

the
Bonne Femme
COOKBOOK

SIMPLE, SPLENDID FOOD THAT
FRENCH WOMEN COOK EVERY DAY



Wini Moranville

The Harvard Common Press
Boston, Massachusetts

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*Dedicated to the French cooks who opened my eyes
to the wonder and warmth of the everyday French table*

The Harvard Common Press

535 Albany Street

Boston, Massachusetts 02118

www.harvardcommonpress.com

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Illustrations © 2011 by Nishan Akgulian

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Printed in China

Printed on acid-free paper

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Moranville, Winifred.

The bonne femme cookbook : simple, splendid food that French women cook every day /

Wini Moranville.

p. cm.

Includes index.

ISBN 978-1-55832-749-8 (alk. paper)

1. Cooking, French. 2. Cooking--France. I. Title.

TX719.M782 2011

641.5944--dc22

2011012157

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Book design by Jill Weber

Illustrations by Nishan Akgulian

Author photograph by Richard Swearingen

10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

Acknowledgments

How does one begin to acknowledge all of the talented and giving people—from home cooks to culinary professionals to the cookbook authors who have come before me—who have made their mark on this book?

Above all, thanks to the Lavignes, the Burgundian family who warmly hosted me when I was 16 and then again on a return visit many years later, and who first revealed the spirit of everyday French cooking that inspires this book. The Briffeille family from Fleurance also shared their generous table where I learned so much about the cooking of southwest France. More recently, Martine Baudonnet and Sebastian Frère both let me watch them cook unforgettable meals in their kitchens in French Cataluña.

I've also had the great luck to travel through France with French professionals who have deepened my appreciation for that country's foods, drinks, and cooking. Aurélia Chimier accompanied me through the Comté region, where I discovered its wonderful cheese, which greatly enhanced my cooking. Jean-Louis Carbonnier introduced me to the Poitou-Charentes region, where I learned that Cognac is so much more than an after-dinner sip, while Bertrand Déoux took me on a tour of the lesser-known wine regions of southwestern France and further deepened my appreciation for the cooking of that area. On my stays in France, many cheesemongers, butchers, greengrocers, *pâtisseries*, and restaurateurs were quick to share their insights on ingredients and cooking techniques; thanks go especially to the C. Cantié-J. Riéra shop, my *boucherie* in Collioure, the Lassalas pastry shop in Beaulieu-sur-Mer, and the beautifully simple Chez Palmyre restaurant in old Nice.

While most of this book's inspiration grew from meals I enjoyed in France, once home I relied on a range of cookbooks, magazines, and websites—too numerous to mention—to help me effect reliable ways to replicate French recipes in the American kitchen. *The 60-Minute Gourmet* by the late Pierre Franey, for example, especially helped me seize upon the "Saute-Deglaze-Serve" method of cooking that inspired many recipes in this book. Chuck Williams, with his *Simple French Cooking*, also keyed me in to ways to bring some French favorites home. When I was truly stuck on a recipe, I'd ask myself, "WWJD?"—What would Julia (Child) do?—and her cookbooks often provided an answer.

Merci mille fois to my two editors. First, Dan Rosenberg, who asked me to write this book, then helped me shape it in a way that truly reflects my vision of everyday French cooking. And thanks to Roy Finamore, who asked difficult questions and paid attention to the kinds of details that made these recipes clearer and more user-friendly, while generously sharing his own knowledge on everything from seafood to potatoes. Pat Jalbert-Levine and Karen Wise, my production and copy editors respectively, also did great things for this book.

I would never have dared to write a cookbook had I not spent 15 years working with professionals from Meredith Corporation, publishers of the *Better Homes and Gardens* family of magazines and cookbooks. Thanks go to all of the editors and test kitchen pros I've worked with, starting with Lisa Holderness, Sandra Mosley, and Lois White, who transformed a French major wondering what to do next into a food writer and editor. Others who have inspired and taught me so much along the way include Jennifer Darling, Carrie Holcomb, Nancy Hopkins, Tricia Laning, Julia Martinusen, Shelli McConnell, Jan Miller, Charles Smothermon, Richard Swearinger, Joy Taylor, Kristi Thomas, Joyce Trollope, and Deb Wagman, as well as Lynn Blanchard and her entire staff in the *Better Homes and Gardens* test kitchen.

Thanks also go to friends and colleagues who helped me research, develop, test, and perfect these recipes. Ellen Boeke served as my right-hand woman throughout the entire project. David Feder

shared his creativity for what ended up being some of my favorite recipes in the book, while Staci Scheurenbrand, Marcella Van Oel, and Patti Chong second-tested many of the recipes for me.—

Thanks also go to Martine Baudonnet (again!), Kellie Bourque, and Muriel Gude, contemporary *bonnes femmes* in France, who patiently answered countless questions about how they cook and eat and who also helped me iron out tricky linguistic conundrums.

I'm also forever grateful to my grandmother, Anna Monthei, and my mother, Gladys Moranville—both of whom took great pleasure in cooking for others and in turn instilled that passion in me. To my husband, David Wolf, I am grateful for more things than I can mention here.

Introduction

It happened again, on the very day that I was to sit down and write this introduction. I mentioned to someone that I was writing a cookbook on easy, everyday French cooking.

"Really?" she asked. "Is there such a thing as easy, everyday French cooking?"

"*Mais oui*" I said, "but of course. And the best place to find it is *chez la bonne femme*."

Bonne femme is French for "good wife." But in French cuisine, the expression refers to a style of cooking. It is the fresh, honest, and simple cuisine served every day in French homes. It's called this no matter who does the actual cooking, whether the *bonne femme* herself, her *mari* (husband), or her *partenaire domestique* (significant other).

Everyday *bonne femme* cooking favors frugality over splurges—the good wife knows how to make a beautiful meal from less-expensive cuts of meat; ease of preparation trumps fussy techniques any day. The good wife's cooking also marches to the beat of the seasons—whatever looks at its freshest, in-season best is likely to end up on her table. Intuition and improvisation are also key—French home cooks know how to substitute an ingredient they have on hand for something they don't and how to make a pan sauce for just about anything (and you will, too, once you've cooked a few recipes in the "Sauté, Deglaze, and Serve" chapter).

Few Americans are familiar with this casual side of French cooking. When we think of French food, we envision splurge-worthy, anything-but-everyday restaurants with a small army of chefs hovering over sauces for hours at a stretch, crafting elegant dishes that require obscure utensils, expensive ingredients, and architectural precision.

When we consider bringing French cooking to our own home tables, we picture slaving for three days over a cassoulet, hunting all over town for veal bones for a reduction, mail-ordering a lobe of foie gras or specialty cuts of wild boar, and stirring way too much butter and cream into every dish.

But, in fact, most French women don't spend all day at the market or in their kitchens, any more than most of us do. Many of them work outside the home, juggling their family and professions and the overall speeding-up of life, just like us. And yet they still manage to bring fresh, life-enhancing food to the table night after night.

I know this because I have had the good luck to spend long stretches of time in France, where I have dined at the tables of quite a few French women. And for years, I have cooked over French stoves as a *bonne femme* myself.

I first got a taste of *bonne femme* cooking at the home of the Lavigne family, who hosted me on high school exchange stay in Burgundy. Monsieur and Madame Lavigne and their teenage daughters, Annie and Françoise, lived in a snug, charming two-bedroom apartment in the industrial town of Montceau-les-Mines, where Monsieur Lavigne worked in a crane factory.

Evening after evening, we sat around their table, which was set up each night in the small living room, kicking off with perhaps a pâté one meal, a quick omelet the next, or an appetite-rousing soup. Next would come lovely main dishes: a succulent beef stew, perhaps, or pan-grilled steaks brought to the table with fascinating, intense pan sauces Madame made as effortlessly as my Midwestern grandmother made gravy.

Madame would then make us a salad with a vinaigrette she prepared fresh at the table. Next would come some cheese to place on the plate on which our salads had been served. Dessert was often something she had picked up from the bakery—a cake layered with mousse, or a glistening fruit tart.

All throughout dinner, Madame and Monsieur would fill their daughters' glasses—and mine—with wine, cut with a little water in consideration of our youth.

My first night at the Lavignes' table, I remember thinking that surely this was a celebratory feast for me. I felt touched that although their guest of honor was just a 16-year-old from the American Midwest, they had obviously put out their best for our first evening together.

But the next amazing meal came, and then the next, and I realized that the Lavignes ate this way pretty much every night. And each dinner was a celebration, a simple yet splendid daily gathering put on so that we could enjoy each other's company. I loved the way conversations stretched into the evening, filled with plenty of laughter and affection, and how the Lavignes never tired of trying to understand my badly pronounced high-school French, even if it sometimes took us 10 minutes to negotiate the simplest exchange.

Like many a young person who discovers France at an early age, I fell in love with the country—the food, the people, their way of life. It was only natural that I became a French major in college. Afterward, I moved to New York, where I worked for a time in a French bank and traveled to France as often as I could.

While my career took a few twists and turns, my love for France was constant. Once I got into my 30s, I carved out a life that would allow me lengthy visits to France in summer, while living the rest of the year close to my family in the Midwest. And partly because a love for France is a love for food, I became a food writer and editor, working on a great variety of cookbooks, magazines, and websites in the past 15-plus years.

When my husband and I travel to France, we spend extended periods of time in one place. On most stays we rent a little apartment, so for weeks at a time, we get to *faire le ménage* (keep house) like French people. This, of course, means cooking at home—and that entails its own daily rituals: heading to the markets in the morning, sniffing melons at the produce stands, chatting with the butcher, choosing the day's cheeses at the cheese shop, picking up a baguette at the *boulangerie*. And then we head home, and I cook something beautiful but never difficult. After all, there are beaches to visit, coffees to sip in cafés, *Herald Tribunes* to read, outdoor markets to haunt. I have no interest in spending all day in the kitchen—but I do want to eat well. And when I follow the *bonne femme's* lead we do.

Our extended stays have also allowed us to befriend French families, giving us the chance to experience contemporary *bonne femme* cooking in French homes, ranging from a five-course Easter dinner *chez* the Briffeille family in the Gers (a remote department in southwestern France) to a more casual weeknight supper at the home of Martine, our landlady in the Mediterranean resort town of Collioure. Each meal reveals again and again what Madame Lavigne shared with me all those years ago: There is nothing exclusive or snobbish or difficult about a good French meal. All it takes is a certain generosity of spirit and a little know-how.

Day after day, summer after summer, I have acquired that know-how. Taking inspiration from French women I've met and from the home-style fare I've found at the tables of the unassuming *maman-et-papa* inns and bistros I've dined in, I've discovered how doable it is to cook and eat like a French person, without spending a lot of time in the kitchen or a lot of money on obscure or expensive ingredients. Over the years, I've collected, developed, and perfected a variety of recipes that tap into the everyday side of French cooking that I first experienced at the Lavignes and then on my later trip to France. I prepare these dishes in France; when home, I cook these same easygoing French meals for family and friends at my own table in Iowa.

My favorites fill the pages of this book.

Some recipes are straight-up classics—dishes such as Beef *Bourguignon*, *Coq au Vin Assez Rapide*, and *Crème Caramel Chez Vous*—that *bonnes femmes* have been making for decades if not centuries and continue to bring to their tables. In many of these recipes, I've found a modern way to simplify the method, while staying true to what made the dish a classic in the first place. Forget

boiling and peeling pearl onions for *coq au vin*; use frozen pearl onions (no one will know the difference). *Crème caramel* can be made easier and more luscious with a high-quality purchased caramel sauce—and you can skip caramelizing the sugar yourself (a tricky step French cooks sometimes skip, too). Go ahead and use purchased puff pastry (and even, in a pinch, purchased pie pastry)—French women do it all the time. I'll also show you how you can savor the warmth of a streamlined cassoulet that you can make in a few hours rather than a few days (after many experiments, I found the perfect cut of pork for this dish).

And while the traditional French *bonne femme* style of cooking often signals rustic and hearty home fare, I've included many recipes that combine ingredients in light, quick, and fresh ways that are more in line with the way contemporary French women cook. Some of these recipes, such as the summer-perfect Cool Arugula Soup and the Roast Chicken Breasts with Goat Cheese and *Trois Oignons*, were inspired by dishes I found in French magazines, cookbooks, and websites. Others are home cook-friendly renditions of recipes I enjoyed while dining out at casual bistros, inns, and cafés—places where you're more likely to encounter the *bonne femme* style of cooking. The goat cheese salad with honey and pine nuts at a casual bistro near Bordeaux, the wondrous open-face sandwiches at a café near the Swiss border, the lovely trout with saffron at a *maman-et-papa* inn somewhere in the Auvergne, the apricot-and-cherry-filled meringue in French Cataluña—these are just a few of the dishes that provided inspiration for my recipes.

I've also included recipes that simply came about when I took good ingredients home from the market and prepared them using French techniques and flavor combinations. Curry and Comté cheeses—a flavor duo I discovered while traveling in eastern France's Franche-Comté region—adds unmistakable French-ness to a chicken and spinach salad. Apricot and sage, a combination I once spotted in a recipe for rabbit fillets, make a lovely flavoring for pork. Other recipes combine readily available foods you'll find at your market with staples of the *bonne femme's* kitchen—*herbes de Provence*, vermouth, *fines herbes*, olives, shallots, wine, Dijon mustard, olive oil, capers, lemon, and some of the more commonly found French cheeses—for dishes that would taste right at home on a French table.

Speaking of ingredients, when it comes to casual cooking, French women generally don't drive all over town for specialty ingredients, so why should you? And, as I mentioned earlier, frugality and flexibility are hallmarks of this kind of cuisine. In some recipes I've replaced an obscure or expensive ingredient with an easily found, less-expensive one (whenever I could do so and still remain true to France). For example, although vermouth-braised rabbit with black olives is a classic French recipe, chicken thighs are much easier to find and make an appropriate substitute for the rabbit. Pork shoulder or steak is an inexpensive and wonderfully succulent stand-in for veal in my *Blanquette* of Pork (a twist on *blanquette de veau*, a classic veal stew). And while French women often braise lamb shanks, I've found that lamb blade steaks are less expensive, easier to find, quicker to cook, and more graceful to serve—yet no less rich and tender. I'll also tell you which domestic cheeses you can use when it's not possible or practical to get your hands on the exact cheeses a French woman would use.

Throughout the process of writing this book, I have had one goal in mind: to interpret today's casual French home cooking in ways that will translate fluently to the American table. I included recipes that tap into the styles of light, fresh fare that both French and American women prefer today. I have tried to avoid an overabundance of cream and butter, though both do appear, in moderation, in many recipes. I avoided recipes with difficult to find (or terribly expensive) ingredients or tricky preparations when I couldn't come up with a substitution or a streamlined technique that was worthy of the dish.

To make it easy to choose which recipe to make tonight—or this weekend—I've placed the bulk of the main-dish recipes into two chapters. For busy weeknights, start chopping a shallot and flipping

through the recipes in the chapter "Sauté, Deglaze, and Serve." Many of these recipes, such as Chicken Tarragon, Flank Steak with Warm Sherry Vinegar and Garlic Vinaigrette, and Tuna Steaks with Honey, Mustard, and Thyme can be made in less than half an hour.

When you have a little more time to cook, look in the "Braise, Stew, or Roast" chapter. These recipes may take longer, but none are difficult; after some initial prep, most of the kitchen time is hands-off cooking in the oven or on the stovetop. They include dishes that can be ready in an hour, such as Basque-Style Chicken and Normandy Pork Chops, as well as selections that take longer to stew or braise, such as Pomegranate *Pot-au-Feu* and *Choucroute Garnie pour le Week-End*.

You'll find other chapters that offer ways to anchor a meal. While lasagna, pot pie, shepherd's pie, and tagliatelle might not come to the top of your mind when you think about French food, the "Casseroles and Pasta" chapter shows you how these and similar recipes are part of the *bonne femme's* main-dish repertoire. Likewise, "Les Tartines, Pizzas, and Savory Tarts" shows you how French women turn bread, pizza dough, and puff pastry into casual-yet-stylish weekend lunches and weeknight dinners. And who knows how to transform eggs into a gratifying lunch or dinner better than a French cook? Find quiches, soufflés, omelets, baked eggs, and crêpes in the "Eggs and Cheese" chapter.

In "Les Sides," you'll learn how the *bonne femme* rounds out a main course with satisfying starches, such as Any-Night Baked Rice or Celery Root and Potato Purée, as well as colorful vegetables, such as Peas with Pearl Onions and Thyme, Tomatoes *au Four*, and Glazed Carrots.

The remaining chapters offer recipes that span the scope of the French meal, from appetizers to dessert.

The "Nibbles, *Amuse-Bouches*, and *Cocktails Maison*" chapter shows you how to start the evening, French-style, with everything from tapenades to keep on hand to quick bites made with puff pastry. "Les Salades" helps you decide which green-, legume-, or vegetable-based salads to serve when—such as Belgian Endive Salad with Blue Cheese and Walnuts to start a meal, Midsummer Salad to go alongside a main dish, or Roasted Shrimp and Green Lentil Salad to serve as a main course. (For a salad to serve after the main course, with cheese, look for A Bright Mini-Salad for the Cheese Course in the "Eggs and Cheese" chapter.)

Soups also rank among the *bonne femme's* favorite recipes, as either an appetite-rousing starter or a satisfying meal-in-a-bowl. In "Les Bonnes Soupes," I've included a variety of recipes, both classic—such as Rustic Vegetable Soup with Cheese Toasts—and modern—such as Roasted Butternut Squash Bisque with Sweet Curry.

And then there are "Les Desserts" including pastry-shop favorites such as Classic French Fruit Tart and Madeleines; bistro classics such as profiteroles and Alsatian Apple Tart; and favorite home-baked treats such as upside-down cakes and Walnut Gâteau. You'll also find some easy everyday dessert recipes such as Cherry Clafouti and Caramelized Bananas *Ce Soir* that French women prepare simply to treat their families to something sweet and satisfying at the end of the day.

And while the French often eat in courses even on weeknights (to find out more about how the French structure their meals, see [\[>\]](#)), flexibility and freedom are touchstones of the *bonne femme's* way of cooking. You'll soon see that you can adapt these recipes to the way you and your family and friends enjoy eating.

For those readers who already enjoy French cooking, I think you will find many new ideas, and new twists on classic recipes, in this book. For others who have been intimidated by the thought of French cuisine, I hope my book teases out the *bonne femme* in you. You will soon learn, as I did at an early age, that the joys of the French table are open to everyone. You can live modestly and cook simply, yet dine splendidly, night after night.

NIBBLES, AMUSE-BOUCHES, AND COCKTAILS MAISON

When a French woman invites friends over for apéritifs, the foods she serves alongside can be quite simple: hard sausages and cured meats, olives and tapenade, some crackers or cheese puffs, and maybe a surprise or two, such as savory pastries she makes from purchased puff pastry kept in the freezer. Here's how to bring it all together, with a few *cocktails maison* that prove that the French know what to do with a shaker.

COMTÉ-WALNUT CRACKERS [\[>\]](#)

TAPENADE NOIRE [\[>\]](#)

TAPENADE VERTE [\[>\]](#)

OLIVES WITH FENNEL AND PERNOD [\[>\]](#)

LEMON-SAFFRON-ROSEMARY WINGS [\[>\]](#)

MUSHROOMS STUFFED WITH SHEEP'S MILK CHEESE [\[>\]](#)

SALAMI ALLUMETTES [\[>\]](#)

GOUGÈRES [\[>\]](#)

FLAKY GREEN OLIVE AND CHEESE SPIRALS [\[>\]](#)

CHUTNEY-HAM AMUSE-BOUCHES [\[>\]](#)

CROQUE JEUNE HOMME AMUSE-BOUCHES [\[>\]](#)

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IS PARIS BURNING? [\[>\]](#)

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KIR WITH A KICK [\[>\]](#)

FRENCH 75 [\[>\]](#)

LA TOMATE [\[>\]](#)

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BOURBON—ORCHARD FRUIT FANTASIE [\[>\]](#)

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PEAR-COGNAC NEO-TINI [\[>\]](#)

LE COUCHER DE SOLEIL [\[>\]](#)

LEMONY PEAR SPARKLING SANGRIA [\[>\]](#)



Nidam

Comté-Walnut Crackers

Yes, the French eat crackers, and that's what they call them. French cooks make a variety of *les crackers*. Some are flat, crunchy rounds made simply with flour, butter, salt, and milk; they're meant to be served or topped with other flavorful foods, like cheese or tapenade. Others combine tasty ingredients to make savory stand-alone bites. This recipe follows the latter path, combining Comté (a Gruyère-style cheese) and walnuts for sumptuous little crackers indeed. If you really want to indulge your guests, layer a thin slice of Brie atop each cracker for a truly decadent double-cheese canapé.

MAKES ABOUT 24 CRACKERS

1 cup shredded Comté, Gruyère, or Emmental cheese, at room temperature (about 4 ounces)

4 tablespoons ($\frac{1}{2}$ stick) unsalted butter, at room temperature

2 tablespoons finely chopped fresh parsley or chives, or a combination

$\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoon salt

$\frac{1}{8}$ teaspoon cayenne pepper

Freshly ground black pepper

$\frac{3}{4}$ cup all-purpose flour

$\frac{1}{2}$ cup finely chopped walnuts

1 tablespoon ice water, plus more if needed

1. In the bowl of an electric mixer, mix the cheese and butter on low speed until combined. Add the herbs, salt, cayenne pepper, and a few grindings of black pepper; mix briefly to combine. Add the flour and mix until crumbly. Using a wooden spoon, stir in the walnuts. Sprinkle the ice water over the mixture and toss with a fork to combine. If needed, add additional water, 1 teaspoon at a time, until the dough clings together.
2. Gather the dough into a ball, place the ball on a clean, flat surface, and shape it into an 8-inch log. Wrap the log in plastic wrap and refrigerate until firm, at least 2 hours and up to 24 hours.
3. Preheat the oven to 350°F. Line two baking sheets with parchment paper (or lightly grease them).
4. Using a very sharp knife, cut the log into $\frac{1}{4}$ -inch-thick slices. Place the slices 1 inch apart on the sheets and bake until golden brown, 10 to 12 minutes. Cool the crackers on the sheets for 1 minute, then transfer to wire racks to cool completely. Store the crackers, tightly covered, in the refrigerator for up to 1 week or in the freezer for up to 1 month.

Vous Désirez un Apéritif?

One of my favorite moments in life comes immediately after I'm seated in a restaurant, well before I even crack open the menu. It's when the waiter (or, in more formal restaurants, the maître d') comes over, pulls out his pen and pad from his suitcoat pocket, and asks, "*Est-ce que vous désirez un apéritif, monsieur-dame?*" (Sir, madam—would you care for an apéritif?)

My answer is always an unequivocal "Oui."

Whether at home or in a restaurant, the apéritif has a way of making everything that came before it (whether a day's work or a day's drive on the *autoroute*) slip away. The French believe that this little pre-dinner drink helps stimulate the appetite, and while this may be true, I think

more than anything it simply readies the spirit for the joys to come. To me, the apéritif is in some small way like arriving somewhere remarkable after a tiresome journey—the first few sips of an apéritif resemble those moments of giddy joy at starting a new adventure. I always serve one to dinner guests the minute they walk through my door.

Yes, there's also a little lift from the alcohol, but the apéritif is usually not a high-proof drink; even when it is, it is not served in head-spinning portions.

One choice that's easy to find stateside is Lillet. Made in the Bordeaux region from wine, fruit brandy, citrus peels, and other flavorings, it's traditionally served chilled, on ice, with an orange slice.

French apéritifs vary from region to region. If you're ever in Gascony, try Floc de Gascogne, made with unfermented grape juice and Armagnac; in the Charentes region, ask for Pineau des Charentes, made with unfermented grape juice and Cognac. The south of France is known for drinks based on anise-flavored pastis, while *vin de pêche* and *vin de noix*—peach- and walnut-flavored wines—often kick off dinner in the southwest.

And in Champagne, the question "*Est-ce que vous désirez un apéritif?*" may well be replaced by the simple query, "*Une coupe de Champagne, monsieur-dame?*" (Sir, madam—a glass of Champagne?)

If you do travel to France, rather than trying to remember all of the kinds of apéritifs available, simply ask the server to recommend an apéritif of the region. I always do, and I'm always delighted.

I've also found in France that ordering an apéritif is a secret code for telling the waiter, "Hey, I might speak French with an American accent, but I know what's supposed to happen in a French restaurant!" More than once, a server has approached our table asking if we were ready to order, without suggesting an apéritif (likely thinking that, being Americans, we might not be clued in to the ritual). When I've said, politely (and in French), "Would it be possible for us to begin with an apéritif?" I've seen the waiter do a double take, kick into gear, and, with a relief in knowing that we'd duly appreciate everything to come, say, "*Mais oui! Bien sûr, madame! Qu'est-ce-que vous désirez comme apéritif?*" (Yes, of course, madam. What would you like for your apéritif?) The meal generally proceeds wonderfully and congenially from that moment on.

Tapenade Noire

What sheer delight it is to go to French markets and pick up a batch of black olives to chop into a *tapenade*; with different olives in nearly every market I go to, I rarely end up with exactly the same tapenade twice. Yet no matter what mix of black olives I use, the results are always delightful.

I keep a batch of this spread on hand both when I'm in France and when I'm at home. Yes, it's a great party food, but it's also a perfect any-day treat to slather on a cracker during *l'heure du pastis* (roughly, the Provençal equivalent of the cocktail hour). At home, I enjoy the same nibble with that after-a-long-day glass of wine.

You can also use tapenade as a finishing touch to other dishes; for example, tuck some into omelets, spoon onto deviled eggs (or *Oeufs Durs Mayonnaise*, [\[>\]](#)), spread into a cheese, turkey, or roast chicken sandwich, or dollop a little atop potato soup as a garnish.

MAKES ABOUT 1 CUP

1½ cups (8 ounces) pitted kalamata olives or mixed black olives
2 tablespoons capers, drained
1 teaspoon dried herbes de Provence
1 teaspoon anchovy paste
1 garlic clove, minced
1 tablespoon extra-virgin olive oil, plus more if needed
2 to 3 teaspoons fresh lemon juice (optional)

Place the olives, capers, *herbes de Provence*, anchovy paste, garlic, and oil in a food processor. Process until the mixture becomes a coarse paste, scraping down the sides of the bowl occasionally. Taste the tapenade. If you like it tangier, add some lemon juice. If it seems dry, add a little more olive oil. Transfer the tapenade to a bowl and serve at room temperature. Store leftovers in the refrigerator in a tightly covered, nonmetal container for up to 1 week.

Tapenade Verte

You can use this spread as a finishing touch to other recipes, as you would the Tapenade *Noire* (see headnote, [\[>\]](#)). It's also a tasty relish, especially when served as a condiment for a tray of cheeses.

If you're making this for a party, set aside a couple of tablespoons for yourself and tuck it away in the refrigerator. That way, you can have some to slip into a Rolled French Omelet with Tapenade Verte and Sheep's Milk Cheese ([\[>\]](#)) the day after *la soirée*. Enjoy it at breakfast while you go over the post-party gossip.

MAKES ABOUT 1 CUP

- 1** *teaspoon fennel seeds*
- 1½** *cups (8 ounces) pitted large green olives*
- 2** *tablespoons extra-virgin olive oil, plus more if needed*
- 1** *garlic clove, minced*
- ¼** *teaspoon dried red pepper flakes*
- ¼** *teaspoon dried tarragon*
- ¼** *teaspoon curry powder*

1. In a small skillet, toast the fennel seeds over medium heat until warm and fragrant. Pour into a small bowl. Using kitchen shears, snip away at the seeds to break some of them apart (or sprinkle the seeds with a few drops of water and crush them with a mortar and pestle).
2. Place the olives, oil, garlic, red pepper flakes, tarragon, and curry powder in a food processor along with the toasted fennel seeds. Process until the mixture becomes a coarse paste, scraping down the sides of the bowl occasionally. If the tapenade seems dry, add a little more olive oil. Transfer the tapenade to a bowl and serve at room temperature. Store leftovers in the refrigerator in a tightly covered, nonmetal container for up to 1 week.

Olives with Fennel and Pernod

In the south of France, when you order a Pernod or other pastis, the server will more often than not bring your drink with a small saucer of tiny black Niçoise olives. They make a great match—a good little quaff and snack before you head home, slightly lifted by the drink, yes, but also by the changing light and beauty that surrounds you and the anticipation of a fine dinner at the end of a day.

Even if you don't love Pernod as a drink, you can still enjoy a little splash in your olives for a similarly irresistible south-of-France effect. Enjoy these with a cool glass of dry rosé for another true-to-France apéritif.

MAKES ABOUT 1½ CUPS

- 1** *tablespoon extra-virgin olive oil*
- ½** *cup chopped fennel*
- 2** *garlic cloves, crushed*
- ¼** *cup Pernod, Ricard, or Pastis 51*
- 1½** *cups (8 ounces) Niçoise or other pitted imported black olives*
- 1** *tablespoon chopped fresh chervil or ½ teaspoon dried fines herbes, crushed*
- ⅓** *teaspoon cayenne pepper*

Heat the olive oil in a skillet over medium heat. Add the fennel and sauté until just softened, about 5 minutes. Add the garlic and cook until fragrant, about 30 seconds. Remove the skillet from the heat. Off the heat, slowly pour in the Pernod, taking care not to let it spatter. Return the skillet to the heat and cook the mixture briefly, until reduced by half. Add the olives and heat through, stirring. Remove the skillet from the heat and stir in the chervil and cayenne pepper. Transfer the mixture to a serving bowl, cool to room temperature, and serve. Alternatively, refrigerate the mixture overnight and bring it to room temperature to serve. Store leftovers in the refrigerator in a tightly covered, nonmetal container for up to 1 week.

Lemon-Saffron-Rosemary Wings

While I've never seen Buffalo wings in France, I have seen a number of elegant, contemporary takes on appetizer wings at *traiteurs* (delis) and *les cocktails* (cocktail receptions); French cooks, too, have become savvy to the idea of using the humble chicken wing as a blank slate for some fabulous flavor. In this recipe, a little saffron, rosemary, and honey make these little wings really take off.

MAKES ABOUT 24 WINGS

2 *tablespoons freshly grated lemon zest*
2 *large pinches saffron threads or ½ teaspoon turmeric*
1 *tablespoon finely chopped fresh rosemary*
1½ *teaspoons coarse sea salt*
½ *teaspoon freshly ground black pepper*
2 *pounds chicken wing drumettes (see Note)*
2 *tablespoons extra-virgin olive oil*
¼ *cup honey*

1. Preheat the oven to 400°F.
2. Combine the lemon zest, saffron, rosemary, salt, and pepper in a shallow bowl or pie plate. Brush the chicken wings with the olive oil, then rub each wing with a little of the lemon-saffron mixture (don't worry about coating the entire wing—a little of these flavors goes a long way). Place the wings on the rack of a broiler pan.
3. Bake the wings for 20 minutes. Turn the wings, drizzle with the honey, and bake until golden and cooked through, 5 to 10 minutes more. Transfer the wings to a platter to serve.

Note: Often available in supermarkets, drumettes are the meaty part of the chicken wing with the less-meaty joints cut away; they resemble little chicken legs. If you can't find drumettes, cut away the second joint and tip of the chicken wing, and use the meaty joint only. (Save the other parts of the wings to make chicken stock, if you like.)

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