

Fait maison

Recipes from a Kiwi in France



Rachel Panckhurst

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To my parents, Fay and John, who can remember in detail many meals eaten in different countries over the years. My love for food, partaken with family and friends, dates back to my childhood. And to my French-born son, Saji, who will, I hope, continue the tradition through to the next generation.

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Introduction

What better way to celebrate three decades of living in a country with such respect for food than to write a book combining my own recipes with those from friends, family and colleagues?

Over the years, I've gathered recipes for classic and everyday French cuisine, alongside recipes and tips from four other continents. Some are adapted to the French palate, others are not. Some contributors shared a connection with France or the French language (as in Quebec or North/West Africa). Sometimes a recipe has been included from those jewels of the Pacific, New Zealand and Australia, just because a homesick Kiwi found she couldn't live without them — and her French friends loved them.

France has always been a cultural melting pot and its geographical position is such that French cuisine is influenced by many other traditions, although French patriots won't necessarily admit to this. I've witnessed this assimilation happening ever since I arrived here. In the south of France, there is a high population of North Africans and Spaniards, largely as a result of past wars and colonisation. Such has been their influence on food in France, that some French, asked to name their national dish, joke that it's 'couscous' rather than the cliché 'frog's legs' or 'snails'.



A French kitchen in the south of France

My favourite cuisine is Mediterranean, including simple French food from the south (with liberal use of olive oil and fresh market produce), and dishes from North Africa since cooking in the south of France invariably includes recipes from the other side of the Mediterranean. Some foods are

served raw, or marinated and slightly cooked, others are steamed or baked. I don't often fry food, unless it's the middle of winter and I feel like sinking my teeth into a good steak, and even that often tastes better grilled.

In translating some of these recipes from French, I've also taken into account utensils and measures used in preparation. In France, metric measurement is the rule, while Anglo-Saxons still often use the imperial 'cup', for example. In France, a teaspoon becomes a coffee spoon or *cuillère à café* or more simply *petite cuillère*, and traditional French ovens are often gas, and therefore measured by thermostat, not always in Celsius. I have standardised these measures for international use. Unless otherwise specified, most recipes cater for four to six people.



Yeast/baking powder: In France, self-raising flour is seldom used. Plain flour is preferred, with added (11 g) sachets of *levure chimique* — chemical yeast — of which the Anglo-Saxon equivalent is baking powder. It contains starch, sodium bicarbonate and sodium pyrophosphate. All of the recipes in this book use this specification. For baking bread, one uses *levure boulangère*, which is dry baker's yeast.

Food is a way of life in France. I hope this book of simple, everyday recipes blending in international influences will give a new perspective on just how closely food is entwined with daily life in France.

The recipes I've chosen are all quick and easy and use readily available ingredients. Most are for everyday. Those suitable for special occasions take hardly any longer to prepare.

I hope you find the recipes as delicious as I do!

Bon appétit!