

Flavours of France

FOOLPROOF BRIOCHE

INGREDIENTS

Makes 1 large brioche

- 500g (3½ cups) strong white bread flour
- 7g (1 tsp) instant yeast
- 2 eggs, beaten
- 200ml (scant 1 cup) whole milk, gently warmed (but not hot!)
- 2 heaped tbsp granulated or caster sugar
- 1 tsp salt
- 100g (generous ⅓ cup) butter, diced and softened
- extra butter and flour for the tin



Eat...

METHOD

Sift the flour into the bowl of a food mixer and stir in the yeast.

Add the beaten eggs, milk, sugar, salt and finally the butter and mix on slow speed to begin with.

When everything is evenly combined, increase the speed and continue mixing until you have a smooth dough that is soft and elastic but not too sticky.

Transfer the dough to a large bowl, cover with clingfilm (plastic wrap) and leave in a warm place for one to two hours or until it has doubled in size.

Punch the dough down and then knead lightly to burst any air bubbles inside. Divide into three equal pieces and roll each into a long, plump sausage. Brush a loaf tin (loaf pan) – the one I use is 30cm x 13cm (12in x 5in) and 8cm (3¼in) deep – with melted butter and dust with flour. Plait (braid) the dough sausages together and then drop the plait carefully into the tin. Cover with clingfilm and leave in a warm place to prove for about 15 minutes or until the dough just reaches the top of the tin.

Meanwhile, preheat the oven to 200°C/180°C fan/400°F/Gas 6. Bake the brioche for about 25 minutes or until well risen and golden brown. Remove from the oven, turn the brioche out of the tin and leave to cool on a wire rack.

IN THE UNLIKELY EVENT...

There is little chance of you having any left over the next day but, should that ever happen or you missed a bit first time, on no account throw it away as it will make the best French toast in the world.

Extracted from *Just A French Guy Cooking* by Alexis Gabriel Aïnouz (Quadrille, £15) Photography © Dan Jones



On the menu next month:
Tarte à la tomate

Drink...



Alongside his regular Wine Quoter column, **Richard Hemming** offers his expertise to answer readers' wine questions

CELLAR SURGERY: YOUR WINE QUESTIONS ANSWERED – PART ONE

Q I know that champagne should be served 'chilled' but what exactly does that mean? Is there an ideal temperature that it should be served at, and how does it affect the taste/drinking experience if you get it 'wrong'?

A The quick answer to this question is that champagne (and all sparkling wine) should be served at between six and 10 degrees Celsius, and there are two important reasons why.

Firstly, the volatility of aroma compounds varies at different temperatures, and white wines are generally more delicious when chilled. Coolness also emphasises acidity, making champagne seem crisp and refreshing.

Secondly, cooler temperatures restrain the energy of the dissolved carbon dioxide in champagne, making it safer to open, and preserving the fizz in your glass for longer – although not everyone agrees on this.

But there's little doubt that tepid champagne is not a desirable experience! In practical terms, serving champagne straight from the fridge should be fine, as most domestic appliances operate within the ideal champagne-serving temperature.

However, a bottle served straight from an ice bucket might be too cold – and when the temperature gets that low, flavour compounds are suppressed.

Whereas if you've got a wine fridge or a cellar that hovers around 12 °C, you might want to chill your champagne a little further before serving – assuming you have the time or patience!

Below are three French fizzes to experiment with.

Do you have a wine question for Richard Hemming? Email it to editorial@livingfrance.com



Taittinger, Prélude Grands Crus NV champagne (£44.90 Hedonism Wines)

There's no shortage of premium champagnes to recommend, but Prélude is one of my best buys for delivering top quality at a relatively affordable price. It's a blend of chardonnay and pinot noir that comes only from the best vineyard sites, known as *grands crus*. The richness and persistence of flavour makes this comparable with luxury cuvées such as Dom Pérignon – but at less than half the price.

Bruno Paillard, Première Cuvée NV champagne (£33.90 Hedonism Wines)

With its slender neck and classic gold label, this under-the-radar champagne brand looks as good as its tastes. It is a Pinot Noir-dominant blend, with a lower dosage of sugar than most champagnes – known as Extra Brut. The result is a stylish, precise, vivid champagne with ripe apple fruit and luscious creamy texture.



Gratien, The Society's Celebration Brut 2015 Crémant de Loire (£12.95 The Wine Society)

This sparkling wine doesn't come from the champagne region, so it can't use the c-word, but by using similar grapes and production techniques, it certainly produces a comparable style. Made in the Loire Valley from chardonnay and pinot noir plus local varieties cabernet franc and chenin blanc, this is a simple but satisfying sparkler at an unbeatable price.