



# TREASURES OF BELGIAN CUISINE

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When people think of Belgian food, they often picture fries slathered in mayonnaise, beer, and pralines. But in reality, Belgian cuisine is surprisingly diverse, with each city or province boasting its own culinary specialties.

### Stoemp

While stoemp is generally considered a 19th-century recipe from Brussels, the widespread popularity of potatoes in the 16th and 17th centuries suggests the dish likely existed earlier. Its name comes from the Dutch *doorgestoemte patatjes*, meaning “mashed potatoes.” The dish combines mashed potatoes with vegetables—typically carrots, cabbage, broccoli, peas, or leeks—and is often served with blood sausage (*boudin*). Simple, hearty, and delicious.

### Moules-Frites

Though often associated with northern French cuisine, moules-frites is a quintessentially Belgian dish. It originated in the Walloon city of Liège, where it was first served in 1875 by the famed *friterie* Fritz. Edible mussels are prepared in a variety of ways—commonly steamed with onions, white wine, or beer—and traditionally served in a large pot. A single portion often includes a full kilo of mussels, accompanied, of course, by crispy fries.

### Liège Meatballs (and Waffles)

The Walloon city of Liège is synonymous with *boulets à la liégeoise*—rich, flavorful meatballs. In fact, there are two varieties: large and small. These meatballs are made from a blend of ground veal (or beef) and pork, along with bread and onions.

They’re typically served with a sweet-and-sour sauce known as *sauce lapin*, named after Ernest Lapin (1868–1922). The sauce includes onions, vinegar, brown sugar, Liège syrup, and currants. The dish is served with fries—nothing more, nothing less. And if you’re craving something sweet afterward, try the soft, caramelized waffles from one of the city’s legendary *gaufres* stands.

### Waterzooi

Originating from Ghent in Flanders, *waterzooi* loosely translates from Dutch as “boiling water.” Traditionally, it was a fish-based stew, but in recent years, chicken waterzooi has gained popularity.

The dish is built on a creamy base of egg yolk, cream, and vegetable broth, with common additions like carrots, onions, celery, leeks, and potatoes, all delicately seasoned with herbs. For a refined touch, connoisseurs might add half a glass of beer or white wine.

### Flemish Carbonade / Stoofvlees

If France is famous for *boeuf bourguignon*, Belgium’s answer is the hearty *carbonade flamande*. This slow-cooked beef stew is braised in Belgian beer and sweetened with a touch of brown sugar for a rich, sweet-and-sour flavor. It’s seasoned with thyme, bay leaf, and mustard—and always served with fries.

The name *carbonade* derives from the French word *charbon* (charcoal), referencing the traditional cooking method. In Dutch, the dish is called *stoofkarbonade* or simply *stoverij*.

