


Executive Pastry Chef Nick Malgieri Article



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Nick Malgieri is the national spokesperson for the Switzerland Tourism Gastronomy and Wine program. After culinary school in the United States, he apprenticed in Switzerland and has maintained close ties with the country ever since through frequent visits. A frequent traveler to other destinations, he collects recipes everywhere. Below is a sample of some of the recipes from his book, *A Baker's Tour: Nick Malgieri's Favorite Baking Recipes from Around the World* (HarperCollins, October 2005). Additional information on Nick Malgieri: www.nickmalgieri.com 

Lyon



In Italy there are endless arguments about whether the food is better in Piemonte or Emilia Romagna. In France, however, everyone agrees that the best food is found in Lyon. The city itself is jam-packed with excellent restaurants from casual to fancy, and the markets overflow with the fine local produce, cheeses, meats and fish. Situated at the southernmost tip of Burgundy, the Lyonnais, the ancient name for the area that includes the city, traditionally overlapped into the Beaujolais region so that the food of southern Burgundy is also considered to be Lyonnais in spirit.

Situated at the confluence of the Rhone and Saone rivers, Lyon has a lively and unique food culture. Cured meats, variety meats, fresh water fish, rich salads, and ethereal cheeses are the building blocks of La Cuisine Lyonnaise and result in classic dishes such as andouillette (pork innards sausage, cooked and served hot), rosette (a peppery salami), quenelles de brochet (pike dumplings), salade lyonnaise (frisee with bacon, croutons, and a poached egg), and cervelle de canut (soft herbed cheese, literally "silk weavers' brains"). Lyon is bouchon country too. A bouchon (the literal meaning is "cork") is a typical Lyonnais bistro serving the specialties of the region. There are 20 odd officially designated bouchons in the city, though nowadays use of the term is no longer very strictly controlled so that a few impostors and wannabes have crept in.

Lyon is also home to Les Meres (literally "the mothers"), a term used in less enlightened times to designate a woman chef. La Mere Guy, La Mere Brazier, and La Mere Fillioux were probably the most famous ones of the early 20th century. La Mere Brazier actually achieved 3 Michelin stars in 1933. La Mere Fillioux' greatest specialty was a truffled capon which she personally carved tableside for each guest. Such is the reverence of the French for their food traditions that La Mere Fillioux' little knife used to carve those thousands of capons is on display in the museum of Escoffier's birth house in Villeneuve-Loubet near Nice.

To top it all off, the Lyonnais is also the birthplace of both Nouvelle Cuisine and the celebrity chef. It all started at La Pyramide in Vienne, the luxurious restaurant of the legendary Fernand Point (1897-1955), rumored to have had a refrigerated bedside stand that always held a bottle of Champagne in case he was thirsty during the night. Point often loudly proclaimed his motto, "Donnez-moi du beurre (Give me butter)" while teaching his apprentices who included the next generation of three-star chefs including Paul Bocuse, Alain Chapel, Louis Outhier, the Troisgros brothers, and Georges Perrier currently of Le Bec Fin in Philadelphia. Point loved to enrich sauces with his favorite ingredient, butter, rather than relying on a flour thickening, and this became one of the main tenets of Nouvelle Cuisine that first appeared about 15 years after his death. The term is said to have been coined by French restaurant critic Henri Gault to describe the food prepared by Bocuse and other top chefs for the maiden flight of the Concorde in 1969.

Paul Bocuse is a major culinary phenomenon in his own right. The first chef to appear on the cover of the New York Times magazine, Bocuse was skillful at promoting himself as well as the principles of Nouvelle Cuisine. Those who were more impressed with his public relations abilities than his cooking satirized the name of the village where his restaurant is located, Collonges au Mont d'Or (Collonges at the Golden Mountain) as Le Mont d'Or de Bocuse (Bocuse's mountain of gold).

The following are some suggestions for real Lyonnais food, plus a few of the luxurious starred palaces of southern Burgundy.

Leon de Lyon is my favorite treasured memory of the city. And though I haven't been there in years, I still vividly remember the lunch I had – quenelles de brochet a la Nantua (pike dumplings in a rich crayfish sauce) followed by perfectly roasted Bresse chicken, a local specialty, and cervelle de canut – a creamy herbed cheese. No I didn't have a sweet since we had spent the morning eating chocolates at Bernachon (see below). Today the restaurant sports 2 Michelin stars and the kitchen is under the able direction of chef Jean-Paul Lacombe. The food is lightly modernized – today the chicken is a whole thigh stuffed with herbs under the skin and served with a morel cream sauce – it remains true to the spirit of real Lyon cooking. Leon de Lyon has spawned a whole chain of bistros and other establishments throughout the city – their website has all the locations. This is your not to be missed meal in Lyon.

Leon de Lyon
1 Rue Pleny
69001 Lyon
Phone: 04 7210 1112

www.bistrotsdecuisiniers.com/fr/leon-de-lyon.php 

One of Lyon's certified bouchons, Brasserie Georges was founded by Georges Hoffherr, an Alsatian brewer, in the 1830s. Today the menu is a mix of fine Lyonnais and Burgundian specialties. There are even a couple of menus with limited choices of local dishes such as chicken liver terrine, Andouillette, Saint Marcellin cheese, and a frozen nougat dessert for 25 Euros – a reasonable price for excellent food.

Brasserie Georges
30 Cours de Verdun
69002 Lyon
Phone: 04 7256 5454

www.brasseriegeorges.com 

Since 1923 La Mere Jean has been well known for its faithful rendering of such timeless Lyonnais specialties as sweetbreads, onion tart, and salade Lyonnaise. Known for its excellent wine cellar as well as its outstanding kitchen, this certified bouchon prominently features some of the best Rhone Valley wines available and from such celebrated houses as Chapoutier and Guigal.

La Mere Jean

5 Rue des Marronniers

69002 Lyon

Phone: 04 7837 8127

www.merejean.com 

Visit the Market

Les Halles de Lyon is one of the world's greatest indoor markets. In the Part-Dieu section of the city, the market (the Lyonnais refer to it as La Halle) features many counters and casual bistros that encourage a little grazing and a glass or two of Beaujolais as you survey the foods that the city's top chefs purchase for the meals you're enjoying at their restaurants. One must see: The cheese merchant known as La Mere Richard. She sells the best Saint Marcellin available, and to such heavies as Bocuse and Ducasse. In fact, Bocuse names La Mere Richard in the cheese section of his menu. Even if you're not fond of picnicking in your room, buy one and a small baguette for a taste of one of the world's most exquisite cheeses. The legendary Fernand Point once said. "Once you taste the cheese you'll immediately understand why they made that guy Marcellin a saint."

Les Halles de Lyon

102 Cours Lafayette

No website

Chocolate passion is real at Bernachon, with 50+ years of experience and a deep love of all things chocolate and sweet behind it. Passion comes in many forms chez Bernachon where they actually make most of the chocolate used for their flavorful confections, scented with an orgy of pistachios, citrus, marzipan, hazelnut paste, and coffee. The liquid liqueur centers are as delicious as they are easy to spill all over your clothes. My favorites, palets d'or or golden disks, are sensuously smooth bittersweet centers have no flavoring added to distract from the outstanding flavor of the chocolate itself. After dipping each is decorated with a shred of gold leaf.

Another impressive thing about the Bernachon family is their love of sharing their knowledge. When the late Robert Steinberg decided to retire from his medical practice and pursue his lifelong dream of becoming a chocolate maker, he went to Bernachon to learn his craft. That knowledge was the basis for the wildly successful Scharffen Berger chocolate company which Steinberg founded along with John Scharffenberger. Going to Lyon and not going to Bernachon would be like going to the movies and keeping your eyes closed...

Bernachon

42 Cours Franklin-Roosevelt

69006 Lyon

Phone: 04 7824 3798

www.bernachon.com 

Out in the Country: A Few of the Outstanding Restaurants of Southern Burgundy

La Pyramide is where it all started and Point's widow Mado did her best to run the restaurant and little hotel after his death. While the cooks trained by Point remained everything was as during his lifetime, but eventually they began to move on, retire, or find other jobs and the restaurant lost all its stars and persisted for a while as a ghost of its

former glory. La Pyramide is back and as healthy as it ever was, though Point's physically and spiritually enormous presence are no longer. It's about a 20 to 30 minute train ride from Lyon to Vienne, a perfect outing for lunch in good weather. Today the restaurant is owned by its former chef, Patrick Henriroux and the current kitchen chef is 35 year old Christian Nee, a winner of the coveted Meilleur Ouvrier de France distinction. And they have regained two of their lost Michelin stars.

La Pyramide

14 Boulevard Fernand Point

38200 Vienne

Phone: 04 7453 0196

www.lapyramide.com 

I confess, I've never been a great admirer of Bocuse and my hair just stood on end when I saw that he's offering some wacky interpretation of la Mere Fillioux' capon for a mere 165 Euros for 2 people. And that's only one course in the meal. Anyway, if you want to indulge, it's about a 20-minute cab ride from Lyon and your meal will be quite an experience to remember. And get a picture of that chicken for your grandchildren... Bocuse has also opened 5 brasseries in Lyon, full information on the website.

Bocuse

40 Rue de la Plage

69660 Collonges au Mont d'Or

Phone: 04 7242 9090

www.bocuse.fr 

Chez la Mere Blanc was started by Georges Blanc's grandparents and the name persisted until the mid-eighties when Georges Blanc decided to get over his well-known shyness and make the restaurant, which has since grown to an enormous complex of spa, several restaurants, a golf club, facilities for other sports, shops and hotel, his own. Today he presides over his vast little empire in the village of Vonnas while his sons Georges and Frederic are in the kitchen. Don't miss the Bresse chicken served with Blanc's grandmother's ethereally delicate potato crepes, long a specialty of the house. Set menus run 130 to 190 Euros, but this is a place where every penny is worth it. The setting, the service, and the quality of everything including the napkin on your lap, all conspire to give you a true luxury experience. You'll have to make a day of it unless you drive to Vonnas from Lyon. Take the one-hour train ride to Macon after breakfast and have a look around. The ten-minute train ride from Macon to Vonnas is timed to get you there around 12:30 pm, just in time for a little aperitif before lunch. And if you take the train you can indulge in some of the 130,000 bottles of wine available.

Georges Blanc

Place du Marché

01540 Vonnas

Phone: 04 7450 9090

www.georgesblanc.com 

The food world bitterly mourned the untimely passing of brilliant chef Alain Chapel in 1990 at 52. I was fortunate to have dined there once in the early eighties and it was the ultimate 3-star experience. On arrival my 3 friends and I were ushered into a 500 square foot wood-paneled salon where we had an aperitif and perused the menu. Every few minutes there was a knock at the door and a waiter would deliver a little basket of fried whitebait or a few crisp gougères to nibble on. After ordering we were led to the table dominated by a centerpiece of a priceless Baccarat

rooster and heavy water glasses from the same maker with the stems set at the side of the bowl above rather than in the center. I was totally drunk, but not from the aperitif, but from the stupefying elegance of every detail. The only dish I remember was a mussel bisque garnished with half a dozen savory poached meringues each of which was surmounted by a generous spoonful of black caviar. I'm sure I heard someone across the room swoon at some point during the evening.

Today, Chapel's widow and son run the restaurant with kitchen chef Philippe Jousse who trained under Chapel. Jousse has free rein of the menu with one proviso: 50% of the dishes must at all times have been originated by Chapel himself. I can't wait to go back. By the way, it's an under-30-minute direct train ride from Lyon to Mionnay.

Alain Chapel

01930 Mionnay

Phone: 04 7891 8202

www.alainchapel.fr 

Beaujolais: Easy to Drink, Controversial too...

Some parts of the Beaujolais vineyard area have been cultivated with vines since Roman times. It took some heavy marketing during the past 30 years or so to ensure the popularity and eventual fall from grace of Beaujolais Nouveau, though. But I'm getting ahead of myself.

The Beaujolais vineyards have always been prolific – sometimes they top production in most of the other parts of Burgundy combined. A relatively thin-skinned grape, low in tannins, Gamay is responsible for the fruity flavor of good Beaujolais, always drunk relatively young and a little cooler than most other red wines.

Beaujolais Nouveau is the new wine which has just been made and has finished fermenting. I remember when the first case was ceremoniously unloaded from its transatlantic flight at Kennedy airport and it was an event that made the news in all print and broadcast media. What was a fun novelty once a year started to go into massive overproduction so that after the 2001 vintage more than a million cases of mostly Beaujolais Nouveau were destroyed or distilled. Consumer discontent with what had come to be perceived as low-quality wine was blamed for the overages. Then a French wine critic used a dirty expletive to describe the wine and Lyon Mag, an employee-owned publication, carried an account of the comment. The Beaujolais producers sued the magazine for defaming a French product and they won, a higher court later overturning the verdict and decreeing that the Beaujolais producers should pay the court costs.

Still in all, Beaujolais can be an excellent wine when the occasion demands something light and fruity. American wine expert Karen McNeil once remarked that Beaujolais is the only white wine that happens to be red and that's a good rule of thumb for enjoying it.

Choose a good quality Beaujolais and drink it within 3 years of its vintage and you'll have an enjoyable experience. Also, opt for a better quality one by choosing a Beaujolais cru – a wine that bears the name Brouilly, Cote de Brouilly, Chiroubles, Régnié, Saint-Amour, Julié纳斯, Chénas, Moulin-a-Vent, or Morgon. And eat anything you please with it – that's what they do in Lyon.

Recipe: Cervelle de Canut (Silk Weavers' Brains)

Because it's white and tender, the cheese spread earned the name of "brains" because of the similarity in texture and appearance to cooked calves brains. Serve it with slices of baguette dried out and toasted in a 375 degree oven.

Makes 6 generous servings

- 1 pound French fromage blanc or firm whole-milk ricotta
- 2 tablespoons heavy cream or crème fraîche
- 1 tablespoon red wine vinegar
- 2 tablespoons flavorful olive oil
- Salt and freshly ground pepper to taste
- 1 tablespoon finely chopped shallot
- 1 clove garlic, peeled and minced or gated
- 2 tablespoons finely sliced chives
- 2 tablespoons chopped flat-leaf parsley
- 2 tablespoons chopped chervil, optional, it's not easy to find

1. Place the cheese in a mixing bowl and beat it smooth with a rubber spatula, beating in the cream.
2. Beat in the vinegar and oil, not too much salt, and the pepper. Taste and adjust seasoning if necessary – it shouldn't be too salty.
3. Beat in all the remaining ingredients. Scrape the cheese into a serving bowl, cover with plastic wrap, and refrigerate until ready to serve.
4. To serve, spread the cooled toasted baguette slices with the cheese, or serve it on plates with the toast on the side.