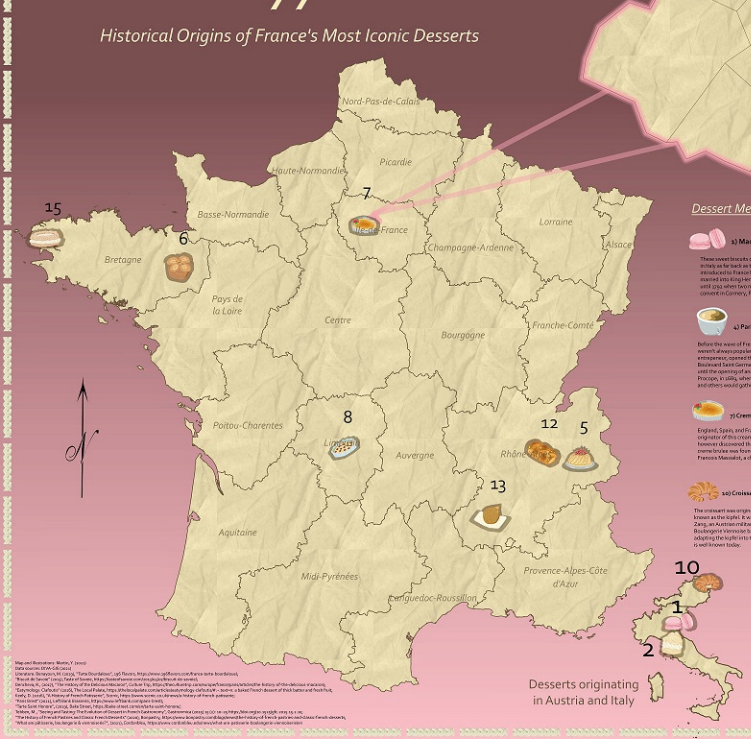
Bon Appetite

Historical Origins of France's Most Iconic Desserts



Dessert Menu

1) Macaron, 1533

These sweet biscuits originated in Venetian monasteries as early as the late 8th century, but were first introduced to France by Catherine de Medici when she married into King Henry IV's royal court in 1533. It wasn't until 1791 when two nuns baked and sold the biscuits at a convent in Cormery, France did they grow in popularity.

2) Puff Pastry, 1645

This creamy pastry's origin is a bit of a mystery. Many believe that Claudius Gele, a French patissier, created the first recorded recipe for like puff pastry. However, the dessert has been seen in 15th century Spanish, Arabic, and ancient Greek recipes as well.

3) Napoleon, 1651

This dessert has been around for some time, however, François Pierre La Varenne was the first to record an official recipe of the dish in his first cookbook. La Varenne also pioneered bouque and bechamel sauce.

4) Parisian Cafe, 1672

Before the wave of French coffee presses and cafes, they weren't always popular. Pascal Rosée, a coffeehouse entrepreneur, opened the first coffee shop in Paris on Boulevard Saint-Germain. The cafe was not successful for years, until the opening of Procope, Café Le Procope, in 1689, where notable scientists, writers, actors, and others would gather often.

5) Garbeau de Savoie, 1692

A sponge cake lighter than a feather, the Garbeau de Savoie was originally created in 1538 by pastrycher Pierre Poyvre for one of Count Amadeus VI of Savoy's dinner parties. The dessert's recipe was later refined by Francois Massialot in the 17th century where he added rose flavoring suger rime, cinnamon, vanilla, and icing sugar to the cake.

6) Kouign Amann, 1800

There is speculation about which baker created this flaky cake. Some claim that it was created by pharcie E. Fredzou. Desormeaux be a baker name Yves Rene Scordia while others claim that a restaurant owner's wife's grandmother created the cake in Scaër.

7) Creme Brulee, 1800

England, Spain, and France have all claimed to be the originator of this creamy desert. Gastronomists however, discovered that the first recipe for creme brulee was found in a French cookbook written by Francois Massialot, a chef in the Palace of Versailles.

8) Clafoutis, 1800

This custard dessert that gained popularity in the 19th century came from the rural farming region of Limousin, France. It's made with a custard base and fresh fruit, traditionally blackberries.

9) Croquembouche, 1815

This pyramid of cream-filled, puff pastry balls drizzled in caramelized sugar is a popular delicacy at weddings and other large celebrations. The recipe for this dessert was developed and recorded in pastry chef Antoine Carême's treatise of the classical cuisi* cookbook in 1815.

10) Croissant, 1839

The croissant was originally created in Vienna, Austria, known as the kipferl. It was introduced to France by August Zang, an Austrian military official and the founder of the Boulangerie Viennoise bakery. French bakeries began adapting the kipferl into the crescent shape (croissant) that is well known today.

11) Saint Honoré , 1846

This cream puff cake was created by pastry chef Fauvel Chiboust in honor of Saint Honorato, an Amiens bishop and patron saint of bakers. Though a delicate and beautiful creation, there were rumors of the cake leading to poisonings in Paris in the late 1860s. After an investigation, these poisonings were caused by poor hygiene in bakeries, improper disposal of plaster during baking, and unrefrigerated egg whites.

12) Brioche, 1880

It's believed that this bread was first created by Norman Viking who settled in France in the 9th century, bringing with them it's essential ingredient brie cheese. In 1880, chef Pierre Labulfy developed the de Saint Genix variation of the brioche recipe, which is the recipe well known of today.

13) Candied Chestnuts, 1882

These nutty delights come from southern France and northern Italy in the early 15th century. The earliest written recipe was from Louis XIV's court at the end of the 15th century. The first industrial factory that began producing candied chestnuts was built in 1882 in Avidesthe, south central France.

14) Tarte Bourdaloue, 1890

This tart was created by a Parisian patissier who worked in a pastry shop on Bourdaloue street, Paris in the late 19th century. Originally, the tart was comprised of almonds, hazelnuts, and cream but has been refined to its now popular rendition with poached pears.

15) Paris-Brest, 1911

In 1891, the Paris Brest-Paris bicycle race started an iconic cycling tradition throughout France. To commemorate the 20th anniversary of the race in 1911, pastry chef Louis Durand created the creamy dessert to be in a shape of a bicycle wheel while the almond toppings were sliced to appear like a winner's wreath.

Take dessert to go

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