

# 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 fraiche 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.

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# **Flammkuchen and the Pursuit of Happiness**

**Flammkuchen, the Alsatian dish that always puts a smile on my face.**

A few days ago I received some bad news; I didn't receive the job I had applied for. For about 10 minutes I was feeling down, but then decided there's something better out there. I quickly made the decision to just get on with it. After a nice stroll to the tree-lined city center of my quaint German town, I sat down at my favorite French Bistro and thought about Flammkuchen and the Pursuit of Happiness.



Flammkuchen (Tarte flambée)

Does food make me happy? Sometimes, it does indeed. Flammkuchen, the Alsatian cult dish always puts a smile on my face. Thin bread dough topped with sour cream, onions, and bacon baked to a crispy perfection. My taste buds say “Ooh-la-la , très bien”.

As I was reveled in the beauty of the day with my Flammkuchen, glass of wine, and husband by my side, a foreign man stood amongst the empty tables of the bistro patiently waiting for someone to notice him. As I’m a regular at the bistro, I asked the man if I could help him and he replied, “Can I sit wherever I like?” I replied with a nod and said “Yes, sit

wherever you like.”

The waitress brought over the German/French menu and the visitor looked a bit confused. I decided to help him translate the menu to English which seemed to give him some relief considering his knowledge of German was limited.

Being that Flammkuchen or Tarte flambée as it's called in France is one of my favorite foods. I recommend the visitor order the classic Flammkuchen and he did. He also ordered a Weizenbier (wheat beer) in German which was impressive.

## **Flammkuchen, What's it all about?**

Flammkuchen (or Tarte flambée in French) is an extremely popular Alsatian dish made of thin bread dough which is smothered with crème fraîche, then covered with onions and bacon bits. Because of its pizza-like, inexpensive, and super quick to make, it's a very popular dish among locals and tourists.

Can you believe there's a Flammkuchen legend? Yes there is and here it goes. Alemannic farmers from Alsace, Baden or the Palatinate would bake bread only once per week. A tarte flambée was used to test the heat of the wood-fired ovens. Due to the intense heat, the Flammkuchen was ready in 1 or two minutes and the crust forming the border nearly burned. Hence the name Tarte flambée meaning “baked in the flames.”

## **The Visitor's Flammkuchen Experience**

He looked. He indulged. He smiled. The Flammkuchen project was a success!

I nodded and said “Oyasumi” (Good night in Japanese).

You see, it's not about a job, my happiness, but the happiness of a visitor in a different land, with different food. It's about the travel, the journey, and the true story of

Flammkuchen and the happiness of pursuit.

Hungry for more? Click here for a [simple Flammkuchen recipe](#).

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## 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 ☐

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# 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.

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# Sélestat: Home of the Christmas Tree

Looking for the perfect Sapin de Noël (Christmas tree)? Then ask someone in Sélestat, the home of the Christmas tree. After all, anyone in the Alsatian village situated between Strasbourg and Colmar should know since the town holds the first recorded mention of a Christmas tree.



Sélestat: Home of the Christmas Tree

Don't believe me? Just check out the Bibliothèque Humaniste (The Humanist Library) which houses the first mention of the Christmas tree dating back to 1521. In addition, the fabulous library full of treasured books also houses the birth certificate of America too.

Today, Sélestat still incorporates the Christmas tree tradition into its holiday market or Marché de Noël, as it's called in French. Not only can you indulge on French Christmas market drink such as Vin Chaud (hot mulled wine), candy and

crepes, you can also search for the perfect tree at the Christmas tree market.

If your airline has set hefty overweight luggage fees, skip the tree purchase and join the Circuit de Noël—a pedestrian route marked with signs that pass the town's main attractions, many with trees decorated minimally as in centuries past.

### **So how did we begin decorating with Christmas bulbs?**

People didn't always load their Christmas tree down with baubles, popcorn, candles, or even even heinous, tacky Christmas decorations. The first trees were decorated in a minimalistic manner either with walnuts and apples or apples to remind people of Adam and Eve's original sin and unblessed communion hosts to remind them of redemption and faith.

Legend has it that in 1858 there was a terrible apple drought, which resulted in a lack of apples. The glass makers of Meisenthal made glass versions of the apples and the baubles were so successful, that manufacturers decided to continue producing them and the fad was copied throughout the world.

Sélestat is not only a city that is home of the Christmas Tree, but a quaint Alsatian town full of historical buildings, a lively shopping zone, and historical wonders.

For more ideas on what to see and do in Sélestat visit the tourism site <http://www.selestat-tourisme.com/en.html>