

THE SUNDAY COOK

TABLE FOR TWO
Kathryn Flett finds
an antidote to
winter blues in
Winchester



Onion soup

SERVES SIX

INGREDIENTS

- 1 tbsp butter
- 1 tbsp oil, such as rapeseed
- 6 large onions, thinly sliced
- 1 tbsp brown sugar
- 200ml dry white wine
- 3 tbsp any type of cognac
- 1 tbsp flour
- 2 litres beef or vegetable stock
- ½ garlic clove
- Slices of stale bread
- 100-150g grated hard cheese (comté, or strong cheddar)

METHOD

- Put a large, heavy-based saucepan over a medium-low heat. Add the butter, oil, then onions. Season with salt and add the sugar. Leave to cook for 30 minutes, stirring from time to time – the onions must be golden brown.
- Pour in the wine, then the cognac, and flambé. When the flames have died down, scrape the bottom of the saucepan with a wooden spoon to incorporate all the cooking juices sticking to it. Stir in the flour – this gives the soup a rich consistency.
- Mix well and then add the stock. Turn down the heat as low as it will go and simmer for 30 minutes. Rub a large gratin dish with the garlic and pour in the soup. Cover the surface with bread slices and top with a layer of grated cheese.
- Grill until the cheese bubbles and turns golden brown before placing the dish in the centre of the table. The heat and steam are fierce enough to burn the tablecloth, so put a trivet or pot stand on the table first.

Recipe from *Just a French Guy Cooking* by Alexis Gabriel Ainouz (Quadrille, £15)

Hit the heights with an Alpine feast

SLOPE STYLE

Longing for the mountains but stuck at home this year? For a taste of the Alps, host an at-home après-ski with Savoyard-inspired recipes, suggests **Madeleine Howell**

Alpine food is comfort food: cheese and potatoes; a hearty re-fuel after a long day in the mountains," says Steve Paddock, chef and co-founder of restaurants Raclette Brothers and Alpes in London. "My favourite is *tartiflette*, a potato gratin baked in a skillet with potatoes, cream, bacon lardons, white wine and reblochon cheese."

An Alpine feast is a convivial affair: "Classic French cuisine isn't made for sharing, but the cuisine of the Haute-Savoie certainly is. It's not fancy: it's about eating socially, enjoying a bottle of wine."

If you're not heading for the slopes this year, there's nothing to say you can't enjoy such foods here in the UK, not just in restaurants but also at home. If you're aiming to go the full Savoyard, you could score yourself a mini raclette grill; failing that, the grill in your oven will work.

Simply gather a group of friends and family, stock up on cheese, cured meats, baguette, potatoes and pickles and go wild. "It's an unpretentious cuisine," says Paddock. "You can have whatever you like really, as long as it involves lots of melted cheese. That said, there's nothing quite like having a proper raclette grill in the middle of the table and scraping the just melted cheese straight off the wheel."

The cheeses produced in Alpine regions that are easiest to get hold of include reblochon, beaufort, abondance, tomme de Savoie and raclette, available from good cheesemongers online or in store (Neal's

Yard Dairy, Hamish Johnston or Paxton & Whitfield).

In terms of charcuterie, there are no hard-and-fast rules: saucisson is traditional, but Paddock also recommends more delicately flavoured pork charcuterie such as coppa or prosciutto. Anything too punchy, such as bresaola, might overpower some of the more delicate cheeses.

Then there's the question of what to drink. In traditional Alpine restaurants, guests are only allowed to drink wine or schnapps with fondue. This derives from an old wives' tale claiming that any other drink, including water, will prevent the cheese being broken down properly and make you ill.

Although there's no evidence for that, Victoria Moore, our wine correspondent, does recommend taking the opportunity to sample local wines with these dishes: "The tannin and bright acidity of a red such as lagrein, which is found in the Italian Südtirol, pairs well with these foods – the prickle of the tannin and the refreshing acidity gives the palate a bit of a rest in between cheesy mouthfuls. I also like the glacial freshness of whites made from jacquère, which is found in the Savoie."

As a digestif, there's the absinthe-related spirit genepi, cherry kirsch or pear Williamsine, a Swiss eau de vie. Paddock's favourite is demi-peche (lager mixed with peach syrup)

And for dessert? It has to be an Austrian-style apple strudel, or a slice of Bavarian Apfelkuchen.



Baked whole vacherin Mont d'Or with rosemary crispbreads

SERVES FOUR

INGREDIENTS

- For the crispbreads
- 100ml warm water
- ½ tsp fast-action dried yeast
- 210g plain flour, plus extra for dusting
- 2 tbsp olive oil, plus extra for oiling
- 3 rosemary sprigs, leaves picked and finely chopped

For the baked cheese

- 1 whole vacherin Mont d'Or
- 2 garlic cloves, crushed
- 1 tbsp finely chopped rosemary
- 50ml dry white wine

METHOD

- To make the crispbreads, pour the water into a bowl, sprinkle in the yeast and whisk together well.
- Leave for five minutes until the mixture starts to foam.
- Sift the flour into a large bowl and make a well in the centre. Pour the yeast

mixture into the well and add the olive oil and a sprinkle of salt. Stir together until a dough forms – it should be moist but not sticky. Tip the dough on to a floured work surface and knead for 10 minutes.

□ Transfer the dough to an oiled bowl, cover with a clean tea-towel or cling film and place in a warm, dry spot, such as an airing cupboard, for an hour.

□ Preheat the oven to 180C/160C fan/Gas 4. Line a

large baking sheet with greaseproof paper (or use two baking sheets).

□ Divide the dough into eight pieces and roll out each piece on a lightly floured work surface into a rectangle measuring about 24 x 10cm. Transfer to the lined baking sheet.

□ Brush with olive oil and sprinkle with the chopped rosemary and some salt. Bake for 15 minutes or until crisp and golden. Remove from the oven and leave to cool on wire racks.

□ To prepare the baked cheese, remove the lid from the cheese box. Make several slits in the top of the cheese with a sharp knife and sprinkle over the crushed garlic, chopped rosemary and white wine. Season with salt and pepper.

□ Place the lid back on the cheese box, sit the box on a baking tray and bake for 15 minutes until melted.

□ To serve, remove the lid from the cheese box and place the box on a wooden serving board, then arrange the crispbreads around the cheese and scatter over some sprigs of rosemary for decoration, if you wish.

Recipe from *Clodagh's Suppers* by Clodagh McKenna (Kyle Books, £20)

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THE SUNDAY COOK



Gruyère and vacherin fondue

The variety of cheeses you can use for this recipe is almost infinite: tomme, manchego, farmhouse cheddar, young gouda and, of course, the gruyère and vacherin Fribourgeois suggested here. Alongside the baguette cubes, you can serve small new potatoes – steamed whole in their skins for about 20 minutes, then halved – to dip into the fondue.

SERVES FOUR

INGREDIENTS

1 garlic clove, peeled
400g gruyère
400g vacherin Fribourgeois
15g cornflour or potato flour
300ml dry white wine, ideally a Swiss Fendant du Valais (Wallis)
A knifetip of finely, freshly grated nutmeg
50ml kirsch (optional)
1 large crusty baguette, cut into large dice

METHOD

▣ Rub the garlic clove around the inside of a fondue pot or heavy pan (ideally enamelled), dipping it from time to time in salt so that it sticks

well to the surface. Coarsely grate the cheeses.
▣ Mix the cornflour or potato flour with about 50ml of the wine until smoothly blended. Add the grated cheeses to the pot, pour in the remaining wine and add the cornflour or potato flour mixture.
▣ Place the pot over a low heat and stir frequently with a wooden spoon until the cheeses melt. As soon as they do, stir constantly, adding the nutmeg and a little pepper, to taste. As the fondue comes to the boil, add the kirsch, if using, and make sure your guests are seated and ready.
▣ To serve, place the pot on a fondue burner or portable spirit burner in the middle of the table. The fondue burner must be set to low and have an adjustable heat setting, so that the temperature of the fondue can be controlled.
▣ Using long forks, each guest spears one piece of bread at a time with the fork and dips and turns it in the fondue before eating.

Recipe from *Cheese* by Michel Roux (Quadrille, £20)

Breaded pork schnitzel

SERVES FOUR

INGREDIENTS

2 eggs
1 pinch grated lemon zest
Freshly grated nutmeg
1 tbsp double cream
80g plain flour
200g white breadcrumbs
8 x 60g pork cutlets
150ml oil
Lemon wedges

METHOD

▣ Crack the eggs into a deep plate and beat. Add a pinch each of lemon zest, nutmeg and the cream and mix well. Put the flour and breadcrumbs into separate deep plates.

▣ Season the cutlets with salt and pepper. Dredge the cutlets one at a time in the flour and tap to remove the excess. Then dip in the egg and cream mixture and finally dredge in the breadcrumbs, pressing very lightly.

▣ Heat the oil in a deep frying pan or skillet and fry the breaded cutlets over a medium heat, first on one side, until golden brown, then turn over and fry on the other side. Add more oil if necessary. Lightly shake the pan, letting the oil cover the schnitzels. You can also spoon the hot fat over them. Fry until golden brown.

▣ Drain the schnitzels on paper towels then arrange them on warmed plates and garnish with lemon wedges.

Recipe from *The German Cookbook* by Alfons Schuhbeck (£29.95, Phaidon)



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Apple strudel

SERVES FOUR

INGREDIENTS

- 4 dessert apples
- 35g sliced almonds
- 30g caster sugar
- ¼ tsp ground cinnamon
- 30g rum-soaked raisins
- Juice of ½ lemon
- 50g sponge cake crumbs
- 2 sheets strudel or filo pastry
- Flour, for dusting
- 2 tsp melted butter
- Whipped cream, to serve

METHOD

- Peel and core the apples and slice with a mandoline. Alternatively, peel, quarter and core the apples. Cut the quarters into 5-10mm dice.
- Lightly toast the almonds in a dry frying pan, stirring constantly. Let cool. Mix the sugar with the cinnamon, then add, together with the rum-soaked raisins, lemon juice, sponge cake crumbs and almonds, to the apples and mix.
- Preheat the oven to 200C/180C fan/Gas 6. Line a baking sheet with greaseproof paper.
- Lay one pastry sheet on a floured work counter and lightly brush with the melted butter. Lay another sheet over it and brush with melted butter.
- Make a thick line of apple filling along the length of one side of the pastry. Leave a 5cm-wide space free of filling at both ends of the sheet and fold over the filling. Slide the strudel on to a cloth and use it to roll up the strudel, pressing in the ends.
- Lay the strudel, seam-side down, on the baking sheet. Brush with the leftover melted butter, put the baking sheet on the lowest shelf of the oven, and bake for 20-25 minutes until golden brown. Serve with whipped cream.

Recipe from *The German Cookbook* by Alfons Schuhbeck (£29.95, Phaidon)



Aletsch tartiflette

Any semi-soft cheese, such as reblochon, can be substituted for aletsch.

SERVES FOUR

INGREDIENTS

- 400g small new potatoes
- 200g unsmoked salted pork belly, cut into fat lardons
- 100ml groundnut oil
- 1 large onion (about 200g), cut into small dice
- 200g button mushrooms, quartered
- Juice of ¼ lemon
- 20g butter
- 50ml crème fraîche
- 200g aletsch, cut into strips about 3mm thick

METHOD

- Wash the potatoes in their skins, then cut into large dice and dry well; set aside. Add the lardons to a

pan of boiling water and blanch for one minute, then drain and dry well.

- Heat 50ml of the oil in a frying pan over a medium heat, add the potatoes and cook, stirring every minute or so, until lightly golden all over, adding the onion to the pan when the potatoes are almost cooked through. Once cooked, set aside in a bowl.

- Add the lardons and the remaining oil to the frying pan and cook, stirring, for 2-3 minutes until golden, then transfer with a slotted spoon to the bowl with the potatoes and onion; discard the oil.

- Preheat the oven to 180C/160C fan/Gas 4.
- Put the button mushrooms into a small pan and add the lemon juice, butter and a little splash of cold water. Bring to the boil and let bubble

for 30 seconds, then drain the mushrooms.

- Toss the mushrooms into the potato, onion and lardon mixture, add the crème fraîche and mix well. Add just a touch of salt and a generous grinding of pepper.
- Divide the mixture between four small ovenproof dishes (earthenware or enameled ceramic), about 15cm in diameter and 3cm deep. Cook in the oven for three minutes, then lay the strips of cheese on top and return to the oven for a further 4-5 minutes.
- Serve the tartiflette straight from the oven. The cheese will have partially melted and mingled with the other elements of the dish.

Recipe from *Cheese* by Michel Roux (Quadrille, £20)

WHERE TO ENJOY A TASTE OF THE ALPS IN THE UK



ALPES, BRIXTON
A bistro serving traditional Savoyard specialities as well as new takes on the classics using British cheese, such as Lincolnshire Poacher fondue.

49 Brixton Station Road, Brixton, London SW9 8PQ; alpes.london

apfelstrudel, there's even a gluten-free vegan option in the form of an Italian pepperonata.

16 Henderson Street, Edinburgh EH6 6BS; alplings.co.uk

THE MOUNTAIN RESTAURANT

Try this cosy, ski-lodge inspired restaurant where the *tartiflette* and *berthaud* (abundance in a hot pan cooked with white wine and garlic) are served by the wood burner.

Grange House, Melton Mowbray, Leicestershire LE14 3QU; jandl.site



THE WHITE HAUS

Choose between fondue, smoked Bavarian sausage and sharing boards, such as a baked Edel de Cleron vacherin cheese with pickles and potatoes.

17 Farringdon Street, London EC4A 4AB; thewhitehaus.co.uk

ANTLER, NEWCASTLE

Austrian and Bavarian bites are on offer: charcuterie boards, beef goulash in beer with spätzle, currywurst, schnitzel and apple cake.

55 Degrees North, Pilgrim Street, Newcastle upon Tyne NE1 6BG; antlernewcastle.co.uk



ALPLINGS, EDINBURGH

This lunch spot draws on the traditions of the Dolomites, where Austrian cuisine meets Italian gastronomy. As well as schnitzel and



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COMING SOON

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AWAITING PLANNING

Bristol Shirehampton; **Derbyshire** Matlock; **Essex** Epping, Thorpe Bay, Witham; **Gtr Manchester** Brooklands; **Hampshire** Basingstoke, Bishop's Waltham, Bitterne, Hythe, Lyndhurst; **Herts** Royston; **Kent** Orpington, Paddock Wood, Rainham; **Northants** Towcester; **Shropshire** Bridgnorth; **Somerset** Taunton; **Surrey** Oxted; **Warwickshire** Shipston-on-Stour; **Wilts** Calne, Chippenham.



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