

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 

Paris

Every time I go back to visit Paris I think of the title of one of my favorite Josephine Baker songs: *Me Revoilà Paris* (I'm Back Again, Paris). Although the City of Light usually seems to have been getting along just fine without me, arriving in Paris again always fills me with a combination of excitement and dread: the former just to be there and the latter that I might have forgotten to make a restaurant reservation... Depending on where you want to enjoy meals, it's prudent to reserve in advance. For an ultra-fancy 3- [Michelin] star establishment, I would do so at least 2 months in advance, and be prepared to switch dates if necessary. Sometimes they only take a month's worth of reservations at a time, but it's best not to be caught short. For new and perennially popular places the same lead time is best. For the little bistro around the corner, you might be able to look in at lunch and get a table at the hour you like that evening, but as I said, I don't like to take chances. Even for neighborhood places, I like to reserve at least a week in advance. And don't forget that lunch is usually easier to reserve than dinner.

Many thanks to my dear friend Dorie Greenspan, part-time Paris resident for the past 12 years, for her suggestions. Take a look at her blog, www.doriegreenspan.com for great Paris suggestions all year long. And look for her books *Baking from My Home to Yours* (Houghton Mifflin, 2006) and the forthcoming *Around the French Table*. Here are a few of the best of the best:

All the Foie Gras You Can Eat

Yves Camdeborde's newest effort that includes the adjacent Relais Saint-Germain hotel is a tiny place called le Comptoir (the Counter). They're serving the same gutsy and distinctive food that made his former effort, La Regalade, famous. Be prepared for lots of impeccably prepared foie gras, great slow-cooked dishes such as beef cheeks with carrots, patés, charcuterie, and hearty foods that this native of Southwestern France is noted for. At lunch there are no reservations, but our 11:45AM arrival on line on a cold day right after Christmas guaranteed us a table as soon as the doors opened at noon. At dinner, reservations are taken for a set menu of appetizer, fish course, meat course, cheese, and dessert. If you want to go for dinner, reserve way in advance.

Le Comptoir

Hotel Relais Saint-Germain
9 carrefour de l'Odeon
75006 Paris
Phone: 011 331 44 22 07 97

Robuchon Redux

Famed Parisian master chef Joel Robuchon has opened a couple of less stately places since leaving his well-known and much regretted Jamin. One of them, La Table de Joel Robuchon, is a casual place that embodies all of the fine food of the chef's earlier days. With two Michelin stars, it's hardly the little bistro on the corner, but it's still a good value and much less expensive than other restaurants of similar quality. Remember to reserve well in advance.

La Table de Joel Robuchon
16 avenue Bugeaud
75116 Paris
Phone: 011 331 56 28 16 16

Three-Star Bargain

If you go to Le Grand Véfour for lunch, you can enjoy a prix-fixe menu and even have a decent bottle of wine and get away with under a hundred Euros, no mean feat considering what restaurant prices are worldwide these days. The room is resplendent with gilded mirrors and chandeliers and has been in continuous operation since the 1700's. Napoleon himself dined there as did all the luminaries of the arts including Colette and Jean Cocteau. The restaurant was for many years under the leadership of Raymond Oliver, the chef who brought cooking to French television in the 1960's. Nowadays the kitchens are ably overseen by Guy Martin who has infused the menu with a contemporary lightness that sacrifices none of the delicacy required in such an elegant setting.

Le Grand Véfour
17 rue de Beaujolais
75001 Paris
011 331 42 96 56 27

Lunch at the Bon Marché

I always stop and pick up some fun jams, mustards, and other condiments at the ground-floor food department of the Bon Marché, called the Grande Epicerie de Paris (Big Paris Grocery Store). Whenever I stop there, I never neglect to go to the floor above for a coffee, snack, or lunch at Delicabar, which has to be the world's best department store restaurant. There are tables and a counter, which is my favorite spot so I can take my time and peruse Chef Sebastien Gaudard's magnificent pastries on display there. Gaudard was formerly the chef at Fauchon, so he knows a thing or two about making good desserts, pastries of all kinds, as well as excellent chocolates. The menu features great soups, salads, and my favorite, a daily selection of delicate vegetable tarts, my usual choice before attacking the desserts. Gaudard's business partner Helene Samuel is formerly of the Ducasse restaurant empire and keeps the front of the house moving as the hungry shoppers storm

the restaurants 70 indoor seats. In good weather there are another 70 on an outdoor terrace, but I've never sat there, it's always the counter for me.

Delicabar

At the Bon Marché Rive Gauche

26-38 rue de Sèvres, on the floor above the Grande Epicerie

75007 Paris

Open the same hours as the store, until 7PM most days, Thursdays until 9PM, Saturday until 8PM, closed Sunday

The Best Pastry Shop in Paris

If you don't already know about Pierre Hermé, the best party chef in France, one stop at one of his two left-bank shops will make you want to be his best friend. Hermé comes from a pastry making family in Alsace and has been at the workbench and in front of the oven since he was old enough to stand on his own. His early days in Paris made him the youngest lead chef for 1960's pastry maven Gaston Le Notre. After that Hermé went on to preside at Fauchon, and Ladurée, one of the oldest pastry shops in Paris still in continuous operation, before going out on his own. His creations are not merely fine desserts and pastries, they are works of art. And not because they're pretty to behold, which they are, but because of the subtle interplay of flavors, textures and temperatures that make his desserts unique. Whether it's a cake, a tart, an ice cream sandwich, or a macaroon sandwiched with delicate butter cream, Hermé's creations are delicious and always memorable. I always pick up a box of goodies to enjoy back at the hotel when those midnight cravings hit, something I wouldn't do anywhere else in the world.

Pierre Hermé

72 rue Bonaparte

75006 Paris

Phone: 011 331 43 54 47 77

Both open Tuesday to Sunday 10AM to 7PM

Also

185 rue de Vaugirard

75015 Paris

Phone: 011 331 47 83 89 96

Fine Chocolates

Right near Odeon on the boulevard Saint-Germain, you'll find some of the best chocolates in France. The work of master chocolatier Patrick Roger, the tiny shop sells both pre-packaged assortments and individual chocolates on about 30 different flavors, so you can make up your own assortments if you wish. The fine chocolates have mostly delicately flavored chocolate cream centers, but there are also some made from flavored almond paste which are delicate and delicious. Don't be surprised if the chocolates are a little pricey, they're worth it.

Chocolaterie Patrick Roger

108 boulevard Saint-Germain

75006 Paris

Phone: 011 331 43 29 38 42

Wine in Paris

There aren't many better places to enjoy fine wines than in France, and certainly the best of what's available is easy to find in Paris. Even though I know a little about French wine I often put myself in the hands on a good sommelier and ask for a recommendation. So after everyone has decided what they're going to order, I usually ask for suggestions on wines, especially if the wine list is as thick as the Manhattan phone book, or I don't recognize much of what's available. Now if you're in the mood to buy some wine (I always wedge a bottle or two of Champagne into the hotel's mini-bar), you can do no better than to go to La Dernière Goutte (The Last Drop), a small friendly shop right behind the church of Saint-Germain des Pres. American born owner Juan Sanchez stocks only the best French wines, champagnes, and alcohols, and he or any of his accommodating staff will be happy to show you around and suggest some wines for immediate consumption or for bringing home. Right around the corner, Sanchez has a casual restaurant with excellent food situated in premises that were once a fish market, so he decided to name the place Fish – a good choice for a casual meal at lunch or dinner.

La Dernière Goutte

6 rue de Bourbon le Chateau

75006 Paris

Phone: 011 331 43 29 11 62

Fish

69 rue de Seine

75006 Paris

Phone: 011 331 43 54 34 69

RECIPE: MADELEINES, LEMON-SCENTED SHELL-SHAPED CAKES

I love recipes that have an interesting history. The story of madeleines, the little shell-shaped cakes, is riddled with literary reference and legend. The famous early-twentieth century French novelist, Marcel Proust, refers to them at the beginning of the first book of his multi-volume autobiographical novel, usually referred to in English as Remembrance of Things Past. In the first novel of the series, Swann's Way, Proust refers to having a bit of madeleine soaked in linden flower tea, given to him by his mother, and the taste provokes a rush of memories of his early life that eventually form the plot of Swann's Way.

The other interesting reference to madeleines is made by Polish-born French scientist and radio food personality of the 1940's and 50's, Eduard de Pomiane. It occurs in a translation of what I believe are transcriptions of some of his radio shows, in a British-published book called Cooking with Pomiane, (Roy Publishers, 1961) by Peggy Benton. The story goes like this: A baker, Pomiane says in 1551, decides to embark on a pilgrimage and leave his young, pretty wife in charge of the bakery. After a little while, a handsome young man happens into the bakery and the wife asks him to stay – not necessarily to bake cakes! The baker returns unexpectedly and finds his wife with the young man and threatens to kill them both if they can't produce 18 cakes in an hour. Fearing for his life, the young man prays to Saint Mary Magdalen (la Madeleine in French) – Pomiane says that she understands those who have sinned – and the saint miraculously appears and creates 18 shell-shaped cakes (the shape hearkening back to the pilgrim's alms container). Before leaving she enjoins the young man to amend his ways. The baker returns and everyone lives happily ever after – and the cakes are named madeleines, in honor of their maker. Pomiane states that the story comes from a book called Le Pâtissier de Bellone written by another scientist, Charles Nicolle, a Nobel Laureate in medicine.

The version of the recipe here comes from a well-known Parisian pastry shop called Lerch, owned and operated by Andre Lerch, an Alsatian pastry chef. Thanks to my dear friend, Dorie Greenspan for sharing the recipe from her book, Paris Sweets (Broadway, 2002).

Makes about a dozen 3-inch shell shaped cakes

3/4 cup all-purpose flour (spoon flour into dry-measure cup and level off)
1/2 teaspoon baking powder
2 large eggs
1/2 cup sugar
2 teaspoons finely grated lemon zest
2 teaspoons vanilla extract
5 tablespoons unsalted butter, melted and cooled

One Madeleine pan with 12 cavities, buttered and floured

1. Stir the flour and baking powder together and set aside.
2. Whisk the eggs by hand in the bowl of an electric mixer and whisk in the sugar in a stream. Whisk in the lemon zest and vanilla.
3. Place the bowl on the mixer with the whisk attachment and whip the mixture on medium high speed for about 2 or 3 minutes, or until it is light and fluffy.
4. Remove the bowl from the mixer and fold in the flour mixture. After the flour has been absorbed, fold in the butter.
5. Cover the bowl and chill the batter for 3 hours or overnight – chilling the batter helps the madeleines to develop the characteristic hump or bump on their undersides, though you can proceed immediately to the baking if you don't care about the bump.
6. When you are ready to bake the madeleines, set a rack in the middle level of the oven and preheat to 400 degrees.
7. Use a spoon to fill the cavities in the pan about 3/4 full.
8. Bake the madeleines for about 10 to 12 minutes, or until they are light golden and firm when pressed with a fingertip.
9. Invert the pan to the work surface and gently bang one of the sides of the pan to encourage the madeleines to fall out. Immediately transfer them to a rack, grooved side up, to cool completely. If some of the madeleines stick, use the point of a paring knife to loosen them around the edges.

Serving: Serve the madeleines with tea, of course.

Storage: On the day they are baked, keep them loosely covered with plastic wrap. Place in a tin or plastic container with a tight fitting cover for longer storage, but madeleines are best on the day they are baked.

VARIATION: Substitute grated orange zest for the lemon zest and add 2 teaspoons orange flower water at the same time.