

Alsatian Flammkuchen Recipe

Follow the simple Flammkuchen recipe below and you'll receive rave reviews when you present family and friends with an authentic [Alsatian Flammkuchen](#).



Homemade Flammkuchen

Basic Flammkuchen Recipe (Tarte flambée).

- 1-14-16" really thin pizza-style yeast crust of your choice (frozen, fresh, non-gluten, or homemade)
- 1 small yellow onion finely chopped
- 3/4 – 1 cup (150 – 200 grams) of crème fraîche or sour cream
- 1/2 cup (110 grams) lardon, matchstick-cut pieces of bacon cut from the belly of pork

- Salt and pepper
- Fresh or dried thyme (optional)

Variations

Be creative as you can and make sure to enjoy the journey!

- Strasbourg (Alsatian recipe above and slices of Munster cheese).
- Veggie Flammkuchen (Cherry tomatoes, olives, onions, mushrooms.)
- Greek Flammkuchen (Feta cheese, green olives, spinach, red onions, dried Basil)

Directions

1. Pre-heat the oven to 450°F (230°C).
2. Place the prepared dough on a pizza stone or oven rack covered with baking paper.
3. Spread crème fraiche evenly onto dough, leaving 1/2 inch of outer edges free.
4. Sprinkle salt and pepper to taste on top of the crème fraiche.
5. Sprinkle the chopped onions evenly over the crème fraiche.
6. Next sprinkle the pancetta bits on top of the crust.
7. Place the Flammkuchen in the pre-heated oven and bake for about 8-10 minutes or until crust is crispy, but not too burnt.
8. Garnish with fresh or dried thyme.

Note: As oven temperatures vary, you'll need to carefully watch the Flammkuchen or it will indeed be a burnt mess – baked in the flames.

French Epiphany Cake Recipe (Galette des rois)

French Epiphany Cake Recipe

Today is January 6th Epiphany, marking the visit of the Magi to the Christ child. People all over the world people are celebrating Epiphany by baking cakes and celebrating the holiday with friends and family members. In thousands of lucky homes a delicious warm French Epiphany Cake or *galette des rois* (kings's tart) will be served.

While living in New Orleans, to celebrate Epiphany or the beginning of the Carnival, I traditionally bought or [baked a Mardi Gras King Cake](#), but today I decided to bake a *galette des rois*.

I should be taking down the Christmas decorations but baking is so much more fun ☐



French Epiphany Cake

The French Epiphany cake *galette des rois* is a light dessert made of puff-pastry filled with a creamy frangipane (almond paste). The cake is relatively easy to make requiring about one hour of time from start to finish.

Epiphany Cake Traditions

The Epiphany Cake is served to celebrate the feast of Epiphany or Twelfth night marking the end of Christmas when the Magi brought gifts of gold, frankincense and myrrh to the Christ Child Jesus. There is a tradition dating back to the middle ages that after the cake is served, the last piece ("piece for

poor” or “piece for the virgin”) is reserved for the first needy person knocking at your door. It’s not likely to happen, so I follow the second tradition.

In every French Epiphany or Mardi Gras cake there’s a little surprise hidden inside. In France it’s a fava bean (*fève*) or trinket (*santon*). In New Orleans a baby Jesus figurine is hidden in the colorful cake to symbolize rebirth or renewal. The person who gets the piece with the trinket is declared king or queen, gets to wear the crown, and should buy the next cake.



Mardi Gras King Cake trinket, Wiki photo by Nono64

I wore the crown last year, so this year I’m baking a French Epiphany cake to see who will become king or queen in my home today.

French Epiphany Cake Recipe (Galette des rois)

Ingredients

- 500 grams (1 lb 2 ounces) ready-made puff pastry
- 100 grams (4 ounces) finely ground almonds
- 75 grams (3 ounces) sugar
- 50 grams (2 ounces) softened butter
- 2 medium eggs
- 1 teaspoon French Cognac (optional)
- 1 bean (*fève*), almond, or *santon* (figurine)

Directions

1. Pre-heat the oven to 210 Celsius (410 Fahrenheit).
2. Divide the pasty in two parts. Roll out each to a circle about 23 cm (9 inches) wide or size of your pie pan.
3. By hand or using a stand mixer, mix the almonds, sugar, butter, one egg, and Cognac until a smooth paste is formed.
4. Place the first circle on the non-stick pie dish and spread the paste evenly across but not too close to the edges.
5. Place a *fève* or figurine on top of the paste near the outer edge.
6. Carefully place the second disk on top and seal the two edges with a fork.
7. Brush the top with the egg yolk and decorate by making a swirl pattern using a knife.
8. Bake for 30 minutes or until golden.

Before serving a warm slice of French Epiphany Cake Recipe (Galette des rois), warn your guests of the trinket to avoid an unnecessary visit to the dentist.

Bon appetit!

Let Them Eat Gateau au Chocolat

In an embarrassing moment of weakness, I pressed my nose against the display window in awe of the puffy, flaky, chocolaty, fruity-filled delights. Each individual petite grandiose calorie-laden perfection of sweet goodness had me awe-struck. The goods were delicately placed in a box and ribbon-wrapped awaiting to tantalize some lucky dinner guest. Suddenly I found myself saying *“Qu'ils mangent de la Gâteau au Chocolat.”*



Delightful French pastries in Alsatian pâtisserie

“Let them eat cake” is the traditional translation of the French phrase *“Qu'ils mangent de la brioche”*, supposedly spoken by Marie Antoinette when she learned that the peasants had no bread. The history of cake dates back to ancient times and the first cakes were very different from today, they were

more like bread or what we know today as *Kugelhopf* (a yeasty cake).

During those days, cake or Brioche as it was called, was sweetened with honey, nuts and dried fruits were often added. For those times those ingredients were scarce and very expensive which meant making brioche was even more out of the reach for peasants than bread. Thank goodness those days are gone and we can rejoice knowing that with a few simple ingredients, we can make *Gateau au Chocolat*.



Kugelhopf, a raisin-filled yeast bread popular in the Alsace region of France.

Ever since vacationing in and around the Alsace region of France, I have a new appreciation for the chocolaty gooey goodness. While walking around French towns and villages, one can't help but gaze into the windows of a *pâtisserie*, confectioners or chocolatiers. The lovely little goodies are calling me in, so I hear the request and follow. Before you know it, I'm walking out of the shop with an array of hand-crafted drool-worthy French pastries. Lavish indeed, but so worth it.

I wonder how many years of intense training I'd need to partially master baking and decorating those sweet squares of perfection let alone a *Gateau au Chocolat*. Probably a lifetime, but *au contraire* (the opposite). There is something magical about what a little gourmet chocolate, French butter, and a few eggs can do.

I could attempt to make the treats myself, but then I'd have no reason to travel to Alsace. Therefore, I'll let the experts carry on baking more ultimate French pastries.



French Gateau au Chocolat from Alsatian pâtisserie

A molten cake oozing with warm chocolate. A rich Gateau au Chocolat that melts in your mouth. A chocolate layer cake smothered with icing. I have no shame. I'm going to spend the holidays baking, buying, and eating rich deserts.

I don't feel guilty indulging in a slice or two of chocolate heaven, because, if chocolate comes from cocoa beans, and all beans are a vegetable, then eating Gateau au Chocolat is like eating a salad ☐

Speculaas Cookie Recipe

Another dreary winter day in Germany, so today I got up early to fill the home with warm and toasty aromas. Last night I

pulled out my crumpled Speculaas cookie recipe and made the dough. It's been chilling in the fridge overnight allowing the spicy flavors to infuse. Now onto baking and then eating them.

The Speculaas cookie recipe is simple and a fun activity for friends, family, or the kids. If you don't have a [Springerle mold](#) to emboss a design onto your dough, use cookie cutters or make your own shapes using a sharp knife. Once the cookies start to bake your home will smell like the holidays—warm and wintry.



Speculaas cookies and spiced tea.

Speculaas Cookie Recipe (Makes

about 3 dozen cookies)

Ingredients

- 1 1/2 cup (235 g) all-purpose flour
- 1/2 cup (45 grams) finely ground almonds
- 3/4 teaspoon ground cinnamon
- 3/4 teaspoon ground nutmeg
- 3/4 teaspoon ground cloves
- 1/4 teaspoon ground ginger
- 1/4 teaspoon ground white pepper
- 1/4 teaspoon baking powder
- 1/4 teaspoon kosher salt
- 1 1/2 teaspoon pure vanilla extract
- 3/4 cup (160 grams) firmly packed light brown sugar
- 1/2 cup (113 grams) cold unsalted butter, cut into 1/2 inch cubes
- 1 large egg

Equipment

- Baking sheet
- Parchment paper
- Stand mixer (optional)
- Rolling pin
- Icing spatula
- Springerle mold, cookie cutters or sharp knife
- All-purpose flour for dusting

Directions: Using Cookie Cutters

1. Line the baking sheets with parchment paper.
2. In a separate bowl, whisk together the flour, finely ground almonds, baking powder, spices, and salt. With an electric mixer or hand cream the butter and sugar until light and fluffy.
3. Scrape the sides of the bowl with a large spatula and

add the vanilla extract and egg and beating on medium speed until combined.

4. Scrape down the sides again and add the flour and beat on medium speed until combined.
5. Flatten the dough into a round and Split the cookie dough in half. Wrap the two halves in plastic wrap, and refrigerate overnight (or at least an hour).
6. Using a plain (flour dusted) rolling pin, roll the dough onto a floured surface until 1/4 inch (0.5 cm) thick. If dough is too hard (cold) to roll, let it rest for about 5 minutes.
7. Use a cookie cutter to cut out the cookies and transfer to the lined baking sheet using an icing spatula. Roll the last amount of the dough it small balls and lightly flatten.
8. Place the baking sheet in the refrigerator for about 15 minutes (so cookies hold their shape while oven is preheating).
9. Preheat the oven to 350 degrees F (175 degrees C). Bake the cookies in the oven for 8-10 minutes or golden brown on the edges.
10. Let the cookies cool on the baking sheet for 10 minutes before moving them to a wire rack.

Directions: Using a Springerle Mold

1. Repeat steps 1-5 above.
2. Using a plain (flour dusted) rolling pin, roll the dough onto a floured surface until 1/4 – 1/2 inch (0.5 – 2.4 cm) thick depending on the mold.
3. Dust the Springerle mold with flour (be sure to brush away excess flour).
4. Gently press an appropriate amount of dough into the mold, removing any excess dough from the back of the mold and then carefully remove it onto the baking sheet. Sometimes I use a toothpick to start the unmolding process.

5. Place the baking sheet in the refrigerator for about 15 minutes.
6. Preheat the oven to 350 degrees F (175 degrees C). Bake the cookies in the oven for 8-10 minutes or golden brown on the edges.
7. Let the cookies cool on the baking sheet for 10 minutes before moving them to a wire rack.

Enjoy the cookies!

Get to Know Springerle and Speculaas

The Dutch call them *Speculaas*. The French call them *Spéculoos*. The Germans call them *Spekulatius*. I call the spiced holiday cookies simply delicious.

No matter how you spell them or call them, you'll find many families baking spiced biscuits near the Christmas season. In Holland on December 5th, just before the [Saint Nicholas celebration](#), Dutch families are busy baking Speculaas. In parts of German-speaking Europe, the Alsace region of France, and parts of Switzerland, families are rolling out lots of Speculaas dough.



(c) Photo by Andreas Bauerle (Wikimedia Commons)

The main ingredients in Speculaas are the spices of winter—pepper, cinnamon, ginger, cloves, cardamom, and nutmeg and when baked infuse the home with a warming wintry fragrance. The cookies are easy to make and if you use a mold, the impression forms a delicate looking cookie perfect for gift giving or enjoying with a cup of tea.

Springerle and Speculaas

Don't get your Springerle mixed up with your Speculaas.

- Springerle and Speculaas are both cookie dough types.
- Speculaas dough contains warm spices.
- Springerle dough contains anise and when baked they seem to “spring up”.
- The Springerle is not only a cookie, but a mold you can use to emboss designs on Springerle or Speculaas.

Once your Speculaas dough has been prepared, you can use a Springerle mold (press or a rolling pin) to emboss a design of choice on your cookie before baking.

Springerle History

Traditionally, the first Springerle mold designs were of horses and their riders. Hence the name “little jumper” or “little knight”. Many ancient molds have survived and can be found in museums such as the [Musée des arts et traditions populaires Musée du Springerle](#) in Alsace. The quaint folk art museum is devoted to the history of wooden molds and Christmas Springerle cookies. Now that sounds delicious.

At German Christmas markets you'll find all types of Springerle impressions for sale from simple to intricate. The molds make lovely Christmas gifts that are functional for baking or can be used decoratively in your home. Keep in mind the more intricate the mold, the trickier they are to work

with (at first).

After a bit of practice, you'll have spicy Speculaas springing up all over the kitchen.