

# RECIPES & REVIEWS

## Lasting memories: No-fuss French food

PARIS, FRANCE — There are countless fancy restaurants here serving exquisite dishes that look like finely executed sculpture, but I often pass them by because I like simple food boosted with a lot of flavor but not much fuss. And those choices are here too.

Most restaurants' menus are posted out front, and walking along I spot grilled fish or roasted chicken, a simple entrecote or steak topped with herb butter, chicken sim-



**SOUL in the KITCHEN**  
with Joyce White

mered in a wine-infused sauce with mushroom and onions that tastes just like smothered chicken.

I am also enjoying beautiful salads that are a meal in themselves, like Salade Nicoise, which offers boiled potatoes, green beans, hard cooked eggs, tuna fish, olives, and anything else that strikes the chef's fancy.

And I also like French-style potato salad infused with herbs and a mustard vinaigrette, which, when you think about it, isn't much different from the backyard USA versions that are laced with mayonnaise and creativity, from sour pickles to diced sweet apples.

The other day I bought a serving of wafer-thin hot dessert crepes, or thin pancakes, from a sidewalk vendor who let me choose my topping: A slathering of orange marmalade topped with a sprinkling of sugar and grated chocolate. Sweet treat in hand, I hurried on to the nearby park, Luxembourg Gardens, trying to remember the last time I had made crepes. A few hours later I was in the kitchen.

I rented a studio apartment for part of my stay here from New York Habitat, a short term rental agency, whose banner proclaims: "Connecting people and apartments."

The apartment is sparkling and crisp with a skylight roof, located on the Left Bank, a stone's throw from the bustling

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ZAGAT  
2002

mered in a wine-infused sauce with mushroom and onions that tastes just like smothered chicken.

Friends like my old pal Nancy Hollaway, who lives here, don't help. Nancy is always pushing me toward the kitchen, literally crying, "I would love to have some back-home cooking." Nancy is a long time Parisian, having lived up in the 9th Arrondissement (or district) since 1956, shortly after she arrived here from Cleveland, Ohio - a jazz singer, showbiz on her mind, the stars shining on her beautiful face.

Nancy has always been a guiding hand during my visits to this City of Light; she knows every seam, and she's a seamless speaker of French. Surprising though, when I call her on the phone and get her answering machine, I still pick up the Midwest twang in her voice.

But some things, like this incomparable city, always remain the same, even when they change. Enjoy these simple but classic recipes that kind of remind me of home.



**FRENCH-STYLE POTATO SALAD**  
2 pounds small waxy potatoes, such as Yukon Gold  
Water to cover  
1/2 teaspoon salt  
1/4 cup dry white wine or vermouth or chicken broth  
1/3 cup extra virgin olive oil  
2 tablespoons cider or wine vinegar  
2 or 3 cloves garlic, crushed  
1 1/2 tablespoons, or more if desired, Gulden or Dijon-style mustard  
1 teaspoon salt, more to taste  
Freshly ground black pepper  
1/2 cup very finely chopped scallions, white and green parts or 1 small onion, finely chopped  
1/4 cup chopped parsley, basil

or cilantro  
Crisp, chilled Boston, red or green leaf lettuce  
Hardcooked eggs  
Pitted olives  
Anchovies filets or caper rolled anchovies

Rinse and scrub the potatoes and then cut away any blemishes. Place the potatoes in a medium-large saucepan with the water to cover at least by 1 inch. Sprinkle in the salt.

Cover the pot, bring the water to a boil, and then cook the potatoes over medium high heat for about 12 minutes or until they are just tender when pierced with a fork. Don't cook the potatoes until falling apart.

While the potatoes cook, make the salad dressing: Combine in a small bowl the olive oil, vinegar, garlic, mustard, salt, black pepper, scallions or onions and parsley or basil or cilantro. Beat briskly with a fork until well combined.

Drain the cooked potatoes and rinse with cold water. Peel immediately. Let cool for 10 minutes or until you can easily cut into 1/4-inch thick slices, without the potatoes crumbling.

Place the potatoes in a bowl. Pour the wine or vermouth or chicken broth into a small pan and heat over medium heat for a minute or two, just until hot.

Drizzle the liquid over the potatoes, mixing well but gently with a rubber spatula.  
Drizzle over the salad dressing and mix well with the spatula. Don't chill the potatoes; this dish tastes best at room temperature.  
To serve: Arrange the lettuce leaves on a large platter. Spoon the potatoes onto the platter and surround with the hardcooked eggs, olives and anchovies.  
Makes 4 to 6 servings.

**FRENCH DESSERT CREPES WITH FRUIT SAUCE**  
For the fruit sauce:  
3 or 4 fresh peaches, plums, apples, or pears



1/4 cup maple syrup or 1/4 cup honey and 2 tablespoons water  
1/2 teaspoon vanilla extract or 1 tablespoon  
Orange or B&B liqueur

For the crepe batter:  
3/4 cup all-purpose flour  
1/4 teaspoon salt  
2 large eggs  
2 tablespoons orange or B&B liqueur  
6 tablespoons unsalted butter, melted  
1 cup milk, about  
Sugar for sprinkling

Have available a 6-inch flat, cast-iron crepe pan or cast iron skillet or a heavy duty no-stick pan for cooking the crepes, and a wide metal spatula for flipping the thin pancakes. Also have handy a wad of paper towel or pastry brush for buttering the pan.

Make the fruit sauce: Rinse and peel the fruit, discard stems and pits or seeds, and cut into chunks or cut into eighths.  
Combine in a medium sauce pan the maple syrup or the honey and water, and the liqueur, stirring to mix well. Add the fruit. Place on medium high heat and bring to a gentle boil.

Immediately reduce the heat, and simmer the fruit, uncovered, stirring occasionally, for about 15 minutes, or until the syrup is slightly thickened and the fruit is tender, but not falling apart.

Meanwhile, make the crepe batter: Sift together the flour and salt and set aside.

Combine in a medium bowl the eggs, liqueur and 3 tablespoons of the melted butter, and the milk. (Save the remaining butter to use to butter the crepe pan for cooking and to drizzle over the cooked crepes.)

Beat the egg mixture briskly with a whisk or fork until well blended. Stir in the flour and whisk briskly to make a very smooth batter.

When the batter is perfectly smooth, set it aside and let rest for at least 30 minutes, preferably longer. If needed, add a little more cold milk or water to smooth out the batter. The batter should be the consistency of heavy cream, no thicker.

To cook the crepes, heat the crepe until quite hot, almost smoking. Brush the pan lightly with a little of the melted butter.

Pour a scant 1/4 cup or less of batter into the hot pan, tilting the pan from side to side to cover the bottom of the pan. Cook the crepe on medium high heat for about 30 seconds. Using a metal spatula, run the spatula around the edge of the crepe to dislodge it from the pan. Lift up the edge of the crepe and check to see if it is golden brown; if not, cook 10 or so seconds longer.

Then, shake the pan to dislodge the crepe from the bottom of the pan. Lift the crepe with the spatula and flip, using your other hand to grab the edge of the crepe. Cook the crepe about 20 to 25 seconds on the other side, or until lightly brown.

Fold the crepe into quarters, place the crepe in a large heavy skillet, lightly buttered, and set aside. Repeat with the remaining batter.

To serve, drizzle the crepes in the pan with the remaining melted butter. Sprinkle generously with sugar. Place the pan on a medium burner, and heat thoroughly, turning over with the spatula.

Serve the crepes with the hot fruit sauce. Makes about 1 dozen crepes.

**Soul Note:** New York Habitat is located at 307 Seventh Avenue, Suite 306, New York, NY, 10001. Telephone 212-255-8015 or see [www.nyhabitat.com](http://www.nyhabitat.com). Air France has several flights daily from most major US cities to Paris.

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