



FRENCH COMFORT FOOD DAVIS

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LAYERED VEGETABLE OMELET CAKE

Le Crespéou SERVES 6

The open-air market in Saint-Tropez in the south of France has a vendor who makes a savory “cake” made from vegetable omelets that are stacked. Her omelets are thick, the cake is quite high yet compact, and she sells it in wedges. It’s divine. I’ve also seen this dish made with very thin delicate omelets, not very high, circled by a tomato sauce.

Le Crespéou is a dish made in Provence and in the higher villages in the Alpes-de-Haute-Provence. The word crespéou means that the omelet cake looks like it is made with crepes. It’s not hard to make and it creates a stunning presentation, easily serving 6.

Make it the day before you want to serve it, wrap it in aluminum foil, and refrigerate. The following are recipes for the layers of the cake and for the sauce to serve with it once it is at room temperature. Stack the layers as you make them, and make as few or as many as you wish depending on how high you would like your cake.

SPECIAL EQUIPMENT 9-INCH (23-CM) NONSTICK SKILLET; LARGE PLATE TO FIT OVER SKILLET; OLIVE OIL NONSTICK COOKING SPRAY; 9-INCH (23-CM) SPRINGFORM PAN; ALUMINUM FOIL; LARGE SERVING PLATE OR CAKE STAND; FOOD PROCESSOR

Green Omelet

- 1 medium zucchini (about 7 heaping tablespoons grated)
- 1 clove garlic
- 1 teaspoon fresh thyme leaves or dried
- 4 large eggs, room temperature
- 1 tablespoon (15 ml) water (or cream or half-and-half)
- salt and freshly ground black pepper, to taste
- 1 tablespoon (15 ml) extra virgin olive oil for the skillet

Red Omelet

- 1 large red bell pepper (about 6 heaping tablespoons grated)
- 4 large eggs, room temperature

- 1 tablespoon (15 ml) water (or cream or half-and-half)
- salt and freshly ground black pepper, to taste
- dash of cayenne pepper
- 1 tablespoon (15 ml) extra virgin olive oil for the skillet

Yellow Omelet

- 1 medium yellow zucchini (about 6 heaping tablespoons grated)
- 1 clove garlic
- 4 large eggs, room temperature
- 1 tablespoon (15 ml) water (or cream or half-and-half)
- salt and freshly ground black pepper, to taste
- 1 tablespoon (15 ml) extra virgin olive oil for the skillet

Green Pea and Carrot Omelet

- ½ small onion
- 2 tablespoons (30 ml) extra virgin olive oil, divided
- ½ teaspoon sugar
- 1 clove garlic, peeled and minced
- 4 large eggs, room temperature
- 1 tablespoon (15 ml) water (or cream or half-and-half)
- salt and freshly ground black pepper, to taste
- ¼ teaspoon ground turmeric
- ¼ cup (25 g) freshly grated Parmesan cheese
- ¾ cup (100 g) frozen peas and carrots, thawed





FRESH MUSSELS IN WHITE WINE

Moules à la Marinière SERVES 4

Fabulous with French fries, this drool-worthy dish is simple and quick to make. So quick, in fact, that you should make the French fries ahead and keep them warm in the oven while the mussels cook. Also place a baguette to warm in the oven to be ready to use to sop up the broth.

I first experienced this dish in Trouville, in Normandy, at a restaurant where they added a final splash of cream before serving. Each and every mouthful of the wine soaked bread that had been dragged through the remaining sauce at the end of the meal was a wonder.

SPECIAL EQUIPMENT VERY LARGE POT WITH LID; 4 SHALLOW SOUP BOWLS; LARGE BOWL

**4 to 5 pounds (1.8 to 2.2 kg)
fresh mussels**

1 small handful flat-leaf parsley

2 sprigs fresh tarragon

**3 tablespoons (45 ml) extra virgin
olive oil**

**4 cloves garlic, peeled and finely
chopped**

**3 large shallots, peeled and finely
chopped**

**3 to 4 cups (720 ml to 1 l)
Muscadet wine or other dry
white wine**

**salt and freshly ground white
pepper, to taste**

**¼ cup (60 ml) dry white
vermouth**

1 long French baguette, sliced

PREP

Clean the mussels by scrubbing them with a brush under cold running water. Pull off the beards and throw away any that are open. Keep them in cold water until you are ready to use.

Pull the leaves off the parsley and tarragon stems and finely chop. Discard stems.

COOK

In the pot, heat the olive oil, add the garlic and shallots, and cook on medium for 2 minutes. Add the wine, tarragon, a little salt and pepper, and bring to a boil. Drop in all the mussels, cover with the lid, and cook on medium for a couple of minutes, shaking the pot once or twice. Pick up the lid and peek inside. If all the mussels have opened, the dish is ready. Throw away any mussels that are still closed.

With a slotted spoon, scoop up the mussels and divide between the soup bowls. Whisk the vermouth

into the sauce then equally ladle over the tops of the mussels. Sprinkle with the chopped parsley and serve immediately. Place the large bowl on the table for the shells and have the basket of sliced baguette nearby to sop up the delicious sauce at the bottom of the bowls.

IDEAS AND SUGGESTIONS

I love adding a tablespoon of Pernod to the white wine for a hint of anise. A richer dish can be made by taking the mussels out and whisking in a mixture of ¼ cup (60 ml) cream and 2 egg yolks until the sauce thickens a little then pour it all over the mussels.

For a casual dinner, make some French fries and pile them in the center of the table on a large piece of wax paper with salt within reach. They are the traditional accompaniment to Moules à la Marinière.