

Provençal Christmas Bread Recipe

Perhaps the most popular of the Christmas traditions in Provence is *les treize desserts*, or the thirteen desserts, to be enjoyed following Midnight Mass. The star of the thirteen desserts is *pompe à l'huile*, sometimes called *fougasse*, a sweet, light, openwork bread made with olive oil and flavored with orange blossom water and citrus zest. (While traditional, these flavorings are optional and the bread will still taste delicious without.)

This tasty bread may also be enjoyed throughout the year in other variations. The sugar can be increased for a sweeter bread, or a savory version could be made with less sugar and other flavorings, like aniseed, or with olives and herbs.

Whichever version you choose to make, this bread will warm your kitchen with wonderful aromas and delight all those at your table.

3 $\frac{3}{4}$ cups Flour (plus more for kneading dough)

1 $\frac{1}{4}$ cup Sugar (*optional to add more for sweeter bread)

1 package active dry yeast (approx 7grams)

1 cup warm Water

$\frac{3}{4}$ cup Extra-Virgin Olive Oil (plus approx 2 tbsp. for oiling bowl and brushing finished bread)

2 tsp. Kosher Salt

1 $\frac{1}{2}$ tsp Orange Flower Water (*optional)

Zest of one Lemon (*optional)

Zest of one Orange (*optional)

- Combine 1 1/2 cups of flour, the sugar, yeast, and 1 cup of warm water in a large bowl. Stir to combine with a wooden spoon or silicon spatula. Allow the mixture rest in a warm spot for around 30 minutes. The mixture should be bubbly before progressing to the next step. (If it hasn't become bubbly, chances are your yeast was too old and didn't activate.)
- Add the remaining 2 1/4 cups flour, the olive oil, and salt to the mixture. Add the optional flavoring if using – orange flower water, lemon zest and/or orange zest. Stir everything together until a dough forms.
- Turn the dough out onto a lightly floured surface. Keep some extra flour nearby in case dough becomes sticky. Knead the dough, flipping and turning, flipping and turning, until the dough is smooth and elastic. This should take around 5 minutes.
- Grease a large, clean bowl with the a bit of the oil, place dough into the bowl, then cover with a clean towel. Set aside in a warm spot for three or four hours to let the dough rise. It should double in size.
- Preheat oven to 400°
- Turn dough out onto a large sheet of parchment paper and gently stretch it with your fingers to form a 12" circle or

long oval. Using a small, sharp knife or kitchen shears, cut out five or six 2 inch long slits. Each slit should be about an inch wide. Use your fingers to gently stretch the holes open so they don't close up when the bread is baked.

– Transfer the dough and parchment paper to a large baking sheet. Bake for 15 – 20 minutes, checking after 10 minutes. Bread should be puffed up and golden brown. (And your kitchen will smell amazing!)

– Remove the bread from the oven and immediately brush the top and sides with a bit of olive oil. Allow the bread to cool to room temperature on a rack, or serve warm.

– Following tradition, *pompe à l'huile* must be broken by hand, and never cut with a knife, to insure good fortune in the coming year.

[Palmiers Recipe](#)

Palmiers Recipe

Palmiers are a delightful pastry and wonderful in their simplicity. In less than an hour and with just a few ingredients, you can create a delicious dessert or tea time snack. Preparation could not be easier, and after making these

just one time, you'll be able to make Palmiers without a recipe and perhaps with some additional flavorings. These are perfect to whip up for surprise guests or to offer at the end of meal with a cup of coffee. Palmiers have a fantastic, crisp crunch, but beware, because with that fantastic crunch comes a scattering of crumbs. Have a napkin handy!



Ingredients:

1 Sheet Puff Pastry, thawed

2 – 3 Tablespoons Butter, melted and cooled (approximate amount)

1/4 Cup Sugar (approximate amount)

Method:

1. Sprinkle sugar on a flat work surface, then roll out puff pastry into a large square – around 12 inches by 12 inches. Be sure to flip and turn the dough often, sprinkling with more sugar when necessary to prevent sticking. Flipping and turning is the best way to make sure the dough rolls out evenly.
2. Brush melted butter over the square, then liberally sprinkle with sugar.
3. Fold in one edge to the quarter line (as opposed to the centerline), then fold in the other side to the opposite quarter line. Spread butter and sugar over the strips as before, then bring the folded edges in to meet at the centerline – you should have three layers of dough on either side. Fold once more, at the center line, so one half is on top of the other.
4. Put dough in the fridge for around 20 to 30 minutes ideally, though if you're in a bit of a hurry, just until the oven heats.
5. Preheat the oven to 425 degrees and line a baking sheet with parchment paper.
6. Once chilled, cut the dough crosswise into strips, approximately 1/2 inch wide. You should have around 20, though a few more or a few less is just fine. Place the strips cut side up on the baking sheet, around two inches apart to allow room for the Palmiers to puff up. You may need two baking sheets – you can either bake two sheets at a time or one at a time. If you opt for one at a time, keep unused dough refrigerated until ready to bake.
7. Bake the Palmiers for around 8 to 10 minutes. They should start to puff up, and the bottoms should begin to turn golden as they caramelize. Carefully turn over the Palmiers with a metal spatula or similar utensil. Bake for another 3 to 5 minutes, until puffed, golden and caramelized on both sides.

8. Transfer to a cooling rack and allow to cool on the baking sheet. Serve at room temperature. These are best day of, but will keep for a few days in an airtight container.

Suggestions:

- Add cinnamon, spices or lemon zest to the sugar
- In place of the butter and sugar, spread a thin layer of melted chocolate or jam
- Once baked, dip Palmiers into melted chocolate or drizzle with melted chocolate
- Dip Palmiers into melted chocolate then sprinkle with chopped nuts (pistachios!), dried coconut or crushed peppermint candies
- Make a savory version with a thin layer of shredded cheese and herbs in place of the butter

Goat Cheese Nirvana

Goat Cheese Nirvana

I am a bona fide goat cheese lover. If you're not, I implore you to sample some real, honest to goodness, French goat

cheese and just try to resist it's magical spell.

French goat cheese, or chèvre, comes in a variety of shapes and styles, diverse flavor profiles and textures. Often named after their region of origin, French goat cheeses range from tangy to mild, creamy to firm, slightly tart to somewhat sweet, grassy or with a hint of walnut, plain or enhanced. The beauty of goat cheese is that it can stand on its own or heighten a dish. Try some. Try a lot. And soon you'll be a goat cheese lover too!



The Seemingly Endless Varieties...

There are three main types of goat cheese: fresh, soft-ripened and aged.

Fresh goat cheese is soft, spreadable, rindless, white and often molded into a log. Feta and Le Cornilly are two

examples.

Soft-ripened goat cheese has either a cream colored natural rind or a whitish bloomy rind. These cheeses are mostly round, button shaped or cylindrical. While some opt not to, both types of rinds are edible. Ripening first on the outside, the inside remains soft and creamy. Some examples of soft-ripened cheeses are Bûcheron, Selles sur Cher and brie.

Aged goat cheeses are often covered in edible ash or "washed" in water, wine or a brine to prevent drying out, aid in rind development and help create a depth of flavor. These cheeses age anywhere from a few weeks to several months. Tomme de chèvre is an example of a washed rind and the pyramidal Valencay an example of ash covered.

While staying at your villa in Provence, I recommend visiting cheesemongers at the markets or cheese shops within the villages to sample and purchase a variety of delightful French cheeses. I just love La Cave aux Fromage in St Rémy.

Be sure to try the regional chèvre, Banon, made in Provence. Banon is aged for a minimum of two weeks and wrapped in a chestnut leaf, held tight with raffia. This cheese is soft, slight acidic and pairs well with Côtes du Rhône.

How to Serve

Cheese should be left out at room temperature for an hour for optimal flavor, though fresh cheese should be kept refrigerated. Cheese boards are best when they feature at least three cheeses, moving from mildest to strongest, and accompanied by jam, fruit, nuts, baguette or crackers. Round cheeses should be quartered, logs sliced into discs, and pyramids cut into slices, like pie.

Beyond the Cheeseboard – Some Great Recipe Ideas for Goat Cheese

So versatile, goat cheese can be part of almost any course, sweet or savory, starter, entrée or dessert. Here are a few of my favorites:

–Fresh goat cheese in a salad with arugula, pine nuts, sliced pears and vinaigrette

–A slice of baguette topped with a soft-ripened cheese, then lightly toasted until the cheese begins to melt –and if you're feeling decadent, drizzle with truffle honey

–On toast, slather fresh goat cheese and top with sliced strawberries and a touch of balsamic vinegar, or top with ripe peaches and a hint of nutmeg, or top with olive tapenade

–For a delicious tart, try soft-ripened cheese, caramelized onions, a handful of arugula and a few lardons

–For a great starter, try fresh or soft-ripened cheese in a tart with asparagus, artichoke and tomato

–Sauté bitter greens (like rapini or dandelion greens) then add fresh goat cheese, lemon zest and a sprinkling of fresh thyme before serving warm or at room temperature

–Homemade goat cheese ice cream: try a version with berries or another with lemon, honey and lavender

–Serving fresh goat cheese mixed with lemon zest alongside poached or roasted fruit for refreshing dessert



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[Coq Au Vin Recipe](#)

Coq Au Vin Recipe

Coq au vin, or chicken in wine, is a lovely, comforting dish for fall. Once the initial prep work is completed, this dish is mostly hands off, left to gently simmer on the stove top.

As with most braises and stews, this recipe is a guideline, easily adapted to your own taste. There are as many versions of coq au vin as there are people who've made it – follow the basic method and trust your instincts. Each ingredient is meant to increase the depth of flavor, so adjust the ingredients to your own palate. I'm not a fan of pearl onions, for instance, so I used a combination of leeks, shallots and onions. Feel free to use the more traditional pearl onion in your dish if that is your preference.

Be mindful to use a wine that you would want to drink from a glass – it will be the underlying flavor of the dish. I like Côtes du Rhone or Pinot Noir.

This is a great dish if you don't like last minute fussing before company comes. Make it the day before and let the flavors mellow and improve. Gently reheat on the stove top before serving. Coq au vin is delicious with roasted potatoes or over egg noodles.

Time: 1 1/2 hours

Ingredients:

1/2 cup bacon, cut into 1/2 inch slices

3 – 4 pounds chicken (legs or a whole, separated chicken with bones)

1/4 cup Brandy or Cognac

1 cup diced onion (or peeled pearl onions or shallots, leeks or white onion)

4 garlic cloves, smashed

2 carrots, sliced into 1/2 inch pieces

1 cup fresh mushrooms, sliced (white button or cremini are

nice) or 1/4 dried wild mushrooms (submerge in boiling water to rehydrate, after 15 minutes, drain and coarsely chop)

1 Tbs tomato paste

2 Tbs flour

1 bay leaf

1 tsp Herbes de Provence

1 1/2 cups red wine

1 cup, approximately, chicken stock (or vegetable stock or water)

Kosher salt and pepper to taste

Method:

1. In a dutch oven, or a deep, heavy bottomed pot, sauté bacon over medium-high heat until fat renders and bacon is crispy. Remove bacon, set on paper towel to drain.
2. Add a bit of neutral oil to the pot if necessary and then add chicken pieces, skin side down. Work in batches as to no overcrowd the pan. Cook until chicken is nicely browned on all sides, around 10 to 15 minutes. Remove chicken and set aside.
3. Add the Brandy or Cognac and stir around the pan, scraping up the flavorful nuggets leftover from browning. Allow the liquid to cook down a bit, two or three minutes, to burn off the alcohol.
4. Lower the heat to medium. Add onions to pan and sauté until soft. Add garlic and stir continually so nothing burns.
5. Stir in carrots. They'll need a few minutes to cook,

stirring now and then to sauté evenly.

6. Add tomato paste, flour, mushrooms, bay leaf and Herbes de Provence. Stir to combine well.
7. Pour in wine then carefully return bacon and chicken to pot. The chicken should be mostly submerged, about 3/4 covered. If not, add stock or broth.
8. Cover pot and allow to simmer. Start checking on the chicken after 20 minutes. It will probably need 30, maybe 40 minutes, but the beauty of braising is that as long as there's still enough liquid in the pot, you won't overcook.
9. Once chicken is ready (juices should run clear, not pink, when pierced), carefully (it's hot!) taste the sauce and add salt and pepper as needed.
10. Coq au Vin will taste even better the second day. Gently reheat on the stove top. Be sure to remove the bay leaf. A sprinkling of parsley will aesthetically brighten up the dish for serving.
11. Bon Appétit!

Enjoy this classic French Recipe. Our chefs love to make this dish for our guests while they stay at one of our [Provence luxury villas](#).

[Panisse Recipe - A Delicious Provençal Snack](#)

Panisse Recipe – A Delicious Provençal Snack

Panisse, or chick pea fries, are great for snacking or as a side dish alongside meat or seafood.

Crisp on the outside, creamy and fluffy on the inside, Panisse can be served plain, with just salt and pepper, or with condiments for dipping, such as aioli. Easily modified to your palate, panisse also tastes great with additional seasonings like herbs (rosemary pairs wonderfully), garlic, cumin or lemon zest.

The panisse mixture can be prepared ahead, cut into almost any shape, then fried just before serving. This recipe can also be scaled up or down.

Time: 45 minutes active, plus resting time

Ingredients:

2 Cups Water

2 Teaspoons Olive Oil (*optional, but I think it lends a creaminess)

1 Teaspoon Sea Salt

2 Cups and 2 Tablespoons Chickpea Flour (I like Bob's Red Mill)

Oil, for frying (I like olive oil, but a neutral oil works too)

Coarse Sea Salt and freshly ground Pepper, for serving



Method:

1. Lightly oil a cookie sheet or baking dish (or line similar with wax paper) and set aside.
2. Heat the water, oil and salt in a saucepan over medium heat. Once hot, but not yet boiling, whisk in the chickpea flour to remove any clumps. Continue whisking until mixture starts to thicken –about two or three minutes.
3. Switch from whisk to a wooden spoon or silicon spatula. Continue stirring, for approximately 7 to 10 minutes, until mixture becomes very thick (but not dry). The batter should hold its shape.
4. Remove from pan heat and pour onto the prepared dish. Allow

to cool a bit, then refrigerate for at least an hour, and up to two days. Batter can be covered with wax paper or plastic wrap to prevent a skin from forming.

5. When mixture is chilled and quite firm, remove from dish and slice into desired shape –rectangles, thin batons (like thick french fries), squares or circles.

6. In a heavy-bottomed skillet (I like cast iron), heat 1/4-1/2 inch oil (I like olive oil, but a neutral oil is fine here) over medium-high heat until it begins to shimmer. Add the panisse in small batches, careful not to crowd the pan, and shallow-fry until nicely golden brown and crisp on each side, approximately three minutes per side.

7. Remove from pan and drain on paper towels. Generously sprinkle Panisse with coarse sea salt and fresh-cracked pepper.

8. Panisse is best served warm, though still delicious at room temperature.



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10 Great Things To Do With Fresh Figs

I'm a bit of a fig purist. A fresh fig, just off the tree, still warm from the sun, is my idea of heaven. These are hard to come by, though, and the truth is I like figs in any form: as jam, in a tart, dried, broiled, even as ice cream. The only issue with fresh figs is how quickly they can go bad. They're best when consumed right away, though they'll keep in the refrigerator for a few days. I was recently gifted an abundance of figs from a friend's tree and found a few great ways to use them. Delicious!



Figs are typically in season from June through early Fall, with each varietal coming to peak ripeness at different times. The flavor profiles vary, but if you like figs, you like all figs.

Fresh figs pair wonderfully with something a little salty, which is why they're often partnered with bacon, pancetta or prosciutto. I prefer this version unbaked, but it is also quite tasty when baked at 375 degrees for 7 to 10 minutes – just long enough for the meat to get crispy.

1. Quarter large figs, or slice in half if small, and wrap with good quality prosciutto

- add a mint or basil leaf
- add a bit of feta, goat cheese or blue cheese

Fresh figs are great in a salad, especially with a spicy lettuce and a sweet dressing.

2. Quartered or halved, add figs to an arugula salad with a bit of shaved parmesan and a honey-balsamic dressing.

3. Figs go nicely with pears in salad – add pecans or walnuts and a tangy cheese (bleu, gorgonzola, crumbled goat cheese) dressed with some balsamic and oil or a touch of honey

4. Roasted figs make a nice addition to a salad as well – most especially when paired with a tart cheese

Add Fresh figs to a sandwich or tartine (open face sandwich)

5. Spread ricotta on bread or toast, add a sprinkling of fresh thyme and/or lemon zest, sliced figs and a drizzle of honey

6. Spread goat cheese on toasted bread, then sliced figs and top with caramelized onion

Fresh figs make delightful desserts

7. As part of a cheese plate, with walnuts and honey

8. Mix yogurt with a bit of lemon zest, top with figs, drizzle a little honey and a sprinkling of pistachios

9. Fig shortcake: mix a dash or two of orange flower water into whip cream or mascarpone, slice open an sweet biscuit, top with the scented cream or mascarpone, top with halved figs (fresh or roasted), drizzle with honey

10. Roast halved figs at 375 degrees, cut side up, for about 15 minutes. Add to vanilla ice cream and swoon.

