

Foie Gras

The History of Foie Gras

- A food which has its origins on the banks of the Nile -

It was the Ancient Egyptians who first enjoyed eating geese that migrated to the banks of the Nile. The flavour came from the reserves of fat the geese built up for their return journey. However, the goose's liver itself was first brought to prominence by the Romans way back in the First Century, when they ate it with figs.

For a long time the Jews of Central Europe were renowned for being the only people to know the secret of how to make a perfect *foie gras*; goose liver was not forbidden under kosher law. But already, in Alsace and south-west France, farmers were beginning to produce *terrines* and *pâtés* from geese.

Foie gras, served to Louis XV, achieved fame during the reign of Louis XVI, thanks to a particular goose *pâtés en croute* recipe. It also inspired writers such as George Sand and Alexander Dumas, and even musicians like Rossini.

The development of refrigerated transport led to *foie gras*' prestige spreading not just to the rest of France but also throughout the world.

How to recognise Foie Gras

- The different types available -

A *foie gras* label must contain as well as the name of the producer, certain exact information: list of ingredients, sell-by date, the temperature at which it should be kept and its production batch number.

Designation

The term '*foie gras*' is reserved solely for a product which contains 'fatty liver'.

- ❖ **Le foie gras entier:** contains only whole *foie gras* or one or more "lobes" (halves) of *foie gras*.
- ❖ **Le foie gras:** a blend of pieces of *foie gras* lobes.
- ❖ **Le foie gras block:** a blend of recomposed *foie gras* which may contain pieces of *foie gras* lobes.

There are also several different preparations of *foie gras*, the content of which can vary.

- ❖ *le parfait de foie gras:* contains a minimum of 75% of *foie gras*.
- ❖ *medaillons, pâtés, mousses* and liver *galantines:* contains at least 50% of *foie gras*.

Getting to know Foie Gras

- A family of different products -

There isn't just one type of *foie gras* but several, which gives the consumer the opportunity to find his favourite.

Goose or duck?

Duck *foie gras* is more 'rustic'. It tantalises with its stronger taste and earthy flavours. On the other hand, *foie gras* from a goose is more delicate and charms with its more gentle and creamy taste. Duck *foie gras* is smaller (450-500g) than goose *foie gras* (700-800g).

Foie gras truffe (foie gras truffles)

If it is called '*foie gras* with truffles', then at least three per cent of the products must be truffles. If the percentage is between one and three, then this is clearly stated on the label.

Le foie gras cru (raw foie gras)

Generally vacuum-packed, it should be an attractive colour: an ivory white pink or yellow depending on the diet of the goose or duck, and it must be firm yet soft to the touch. It can be kept for up to a week between 1 and 3°C.

Le foie gras mi-cuit (ou semi-conserved - part-cooked)

Available in tins, jars or is vacuum-packed. Vacuum-packed, it can be kept for several weeks at 1-3°C, and for several months in tins or jars.

Le foie gras appertisé (long conservation)

Available in tins or jars and can be kept for several years at room temperature.

Serving Foie Gras

- Preparation -

Foie gras should be placed in the fridge in its packaging several hours before being served and then taken out 20 minutes prior to the meal. Slice it on serving so it retains its colour and flavour.

A non-serrated knife should be used to cut it, rinsed in hot water and wiped after cutting each slice. To keep it fresh on the table, place the plate on a bed of ice.

As a starter, serve 50-70g per person, and as a main course between 100-130g.

And to Accompany

- Delicious combination -

Bread, wine and *foie gras* make an excellent combination of fabulous foods. However, you can eat *foie gras* with many other foods as long as you follow some simple rules.

❖ **Which bread?**

Avoid fancy breads. Select a simple country loaf or even better a baguette. There's no need to butter it, just place the *foie gras* on the bread.

❖ **Which wine?**

Because of the many rich flavours of *foie gras*, you can serve it with many different wines, but they mustn't be too complex. So avoid wines that are either too light or too young.

Sweet white wines:

The most well-known wine to accompany *foie gras* is a Sauterne. But you must also try some other wines from the south-west, such as a Jurancon, Monbazillac or a smooth Bergerac. It will also go with an Alsace, but remember to choose a late harvest one.

Dry white wines:

A grand cru Côtes de Beaune or even a light champagne go very well with *foie gras*, as do white wines from Graves or Chateauf-du-Pape.

Red wines:

Foie gras can also be eaten with grand-cru from Médoc (Margaux or Pauillac), a cru from Libournais and even with wines containing a lot more tannin like Madiran and Cahors.

FOIE GRAS ON POTATO AND ONION GALETTES

Ingredients: (serves four)

250g goose or duck foie gras
250g Charlotte potatoes
125g onions
12 small girolle mushrooms in oil
2 sprigs of thyme
2 pinches of grated nutmeg
2 tbsps oil
30g butter
1 tsp acacia honey
salt and pepper

Preparation time: 40 minutes

Cooking time: 25 minutes

Finely grate the potatoes. Squeeze the excess water out of them by wrapping them in kitchen paper then pressing firmly on them with the palms of your hands. Place them in a large bowl and add the salt, pepper, nutmeg and thyme. Peel and finely chop the onions. Put them in a frying pan with the two tablespoons of oil, the honey and half the butter.

Cook them over a gentle heat, turning them from time to time, until they are transparent. When ready, add to the potato slices, ensuring that they are well mixed. Divide into four.

Heat the oil in a large frying pan. Add the rest of the butter. Place the four balls of potato mixture in the pan, flattening them with a spatula into the form of a small pancake of about 1cm thickness. Allow them to cook for 6 minutes on each side. The galettes should be creamy in the middle and crunchy on the outside.

Drain on a piece of kitchen paper and then place on four heated plates. Cut the foie gras into 4 slices. Place a slice on each galette and decorate with the mushrooms. Serve immediately.

FOIE GRAS WITH GOLDEN APPLES

Ingredients: (serves four)

1 raw duck foie gras weighing 500g
800g Royal Gala apples
2 tbsps acacia honey
1 tbsp dry white vermouth
1 tbsp cider vinegar
2 tbsps lemon juice
½ tsp "five spice"
½ tsp fine sea salt
1 tbsp brown sugar
25g butter

Preparation time: 20 minutes

Cooking time: 1 hour 10 minutes

Preheat the oven to gas mark 6 (200°C). Peel the apples and cut each one into eight slices, removing the core and the pips. Place the apple slices in a buttered ovenproof dish, lightly dotting the top with butter. Add a light dusting of sugar, two tablespoons of water, then cover and leave in a warm oven for an hour.

Slice the foie gras obliquely into 1.5cm thick slices. Sprinkle with the rest of the salt and spices. Cook them in three batches in a non-stick frying pan, for 30 seconds each side, over a very hot heat, getting rid of the fat each time, before adding the next batch. When cooked, remove from the pan and allow to drain on a wire rack.

Add the honey to the pan and allow to caramelize. Add the vermouth and when it has evaporated, add the vinegar. When this has reduced by half, add the lemon juice. Mix for 10 seconds. Take off the heat. Divide the slices of foie gras between hot plates. Cover with the sauce and surround with the caramelized apples. Serve immediately.

FOIE GRAS SALAD

Ingredients: (Serves four)

200g preserved duck or goose foie gras
6 small Charlotte potatoes
2 sweet dried figs
1 celery heart
1 small red onion
1 tbsp slivered hazelnuts
2 tbsps dry white wine
1 tbsp sherry vinegar
2 tbsps peanut oil
1 tbsp hazelnut oil
salt and pepper

Preparation time: 20 minutes

Rinse the potatoes and put them in a pan. Cover them with cold water, bring to the boil, adding a pinch of salt. Let them cook for about 18 minutes, until the point of a knife pierces them easily.

At the same time, rinse the figs and cut them into small cubes. Rinse the celery and cut the sticks into thin slices. Grill the hazelnuts in a dry pan. Cut the foie gras into very fine slices.

Peel the onion and slice in fine rounds. Separate the rings of the onion slices.

In a bowl, whisk together the vinegar, the two oils and the salt and pepper.

Drain the potatoes. Peel them while they are still hot and cut them into fine slices. Place them in a salad bowl, adding the figs. Sprinkle the white wine over them and when absorbed, add the celery and the vinaigrette dressing. Mix together.

Divide the salad between plates. Garnish with the foie gras slices and the onion rings. Sprinkle the hazelnuts over the plates and serve immediately. You can also garnish this salad with lettuce.

FRESH PASTA WITH FOIE GRAS AND MOREL MUSHROOMS

Ingredients: (Serves four)

150g very cold part-cooked duck or goose foie gras
250g fresh tagliatelle
200ml double cream
20g dried morel mushrooms
2 tbsps veal stock
2 tbsps sherry or Madeira
2 pinches of grated nutmeg
20g butter
white pepper
20 chive stems

Preparation time: 20 minutes

Cooking time: 25 minutes

Rinse the mushrooms. Put them in a large bowl and cover them with 250ml of warm water. Allow them to swell for 8 hours then take them very gently out of the water. Keep 150ml of this water, being careful not to add any of the sandy deposits at the bottom of the bowl.

Put the veal stock in a medium-sized casserole. Add the water from the mushrooms, mixing them together. Bring to the boil, adding the cream, wine, salt and pepper, nutmeg and the mushrooms. Allow to simmer over a gentle heat for 12 minutes, stirring frequently.

At the same time, cut 100g of foie gras in fine pieces and place them on a plate covered with cling-film. Cut the rest into small cubes.

Cook the pasta "al dente" in boiling, salted water. Put into a salad bowl. Add the butter and mix together. Take the pan off the stove and add the cubes of foie gras to the sauce. Mix for 10 seconds with a spatula; the foie gras will melt.

Pour the contents of the pan over the pasta. Mix gently. Divide the pasta between four hot plates. Decorate with the chopped chives and serve immediately.