

Olive Oil Dough

- 15g dried yeast or 2 x 7g sachet easy blend
 - 1kg strong bread flour
 - 20g salt
 - 100ml Olive Oil
 - 600ml tepid water
1. In a large bowl rub the yeast into the flour until evenly distributed. Add the salt and mix in.
 2. Add the olive oil and water. Mix in by spoon or hand to bring together.
 3. Turn out on to your work surface and begin kneading.
 4. Work the dough for 5–10 minutes until it is silky, supple, springy and smooth.
 5. Place in a clean and lightly oiled, non-metallic bowl. Cover and leave to prove in a warm, draught free place until doubled in size. This will take about an hour.

Onion Tart with Anchovies and Olives - Pissaladiere

We would think of this as the Niçoise version of Pizza, but mentioning that in the South of France will inevitably lead to a lecture on how Neapolitan seamen visited Nice and Marseilles and took the idea back to Italy where they ruined it by adding tomatoes. Pissalat was originally a fermented fish paste and gave this dish and pizza its name.

- 400g of dough from the recipe above
 - 500g onions, finely sliced
 - 2 tbsp olive oil
 - 2 large cloves garlic, unpeeled
 - Pinch of dried thyme
 - A small handful of fresh thyme
 - 10 black olives
 - 10 anchovy fillets
 - Salt and fresh black pepper
1. While the dough is enjoying its first rise slowly cook the onion, garlic, and dried thyme with the oil and plenty of salt and pepper. Cover and stir from time to time.
 2. When the dough is ready, knock it back. Roll or tease into a 12" x 12" square and place onto a baking sheet and prick all over with a fork.
 3. Pile on the onion mix and spread out, decorate with olives and anchovies and toss on the fresh thyme. Slice the garlic and scatter over.
 4. Leave to prove for 15 mins the bake for 20 – 25 mins in a 200° Oven. If possible, flick the Pissaladiere off the tray half way through to ensure a crisp and firm underside.

Socca

This simple street food is found in markets through the South. It is usually served plain, with maybe some black pepper, but can be filled with an infinite variety of things for a more elaborate version.

- 240g chickpea flour
 - Sea salt and black pepper
 - 2 tsp olive oil
 - 600ml water
 - olive oil for frying
1. Mix all the socca ingredients together to form a batter (like single cream). Leave for 30 minutes.
 2. Either make thin pancakes, cooked in olive oil in a frying pan, or make a thicker batter and cook the bottom in a pan, then the top under the grill with extra oil, then top with rosemary.

Soupe au Pistou

Pistou is the garlicky, basil paste very similar to pesto, that is so prevalent throughout the south of France during the summer months. This is a spring version of the soup with filling beans and pumpkin – also popular ingredients in southern French cooking.

- 1 x 400g tin butter beans, drained and rinsed
 - 1.5 litres stock, chicken or beef
 - 1 leek, finely sliced and washed
 - 2tbsp olive oil
 - 1 small butternut, peeled and diced into 1cm cubes
 - 1 large potato, peeled and diced into 1cm cubes
 - 1 courgette, diced into 1cm cubes
 - ½ small cabbage, shredded
 - Salt and pepper
- For the pistou**
- 8 cloves garlic, peeled
 - 1 tomato, skinned, deseeded and chopped
 - Large handful of fresh basil
 - 3tbsp oil
1. Heat the oil in a large pan and add the leek, potatoes and pumpkins. Season well and cook gently until tender.
 2. Add the beans and courgette and cook for another 3 minutes. Add the stock and bring to the boil. Simmer for 10 minutes and add the cabbage. Simmer for another 5 minutes and whizz with a hand blender until half-puréeed.
 3. To make the pistou, pound the garlic with some salt in a pestle and mortar until well bashed. Add the basil and tomato and bash that in too. Gradually mix in the olive oil to emulsify it – much like making mayo.
 4. Serve the soup in bowls with the pistou separate so people can help themselves to it.

La Baudroie de la Mere Figon - Monkfish tails with Anchovies, Capers and Olives

- 6 small monkfish tails, skinned
 - 2tbsp plain flour, seasoned
 - 3tbsp olive oil
 - 1 onion, peeled and finely chopped
 - 1 400g tin chopped tomatoes
 - 8 anchovy fillets, pounded
 - 150ml dry white wine
 - 1 handful fresh basil, shredded
 - 1 handful fresh parsley, finely chopped
 - 2tbsp black olives, pitted and chopped
 - 2tbsp capers
 - Salt and pepper
1. Dust the monkfish tails in the seasoned flour. Heat the oil in a large pan and cook the monkfish right through until golden brown. Keep warm in the oven.
 2. Cook the onions in the same pan until soft and then add the tomatoes, anchovies, wine and parsley. Season well.
 3. Simmer the sauce until thick and jammy. Stir in the capers, olives and basil and cook for another 2-3 minutes. Add the monkfish and serve.

Basque Chicken - Riz a la Gachucha

This is an easy one-pot dish from the Hautes-Pyrénées, similar in many ways to the Spanish paella due to the border being so close and the Basques, like the Catalans living in both France and Spain.

- 1 chicken, jointed
 - 3tbsp olive oil
 - 1 red onion, peeled and sliced
 - 2 cloves garlic, peeled and crushed
 - 120g bacon lardons
 - 1 red pepper, deseeded and sliced
 - 120g chorizo, sliced
 - 200g Arborio rice
 - 500ml chicken or beef stock
 - 1 orange, chopped into wedges with the skin on
 - 12 black olives
 - 1tbsp chopped fresh parsley
1. Heat the oven to 180C/Gas 4.
 2. Heat the oil in a frying pan and brown the chicken pieces. Put into an ovenproof dish.
 3. Add the onion, garlic and lardoons and soften for a few minutes. Add the pepper and chorizo and cook for another 3-4 minutes. Stir in the rice and orange wedges and season well.
 4. Heat the stock and pour over the rest of the ingredients. Cover and place in the oven until the rice is tender – about 1 hour.
 5. Garnish with the parsley and olives and serve

Ratatouille

The archetypal southern French vegetable dish. This version is from the Landes region in the south west of the country and is spiced with fresh chilli

- 1 aubergine, cut into 1cm dice
 - 6tbsp olive oil
 - 1 red pepper, deseeded and cut into 1cm chunks
 - 1 orange pepper, as above.
 - 2 red chillies, deseeded and very finely chopped
 - 4 shallots, peeled and finely chopped
 - 4 cloves garlic, peeled and finely crushed
 - 2 tbsp fresh parsley finely chopped
 - 3 courgettes, cut into 1cm dice
 - 1 fennel bulb, cut into 1cm chunks
 - 1tbsp fresh thyme leaves
 - 400g tomatoes, skinned, deseeded and chopped
 - Salt and pepper
 - Pinch of sugar
1. Heat half the oil in a large saucepan. Cook the aubergine cubes until golden and put aside
 2. Heat the rest of the oil and cook the peppers, shallots and fennel for 5 minutes. Then add the courgettes, chilli, parsley and garlic and cook for another 5 minutes.
 3. Add the tomatoes, sugar and thyme leaves and season well. Add the aubergines, cover and simmer for 20 minutes.
 4. Uncover and cook for another 10 minutes to thicken the sauce. Serve at room temperature.

Salade Niçoise

- 3 ripe tomatoes
 - 1 little gem lettuce, washed and torn
 - 100g French beans, steamed
 - 8 new potatoes, cooked and sliced
 - 1 shallots, peeled and finely chopped
 - 2 fresh tuna steaks, seared- medium rare
 - 2 hard-boiled eggs, quartered
 - 8 anchovy fillets
 - 12 black olives
 - 1 tbsp chopped fresh parsley
- For the vinaigrette dressing:**
- 1 clove garlic, peeled & finely chopped
 - 1 tsp mustard
 - 1 tbsp wine or balsamic vinegar
 - 6 tbsp extra virgin olive oil
 - 2 tbsp finely chopped fresh herbs (chives, tarragon, parsley, basil, chervil mint, oregano or thyme,
 - Salty and fresh black pepper

Potato, Tomato and Onion Gratin

- 500g onions, peeled and sliced
 - 4tbsp olive oil
 - 500g tomatoes, peeled and sliced
 - 1kg potatoes, peeled and thinly sliced
 - 3 sprigs fresh thyme leaves
 - 6 juniper berries, crushed
 - Salt and pepper
1. Cook the onions in the oil until soft and starting to caramelize. This will take about 30 minutes. Mix the juniper berries and thyme leaves into the onions when they are soft.
 2. Heat the oven to 150C/Gas 3.
 3. Layer the potatoes, onions and tomatoes finishing with a layer of potatoes, seasoning well as you do so.
 4. Cover with foil and bake for about an hour until the potatoes are tender. Take off the foil 15 minutes before the end to colour the top

Walnut Tart - Tarte aux Noix

For the pastry

- 180g plain flour
- 50g caster sugar
- 2tbsp ground walnuts
- 100g butter
- 1 egg, beaten

For the filling

- 80g caster sugar
- 3 eggs, separated
- 30g butter, melted
- 120g walnuts, chopped
- 1tbsp double cream
- Juice and zest 1 lemon

1. Put the flour and butter in a food processor and blitz to breadcrumbs. Add the sugar and walnuts and pulse to incorporate. Add the egg and pulse until the dough comes together. Add a little cold water if still too dry.
2. Roll the pastry out to fill a 24cm tart tin. Chill for 20 mins
3. Heat the oven to 200C/Gas 6. Fill the tart with baking parchment and baking beans and bake the pastry blind for 10-15 minutes. Take out the baking parchment and beans and reduce the oven temperature to 150C/Gas 3.
4. Whisk the egg yolks and sugar until thick and creamy. Stir in the melted butter, walnuts, cream and lemon juice and zest. Whisk the egg whites until they are at the soft peak stage and fold in to the walnut mixture. Pour into the pastry case and bake in the oven for 20-25 minutes until pale golden and set.
5. Leave to cool and turn the tart out of the tin. Dust with icing sugar and serve with crème fraiche.

