

COOKERY

French Cookery

Pantry and knife skills, stocks, the five mother sauces, sautéing and pan sauces, braising and confit, egg technique, and pastry basics — closing with a capstone planning and cooking a genuine entrée/plat principal/dessert bistro meal.

10 Chapters

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CHAPTER 1: FOUNDATIONS & THE FRENCH PANTRY

French Cookery

Chapter 1 · Foundations & the French Pantry

French home cooking rests on a genuinely small set of ideas used with real discipline — good butter, a little wine, a few herbs used the right way, and stock built properly (Chapter 3). This chapter is the no-cooking foundation: the pantry, and the equipment later chapters actually lean on.

Butter: The Backbone of French Cooking

TYPE	WHAT IT IS	BEST USED FOR
Unsalted butter	No added salt — the default choice in almost every French recipe	Cooking and baking generally, since it lets you control salt precisely rather than guessing how much a "salted" brand already added
Salted butter	Butter with salt added, mainly for table use and shelf life historically	Spreading on bread — rarely used for actual cooking in this course
European-style butter	A higher butterfat content (roughly 82–84%, against a standard 80%) and less water, often cultured for a slightly tangier flavour	Worth seeking out for pastry (Chapter 9) and emulsified sauces (Chapter 5), where its lower water content genuinely changes the result

UNSALTED BY DEFAULT, FOR A REAL REASON

Recipes across this course assume unsalted butter and season separately — a French kitchen's own habit of controlling salt at the very end of a dish, once every other salty ingredient (stock, cheese, cured meat) has already had its say, rather than guessing at the start.

Cooking with Wine

Wine shows up constantly in French cooking — deglazing a pan (Chapter 6), braising (Chapter 7), building a sauce (Chapters 4 and 5). A few real distinctions are worth knowing before you start.

- **Skip bottles labelled "cooking wine."** These are often salted and lower quality specifically so they can be sold outside normal alcohol regulations — the added salt makes seasoning a dish harder to control, not easier. A modest, genuinely drinkable bottle works better and rarely costs much more.
- **Dry white wine** is the default for deglazing a pan or building a lighter sauce — its acidity balances rich butter and cream-based sauces.
- **A medium-bodied red wine** is the classic choice for a real braise like coq au vin or boeuf bourguignon (Chapter 7), where it simmers for hours and needs real character to still taste like something at the end.

The Herb Basics: Herbes de Provence & Bouquet Garni

Two genuinely different things, often confused by name alone.

- **Herbes de Provence** is a dried herb blend — typically thyme, rosemary, oregano, marjoram, and savory, sometimes with a little lavender — sprinkled directly into a dish, most often something roasted or grilled.
- **Bouquet garni** is a small bundle of fresh herbs — classically thyme, bay leaf, and parsley stems — tied together with kitchen string or wrapped in a leek leaf, dropped whole into a simmering stock or braise, and fished back out before serving. It flavours the liquid without leaving stray leaves and stems behind in the final dish.

YOU'LL MEET THE BOUQUET GARNI AGAIN SOON

Chapter 3's stock and Chapter 7's braise both lean on a bouquet garni directly — it's worth tying one together once here, in a low-pressure setting, before you need to build one quickly alongside a real dish.

Essential Equipment

GENUINELY ESSENTIAL

- A heavy-bottomed pot or Dutch oven (for stocks and braises)
- A fine-mesh sieve, for straining stock
- A whisk (essential for Chapter 5's hollandaise)
- A good paring knife
- Kitchen string, for tying a bouquet garni

NICE TO HAVE, NOT URGENT

- A dedicated stockpot
- A mandoline, for fine, even vegetable cuts

SKIP FOR NOW

- A copper sauté pan
- A proper conical chinois strainer — the fine-mesh sieve above does the job for now

Kitchen Practice

No cooking yet — this chapter's practice is about stocking, tasting, and one small piece of prep.

KITCHEN PRACTICE 1

Audit your own pantry against this chapter's own list. Check off what you already have, and note which missing items are needed soonest — good unsalted butter and a dry white wine for the earliest chapters.

[→ Solution](#)

KITCHEN PRACTICE 2

Taste a small piece of unsalted butter plain, at room temperature, then a piece of salted butter the same way. Note the real difference, so you have a reference point for why this course seasons separately rather than relying on salted butter to do it.

[→ Solution](#)

KITCHEN PRACTICE 3

Tie a bouquet garni from fresh thyme, a bay leaf, and a few parsley stems, using kitchen string — practising the bundle once now, before Chapter 3 needs one built quickly alongside a real stock.

→ Solution

QUICK REFERENCE — THE FRENCH PANTRY

- Unsalted butter by default — season separately rather than relying on salted butter
- Skip bottles labelled "cooking wine" — a modest drinkable bottle works better
- Herbes de Provence: a dried blend sprinkled directly into a dish
- Bouquet garni: fresh herbs tied together, simmered in liquid, then removed before serving
- Equipment: a heavy-bottomed pot, a fine-mesh sieve, a whisk, and kitchen string

Next — Chapter 2: Knife Skills & Mise en Place

The discipline of "everything in its place," and the classic French cuts — julienne, brunoise, and chiffonade.

CHAPTER 2: KNIFE SKILLS & MISE EN PLACE

French Cookery

Chapter 2 · Knife Skills & Mise en Place

Mise en place — literally "putting in place" — is the single habit that separates a calm French kitchen from a chaotic one. Paired with three genuinely useful knife cuts, it's the real foundation everything from Chapter 4's sauces to Chapter 6's fast sauté rests on.

Mise en Place: Everything in Its Place, Before You Start

Mise en place means every ingredient is washed, cut, measured, and set out in its own small bowl or container **before** the heat goes on — not chopped an onion at a time while something else is already sizzling in the pan.

1 Read the whole recipe first

Read it start to finish before touching a single ingredient — knowing what's coming in ten minutes changes what you prep now.

2 Prep everything, then arrange it in order of use

Chop, measure, and portion every ingredient the recipe calls for, laying the small bowls out roughly in the order they'll actually go into the pan.

3 Only then, start cooking

With everything already prepped, cooking itself becomes a matter of adding things at the right moment — not scrambling to chop while something else risks burning.

THIS MATTERS MORE HERE THAN IN MOST CUISINES

Several later chapters genuinely can't pause mid-cook — Chapter 5's hollandaise breaks if you walk away to chop a shallot, and Chapter 6's sauté needs ingredients added within seconds of each other. Mise en place isn't a nice-to-have habit for those chapters; it's the only way to actually execute them correctly.

Grip & Guiding Hand

Hold the knife with a pinch grip — thumb and forefinger gripping the blade itself just above the handle, the remaining fingers wrapped around the handle — for real control rather than a loose fist around the handle alone. Your other hand curls into a claw shape on the food, fingertips tucked well back, guiding each cut while keeping your fingertips safely away from the blade.

The Classic Cuts: Julienne, Brunoise & Chiffonade

CUT	SHAPE	TYPICAL SIZE
Julienne	Thin matchstick strips	~3mm × 3mm × 5cm
Brunoise	A fine, even dice	~3mm cubes — literally a diced julienne
Chiffonade	Thin ribbons, for leafy herbs and greens	~2–3mm wide ribbons

Julienne, Then Brunoise

1 Square off the vegetable

Trim a rounded vegetable (carrot, for instance) into a rough rectangular block first — a flat, stable surface is what makes every cut after this one safe and even.

2 Slice into thin, even planks

Cut the block into thin planks, roughly 3mm thick, stacking them as you go.

3 Stack and cut into matchsticks — the julienne

Stack a few planks at a time and slice lengthwise into thin, even matchsticks — the julienne itself.

4 Turn 90° and dice — the brunoise

Gather the julienne strips together and cut straight across them at roughly 3mm intervals — the julienne instantly becomes a fine, even brunoise dice.

BRUNOISE IS JUST A DICED JULIENNE

There's no separate technique to learn for brunoise — it's genuinely just a julienne, turned and cut again. Get comfortable with a clean, even julienne first, and the brunoise essentially comes for free.

Chiffonade

1 Stack the leaves

Stack several leaves of a leafy herb or green (basil, spinach, sorrel) directly on top of each other, largest on the bottom.

2 Roll tightly

Roll the stack up tightly into a compact cylinder, like a small cigar.

3 Slice thinly across the roll

Slice straight across the rolled cylinder, as thinly and evenly as you can — each slice unrolls into a set of fine, even ribbons.

A DULL KNIFE BRUISES BASIL, IT DOESN'T SLICE IT

Chiffonade specifically punishes a dull blade — instead of a clean slice, a dull edge crushes and bruises the leaves as it goes, turning the cut edges brown within minutes and dulling the flavour. If your basil chiffonade looks dark and wilted almost immediately, the knife needs sharpening, not a different technique.

Kitchen Practice

KITCHEN PRACTICE 1

Practice a full mise en place for a simple three-ingredient task — pick any small recipe, read it fully first, then prep and portion every ingredient into its own bowl before turning on any heat.

→ Solution

KITCHEN PRACTICE 2

Square off a carrot and cut it into a clean julienne, then turn the julienne into a brunoise.

Aim for genuinely even, consistent sizes throughout.

→ Solution

KITCHEN PRACTICE 3

Stack, roll, and chiffonade a handful of fresh basil leaves. Check the cut edges a few minutes later for browning, and note whether your knife needs sharpening based on what you see.

→ Solution

QUICK REFERENCE — KNIFE SKILLS & MISE EN PLACE

- Mise en place: read the full recipe, prep everything, then start cooking
- Pinch grip on the blade, claw grip on the guiding hand
- Julienne: thin matchsticks, ~3mm × 3mm × 5cm
- Brunoise: a julienne, turned and diced again — ~3mm cubes
- Chiffonade: stack, roll tightly, slice thinly across — needs a genuinely sharp knife to avoid bruising

Next — Chapter 3: Stocks (Fond): The Foundation of French Cooking

White stock vs. brown stock, mirepoix, and why bones are roasted for a brown stock but not a white one.

CHAPTER 3: STOCKS (FOND): THE FOUNDATION OF FRENCH COOKING

French Cookery

Chapter 3 · Stocks (Fond): The Foundation of French Cooking

Fond means both "stock" and, literally, "foundation" — and that double meaning is deliberate. Chapters 4 and 5's mother sauces and Chapter 7's braise all lean on a real stock underneath them. Get this chapter right and several later ones become noticeably easier.

Mirepoix: The Aromatic Base

French cooking's own aromatic base is **mirepoix** — onion, carrot, and celery, classically in a **2:1:1 ratio by weight** (twice as much onion as either carrot or celery). For a stock, cut it into a rough, medium dice — nowhere near as fine as Chapter 2's brunoise, since mirepoix destined for a stock gets strained out and discarded at the end, not eaten.

NOT THE SAME MOVE AS ITALIAN COOKERY'S SOFFRITTO

If you've made an Italian soffritto, the ingredient list looks identical — but the technique genuinely isn't. Soffritto is sautéed low and slow in oil until soft and sweet before anything else is added. Mirepoix for a white stock, below, usually goes in raw, straight into the simmering water alongside the bones — no sautéing at all.

White Stock (Fond Blanc)

A white stock stays pale and delicate — the base for Chapter 4's béchamel and velouté, and for poaching. Nothing in it is browned.

1 Blanch the bones first

Cover raw bones (chicken or veal) with cold water, bring briefly to a boil, then drain and rinse them under cold water. This washes away surface impurities that would otherwise cloud the finished stock.

2 Start again with fresh cold water

Return the blanched bones to the pot with fresh cold water — starting cold, not hot, lets flavour and gelatin extract gradually as the water slowly comes up to temperature.

3 Add mirepoix and a bouquet garni

Add the raw, roughly-cut mirepoix and Chapter 1's own bouquet garni directly to the pot.

4 Simmer gently for hours, never boil

Bring to a bare simmer — small, occasional bubbles, not a rolling boil — and hold it there for several hours, skimming the grey foam that rises to the surface every so often.

A HARD BOIL RUINS THE CLARITY, NOT JUST THE FLAVOUR

Boiling a stock hard emulsifies fat straight into the liquid, turning a clear, clean stock permanently cloudy — there's no fixing this afterward by straining alone. Once fat is emulsified in, it stays emulsified. Keep it at a bare simmer the entire time, full stop.

Brown Stock (Fond Brun)

A brown stock is deeper in colour and flavour — the base for Chapter 5's espagnole and Chapter 7's braise, where a stronger, more assertive backbone is exactly what's wanted.

1 Roast the bones first

Roast the bones in a hot oven until deeply browned — real Maillard-reaction colour and flavour, the same chemistry behind a seared crust on meat.

2 Roast the mirepoix alongside, toward the end

Add the roughly-cut mirepoix to the same roasting pan partway through, so it browns too without burning before the bones are ready.

3 Deglaze the roasting pan

Once out of the oven, deglaze the pan with a little water or stock, scraping up every browned bit stuck to the bottom — that fond (the browned residue, not the stock itself) carries real, concentrated flavour straight into the pot.

4 Simmer exactly as for a white stock

Combine the roasted bones, mirepoix, and deglazing liquid with fresh water and a bouquet garni, then simmer gently for hours, skimming regularly — the same patient, never-boil-hard rule applies here too.

WHY ROAST FOR BROWN, BUT BLANCH FOR WHITE

The two stocks are built for opposite goals. A brown stock wants colour and deep, roasted flavour — exactly what browning the bones and mirepoix delivers. A white stock wants to stay pale and delicate, since it's headed for equally pale, delicate sauces — so its bones are blanched clean instead, never browned at all. Same basic method underneath; the one real fork in the road is whether the bones ever see direct, high heat.

Straining & Cooling

Strain the finished stock through Chapter 1's fine-mesh sieve, discarding the spent bones, mirepoix, and bouquet garni. Cool it quickly rather than leaving it at room temperature for a long stretch — an ice bath, or simply dividing it into smaller, shallower containers, brings it down to a safe temperature far faster than one large pot cooling slowly on the counter.

Kitchen Practice

KITCHEN PRACTICE 1

Make a basic white chicken stock — blanching the bones first, then simmering gently with a rough mirepoix and a bouquet garni for at least a couple of hours, skimming as you go.

→ Solution

KITCHEN PRACTICE 2

Make a small batch of brown stock, roasting bones and mirepoix together and deglazing the pan before simmering. Compare its colour and aroma directly against Kitchen Practice 1's white stock.

[→ Solution](#)

KITCHEN PRACTICE 3

Deliberately boil a small portion of stock hard for a few minutes, rather than keeping it at a bare simmer, and compare its clarity once cooled against a portion that was properly simmered gently the whole time.

[→ Solution](#)

QUICK REFERENCE — STOCKS (FOND)

- Mirepoix: onion, carrot, celery, roughly 2:1:1 by weight, cut roughly since it's strained out
- White stock: bones blanched first, everything else added raw, simmered gently
- Brown stock: bones and mirepoix roasted first, the roasting pan deglazed and added in
- Never let a stock boil hard — it emulsifies fat into the liquid and permanently clouds it
- Strain, then cool quickly — an ice bath or shallow containers, not one large pot left on the counter

Next — Chapter 4: Roux & the Mother Sauces I: Béchamel & Velouté

Building a roux to the right stage, and thickening it with milk versus this chapter's own stock.

French Cookery

Chapter 4 · Roux & the Mother Sauces I: Béchamel & Velouté

Classical French cooking organises its sauces around five "mother" sauces — a small set of base sauces every other sauce is built from by adding something to it. This chapter covers two of the five, both built on the same roux; the remaining three follow in Chapter 5.

The Roux

A roux is equal parts (by weight) butter and flour, cooked together — the classic French thickener behind both sauces in this chapter.

STAGE	COLOUR & SMELL	ROUGHLY
White roux	No colour at all, raw-flour smell just gone	1–2 minutes over medium-low heat
Blond roux	Very pale gold, a faint nutty smell	3–5 minutes
Brown roux	Genuinely browned, deeply nutty	10+ minutes — loses real thickening power the darker it gets, since the starch itself breaks down

Béchamel and velouté both use a white or blond roux — nothing dark is needed for either.

- 1

Melt the butter

Melt equal-weight butter in a heavy-bottomed pot over medium-low heat.
- 2

Whisk in the flour

Add the flour all at once and whisk continuously until it's fully absorbed into the butter, forming a thick paste.
- 3

Cook to the stage you need

Keep whisking over gentle heat until the raw-flour smell is gone (white roux) or a faint nutty aroma develops (blond roux) — never let it sit still, or it scorches unevenly on the bottom.

Avoiding Lumps: The "Hot Into Cold" Rule

The single most common failure with any roux-based sauce is lumps — flour that seizes into little clumps instead of dissolving smoothly into the liquid. The fix is a genuinely simple rule: bring the liquid and the roux together at **opposite temperatures**.

HOT ROUX, COLD LIQUID — OR THE REVERSE

Adding cold (or room-temperature) liquid to a hot roux, or the reverse — a cold roux to hot liquid — gives the starch time to hydrate gradually as the whole mixture comes to a shared temperature together. Adding hot liquid straight into a hot roux is what shocks the starch into seizing all at once, which is exactly what produces lumps.

Béchamel: Roux + Milk

1 Warm the milk separately

Gently warm milk in a separate pan — not boiling, just warm — while your roux cooks in the main pot.

2 Whisk the warm milk into the roux gradually

Add the milk a little at a time, whisking constantly, letting each addition fully incorporate before the next goes in.

3 Simmer to cook out the raw flour taste

Simmer gently for 10–15 minutes, whisking occasionally, until it coats the back of a spoon and no longer tastes of raw flour.

4 Season classically

Season with salt, white pepper (to avoid dark flecks in a pale sauce), and a small pinch of grated nutmeg — the traditional finishing note for a béchamel.

Velouté: Roux + Stock

Velouté follows the exact same method as béchamel — the only real difference is what liquid goes in. Instead of milk, velouté is built on Chapter 3's own **white stock**, warmed the same way and whisked in gradually against the roux.

THIS IS WHY CHAPTER 3 MATTERED

A real velouté genuinely needs a real white stock underneath it — chicken or veal, made properly, not a stock cube standing in. If Chapter 3's stock turned out cloudy or over-boiled, this is the chapter where that shows up directly, since velouté has nowhere to hide a poor stock behind.

Kitchen Practice

KITCHEN PRACTICE 1

Make a béchamel from scratch — a white roux, warm milk whisked in gradually, and a 10–15 minute simmer finished with salt, white pepper, and a pinch of nutmeg.

→ Solution

KITCHEN PRACTICE 2

Make a velouté using your own Chapter 3 white stock in place of milk, following the same roux and gradual-whisking method. Taste it directly against Kitchen Practice 1's béchamel.

→ Solution

KITCHEN PRACTICE 3

Deliberately pour hot milk straight into a hot roux all at once, without whisking gradually, and observe the lumps that form. Then rescue it (or start again) using the proper gradual method.

[→ Solution](#)**QUICK REFERENCE — ROUX, BÉCHAMEL & VELOUTÉ**

- Roux: equal parts butter and flour by weight, cooked to white, blond, or brown
- The darker the roux, the less thickening power it has left
- Avoid lumps by combining hot roux with cold liquid, or cold roux with hot liquid — never hot with hot
- Béchamel: roux + milk, finished with salt, white pepper, and a pinch of nutmeg
- Velouté: roux + white stock — the exact same method, a different liquid

Next — Chapter 5: The Mother Sauces II: Espagnole, Tomate & Hollandaise

A brown sauce built on Chapter 3's own brown stock, a simple French tomato sauce, and the temperamental emulsified hollandaise.

CHAPTER 5: THE MOTHER SAUCES II: ESPAGNOLE, TOMATE & HOLLANDAISE

French Cookery

Chapter 5 · The Mother Sauces II: Espagnole, Tomato & Hollandaise

Chapter 4's béchamel and velouté were genuinely the same technique twice, with only the liquid changed. These three are not — a brown stock-based sauce, a smooth tomato sauce, and an entirely different kind of thickening altogether. This chapter closes out the classical five.

Espagnole: A Brown Sauce Built on Brown Stock

Espagnole is the brown counterpart to velouté — a roux-based sauce, but built on Chapter 3's own brown stock instead of white, with real depth from browned aromatics and a little tomato.

1 Build a blond-to-brown roux

Cook a roux a little further than Chapter 4's béchamel — a genuine light brown, not just blond — for a deeper flavour base.

2 Whisk in warmed brown stock, gradually

Exactly as in Chapter 4, warm the brown stock separately and whisk it into the roux a little at a time.

3 Add a small amount of tomato

Stir in a small spoonful of tomato paste — enough for colour and a background note of acidity, nowhere near enough to make this a tomato sauce.

4 Simmer long, skimming as you go

Simmer gently for at least 45 minutes to an hour, skimming any fat or foam that rises, until it's noticeably reduced and richly flavoured.

REAL ESPAGNOLE IS A MULTI-DAY PROJECT — THIS IS THE HONEST HOME VERSION

A classical restaurant espagnole is sometimes simmered and refined over a full day or more, eventually reduced further into demi-glace. What's above is a genuine, real espagnole scaled to a home kitchen and a single afternoon — not a shortcut in method, just in time invested.

Sauce Tomate: A Genuinely French Tomato Sauce

French sauce tomate and Italian Cookery's own tomato sugo share an ingredient list but not a finished texture — sauce tomate is traditionally passed through a food mill or fine sieve at the end, producing a smooth, refined sauce with no visible tomato skin, seed, or chunk left behind.

1 Sweat a simple aromatic base

Cook diced onion (and often a little diced pork or bacon for richness) gently until soft.

2 Add tomatoes and a touch of stock

Add crushed or whole tomatoes along with a small amount of stock (white or brown both work), and season.

3 Simmer until fully broken down

Simmer gently, uncovered, until the tomatoes have completely collapsed into the sauce.

4 Pass through a food mill or fine sieve

Press the finished sauce through a food mill, or push it through a fine sieve with the back of a ladle, leaving skins and seeds behind — this is the step that gives sauce tomate its genuinely smooth, restaurant-style texture.

TWO REAL TRADITIONS, NOT ONE "RIGHT" TOMATO SAUCE

Italian Cookery's own sugo is deliberately left with real texture — hand-crushed tomatoes, a soffritto you can see the shape of. Sauce tomate makes the opposite choice on purpose. Neither is a lesser version of the other; they're built to different ends.

Hollandaise: An Egg-Yolk Emulsion, Not a Starch One

Hollandaise thickens by a completely different mechanism than every other sauce in this chapter — there's no roux and no starch at all. Egg yolks act as the emulsifier, binding butter and a little acid into a smooth, thick sauce.

1 Whisk yolks over gentle, indirect heat

Whisk egg yolks with a splash of water or lemon juice in a bowl set over a pan of barely simmering water (a bain-marie) — never direct heat, which scrambles the yolks almost instantly.

2 Whisk until pale and thickened

Keep whisking constantly until the yolks turn pale and noticeably thicker — this stage does real work building the emulsion's own structure before any butter is involved.

3 Add melted butter, a few drops at a time at first

Add warm melted butter extremely slowly at the start — literally a few drops at a time — whisking constantly. Once the sauce visibly starts to thicken and hold together, the remaining butter can be added in a slightly thinner, steadier stream.

4 Finish with lemon juice and seasoning

Whisk in a little more lemon juice, salt, and a pinch of cayenne if you like, tasting as you go.

THIS IS A GENUINELY DIFFERENT KIND OF EMULSION

Chapter 5 of Italian Cookery's own cacio e pepe emulsifies fat and water using starch. Hollandaise emulsifies fat and water using lecithin, a fat-and-water-loving compound naturally present in egg yolk — a different ingredient doing a related job by a genuinely different mechanism, not the same trick twice.

IF IT BREAKS (SPLITS INTO A GREASY, SEPARATED MESS)

A broken hollandaise is usually caused by butter added too fast, or heat that's crept too high and started cooking the yolks. The classic rescue: start a fresh yolk with a teaspoon of water in a clean bowl, whisk it until slightly thickened, then whisk the broken sauce into it very slowly, the same way you added butter the first time — rebuilding a fresh emulsion around a fresh yolk, using the broken sauce itself as the "fat" being added in.

Kitchen Practice

KITCHEN PRACTICE 1

Make a home-scale espagnole, using your own Chapter 3 brown stock, a browned roux, and a small amount of tomato paste, simmered and skimmed for at least 45 minutes.

[→ Solution](#)

KITCHEN PRACTICE 2

Make a sauce tomate, passing it through a fine sieve at the end. If you have access to Italian Cookery's own sugo, taste the two side by side and compare their texture directly.

[→ Solution](#)

KITCHEN PRACTICE 3

Make a hollandaise, deliberately adding the butter too fast partway through to break it on purpose, then rescue it using the fresh-yolk method described in this chapter.

[→ Solution](#)

QUICK REFERENCE — ESPAGNOLE, SAUCE TOMATE & HOLLANDAISE

- Espagnole: a brown roux + brown stock + a little tomato paste, simmered long and skimmed

- Sauce tomate: tomatoes simmered down and passed through a food mill or sieve for a smooth texture
- Hollandaise: egg yolks + butter, emulsified by lecithin, not starch — a genuinely different mechanism
- Whisk hollandaise over indirect heat only, adding butter in drops at first
- A broken hollandaise can often be rescued by rebuilding the emulsion around a fresh yolk

Next — Chapter 6: Sautéing & Building a Pan Sauce

Proper sauté technique, deglazing, and reducing to a real pan sauce.

CHAPTER 6: SAUTÉING & BUILDING A PAN SAUCE

French Cookery

Chapter 6 · Sautéing & Building a Pan Sauce

Sauter means "to jump" — the quick, high-heat cousin of Chapter 3's own patient, hours-long stock. This chapter is about a genuinely fast technique: sear something well, then turn what's left in the pan into a real sauce in a few minutes flat.

Proper Sauté Technique

1 Pat the food completely dry

Surface moisture steams instead of browning — pat meat or vegetables dry with paper towel before they ever touch the pan.

2 Use the right fat, and get the pan properly hot

Plain whole butter burns at real sauté heat — its milk solids scorch well before the fat itself is hot enough. Use a neutral oil, clarified butter, or a mix of oil and butter, and let the pan genuinely heat through before anything goes in.

3 Don't crowd the pan

Give each piece real space. A crowded pan drops in temperature and traps steam around the food instead of letting it escape — the food ends up grey and boiled-looking rather than browned, no matter how hot the pan was to start with.

4 Leave it alone until it releases

Resist moving or flipping too early. A properly searing piece of food naturally releases from the pan once a real crust has formed — if it's still sticking and tearing when you try to move it, it isn't ready yet.

CROWDING IS THE SINGLE MOST COMMON MISTAKE HERE

It's tempting to cook everything in one batch to save time — but a pan that's genuinely too full almost always produces worse food than the same amount cooked in two unhurried batches. If in doubt, cook in batches.

Deglazing

Once your protein is well-browned and cooked through, remove it to rest on a plate — and don't wash the pan. Everything stuck to the bottom, the fond, is the start of your sauce.

1 Add liquid to the hot, empty pan

Pour in wine, stock, or even water, straight into the still-hot pan.

2 Scrape up every browned bit

Use a wooden spoon to scrape the pan bottom firmly as the liquid bubbles, lifting every trace of fond into the liquid itself.

3 Reduce to concentrate flavour

Let the liquid bubble and reduce by roughly half, concentrating the flavour you just lifted from the pan.

THE SAME FOND, A MUCH FASTER PAYOFF

This is exactly the deglazing principle Chapter 3's brown stock and Italian Cookery's own braising chapter both use — capturing browned residue rather than washing it away — just compressed from hours down to minutes, since a pan sauce doesn't need a long simmer to taste like something real.

Monter au Beurre: Mounting the Sauce with Butter

The classic French finish for a pan sauce — *monter au beurre*, "to mount with butter" — swirls cold butter into the reduced liquid off the heat, enriching it, thickening it slightly, and giving it

a real, glossy sheen. No roux, no flour at all — this is a completely different thickening method from Chapters 4 and 5.

1 Take the pan off the heat

Remove the pan from direct heat before adding any butter at all.

2 Add cold butter, a piece at a time

Cut cold butter into small cubes and whisk them in one or two pieces at a time, letting each fully melt and incorporate before adding more.

3 Never let it boil again

Once butter is being mounted in, the sauce must not return to a boil — direct heat breaks the emulsion, leaving a greasy, separated sauce rather than a glossy one.

THE SAME FRAGILITY AS CHAPTER 5'S HOLLANDAISE

Monter au beurre is a genuinely different technique from hollandaise, but it shares its one real weakness — both are butter-based emulsions that split under too much heat. Keep the pan off direct heat once the butter goes in, exactly the same discipline Chapter 5 already asked of you.

Putting It Together

A complete pan sauce dish: sauté a piece of meat properly, rest it while you deglaze and reduce the pan, then mount the reduced liquid with cold butter off the heat, season, and pour it over the rested meat. Resting matters here too — cutting into meat straight off the heat lets its juices run out onto the plate rather than settling back through the meat itself.

Kitchen Practice

KITCHEN PRACTICE 1

Sauté a piece of chicken breast or steak properly, rest it, deglaze the pan with wine or stock, reduce, mount with cold butter off the heat, and serve the sauce over the rested meat.

→ Solution

KITCHEN PRACTICE 2

Sauté two batches of the same ingredient side by side — one properly spaced, one deliberately crowded into too small a pan. Compare the colour and texture of both once done.

→ Solution

KITCHEN PRACTICE 3

Deliberately return a butter-mounted sauce to a boil and watch it split, then make a fresh batch mounting the butter correctly, off the heat, for comparison.

→ Solution

QUICK REFERENCE — SAUTÉING & PAN SAUCES

- Pat food dry, use the right fat, get the pan properly hot, and never crowd it
- Leave food alone until it releases naturally — don't force an early flip
- Deglaze the empty pan with liquid, scraping up the fond, then reduce
- Monter au beurre: cold butter, off the heat, one piece at a time — never let it boil again
- Rest the meat while the sauce comes together, then pour the sauce over it to serve

Next — Chapter 7: Braising & Confit

Coq au vin-style braising, and duck confit — the preservation logic behind cooking in its own fat.

CHAPTER 7: BRAISING & CONFIT

French Cookery

Chapter 7 · Braising & Confit

Two low-and-slow techniques, genuinely different from each other. Coq au vin-style braising reuses stock, deglazing, and mounting with butter — everything Chapters 3 and 6 already taught, aimed at a wine-heavy classic. Confit is something else entirely: meat cooked and stored submerged in its own fat, a real, centuries-old preservation method as much as a cooking technique.

Coq au Vin-Style Braising

Coq au vin means, literally, "rooster in wine" — bone-in chicken (thighs and legs work well) braised slowly in red wine with bacon, mushrooms, and pearl onions. The method below reuses nearly everything you've already learned.

1 Marinate overnight, if you have time

Marinating the chicken pieces in red wine with a bouquet garni (Chapter 1) overnight isn't essential, but it genuinely deepens the final flavour — real infusion, not just a formality.

2 Render lardons, then sear the chicken

Cook diced bacon (lardons) in the pot first, until the fat renders out and the pieces crisp. Remove them, then sear the chicken pieces well in the same rendered fat — the real point of Chapter 6's own crust discipline, applied here.

3 Build a mirepoix in the same pot

Cook a rough mirepoix (Chapter 3) in the fat left behind, letting it pick up colour from what's already stuck to the pot.

4 Deglaze with wine, add stock, return everything

Deglaze with red wine (the marinade itself, if you used one, or fresh wine), scraping up the fond exactly as in Chapter 6. Add stock and a fresh bouquet garni, then return the chicken and lardons to the pot.

5 Cover and simmer low and slow

Cover and simmer gently for an hour to ninety minutes, until the chicken is genuinely fork-tender.

6 Add the classic garnish near the end

Separately, glaze pearl onions in butter with a touch of sugar, and sauté mushrooms until browned. Stir both into the pot only in the final few minutes, so they keep their own texture rather than dissolving into the braise.

BEURRE MANIÉ: A RAW ALTERNATIVE TO A COOKED ROUX

If the braising liquid needs thickening at the end, French kitchens often reach for *beurre manié* — equal parts soft butter and flour, kneaded into a raw paste and whisked into the simmering liquid a little at a time. It thickens almost instantly, without the separate cooking step Chapter 4's roux needed — a genuinely faster, if slightly less refined, alternative.

Confit: Cooking, and Preserving, in Fat

Confit predates refrigeration — it's a real, historical preservation method, not just a cooking style. Meat cured in salt, then cooked and stored fully submerged in fat, can genuinely keep for weeks without spoiling.

1 Cure the meat in salt first

Rub duck legs generously with salt (often with crushed garlic and fresh thyme) and let them cure in the fridge for several hours, or overnight. The salt draws out moisture and lowers the meat's own water content — the first half of the preservation logic.

2 Rinse, then submerge in fat

Rinse off the excess salt, pat dry, and submerge the meat completely in melted duck fat (or a neutral fat if duck fat isn't available).

3 Cook low and slow — well below a simmer

Cook at a genuinely low, steady temperature, around 90°C (195°F) — noticeably gentler than even a bare simmer in water. The fat itself is the cooking medium here, not a stock or braising liquid.

4 Cool and store, still submerged

Let the meat cool completely in its own fat, still fully submerged, then store it that way, refrigerated. The solidified fat forms a real, physical seal around the meat.

WHY THIS ACTUALLY WORKS AS PRESERVATION

Two things are doing real work here: the salt cure lowers the meat's own water content, making it a poorer environment for bacteria to begin with, and the solid fat coating physically seals the meat away from air once cooled — the same basic principle behind sealing food under a layer of oil or wax. Neither trick alone is as effective as the two combined.

CONFIT'S OWN HEAT IS GENUINELY DIFFERENT FROM A BRAISE'S

A braising liquid simmers at or just below 100°C (212°F), the boiling point of water. Confit's fat sits meaningfully lower, around 90°C (195°F) — gentle enough that the fat itself never even approaches a simmer's own visible movement. If your confit fat is bubbling and moving the way a braise does, the heat is genuinely too high.

To serve, confit is traditionally crisped skin-side down in a hot pan after its long, slow cook — a real textural contrast against the meltingly tender meat underneath, and a direct callback to Chapter 6's own searing discipline.

Kitchen Practice

KITCHEN PRACTICE 1

Make a coq au vin-style braise from start to finish — lardons, a properly seared chicken, a mirepoix built in the same fat, a wine deglaze, a low simmer, and the pearl onion and mushroom garnish added near the end.

[→ Solution](#)**KITCHEN PRACTICE 2**

Make a small batch of confit (duck legs if available, or chicken thighs as a home- scale substitute), salt-curing first and cooking fully submerged in fat at a genuinely low, steady temperature.

[→ Solution](#)**KITCHEN PRACTICE 3**

Using a thermometer, compare a braising liquid's real simmer temperature against confit fat held at 90°C. Note the visible difference in how each one moves at its own correct temperature.

[→ Solution](#)**QUICK REFERENCE — BRAISING & CONFIT**

- Coq au vin: lardons rendered first, chicken seared in the same fat, mirepoix, wine deglaze, low simmer
- Beurre manié: raw butter-and-flour paste, whisked in to thicken quickly — a fast alternative to a roux
- Confit: salt-cured first, then cooked fully submerged in fat around 90°C — well below a braise's simmer
- Confit preserves via two mechanisms together: lowered water content from the salt, and a solid fat seal once cooled

- Crisp confit skin-side down in a hot pan just before serving

Next — Chapter 8: Egg Techniques: Omelette & Poaching

The classic French rolled omelette, poaching eggs properly, and pairing a poached egg with Chapter 5's own hollandaise.

CHAPTER 8: EGG TECHNIQUES: OMELETTE & POACHING

French Cookery

Chapter 8 · Egg Techniques: Omelette & Poaching

French cuisine treats an egg as a real technical test — nothing hides a shaky hand quite like a plain omelette or a poached egg. Two techniques here, closing with a direct payoff of Chapter 5's own hollandaise.

The Classic French Omelette

A genuine French omelette (*omelette baveuse* — literally "drooling," meaning soft and slightly creamy inside) is a completely different technique from a folded, browned American-style omelette.

	FRENCH OMELETTE	AMERICAN-STYLE OMELETTE
Motion	Constant stirring/shaking the whole time	Poured and left mostly undisturbed
Colour	Pale yellow, no browning	Often browned, sometimes deliberately
Shape	Rolled into a smooth, seamless cylinder	Folded in half
Fillings	A thin line before rolling, if any	Often mixed throughout

1 Whisk the eggs well

Whisk eggs vigorously until fully combined and slightly frothy — no milk or cream, unlike many American-style recipes.

2 Heat butter until foaming, not browning

Melt butter in a small nonstick pan over medium-high heat until it foams — pull back the heat slightly if it starts to brown.

3 Pour in the eggs and start moving immediately

Pour in the eggs and, using a fork, stir constantly in small circles while gently shaking the pan with your other hand — small, soft curds should form throughout, never a single solid sheet.

4 Stop while it's still slightly wet on top

Once the eggs are mostly set but the very top still looks slightly glossy and underdone, stop stirring — residual heat finishes the rest.

5 Roll, don't fold

Tilt the pan and use the fork to roll the omelette over on itself, working it into a tight cylinder as you slide it toward the pan's edge, then tip it out onto a plate seam-side down.

BROWNING ISN'T A STYLISTIC CHOICE HERE — IT'S A TECHNICAL MISS

In classical French technique, a browned omelette is generally considered overcooked, not "well done." The heat control and constant motion above exist specifically to cook the eggs through without ever letting a crust form.

Poaching Eggs

1 Use the freshest eggs you can

A fresh egg has a tighter, thicker white that holds together in the water. An older egg's white has thinned and spreads out into wispy, ragged strands instead of staying compact around the yolk.

2 Bring water to just below a simmer

Heat water until small bubbles just begin forming on the bottom of the pot — not a rolling boil, which tears a poaching egg apart.

3 Add a splash of vinegar

A small splash of white vinegar helps the egg white coagulate faster and tighter around the yolk.

4 Crack into a cup first, then slide in gently

Crack the egg into a small cup or ramekin, then lower the cup close to the water's surface and slide the egg in gently — dropping it from height scatters the white on impact.

5 Cook about 3 minutes for a runny yolk

Cook undisturbed for roughly 3 minutes, then lift out with a slotted spoon. The white should look fully set and opaque; a gentle press should still feel soft and give at the yolk.

TRIMMING FOR A NEAT, RESTAURANT-STYLE SHAPE

Classically trained cooks often trim the ragged, wispy edges off a poached egg with kitchen scissors once it's out of the water, leaving a neat, compact oval — purely presentational, never necessary for taste.

Bringing It Together: Poached Egg with Hollandaise

A poached egg on toasted bread, topped with Chapter 5's own hollandaise, is the classic pairing — the exact structure behind eggs Benedict. Toast the bread, warm a slice of ham if you like, top with the poached egg, and finish with a generous spoonful of hollandaise.

Kitchen Practice

KITCHEN PRACTICE 1

Make a proper French rolled omelette, stirring constantly and stopping while it's still slightly wet on top. Then make a second one deliberately left undisturbed until fully set and browned, for comparison.

[→ Solution](#)

KITCHEN PRACTICE 2

Poach two eggs side by side — one genuinely fresh, one a week or more old — using the exact same water and method. Compare how much the white spreads in each case.

[→ Solution](#)

KITCHEN PRACTICE 3

Build a full poached egg with hollandaise, reusing Chapter 5's own sauce, on toasted bread with a slice of ham.

[→ Solution](#)

QUICK REFERENCE — EGG TECHNIQUES

- French omelette: constant stirring, no browning, rolled into a seamless cylinder
- Stop stirring while the top still looks slightly wet — residual heat finishes it
- Poaching: fresh eggs, water just below a simmer, a splash of vinegar, cracked into a cup first
- Roughly 3 minutes for a runny yolk — white fully set, yolk still soft to a gentle press
- Poached egg + toast + hollandaise = the classic pairing, reusing Chapter 5's own sauce

Next — Chapter 9: Pastry Basics: Pâte Brisée & Choux

A basic short pastry dough and choux pastry — two genuinely different French pastry doughs.

CHAPTER 9: PASTRY BASICS: PÂTE BRISÉE & CHOUX

French Cookery

Chapter 9 · Pastry Basics: Pâte Brisée & Choux

Full French patisserie is its own enormous subject — this chapter covers just the two doughs everything else in a home kitchen tends to build on: pâte brisée, a short, crumbly tart dough, and choux, a cooked dough that puffs from nothing but its own steam.

Pâte Brisée: A Short, Cold Dough

"Short" describes a dough's own texture — tender and crumbly rather than chewy — and it comes from keeping gluten development to an absolute minimum. This is the exact opposite goal from Chapter 2's fresh pasta dough, which wanted real gluten structure. Here, gluten is genuinely the enemy.

1 Cut cold butter into flour

Cut cold, cubed butter into flour using your fingertips, a pastry cutter, or a food processor pulsed briefly, stopping once the mixture looks like coarse crumbs with pea-sized butter pieces still visible.

2 Add ice water gradually

Add ice-cold water a tablespoon at a time, mixing just until the dough starts to come together — stop the moment it does, well before it looks like a smooth ball.

3 Rest in the fridge before rolling

Wrap and refrigerate the dough for at least 30 minutes. This relaxes what little gluten formed and keeps the butter solid, both of which make the dough easier to roll cleanly.

WARM BUTTER AND OVERWORKING BOTH RUIN THE "SHORT" TEXTURE

If the butter melts into the flour rather than staying in distinct little pieces, or if the dough is mixed until smooth and elastic, real gluten develops — and a pâte brisée with

real gluten structure bakes up tough and chewy instead of tender and crumbly. Work quickly, keep everything cold, and stop mixing the moment the dough holds together.

Blind Baking

For a tart or quiche shell that needs to hold a wet filling, the crust is often partially or fully baked empty first — "blind." Line the chilled, rolled-out shell with parchment paper, fill it with pie weights (or dried beans), and bake until the edges are set before removing the weights and parchment to finish. The weights stop the base from puffing or the sides from slumping while the crust sets.

Choux Pastry: Puffed by Steam Alone

Choux is built completely differently — cooked on the stove first, then finished with raw eggs beaten in. Unlike almost every other baked dough, choux contains no baking powder, no baking soda, and no yeast at all.

1 Bring butter, water, and salt to a boil

Bring water, butter, and a pinch of salt to a full boil in a saucepan.

2 Add flour all at once, off the heat, and beat

Remove from the heat, tip in the flour all at once, and beat vigorously until it forms a smooth mass that pulls cleanly away from the sides of the pan — this cooked mixture is called a panade.

3 Cool briefly, then beat in eggs one at a time

Let the panade cool for a few minutes (hot enough to still cook the eggs would scramble them), then beat in eggs one at a time, making sure each is fully incorporated before adding the next.

4 Check the consistency

The finished dough should be smooth, glossy, and thick enough to hold a soft ribbon shape when a spoon is lifted from it — not runny, but not stiff either.

NO CHEMICAL LEAVENING — THIS IS STEAM, AND ONLY STEAM

Choux's own high moisture content is the entire rising mechanism. In a hot oven, that moisture flashes into steam almost immediately, and the trapped steam physically pushes the dough outward from the inside before the structure has a chance to set — a genuinely different leavening principle from a yeast-risen dough or a baking-powder-leavened batter.

1 Pipe onto a lined baking sheet

Pipe the dough into small mounds (for profiteroles or gougères) or logs (for éclairs), spaced well apart.

2 Bake hot first, then lower the temperature

Start in a hot oven to drive a strong initial puff, then reduce the temperature partway through to dry out the interior without over-browning the outside.

3 Never open the oven door early

Opening the door before the structure has genuinely set lets the trapped steam escape all at once — the puffs collapse immediately and won't recover.

Kitchen Practice

KITCHEN PRACTICE 1

Make a pâte brisée, rest it, and blind bake a tart shell — lining it with parchment and pie weights before baking the base.

[→ Solution](#)

KITCHEN PRACTICE 2

Make a second batch of pâte brisée, this time deliberately letting the butter warm and overworking the dough until smooth. Bake both alongside each other and compare texture.

[→ Solution](#)

KITCHEN PRACTICE 3

Make a batch of choux pastry and pipe it into small mounds, baking hot first and then lower, without opening the oven door early. Cut one open once cooled to check the hollow centre.

[→ Solution](#)

QUICK REFERENCE — PÂTE BRISÉE & CHOUX

- Pâte brisée: cold butter cut into flour, ice water added gradually, minimal mixing — gluten is the enemy
- Rest pâte brisée in the fridge before rolling to relax gluten and keep the butter solid
- Blind bake with parchment and pie weights for a shell that needs to hold a wet filling
- Choux: butter/water/salt boiled, flour beaten in off the heat, then eggs beaten in one at a time
- Choux rises from trapped steam alone — no baking powder, no yeast, and never open the oven door early

Next — Chapter 10: Capstone: A Classic French Bistro Meal

A starter, a sautéed main with pan sauce, and a simple dessert built on this chapter's own pastry basics.

CHAPTER 10: CAPSTONE — A CLASSIC FRENCH BISTRO MEAL

French Cookery

Chapter 10 · Capstone: A Classic French Bistro Meal

A real French bistro meal runs **entrée** (starter), **plat principal** (main), **dessert** — the same three-course backbone behind Italian Cookery's own antipasto/primmo/ secondo, built from genuinely French technique instead. This capstone plans and cooks all three, reaching back into nearly every chapter this course has covered.

Planning: Work Backward from the Slowest Element

1 The dessert anchors the timeline

A pâte brisée tart (Chapter 9) needs its dough rested, rolled, blind baked, and cooled before it can even be filled — real, unavoidable dead time. Make it first, and let it work in the background while everything else comes together.

2 The entrée fits in the middle

A velouté-based soup (Chapter 4) needs a roux and warmed stock whisked together, then simmered briefly — real active time, but nowhere near the tart's own wait.

3 The main goes last, closest to serving

Chapter 6's sauté-and-pan-sauce main is the fastest element of the whole meal and tastes best made last — sear, rest, deglaze, mount with butter, and serve within minutes.

Entrée: A Velouté-Based Soup

Chapter 4's velouté isn't only a sauce base — thinned further and pureed with a vegetable, it becomes a genuine soup. A mushroom velouté soup works well: sauté mushrooms, build a roux directly in the same pot, whisk in warmed white stock (Chapter 3), simmer, then purée

until smooth. Finish with a small splash of cream if you like, and serve as the meal's own opening course.

Plat Principal: Sautéed Chicken or Steak with a Pan Sauce

Exactly Chapter 6's own method: sear a chicken breast or steak properly, rest it, deglaze the pan with wine (Chapter 1), reduce, and mount the sauce with cold butter off the heat. Serve the sauce spooned over the rested meat.

Dessert: A Fruit Tart on Pâte Brisée

The tart shell blind baked in Chapter 9, cooled, then filled — a simple pastry cream or lightly sweetened whipped cream, topped with fresh fruit arranged over the top, is enough for a genuine bistro-style finish without needing choux pastry's own more involved piping and baking on top of everything else.

What Each Course Draws On

COURSE	CHAPTER(S)	TECHNIQUE REUSED
Entrée	3, 4	White stock, a roux-and-stock velouté thinned into soup
Plat Principal	1, 6	Cooking wine, proper sauté, deglazing, monter au beurre
Dessert	9	Pâte brisée, blind baking
Throughout	2	Mise en place, keeping every element on schedule

Kitchen Practice

KITCHEN PRACTICE 1

Plan and cook the full three-course meal — a mushroom velouté soup, a sautéed main with pan sauce, and a fruit tart — writing out a backward timeline anchored on the tart before you

start cooking anything.

→ Solution

KITCHEN PRACTICE 2

While the tart dough rests in the fridge, prep and start the soup in the same window, practising the two techniques side by side and noting where the timing genuinely overlaps.

→ Solution

KITCHEN PRACTICE 3

Add a simple cheese course (fromage) between the main and dessert — a classic French addition — reasoning through where it fits into your existing backward timeline.

→ Solution

QUICK REFERENCE — PLANNING A BISTRO MEAL

- Entrée, plat principal, dessert — the French three-course backbone
- Plan backward from the slowest element — here, the tart's own dough-rest and bake time
- The main goes last, closest to serving, since it's the fastest and best fresh
- Every course in this capstone reuses a real technique from earlier chapters — nothing here is new

Course Complete

That's French Cookery, start to finish — from mirepoix and a proper stock through to a full bistro meal built entirely from technique you now actually understand, not just followed once.