes (Pommes Duchesse)

Light, golden, and delicately crisp on the outside with a soft, buttery center – Duchess potatoes are one of the most elegant potato sides in French cooking.

They look fancy, but they're wonderfully simple once you know the technique. Perfect for holiday dinners, special occasions, or whenever you want something beautiful and classic on the table.



- Makes: 20 pieces, 4-5 servings
- Prep Time: 25 min , Cook Time: 12-15 min, Chill time 30 min, Total Time: 1h
- Difficulty: Medium, Estimated Cost: ~ \$4-5
- Vegetarian: Yes

Approx. 190 kcal · 5 g protein · 9 g fat · 2 g fiber · 1 g sugar

- 2 1/4 lbs potatoes
- 70 g butter + extra for greasing the baking sheet
- 3 egg yolks
- 3 whole eggs
- Freshly grated nutmeg
- All-purpose flour (for dipping)
- Salt & pepper



Instructions

1. Cook & mash the potatoes

- Boil the potatoes in salted water for 20 minutes.
- Drain well.
- Pass through a food mill while still hot.

2. Add richness

- Beat in:
 - The 3 egg yolks
 - 1 of the whole eggs
 - o The 70 g butter
- Season with nutmeg, salt, and pepper.

3. Chill the mixture

- Grease a baking sheet with butter (or line with wax paper).
- Spread the potato mixture onto a separate sheet to a ½-inch thickness.
- Cool, then chill in the refrigerator until almost firm.

4. Shape the duchess potatoes

- Place the chilled potato mixture into a piping bag fitted with a large Chantilly tip.
- On a lightly floured surface, pipe little spirals or piles about 1.5 x 1.5 inches.
- Sprinkle lightly with flour using a fine sieve.
- Transfer the shaped potatoes to the greased baking sheet.

5. Glaze & bake

- Whisk the remaining 2 whole eggs.
- Brush the tops of each duchess potato with the egg wash.
- Bake for 12-15 minutes at 400°F (or until golden to light brown).
- Serve immediately airy, elegant, and delicious.



- Nutmeg is classic, but you can add a pinch of garlic powder or thyme.
- Pipe tightly for neat shapes; loose spirals spread more.
- Serve with beef, chicken, duck, or fish they pair with everything.

4.11. Mashed Potatoes With Mushroom Gravy

A comforting classic with a French touch.

These mashed potatoes are silky, buttery, and lightly perfumed with golden sautéed shallots. The mushroom gravy is rich, earthy, and deeply flavorful thanks to rosemary, soy sauce, garlic, and vegetable broth. Together, they make the perfect side dish for any holiday main – or a comforting dish all on their own.



- Makes: 6 servings
- Prep Time: 10 min , Cook Time: 25 min, Total Time: 35 min
- Difficulty: Easy,
- Estimated Cost: ~ \$5-7
- Vegetarian: Yes, Vegan: No, GF: yes

Approx. 220 kcal · 5 g protein · 10 g fat · 3 g fiber · 3 g sugar

Ingredients for the Mashed Potatoes:

- 6 medium-large potatoes
- 2 shallots
- 20 g butter
- ½ tsp salt
- ½ tsp pepper
- 2 tbsp heavy cream



Instructions

For the mashed potatoes

- Boil the potatoes
 - Peel for a classic smooth texture, or leave unpeeled for a rustic mash.
 - o Boil until soft. Drain well.
- Sauté the shallots
 - o Cook the shallots in a little oil or butter until golden.
- Mash everything together
 - o In a large bowl, mash the potatoes with:
 - the sautéed shallots
 - salt & pepper
 - butter
 - heavy cream
 - Use an immersion blender or a food processor for a very smooth mash.
 - Set aside and keep warm.

Ingredients for the Gravy:

- 300 g mushrooms
- 3 garlic cloves, crushed
- 1 onion, minced
- 2 tsp soy sauce
- 12 tbsp olive oil
- ½ tsp salt
- ½ tsp pepper
- 2 tbsp corn or potato starch
- 1.5 cups vegetable broth
- 1 sprig rosemary



Instructions

For the Gravy

- 1. Sauté the aromatics
 - o In a pan, heat the olive oil.
 - o Add garlic, onion, and the sprig of rosemary.
 - Cook 1–2 minutes.
- Cook the mushrooms
- Add the mushrooms and cook for 2-3 minutes.
 - Season with salt and pepper.
 - Add depth
 - o Add the soy sauce and mix well.
- Thicken the gravy
 - Sprinkle the starch over the mixture and stir well.
 - o Pour in the vegetable broth.
 - Cook on medium heat until thickened.
- Remove the rosemary before serving.



- Serve mashed potatoes with the gravy poured on top
- Or serve the gravy separately for guests to add as they wish



Cookies, Treats & Desserts

The holidays are a time when even the simplest sweet can feel magical.

A tray of warm cookies on the counter, a pretty little dessert after dinner, a homemade treat to share with friends – these are the moments that make the season feel cozy and generous.

In France, we love desserts that are comforting without being complicated: buttery cookies, fruit-forward treats, elegant little bites you can prepare ahead, and festive sweets that bring people together around the table. This chapter gathers some of my favorite recipes – simple, beautiful, and perfect for gifting, sharing, or enjoying with a cup of coffee by the tree.

Some of these sweets are light, others are rich and indulgent, but they all have something in common: they're made for joy.

Whether you're baking for a holiday party, preparing a dessert plate, or simply treating yourself on a quiet winter afternoon, you'll find something here to bring a little sweetness to the season.

Let's end this journey on a delicious note. 🐆



5.1. Marble Cake With Hazelnut Chocolate Cover (Gâteau Marbré, Nappage Rocher)

Soft, moist, and beautifully marbled, this cake brings together the delicate sweetness of vanilla and the depth of chocolate. The final touch – a glossy hazelnut chocolate coating inspired by the "rocher" style – turns this simple cake into a festive showstopper.

It's perfect for holidays, celebrations, or anytime you want something both nostalgic and impressive.



- Makes: 8-10 servings
- Prep Time: 20 min, Cook Time: 16-20 min, Total Time: 40 min + cooling
- Difficulty: Easy, Estimated Cost: ~ \$7-8
- Vegetarian: Yes, GF: No

Approx. 380 kcal · 6 g protein · 23 g fat · 3 g fiber · 28 g sugar

For the Marble Cake

- 1⅓ cups flour
- ²/₃ cup + 1 tbsp cane sugar (divided into 2 containers)
- ½ tsp baking powder
- ½ tsp baking soda
- 1/4 tsp salt
- 1 cup + 1/4 cup milk (divided)
- ½ tsp apple vinegar
- 1/₃ cup sunflower oil
- 2 tsp vanilla extract
- 3 tbsp unsweetened cocoa powder, sifted
- 2 tbsp grated semi-sweet chocolate

For the Hazelnut Chocolate Cover

- 360 g semi-sweet chocolate
- 80 g hazelnuts, crushed
- 30 g sunflower oil
- 2 tsp shortening

Instructions

1. Prepare the cake batter

- Grease your cake dish.
- Dry ingredients
 - o In a small bowl, combine:
 - Flour
 - ²/₃ cup sugar
 - Baking powder
 - Baking soda
 - Salt

Wet ingredients

- o In a large bowl, whisk together:
 - 1 cup milk
 - Apple vinegar
 - Sunflower oil
 - Vanilla extract
 - Chocolate paste

• In a third bowl, combine:

- Cocoa powder
- 1 tbsp cane sugar
- Whisk, then add:
 - ¼ cup milk
 - Grated semi-sweet chocolate
- Stir until you have a smooth chocolate paste.

2. Combine and marble

- Add the dry flour mixture into the wet mixture and whisk until fully combined.
- Split the batter evenly into two bowls.
- Add the chocolate paste to one of the bowls and mix well.
- Marbling
- Pour alternating layers of vanilla batter and chocolate batter into your greased cake dish.
- Using a butter knife, gently swirl through the batter several times to create a marbled effect.

3. Bake

- Bake at 355°F (180°C) for 16–19 minutes, or until a thin knife comes out clean.
- Let the cake cool slightly, then unmold and place on a wire rack with a shallow dish underneath.

4. Prepare the Hazelnut Chocolate Cover

- In a heatproof bowl, melt together:
 - o Semi-sweet chocolate
 - Crushed hazelnuts
 - Sunflower oil
 - Shortening
- Mix until smooth and fully melted.

5. Coat the cake

- Pour the melted chocolate mixture over the cake, allowing it to drip down the sides until it is fully covered.
- Let the chocolate cool and harden before slicing.
- Serve and enjoy the perfect mix of softness and crunch



- Use high-quality chocolate for the best "rocher" texture.
- Toast the hazelnuts lightly for deeper flavor.
- The cake keeps beautifully for 2-3 days.

5.2. Pear-Chocolate Tatin Pie (Belle-Hélène Style)

A heavenly mix between a classic Tarte Tatin and the beloved Belle-Hélène pear dessert.

This recipe was born from a happy accident – a few extra pears in the kitchen and a bit of curiosity. The result is one of the most aromatic, decadent pies you'll ever serve. In fact... it might not even make it to the table!

Caramelized pears, melting chocolate, buttery puff pastry, and a finishing touch of whipped cream, vanilla ice cream, and warm chocolate drizzle – this dessert is a true holiday showstopper.



- Makes: 6-8 servings
- Prep Time: 15 min, Cook Time: 55-65 min, Total Time: 1h 20 min
- Difficulty: Easy,
- Estimated Cost: ~ \$10-12
- Vegetarian: Yes, GF: No

Approx. 360 kcal · 4 g protein · 19 g fat · 5 g fiber · 34 g sugar

- 6-8 pears
- 100 g semi-sweet chocolate chips
- 120 g butter, softened
- 70 g brown sugar
- 1 puff pastry sheet
- Whipped cream (to serve)
- Vanilla ice cream (to serve)
- Melted chocolate (for drizzling)



Instructions

1. Build the caramel base

- Press the softened butter evenly at the bottom of your baking dish.
- Sprinkle ¾ of the brown sugar on top.

2. Prep the pears

- Peel the pears.
- Cut them in half and remove the cores, creating a small hollow in each.
- Place the pear halves cut-side up in the dish, arranged like a flower.

3. Fill with chocolate

- Fill each hollow center with chocolate chips.
- Sprinkle the remaining brown sugar over the pears.

4. Cover with puff pastry

- Roll the puff pastry and cut it to the size of the dish plus about 3/4 inch.
- Lay it over the pears and gently tuck the edges in like tucking a child into bed.

5. Bake

- Bake at 425°F (220°C) for 20 minutes.
- Lower the temperature to 350°F (175°C) and bake an additional 35–45 minutes, checking regularly to avoid burning.

6. Serve

- Flip the tart onto a plate while still warm.
- Serve with:
 - Whipped cream
 - Vanilla ice cream
 - o A drizzle of melted chocolate

Pure heaven!



- Use ripe but firm pears they hold their shape beautifully.
- Serve immediately for the best caramel and chocolate texture.
- Add toasted almonds or hazelnuts for crunch.

5.3. Île Flottante With Candied Almonds

Île Flottante – "Floating Islands" – is one of the most magical French desserts.

Soft, airy meringue "islands" floating on a silky custard, scented with vanilla, citrus, and orange blossom... it feels delicate, warm, and deeply luxurious. This version adds a festive twist with candied almonds, Grand Marnier, orange blossom water, and lemon–orange zest, creating a dessert that's floral, cozy, and unforgettable.

It's not an easy dessert – it requires attention from the very beginning – but the moment it reaches the table, everything becomes quiet.

It's a dessert people remember long after the evening is over. I love preparing Île Flottante the day before so the flavors can settle and so I can enjoy the evening without rushing.



- Makes: 4-6 servings
- Prep Time: 35 min , Cook Time: 10 min, Total Time: 45 min + chilling
- Difficulty: Hard,
- Estimated Cost: ~ \$8.50
- Vegetarian: Yes, GF: Yes

Approx. 310 kcal · 8 g protein · 20 g fat · 1 g fiber · 22 g sugar

For the Candied Almonds

- 1 handful almonds
- 1tsp almond oil
- 1 pinch salt
- 2 tbsp sugar
- 1 tbsp almond flour

For the Islands

- 125 g egg whites
- 1 pinch salt
- 55 g sugar
- 5 ml orange blossom water

For the Custard

- 325 g milk + a little extra
- ½ vanilla bean
- 15 g toasted almond powder
- 125 g heavy cream
- 5 ml orange blossom water
- 25 ml Grand Marnier
- 65 g sugar
- 5 egg yolks
- Zest of 1/4 lemon
- Zest of ¼ orange

Instructions

1. Make the Candied Almonds

- Roughly chop the almonds.
- Mix with salt, sugar, and almond flour.
- Heat the almond oil in a pan.
- Cook the mixture, stirring often, until caramelized.
- Let cool, then break into small pieces. Set aside.

2. Prepare the Custard

- Warm the milk with vanilla and almond powder.
- Remove from heat and let infuse for 15 minutes.
- Strain, then add cold milk to reach 350 ml total.
- Transfer to a saucepan; add cream, orange blossom water, and Grand Marnier.
- Bring just to a boil.
- In a bowl, whisk yolks and sugar until pale and creamy.
- Slowly pour the hot milk mixture into the yolks while whisking constantly.
- Add lemon and orange zest.
- Cook gently, stirring nonstop, until the mixture reaches 183°F (84°C).
- Strain and immediately place the bowl over ice to cool.

3. Prepare the Islands

- Whip the egg whites with salt until foamy.
- Add sugar and orange blossom water; whip until stiff peaks form.
- Using two spoons, form large quenelles on a silicone baking mat.
- Bake at 320°F (160°C) for 4-5 minutes.
- Brown the tops with a torch or long-nose lighter.

4. Assemble

- Pour the chilled custard into serving bowls.
- Place one meringue island on top.
- Sprinkle generously with candied almonds.
- Serve immediately.





- Best prepared ahead so the custard can chill fully.
- Once the yolks are added, never let the custard boil keep the heat controlled.
- Candied almonds keep well in an airtight container for days.

5.4. Bûche De Noël (Classic French Yule Log)

A timeless holiday dessert – light sponge cake rolled with a rich coffee buttercream and covered in silky chocolate cream, decorated to look like a festive winter log.

This is one of the most traditional Christmas desserts in France, and once you master it, it becomes a yearly favorite for family and friends.



- Makes: 8-10 servings
- Prep Time: 35 min , Cook Time: 10 min, Total Time: 45 min + chilling
- Difficulty: Medium
- Estimated Cost: ~ \$10-12
- Vegetarian: Yes, GF: No

Approx. 380 kcal \cdot 6 g protein \cdot 24 g fat \cdot 2 g fiber \cdot 30 g sugar

For the Buttercream

- 100 g sugar
- ½ cup water
- 3 egg yolks
- 250 g softened butter
- 100 g dark chocolate
- 1tsp espresso powder

For the Sponge Cake

- 100 g sugar
- 100 g flour
- 5 eggs
- 1 tbsp vanilla sugar

Instructions

1. Make the Sponge Cake

- In a bowl, whisk 4 egg yolks with the sugar and vanilla sugar until the mixture becomes pale and creamy.
- Add the remaining whole egg and continue mixing a few minutes with a spatula.
- Gradually add the flour.
- Whip the egg whites until firm, then gently fold them into the batter.
- Line a rectangular baking sheet with lightly buttered parchment paper.
- Spread the batter evenly.
- Bake at 425°F (220°C) for 10 minutes.
- Remove from the oven and immediately flip the cake onto a cold surface, leaving the parchment attached.
- Cover the cake with a clean towel the steam will soften it and make rolling easier.

2. Prepare the Buttercream

- Combine sugar and water in a saucepan. Heat gently until you obtain a thick syrup.
- Slowly pour the hot syrup over the egg yolks, whisking constantly until completely cooled.
- Add the softened butter and mix until smooth.
- Divide the cream into two equal portions:
 - o Coffee cream: add the espresso powder.
 - Chocolate cream: melt the dark chocolate with a little water and mix into the second half.

3. Assemble the Bûche

- Remove the parchment paper from the cooled sponge cake.
- Spread the coffee cream evenly over the entire surface.
- Roll the cake tightly along the long side.
- Trim the ends neatly with a knife for a clean presentation.

4. Finish & Decorate

- Cover the log with the chocolate cream.
- Using a fork, gently drag lines along the surface to imitate tree bark.
- Decorate as you like powdered sugar "snow", chocolate shavings, meringue mushrooms, or berries.
- Chill in the refrigerator until serving.



- The cake is easier to roll when still slightly warm and flexible.
- This dessert is even better after resting a few hours in the fridge.
- You can flavor the coffee cream more strongly with additional espresso powder if you prefer.

5.5. Leaf-Shaped Cookies With Chocolate & Pistachio

Ultra crunchy, delicate, and shaped like little tree leaves, these cookies are as beautiful as they are delicious. The dough is simple and fragrant, the texture is wonderfully crisp, and the final touch – dipping them in melted chocolate and pistachios – makes them perfect for holiday gifting or an elegant dessert platter.



- Makes: 20-24 cookies *6-8 servings
- Prep Time: 20 min , Cook Time: 18 min, Total Time: 40 min
- Difficulty: Easy
- Estimated Cost: ~ \$5
- Vegetarian: Yes, GF: No

Approx. 140 $kcal \cdot 2$ g protein $\cdot 8$ g fat $\cdot 1$ g fiber $\cdot 10$ g sugar

- 125 g butter
- 1 egg
- 1 cup sunflower oil
- 1.5 cups icing/confectioner's sugar
- 1 tsp baking powder
- 2.5 cups flour (added gradually)
- Milk chocolate (for dipping)
- 2 tsp shortening
- Crushed toasted pistachios (for topping)



Instructions

1. Make the Dough

- In a bowl, mix together the butter, egg, sunflower oil, and icing sugar.
- Add the baking powder and stir.
- Slowly add the flour, a little at a time, until you obtain a soft, smooth dough.

2. Shape the Cookies

- Form small balls with your hands.
- Flatten each ball using the back of a soup spoon.
- Using a rounded knife, make:
 - One long line down the center
 - Diagonal lines on each side
 - This creates the classic leaf pattern.
- Place the shaped cookies on a baking sheet lined with parchment paper.



3. Bake

• Bake at 340°F (170°C) for 18 minutes, until the bottoms are lightly golden but the tops remain pale.

4. Decorate

- Melt the milk chocolate with 2 tsp shortening until smooth.
- Dip each cookie halfway (up to the center line) into the warm chocolate.
- Sprinkle immediately with crushed toasted pistachios.
- Let the cookies rest until the chocolate has fully hardened.



- You can replace the pistachios with hazelnuts or almonds.
- These cookies store beautifully for up to 1 week in an airtight tin.
- Perfect for cookie boxes or holiday dessert tables.

5.6. Spritz Cookies (Classic French-Style Butter Cookies)

Perfectly buttery, lightly crisp, and beautifully shaped, Spritz cookies are a holiday essential.

These melt-in-your-mouth treats are piped into elegant swirls, chilled for the perfect texture, and dipped in chocolate for that final touch of drama. Add almonds or hazelnuts if you're feeling festive – they're irresistible either way.



- Makes: 15 cookies *7-8 servings
- Prep Time: 20 min , Chill time: 30-40 min, Bake Time: 12-14 min, Total Time: 1h
- Difficulty: Medium, Estimated Cost: ~ \$4
- Vegetarian: Yes, GF: No

Approx. 120 kcal \cdot 2 g protein \cdot 7 g fat \cdot 0 g fiber \cdot 7 g sugar

- 150 g very soft butter
- 40 g sunflower oil
- 60 g icing sugar
- 1/4 tsp salt
- 1 tsp vanilla extract
- 1 egg white
- 260 g flour

For decoration:

- Chocolate (for dipping)
- 2 tsp shortening
- Almonds or hazelnuts (optional)



Instructions

1. Prepare the Dough

- In a mixing bowl, whisk together the soft butter, oil, icing sugar, salt, and vanilla until it forms a smooth, creamy emulsion.
- Add the egg white and mix until well incorporated (a leaf attachment works well).
- Add the flour gradually, mixing continuously until the dough is fully combined.

2. Pipe the Cookies

- Transfer the dough into a piping bag fitted with a 13 mm star / "douille cannelée" tip.
- Pipe classic Spritz shapes onto a parchment-lined baking sheet:
- swirls, S-shapes, or straight lines whatever you prefer.
- Refrigerate for 30-40 minutes to help the cookies hold their shape while baking.

3. Bake

• Bake at 355°F (180°C) for 12–14 minutes, until lightly golden around the edges.

4. Decorate

- Melt the chocolate with 2 tsp shortening until smooth.
- Dip about one-third of each cooled cookie into the chocolate.
- Place back onto parchment paper.
- Sprinkle with chopped almonds or hazelnuts if using.
- Let the chocolate set before serving or storing.



- If your dough feels too firm to pipe, warm the piping bag in your hands for a moment.
- These cookies keep beautifully in a tin for up to a week.
- Perfect for holiday gifting or adding elegance to a dessert platter.

5.7. Chocolate Brownie Cookies

These cookies taste exactly like a fudgy, rich brownie... but in cookie form.

Crackly on top, soft inside, deeply chocolatey, and lightly scented with espresso, they are impossible to resist. The dough comes together quickly and bakes into perfect rounds with those signature brownie cracks. A holiday must-have (and an everyday danger!).



- Makes: 18 cookies *6 servings
- Prep Time: 10 min , Bake Time: 15 min, Total Time: 25 min
- Difficulty: Easy,
- Estimated Cost: ~ \$5
- Vegetarian: Yes, GF: No

Approx. 120 kcal \cdot 2 g protein \cdot 7 g fat \cdot 0 g fiber \cdot 7 g sugar

- 225 g bittersweet chocolate, in pieces
- 90 g butter
- 150 g brown sugar
- 50 g white granulated sugar
- 2 eggs
- 95 g flour
- 25 g cocoa powder
- 1/4 tsp salt
- 2 tsp espresso powder



Instructions

1. Melt the Chocolate

- In a microwave-safe bowl, melt the chocolate and butter in 20second increments.
- Stir between each burst until completely smooth.
- Set aside to cool slightly.

2. Whisk the Eggs & Sugars

- In a separate bowl, whisk the eggs, brown sugar, and white sugar vigorously for 3 minutes.
- The mixture should become pale, thick, and slightly frothy.

3. Combine

- Slowly pour the melted chocolate mixture into the egg mixture.
- Mix gently until smooth and fully incorporated.
- Add the flour, cocoa powder, salt, and espresso powder.
- Mix until just combined the dough will be soft and slightly loose.

. Scoop & Bake

- 1. Immediately scoop the dough onto two parchment-lined baking sheets, spacing cookies 2 inches apart.
- 2. Bake at 350°F (180°C) for 15 minutes, until:
 - The tops are cracked
 - The edges are set
- 3. Cool completely on the tray.

Your brownie cookies are ready.



- For even deeper flavor, add an extra pinch of espresso powder.
- Cookies will firm as they cool do not overbake.
- These freeze well for up to 1 month.

5.8. Chocolate Espresso Butter Cookies.

Deep, rich, and wonderfully aromatic – these chocolate–espresso butter cookies bring together the intensity of cocoa, the warmth of coffee, and the softness of a classic French sablé.

They are piped like Spritz cookies, beautifully shaped, chilled for perfect texture, and dipped in melted chocolate for an elegant finish. Add nuts for crunch, or keep them simple and sophisticated.

A perfect cookie for holiday plates... or with your afternoon coffee.



- Makes: 18 -20 cookies *6 servings
- Prep Time: 20 min , Chill Time: 30-40 min, Bake Time: 12-14 min, Total Time: 1h
- Difficulty: Medium, Estimated Cost: ~ \$5
- Vegetarian: Yes, GF: No

Approx. 140 kcal \cdot 2 g protein \cdot 8 g fat \cdot 1 g fiber \cdot 9 g sugar

- 200 g soft butter
- 150 g icing sugar
- ¼ tsp salt
- 25 g cocoa powder
- 1tsp espresso powder
- 2 tbsp milk
- 1egg
- 260 g flour
- For decoration:
- Extra chocolate (for dipping)
- 2 tsp shortening
- Crushed nuts (optional)



Instructions

1. Prepare the Dough

- In a mixing bowl, whisk together the soft butter, milk, icing sugar, salt, cocoa powder, and espresso powder until smooth and creamy.
- Add the egg and mix until fully incorporated (a leaf attachment works well).
- Add the flour gradually, mixing continuously until the dough is uniform.

2. Pipe the Cookies

- Transfer the dough into a piping bag fitted with a 13 mm star / "douille cannelée" tip.
- Pipe onto a parchment-lined baking sheet in shapes you like:
 - Round spirals
 - o "8" shapes
 - S-curves
 - Swirls
- Refrigerate for 30-40 minutes to help the cookies maintain clean edges during baking

3. Bake

• Bake at 355°F (180°C) for 12–14 minutes, until the edges and tops feel set and lightly crisp.

4. Dip & Decorate

- Melt the chocolate with 2 tsp shortening until smooth.
- Dip half of each cooled cookie into the warm chocolate.
- Sprinkle immediately with crushed nuts if using.
- Let the chocolate harden completely before storing or serving.



- These cookies freeze beautifully for up to 1 month.
- For a more intense coffee flavor, add an extra $\frac{1}{2}$ tsp espresso powder.
- Perfect on holiday platters dark, dramatic, and delicious.



Thank you!

The holidays have always held a special place in my heart. They are the season when kitchens become gathering places, when a simple recipe becomes a memory, and when we cook not just to feed, but to care, to share, and to connect.

As I put this little holiday book together, I thought of all the tables I've had the joy of sitting at – in France, in Canada, and now here in North America. So many accents, so many traditions, and always, always the same feeling: warmth, generosity, and the joy of cooking for someone you love. My hope is that these recipes bring that same feeling into your home.

That something here makes your holiday season easier, more delicious, or maybe even a little more magical.

That you feel inspired to adapt them, to make them your own, to share them with the people who matter most.

Thank you for cooking with me, for supporting French Cooking in America, and for letting these recipes become part of your celebrations. It means more than you know.

And of course...

Thank you to my family and friends, who taste-test everything with enthusiasm (and sometimes bravery).

Thank you to the wonderful FCIA community for your kindness, your photos, your messages, and your constant encouragement.

You are the heart of this project.

Wherever you are this season,

I wish you warmth, joy, good food, and moments that feel slow and cozy – just like home.





Bonus Tips

1. Make more than you think you need

Leftovers are never a problem during the holidays.

Many dishes – like Confit Byaldi, soups, and anything with cream or sauce – taste even better the next day.

2. Prep ahead whenever possible

You deserve to sit, laugh, and enjoy your guests.

Many recipes in this book can be made ahead:

- Bûche de Noël (the day before!)
- Île Flottante custard
- Cookies and desserts
- Holiday focaccia dough
- Terrines and spreads

Small steps done early create a calm cook.

3. Keep your pantry holiday-ready

A few simple ingredients can transform any meal:

- Olive oil
- Garlic
- Lemons
- Fresh herbs
- A good baguette
- Butter (lots of butter...)
- Chocolate, nuts, spices

These are the backbone of French holiday cooking.

4. Temperature is everything

If something feels "off," it's often just temperature:

- Butter too cold
- Meat not rested
- Bread not cooled
- Chocolate too warm
- A two-minute pause can fix almost anything.

5. Make it beautiful, but keep it simple

A sprig of rosemary, a swirl of cream, a sprinkle of pistachio, a drizzle of chocolate – tiny touches elevate a dish without complicating it.

Your guests don't want perfection.

They want warmth.

6. Cook with confidence - not perfectionism

The joy of holiday cooking comes from sharing your table, not achieving flawless results.

If your meringue leans to the side or your gratin browns a little too much... it's still delicious.

7. Most importantly: enjoy your own dinner

You worked hard.

Sit down.

Eat slowly.

Have a glass of wine.

Let the compliments come to you.

Final Words

Thank you again for inviting my recipes into your kitchen.

I hope they bring comfort, beauty, and those quiet, unforgettable holiday moments we all cherish.

Wishing you a season full of joy, light, and delicious memories.

See you very soon on French Cooking in America.

