

Flavours of France



Eat...

TARTE À LA TOMATE (TOMATO TART)

INGREDIENTS

Serves 6

- 8–12 tomatoes
(A mixture of colours is nice)
- 200g puff pastry
- 2 tbsp Dijon mustard
- 1 tbsp polenta
- 1 tbsp thyme leaves
- about 1 tbsp good olive oil
- salt and freshly ground black pepper

METHOD

1. Slice the tomatoes 5mm thick and lay them out on a rack. Sprinkle a little salt over them and leave them for 20 minutes to render excess water. Pat the slices dry with a clean tea towel or some kitchen paper.
2. Preheat the oven to 200°C/Fan 180°C/Gas 6. Roll out the puff pastry to fit a 26cm flan ring. Prick the pastry with a fork, then line it with greaseproof paper and fill it with baking beans.
3. Blind-bake the tart case for 20 minutes. Remove the paper and beans and bake for another 10 minutes.
4. Remove the tart case from the oven. Leave the oven on.
5. Spread the mustard over the base of the tart, then sprinkle over the polenta. Arrange the tomato slices in the tart, then season with a little pepper and the thyme leaves.
6. Drizzle the olive oil over the tomatoes and bake the tart for 20 minutes. Serve hot, warm or cold.

The French Revolution
by Michel Roux Jr
(Seven Dials, £25).
Photography
by Cristian Barnett



On the menu next month:
Coffee and hazelnut meringues

Drink...



Alongside his regular Wine Quoter column, this month **Richard Hemming** continues with a new occasional series answering readers' wine questions

CELLAR SURGERY: YOUR WINE QUESTIONS ANSWERED – PART TWO

“When buying French wine, is it better to buy it ready bottled from France as opposed to containered and bottled in the UK? Is there any difference between the two?”

Packaging and logistics might not sound like the tastiest element of wine, but it is a vital factor in guaranteeing quality. To answer the question: these days, there shouldn't be any difference in quality between wines that are bottled in different countries, be that England, France or anywhere else.

Until the 1960s, it was quite normal for wine to be exported to London by the barrel and then bottled by the merchant on arrival. In those days, wine was not the daily drink it is now, and merchants mostly dealt in the fine red wines of Bordeaux and Burgundy.

As bottling technology improved and became more affordable, producers began bottling their own wine in situ, and it became a mark of

quality to emblazon ‘*mis en bouteille au château*’ across the label. The thinking was that producers who had complete control over the production process could ensure their wine was in absolutely perfect condition.

Whether that was true or not, estate bottling became synonymous with quality. Today, however, improvements in bulk transport – as well as concerns over the cost and environmental impact of shipping wine in heavy glass bottles – has meant that wine is increasingly shipped en masse and bottled in the country of sale, with no compromise on quality.

These days, wine drinkers needn't worry whether a wine is bottled at source or not – and below are some examples that will prove it!



Château Pabau 1962 Haut-Médoc (£60 winetrove.co.uk)

This particular red Bordeaux was bottled by Justerini & Brooks, the London merchants that have sold wine to every British monarch since George III. This château is not a particularly celebrated one, although the 1962 vintage was pretty good. This isn't just mature Bordeaux, but a historical relic from a bygone era – and in that context, the price seems very fair.

Domaine San de Guilhem 2017 Côtes de Gascogne (£23.90 per three-litre bag-in-box, bibwine.co.uk)

The vast majority of French wines aren't shipped to Britain in bulk because the short distances involved don't offer economies of scale. However, this new, innovative bag-in-box range is shipped in a 1,000 litre tank then packaged in England. Using modern bag-in-box packaging makes this great value and 100% reliable: for equivalent to £8 per bottle, this white blend is zippy, citric and gluggable.



London Cru, Cabernet Sauvignon 2014 EU Wine (£10 roberson.co.uk)

Something a bit different: this wine is made in London, not from imported wine but imported grapes! Cabernet Sauvignon grapes are shipped from the Roussillon region of southern France in refrigerated containers, and fermented in south-west London. To taste it, you would never know – it's a modern, fruity, hearty style that evokes the delicious heat and spice of the Mediterranean coast.