

Twinning Social 19th March 2017

"Let Them Eat Cake - an exploration of, and indulgence in, French Pâtisserie and Gateaux" with a cup of tea (or coffee) and optional glass of appropriate wine!

Madeleines

Langue du chat

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Gateaux St Honore

Floralis Moscatel Oro

Tea

Madeleines

"...little shell of cake, so generously sensual..."

Madeleines are little cakelike cookies that are baked in special molds that give them a delicate shell shape. According to one story the name "Madeleine" was given to the cookies by Louis XV to honor his father-in-law's cook Madeleine Paulmier. Louis first tasted them at the Chateau Commercy in Lorraine in 1755. Louis' wife, Marie introduced them to the court and they soon became all the rage at Versailles. Whatever the origins, they have become inextricably linked with the author Marcel Proust, who described them as "...little shell of cake, so generously sensual beneath the piety of its stern pleating."

From In Remembrances of Things Past, here is Proust's description:

...when one day in winter, on my return home, my mother, seeing that I was cold, offered me some tea, a thing I did not ordinarily take. I declined at first, and then, for no particular reason, changed my mind. She sent for one of those squat, plump little cakes called petites madeleines, which look as though they had been molded in the fluted valve of a scallop shell. And soon, mechanically, dispirited after a dreary day with the prospect of a depressing morrow, I raised to my lips a spoonful of the tea in which I had soaked a morsel of the cake.

No sooner had the warm liquid mixed with the crumbs touched my palate than a shiver ran through me and I stopped, intent upon the extraordinary thing that was happening to me. An exquisite pleasure had

invaded my senses, something isolated, detached, with no suggestion of its origin. And at once the vicissitudes of life had become indifferent to me, its disasters innocuous, its brevity illusory - this new sensation having had the effect, which love has, of filling me with a precious essence; or rather this essence was not in me, it-was-me. I had ceased now to feel mediocre, contingent, mortal. When could it have come to me, this all-powerful joy?

Langue du chat

A cat's tongue cookie is a type of cookie shaped like a cat's tongue (long and flat)^{[1][2][3]} from the Netherlands. They are sweet and crunchy.^[1] In Dutch, this cake is called *Katte tong*.^[4] It is also a popular snack in Indonesia where it is known as *Lidah kucing* while in the Philippines, it is known as *lengua de gato*.

Cat's tongue cookies made from dough of wheat flour mixed with butter, powdered sugar, and egg are then baked in the oven until cooked.^[4] Additional ingredients may include chocolate, citrus, and spices.^[1] They are typically prepared with a ganache, cream or jam filling, and sandwiched together.^{[1][5]} They are sometimes dipped in chocolate as part of their preparation.^[5] In France, the cookie is often served with sorbet or ice cream.^[5]

A cat's tongue mold pan may be used in their preparation, in which cookie dough is placed and then baked.^[1] In French, this pan is known as *langue-de-chat*.^[1] This pan is also used in the preparation of ladyfingers and *éclairs*.^[1] The mold is also referred to as a cat's tongue plaque.^[6]

In the Canary Islands, cat's tongue cookies are served with *bienmesabe*, a dessert dish.

Many food history books mention *Langue-de-chat*, a small, dry, finger-shaped biscuit whose name translates literally as "cat's tongue," but none provide much in the way of definitive history. We can surmise from the ingredients/method of cooking, the earliest cookies of this type might possibly date to the 17th century. At that time refined white sugar and piping bags (capable of extruding shapes) were popular with the wealthy classes of Northern Europe. Shaped sugar cookies and sweet biscuits (gemels, gimmows, sugar cakes etc.) date to Medieval times. Mexican wedding cakes, Russian tea cakes, Spanish *polvorones*, *melindros* and *biscochos* are all related. Our notes on these biscuits [here](#). Our culinary history sources do not credit a specific region of France for creating the first *Langues de Chat*. Presumably, the recipe evolved in regions rich with butter (north, central, mountains) rather than mediterranean areas featuring oil.

Picasso's *Still Life With Biscuits* may very well have featured *langes de chat*. The piped ridges might very well have intrigued Picasso's eye. [Still Life with Biscuits](#) (*langues de chat* on plate on right) is currently owned by the Cleveland Art Museum [OH].



Tarte au Citron

Thanks to the Roux brothers, Michel and Albert, the *tarte au citron* is now considered as much a quintessentially French a dessert as the *tarte tatin* or *crème brûlée*. The sibling chefs and restaurateurs

opened Le Gavroche in London in 1967, and it was there that their take on the classic lemon tart captured the imagination of all who heard about it.

Marco Pierre White was one of the chefs who trained at the Roux's Michelinstarred restaurant and, like the French original, his *tarte au citron* contains a creamy lemon custard filling. However, *pâtissiers* all over France have tried to put a unique twist on the tart, so some are prepared with a sharper-tasting curd mixture. This works especially well when topped with a really thick layer of fluffy white meringue and ever so lightly browned, an accent which transforms the dish into a *tarte au citron meringuée* – another staple of the extensive repertoire of delicate French desserts.

For one of the most delicious lemon tarts to be found in France, make your way to Menton on the Côte d'Azur, where they grow their very own 'Menton lemons', which possess their own distinctive taste, vibrant colour and shape. The commune of Menton produces more than 150 tonnes of lemons per year – more than enough for the Fête du Citron, celebrated each February. Menton lemons are made all the more delicious when used for the local *tarte au citron Mentonnais*, a variant which usually includes ground almonds.

Doigt de Charles Quint. A long sponge finger dipped in chocolate.

Charles V's finger is quite famous though I haven't anywhere come across another shop selling a sponge finger replica.

It turns out that Charles Quint (or V) was one of the most powerful rulers of the Middle Ages. During his reign as Holy Roman emperor from 1519 to 1556, he controlled territories spanning the globe, from Asia and Africa to the newly conquered Aztec and Inca empires in the Americas. The poor man was known to suffer from painful gout though that was a term then used to describe a number of symptoms in those days, all of which seem to be associated with a gluttonous and lazy lifestyle. His suffering, which began at the age of 28, affected his ability to write and travel – both of which are fairly essential when you rule an empire. Eventually, this caused him to give up the throne at the age of 56 and he died of malaria two years later. Before he was buried in a tomb in El Escorial monastery in San Lorenzo, one of his pinky fingertips was cut off as a religious relic (they did that in those days). The mummified morsel has been held for centuries at the monastery in a red velvet-lined box.

The "doigt de Charles Quint" cake is in honour of the great man's pinky...

Opera Cake

The creation of the cake goes back to 1955 when great French pastry chef Cyriaque Gavillon worked at the legendary Dalloyau shop in Paris. Dalloyau have been trading since 1682 and were suppliers to the court of Versailles. It was the perfect match when Cyriaque, a genius with patisserie and an artist who created the most amazing cakes and sugar decorations, and Dalloyau got together. When inventing the Opera cake he wanted to make something that in taking one bite, would give a taste of the whole cake. He worked on layers and tastes and came up with a wonderfully sophisticated cake. His wife told him it reminded her of the Paris Opera House, Palais Garnier. It was a name that stuck, the Opera cake was born.



Known throughout the world, the rectangular cake is made of three layers of Joconde almond flavoured sponge soaked in coffee syrup and topped with coffee butter cream and chocolate ganache. The top is covered with a deep dark chocolate icing.

Éclair

An éclair is an oblong pastry made with choux dough filled with a cream and topped with icing. The dough, which is the same as that used for profiterole, is typically piped into an oblong shape with a pastry bag and baked until it is crisp and hollow inside. Once cool, the pastry is then filled with a vanilla-, coffee- or chocolate-flavoured^[1] custard (*crème pâtissière*), or with whipped cream, or chiboust cream; and then iced with fondant icing.^[1] Other fillings include pistachio- and rum-flavoured custard, fruit-flavoured fillings, or chestnut purée. The icing is sometimes caramel, in which case the dessert may be called a bâton de Jacob.¹

The French Éclair is known around the world, it is one of the greatest cakes ever! Éclair means “flash of lightning” and quite why it’s called that is not 100% known but many say that it is an old joke of pastry makers that the éclair is eaten “in a flash”!

Antonin Carême (1784-1833), one of the first celebrity chefs, is attributed with making the éclair legendary by adding his magic touch to a cake previously known as “pain à la duchesse” or “petite duchesse”. Carême was the chef who baked Napoleon’s wedding cake and created gastronomic masterpieces for the Prince de Talleyrand at the Chateau of Valencay. He was invited to cook for the Romanovs in St. Petersburg and made soufflés flecked with real gold for the wealthy Rothschilds in Paris. His cookbooks published in Paris made him world famous.

An éclair is an oblong pastry made with choux pastry (the same dough used for profiteroles) and when baked, and cooled, it is filled with cream or crème patisserie that can be flavoured and topped with icing. The older version, the Duchesse style cake, included different types of pastry.

The most famous éclair is the chocolate one, in fact, there’s even a national day devoted to the chocolate éclair – June 22nd!

In France the éclair is revered and you will find a version in every patisserie. Filled with chocolate cream or fresh cream and topped with chocolate icing is how many like their éclair but you'll also find designer versions with unusual fillings and toppings. In Paris, for the last few years, Patisserie Fauchon have been creating glamorous éclairs to honour Paris Fashion Week (September) with flavours like foie gras and truffle, white chocolate and coconut, lemongrass and lime, pearls of honey with Chantilly cream and slivers of pistachio...

Éclair today, éclair tomorrow – they've been loved for almost two centuries and we still adore them!

Financiers

Originally made by the Visitandine order of nuns in the middle ages, the financier was popularized in the 19th century. The name *financier* is said to derive from the traditional rectangular mold, which resembles a bar of gold. According to another tradition, the cake became popular in the financial district of Paris surrounding the Paris stock exchange, as the cake could easily be stored in the pocket for long periods without being damaged

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Pierre Lacam, in "Memorial Historique de la Patisserie," published in 1890, wrote that the financier was created by a baker named Lasne, whose bakery on the Rue St.-Denis was near the Bourse, the financial center of Paris. Presumably, the rich little cake was named for the rich financiers who frequented his bakery. The cake was baked in rectangular molds, the shape of gold bars.

Macarons

Macarons or macaroons are those timeless little desert biscuits... fads may come and fads may go says Janine Marsh who knows a good macaron when she eats one – but macarons, those little aristocrats of the patisserie world, will always be in fashion.

Popular myth has it that macarons, the pretty little crunchy, soft biscuit cakes, came to France in 1533 when Catherine de Medici arrived from Italy to marry Henry II of France.

Macarons are certainly of Italian origin, possibly dating back as far as the 8th Century after almonds started to be imported to Venice.

They seem though to have become archetypically French over the centuries ensuing.

One of the legendary stories of macarons dates back to the 18th century in the city of Nancy in eastern France. At the Convent of the Dames du Saint Sacrement, the nuns baked macarons because meat was forbidden and the sweet little cakes were nutritious – and of course delicious.

In 1792, two of the nuns, Sisters Marguerite and Marie-Elisabeth, began selling macarons commercially to the general public after losing their home in the days of French Revolutionary chaos and anti-religious fervour.

Their little crispy rustic looking macaron biscuits became instantly popular and the secret recipe has been passed on from one generation to another. Today Maison des Soeurs Macaron in Nancy continues to produce the macarons to the same centuries old recipe, a single biscuit with a rough, cracked top and a scrumptiously soft and chewy inside.

Elsewhere in France there are other legends, more stories of the making and popularity of macarons including that of one of the most famous macaron outlets in Paris – Ladurée.

In 1862, Louis Ernest Ladurée created a bakery at 16 rue Royale in the heart of Paris. When it burned down, Ladurée rebuilt it and employed Jules Cheret, notable painter of the century, to redecorate the new bakery. Inspired by the techniques used to paint the ceilings of the Opera Garnier, he adorned the ceilings and walls. Over the years the bakery became well known for its beautiful interior and superior pastries, becoming one of the largest tea rooms in Paris. In the early 20th Century the grand-son of Louis Ernest Ladurée, came up with an idea to assemble the little macaron biscuits sandwiched by cream and it became a best-selling idea which made the macarons of Laduree their flagship product and famous all over the world.

Today in Paris there is one man who epitomises the making of a perfect macaron – Pierre Hermé of Paris is generally acknowledged to be the master . Described as a couturier of pastry, “the Picasso of Pastry” (Vogue) – his macarons are in a league of its own. For the last 15 years he has dominated the macaron market for enthusiastic gourmets.

So beloved are macarons in France that there is even a museum dedicated to them! The Musée de l’Amande et du Macaron in Montmorillon, Vienne, Poituo-Charente where you can learn about the history of this fascinating and enduring little cake and even have a tasting in the museum’s Winter Garden.

Eclairs may come and go, Cronuts (half croissant and half doughnut) may be the darling du jour, but the macaron will keep on going, changing flavours, sweet... savoury, vive la macaron!

What is the story of the mille-feuille?

The origin of the mille-feuille is unknown: some sources refer to François Pierre De La Varenne’s 1651 invention, later improved by the legendary Marie-Antoine Carême, and some others mention the Italian city of Naples as birthplace of this dessert. The “Neapolitan” adjective was later mangled into “Napoleon“, a name that became widespread in the 1800’s with the Napoleonic wars. For this reason, the mille-feuille is also known as Napoleon in many countries.

Mathematical demonstration that the mille-feuille does not contain a thousand layers (but almost!)

The French name “mille-feuille” (“*a thousand leaves*”) refers to the number of layers in the dough.

For this dessert, puff pastry is folded 6 times, and each fold increases the number of layers exponentially. In case you ever wondered how many actual layers there are in a mille-feuille, here is the answer:

Fold	Layers with a simple folding	Total layers
1	1+1+1	3
2	3+3+3	9
3	9+9+9	27
4	27+27+27	81
5	81+81+81	243

Gateaux St Honore

The cake was named in honour of the French patron saint of bakers and pastry chefs, Saint Honoré (Honoratus – died 600 AD), bishop of Amiens.

Saint Honore Patron Saint of French bakers

Born in Port-le-Grand (Ponthieu) near Amiens to a noble family, it is said he was an extremely virtuous man who resisted the trappings of promotion within the clergy but rose to the status of Bishops of Amiens. Legend has it that his nursemaid, who was baking bread when she heard of his elevation to Bishopric, was so astonished at the news that she refused to believe it. She declared only if the peel she was using turned into a tree could it possibly be true. Quite what bread she was making with peel is not clear but at any rate you will not be surprised to hear that the peel took root in the ground and grew into a Mulberry tree.

Several miraculous happenings were attributed to the Bishop during and after his lifetime and he was made a Saint. In 1202, a baker in Paris named Renaud Cherins donated land for a chapel to be built to honour the saint. The chapel became one of the richest in Paris, and gave its name to Rue du Faubourg Saint-Honoré. In 1400, the bakers of Paris established their guild in the church of Saint Honoratus, celebrating his feast on May 16 and spreading his cult.

In 1659, Louis XIV ordered that every baker should observe the feast of Saint Honoratus, and give donations in honour of the saint and for the benefit of the community.

History of the Saint Honore cakeIn the 1800's a pastry chef named Chiboust, who had a shop in Rue Saint Honoré created a cake called a Saint Honoré and it has remained a firm favourite ever since.

The basics though must include the traditional elements of a base which is traditionally puff pastry and choux pastry; profiteroles (cream puffs), dipped in caramelized sugar; chiboust cream, a type of crème patisserie (or sometimes Chantilly cream).