FROM FLANDERS WITH FOOD

FLANDERS, A HOME FOR FOOD LOVERS
WITH PETER GOOSSENS

MEET FLANDERS’ BREWERS
WITH ROSA MERCKX

FLANDERS’ STREETFOOD
WITH WIM BALLEU

HOME OF WORLD-CLASS CHEFS
WITH GERT DE MANGELEER

CUTTING-EDGE CHOCOLATIERS
WITH HERMAN VAN DENDER

FLANDERS KITCHEN REBELS
WITH DENNIS BROECKX

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COVER IMAGE: HANNES VANDENBROUCKE
WITH THANKS TO FLANDERS KITCHEN REBEL DAVY DE POURCQ AND RESTAURANT VOLTA.
Welcome to Flanders, the northern half of Belgium. Situated in the heart of Europe, it’s also at the centre of European history. Over the years, pioneers in art, design, fashion and architecture have all called Flanders home. And today, the region is admired all over the world, thanks to the cutting-edge craftsmanship that puts Flanders at the forefront of chocolate, gastronomy, arts & culture, heritage and cycling.

Bite-sized Flanders is the perfect scale for exploring – the art cities Antwerp, Bruges, Ghent, Leuven and Mechelen and capital Brussels are all within easy reach and just waiting to be discovered.

7 reasons to visit Flanders

UNESCO
Flanders has no fewer than seven sites protected by UNESCO, with Bruges as the jewel in the crown. In 2016, Flanders' beer culture received the seal of approval as cultural heritage – something all Flemings are proud of!

Culinary craftsmanship
Whether in a smart restaurant or a snack bar, you can find top-quality gastronomy at every turn.

Arts & heritage
Explore a rich cultural heritage that goes back centuries. The region has a multitude of world-class museums and galleries and a wealth of art events all year round.

Cycling
Flanders is paradise for cyclists, so get on your bike and explore its beautiful landscape, picturesque villages and artistic cities.

Flanders is a festival
Flanders is the ultimate place to experience the festival atmosphere in summer. Every year millions of people gather at more than 280 festivals covering 16,500 km.

Family-friendly
Feel at home, even on holiday. Throughout Flanders you’ll find places to eat and stay that welcome families with open arms. For active families, it’s the perfect base for days out and bike rides.

Accessibility
Flanders aims to offer great experiences to travellers with disabilities too. We’re committed to making our accommodation, transport, museums and other attractions as accessible as possible.
For 30 years, chef Peter Goossens has been the godfather of Flemish gastronomy. With his three Michelin star restaurant, Hof van Cleve, he's performing at an international level with some of the biggest names in the culinary world. He serves up gastronomic craft of the highest order, and his innovative creations set the tone for the food landscape of tomorrow. His emphasis on using local products makes him one of the proudest ambassadors of our Flemish terroir and our culinary craftsmanship.

In Flanders we enjoy life and we love to eat, you can find that at all culinary levels.

Peter Goossens

Flanders' culinary culture and tradition are the thread running through Peter Goossens' cooking and his restaurant. His signature work exudes Flemish craftsmanship in all its facets. "The dishes we serve in our restaurant are the result of skilful handicraft and expertise on so many levels," he says. "Without the hard work of our farmers, fishermen, hunters and cheese makers, it would be impossible to create magic on a plate. Everything begins with these fantastic Flemish products. I cherish and respect our local ingredients enormously; they are the DNA of my kitchen and they share responsibility for the unique quality of the food I make. It's a wonderful challenge to allow the taste, aroma and the texture of our local products to really come into their own."

"No innovation without tradition" While never losing sight of classic techniques, Peter creates refined, contemporary dishes. For him, constant innovation and evolution are key to the success of Flemish gastronomy.

"Our artisans are always looking for new ways to refine. We're not resting on our laurels here, we're always challenging ourselves without denying our culinary traditions. The classic Flemish vol-au-vent is a good example. It was once a hearty dish based on a heavy béchamel sauce. Today we've refined the sauce and replaced some of the flour and butter with a robust, flavorful broth. We don't hesitate to take our traditions and adapt them to contemporary dining habits."

"Explosion of flavours" "Good taste is rooted in our DNA, and we have our grandmothers and great-grandmothers to thank for that. They were constantly occupied with food, in accordance with the seasons. There was always something simmering away in their kitchens. Our food and flavour is in a Flemish soul. Thanks to the distinct seasons, Flemish culinary landscape has grown to become one of the world's most varied and interesting. "When the first white asparagus pops up with the spring, our kitchens are dominated by light plates that are full of flavour. In the dead of winter, when it's freezing cold, we warm ourselves up with hearty stews and nutritious soups," Peter adds. "In Flanders, we enjoy life and we love to eat, and you can experience this whenever you choose to dine."

Visit Peter Goossens at his restaurant The three Michelin star restaurant Hof van Cleve, set in the countryside in East Flanders, was included in "World's 50 Best Restaurants 2017" by Restaurant Magazine.

Hof van Cleve
Riemegemstraat 1
9770 Kruishoutem
www.hofvancleve.com

Peter Goossens is performing at an international level with some of the biggest names in the culinary world.
When Rosa Merckx went to work as a secretary for the Liefmans brewery in Oudenaarde, just after the Second World War, she was a one-off. "In those days, it wasn't the done thing for a girl from a good home to go out to work," says Rosa. "I could have taken ballet lessons or volunteered at the Red Cross, until I met a man. But I wasn't waiting around. I wanted to have lots of experiences, and so I came to Liefmans." Ten years, she worked alongside Paul van Geluwe de Berlaere, owner and head brewer of Liefmans. As she helped more and more with the brewing, she picked up the tricks of the trade. "I learned things like how the hops should smell, how to check the temperature of the brew and how to measure the acidity. Along the way, my interest grew and I fell in love with beer. The older beer lives, the more I delved. You see it ferment and transform." When, at her boss's request, Rosa tasted the beer, she gave him her blunt opinion. "It tasted far too sour and it really wasn't very nice," she recalls. Sour beers were traditionally brewed in the area, but Rosa wanted a beer that young people and women would also enjoy. "A woman just has her opinion," Rosa says with a laugh, and under her influence, the taste of the drink became softer and more rounded. When Van Geluwe de Berlaere died suddenly in 1972, the young woman rose to become head of the business. She made the recipe her own and strengthened by the latest technological know-how, becoming the first female head brewer, laying the foundations more than half a century ago for the current taste of the award-winning Liefmans beer.

When I was young, every village had a brewery," says Rosa. "They were operated by the mayor, but not many people know that it was usually the wife of the mayor who did the brewing. When I started working for Liefmans in the 1940s, there were more than 3,000 breweries in Belgium! We didn't have any rules about water purity and so on, everyone just did what they wanted. Sometimes it tasted good, sometimes not..." Due to growing regulation, takeovers and the high cost of investment, lots of small breweries disappeared, until there were just a handful or so left. Today the making of beer is scientifically based and the Flemish beer tradition lives on in young, passionate brewers, trendy microbreweries and a new generation who are keen on homegrown beer. The University of Louvain even offers a course called 'technology of beer brewing'.

"When, at my boss's request, I tasted the beer, I gave him my honest opinion. "It tasted far too sour and it really wasn't very nice," she recalls. Sour beers were traditionally brewed in the area, but Rosa wanted a beer that young people and women would also enjoy. "A woman just has her opinion," Rosa says with a laugh, and under her influence, the taste of the drink became softer and more rounded. When Van Geluwe de Berlaere died suddenly in 1972, the young woman rose to become head of the business. She made the recipe her own and strengthened it by the latest technological know-how and scientific developments. This is why our beer tastes – and keeps – better than ever. "On the one side, brewing beer is a question of emotion, and on the other it's about scientific detail," says Rosa. "You can't have one and not the other; they go hand in hand. You can have all the technological know-how, but if you can't taste and smell properly, you'll never brew a delicious beer!"

Flemish brewing culture through the centuries

Traditional production methods are handed down from generation to generation, systematically complemented and strengthened by the latest technological know-how and scientific developments. This is why our beer tastes – and keeps – better than ever. "On the one side, brewing beer is a question of emotion, and on the other it's about scientific detail," says Rosa. "You can't have one and not the other; they go hand in hand. You can have all the technological know-how, but if you can't taste and smell properly, you'll never brew a delicious beer!"

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MEET FLANDERS’ BREWERS
ROSA MERCKX

"Good beer begins with honest ingredients of the highest quality"

When you rub the hop flowers between your hands, they release a delicious aroma. Pure water and yeast also play an important role in the brewing process. Every brewery has its own unique yeast culture that has an impact on the eventual taste.

While hops are one of the best-known ingredients in beer, what many people don’t know is that, historically, it was often replaced by yeast. This mixture of herbs varied from region to region, but commonly contained myrtle, sage, yarrow and juniper berries. At the time, brewers on the left bank of the river Scheldt were obliged to buy gruit from the gruithouses. This was an early form of excise duty on beer and the spice mix was responsible for taste and for slowing down acidification.

Meanwhile, the breweries on the right bank of the Scheldt were using hops. Hops were one of the first ingredients added to beer to be used as a natural preservative. Along with evolutions in working methods and the changing laws through the centuries, these historical and regional differences are the basis of our current varied range of beers.

Hops are an essential ingredient in beer. They act as a natural preservative and are responsible for taste and for slowing down acidification. brewers on the right bank of the Scheldt added a good dose of hops to their beers as a natural preservative. Along with evolutions in working methods and the changing laws through the centuries, these historical and regional differences are the basis of our current varied range of beers.

For centuries, family businesses in Flanders have been growing hops with low and expertise. Today the hops industry is concentrated primarily around Poperinge, West Flanders, a region with the ideal soil for this exceptional plant. Thanks to their high quality, Poperinge hops are a recognised regional product. Beers made with at least 50% hops from here receive the circular "Belgian hop label".

In Flanders, it’s not only our beer that makes use of the hop plant. The white, crunchy hop shoots that grow at the base of the plant are a nutritious delicacy. Flemish kitchens with their mild, earthy hop shoots are the basis of our current varied range of beers.

Regional products and hop labels

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About ‘t Hoppecruyt

For four generations, the Desmyter family has been growing the finest hops for our Belgian brewers. The ‘t Hoppecruyt hop farm is in the heart of Poperinge. Farmer Benedikte will happily give you a tour of the hop fields, and up to six people can stay the night at a cozy holiday home nearby.

www.hoppecruyt.be

In light of centenary commemorations for the First World War, Westtoer (the tourism agency for West Flanders) has created 12 new cycle routes in the Westhoek with the Great War as the connecting theme. They offer a fantastic mix of scenery, visits to important historical sites and scenic cycling routes.

POP cycle route 14-18

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4 facts about hops

1. The hop cone is the fruit of the hop plant. The most important component of the hop cone is a bitter yellow powder called lupulin found under the scales of a female plant. This helps to preserve the beer and gives it its bitter taste. The lupulin in a fertilised hop cone is of much lower quality, which is why there are no male plants in hop fields.
2. You can actually see hops growing. In early summer the plant can grow up to 10 cm (4 inches) a day, making it the fastest growing climbing plant in Western Europe.
3. The hop plant prefers a nutrient-rich, permeable and damp soil. The sandy loam ground of Poperinge offers an exceptional growth medium.
4. Botanically, the hop is part of the hemp family. Its scientific name is Humulus lupulus.

www.hopmuseum.be

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Natural ingredients

Alongside 40% water, beer has three main ingredients.

- Malt
- Hops
- Yeast

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Malt

Malt is germinated and dried grains, mainly barley. It’s an important ingredient of beer, as well as jammer and whiskey.

Hops

Hops give beer its characteristic flavour, are a natural preservative and ensure head stability.

Yeast

Yeast turns the sugars into alcohol and carbon dioxide. High, low and wild fermentation each have their own aroma.
In figures
- Belgium has around 1000 beer brands and more than 700 different taste profiles.
- Our country produces 1% of the world’s beer, a staggering amount considering Belgium’s relatively small population.
- 10% of our beer production is destined for export.
- Belgians consume around 200 million gallons of beer a year, equal to 121 lbs or more than 125 pints per inhabitant.
- The Belgian beer weekend has been named as one of the world’s top 10 beer festivals and is praised for its scope and relevance.

The art of making beer

Beer is made from natural ingredients, in which there can be slight variations. One hop harvest is not the same as another, and minor fluctuations can have a big effect on the eventual table of the beer. To avoid these differences, and put a standardised beer on the market, you can use blends. Sometimes different batches of beer (as many as five types) are mixed together to make perfectly balanced beer, just like wine and champagne, the mix of different vintages adds depth and character and the drink is not only blended like wine, it’s also tasted in the same way by swirling the glass to release the aroma.

In innovative co-creation in Brussels, an artist would create a painting Rosa Merckx

To get the perfect blend, different vintages stored in maturation tanks are mixed together.

From grain to beer: the brewing process
1. The raw ingredients are milled and the extracted grains are steeped in hot water.
2. The crushed malt is mixed with water, turned into a mash and then warmed to 78°C (172°F), so the starch in the malt is converted into sugar, which will later act as food for the yeast.
3. The mixture is then heated to give a clear liquid (the wort) and the malt residue (the draft).
4. The wort cools to the correct temperature for fermentation. For most beers, the yeast is added in this phase, and the fermentation can begin. The wort is then transferred to maturation tanks and its aroma develops further.
5. The wort is boiled with hops, and, depending on the type of beer, the mixture will simmer for anything from a few hours to a whole day.

A selection of beer varieties

Flemish beer comes in all colours, flavors and alcohol percentages, from high and low to spontaneous and mixed fermentation, from light to dark and from fruity to sour – there’s something for everyone! Here are five major categories:

- Pils
  - Low-fermentation or pils beers are the best-known.
  - It’s a light, golden-colored beer that can be lightly or heavily hopped.

- Abbey Beer
  - Abbey beers have a historical link with a Norbertine or Benedictine abbey. The best-known are a relatively sweet dark brown liqueur (triple) deep amber in Flemish beers) and a sharper, generally heavier blonde (the tripel or hoptop).

- Wittbier
  - Wittbier is an often unfiltered and cloudy wheat beer with notes of coriander and orange peel.

- Lambic & Geuze
  - Lambic is a copper- to red-brown beer produced by spontaneous fermentation. Geuze is made by blending young and old lambics.

- Speciality beer
  - Anything can fall into the ‘speciality beer’ category. In terms of flavor, they vary enormously. There are sour, bitter, fruity smooth and strong specialty beers available.

Land of brewers

Belgium has 90 active breweries, from major players to small microbreweries. You can visit lots of them to see the brewing process up close.

Brussels Beer Project
Innovative co-creation in an urban brewery.
Antoine Demeurestraat 188
1000 Brussels
www.brusselsbeerproject.be

Het Anker
A fifth-generation family brewery.
Guido Gezellelaan 49
2000 Mechelen
www.hetanker.be

Gruut
A city brewery that replaces hops with medieval spices.
Rembrandt Doodsmedenstraat 31a
8000 Gent
www.gruut.be

De Halve maan
Thanks to a 4 km beer pipeline, city beer Brugse Zot flows beneath the streets.
Wabrechtlaan 26
4000 Leuven
www.dehalvemaan.be

Stella Artois
With an 800-year tradition of brewing tradition, this is one of the biggest breweries in the world.
Aarschotsesteenweg 20
4000 Leuven
www.stellaartois.be

Trappist beers in Belgium

Trappist beers are brewed by the monks of the Cistercian order. To be worthy of the name Trappist, a beer must meet strict conditions: they must always be brewed with the latest technological know-how, from generation to generation and are strengthened with the local technical know-how.

You create beer like an artist would create a painting Rosa Merckx

To do the perfect blend, different vintages stored in maturation tanks are mixed together.

The Belgian Beer Weekend has been praised for its scope and relevance. 62% of our beer production is destined for export. Our country produces 1% of the world’s beer, equal to 72 litres or more than 125 pints per inhabitant. Belgium has around 1000 beer brands and more than 700 different taste profiles. Belgium has 168 active breweries, from major players in Belgium: Westmalle, Westvleteren, Achel, Chimay, Orval and Rochefort. 12 recognised Trappist beers are brewed in Belgium: Westmalle, Westvleteren, Achel, Chimay, Orval and Rochefort.

No fewer than six of the world’s 12 recognised Trappist beers are brewed in Belgium: Westmalle, Westvleteren, Achel, Chimay, Orval and Rochefort.

Rosa Merckx create a painting an artist would create a painting

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SERVED WITH LOVE

The perfect draught

Tapping a beer is a real art form. Follow these nine steps to pour a perfect cold beer with a good head.

1. The purification
   Rinse the glass thoroughly with cold water to bring it to the same temperature as the beer

2. The offering
   Open the tap and let the first head, the sacrifice, flow away

3. The swirling chinny
   Hold the glass at a 45° angle. That way, the beer will swirl and the purifications

4. The offering
   Rinse the glass thoroughly with cold water, to bring it to the same temperature as the beer

5. The collar
   Close the tap and take the glass away

6. The judgement
   Rinse a dissembler to remove the head that comes above the rim of the glass

7. The offering
   Rinse the base and sides of the glass clean

8. The final cleansing
   Rinse the base and sides of the glass clean

9. The presentation
   Finally, set the perfectly tapped beer down, and enjoy.

Plan Beer

With 12 cycle routes and nine walks, Plan Beer leads visitors around 28 breweries and more than 200 local cafes. Cycle through the rolling landscape of the Flemish Ardennes, beside the waters of the Scheldt or the green Waasland landscape of the Flemish Ardennes, beside the waters of the Scheldt or the green Waasland region – and right on cue, quench your thirst with a cool beer!

Rosa’s favourite

“My favourite beer is of course Goudenband. I made it myself, and I really enjoy drinking it. But I’ll sometimes order a Trappist or a glass of wine,” says Rosa. In the world of the true beer lover, Goudenband is a name that resonates. This dark brown beer has grown over the decades to become the brewery’s most popular beer. It’s a traditional and strong Old Brown that, like most Flemish beers, is the perfect marriage between tradition and modern technology. Liefmans Goudenband is designed to be laid down in storage, and just like wine it gets better with age. On the nose there are aromas of caramel, apple, rhubarb, cherry and mint. In the mouth, you can taste apple and cherry, combined with notes of wood. The slightly sour taste and grilled, bitter elements make this beer a perfect match for blue cheese.

Beer and food pairing

Beer is the best companion for a good meal.

Complex aromas pair perfectly with food, just as wine does – or perhaps even better. The right beer can lift the right dish to a higher level. Our sensible beer landscape has the perfect match for every flavour!

The famed ABC method offers three approaches. A is for Appetizer. This is the most obvious method, where you look for the same principal aromas. B is for Bridge. A sweet beer with caramelised meat, for example. Using the Bridge method, you find similar flavours that complement each other: the citrus notes of a welter with the salty taste of fish, for example. The Contrast approach brings together opposing flavours, such as a refreshing gin with spicy food.

Rosa’s favourite beer, Goudenband, is itself served in several excellent restaurants, including The lane in Antwerp.

Top 5 beer tasting pubs

1. Het Goudblommeke in Papier
   Famous hangout of René Magritte.
   Grote Markt 11, 2800 Mechelen
   www.papier.be

2. M-Café
   The full-on café experience.
   Vrijdagmarkt 50, 9000 Ghent
   www.mcafe.be

3. Als ik mijn ogen toedoe, ben ik in Honoloeoe
   The café with the longest name in Belgium.
   Cellebroersstraat 55, 1000 Brussels
   www.honoloeoe.com

4. ’t Brugs Beertje
   The full-on café experience.
   Kemelstraat 5, 8000 Bruges
   www.brugsbeertje.be

5. De Dulle Griet
   Famous hangout of René Magritte.
   in Papier, before or after a visit to Museum M.
   Kemelstraat 5, 8000 Bruges
   www.dullegriet.be

Sources:

1. The perfect draught (source: Stella Artois)
2. Beer tasting in 5 steps (source: Beer sommelier Sofie Van Rafelghem)
3. The famed ABC method offers three approaches. A is for Appetizer. This is the most obvious method, where you look for the same principal aromas. B is for Bridge. A sweet beer with caramelised meat, for example. Using the Bridge method, you find similar flavours that complement each other: the citrus notes of a welter with the salty taste of fish, for example. The Contrast approach brings together opposing flavours, such as a refreshing gin with spicy food.
4. Rosa’s favourite beer, Goudenband, is itself served in several excellent restaurants, including The lane in Antwerp.

www.thejaneantwerp.com
www.sofiesworld.be

See more at www.meetflandersbeer.com
When I started in hospitality, I’d never heard of Michelin, and I knew nothing about fine dining. I wanted to open a jazz café with a grill. But it all turned out a little differently,’ says Gert De Mangeleer, laughing. ‘During my training at Den Gouden Harynk in Bruges, which still has a Michelin star, everything changed. My tutor Philippe Serruys dazzled me with culinary creations and awoken my passion for gastronomy. After that I became chef of ’t Molentje in Zeebrugge. I met Joachim and three years later the business was awarded two Michelin stars. That was when we both started to get the urge to open our own restaurant.’ And so the two of them bought a dilapidated bistro called Hertog Jan. ‘There were houseplants on the windowsill, wicker chairs in the dining room and paper placemats on the tables. Everyone said we were crazy. But we believed in it, and with the few resources we had, we made something of it. In the year that we opened, we received our first Michelin star. From there everything has happened so quickly.’

The way to the top
From the beginning, the goal was clear: three Michelin stars. ‘We hoped to achieve it within 15 years. We didn’t talk about it with anybody, but we knew we could do it. After seven years, we got there,’ says Gert. ‘Getting that third star was the most emotional moment in my career. It’s impossible to describe the feeling; my colleague Peter Goossens from Hof van Cleve can confirm that. You can’t get three stars in your life; it’s a once-in-a-lifetime goal, it’s so very rare.’

Of course, the path to the top wasn’t a smooth one. ‘It’s been a tough road, almost unbelievable at times,’ says Gert. ‘Everyone sees the good side, but chefs have to give up so much to be able to offer the same top quality, day in and day out. It makes unbelievable physical, personal and financial demands on a person. There were many times I was ready to throw in the towel. But I really believe that everything in life goes in waves. After a downward wave, an upward wave will follow.’

More than 10 years ago, Gert De Mangeleer and his culinary soulmate, master sommelier Joachim Boudens, began the story of their restaurant Hertog Jan. They took a remarkable path, following a unique vision, and fuelled by endless perseverance. Today, on an impressive farm site in West Flanders, the pair run an internationally renowned three Michelin star restaurant.
A WALK IN THE GARDEN

In the dining room at Hertog Jan, the light, the table, the music, the food – everything is designed to bring you closer to the Flemish terroir.

Agritourism

More and more people are looking for peace and tranquility in the countryside during their holidays. Agritourism is on the rise in Flanders, and farmers are throwing open their doors to the public. With a farm stay, you can immerse yourself in farm life. Get close to the animals, learn how to make cheese, go for a walk in the countryside and join your host family around the table for a typical Flemish meal with farm products. Slow tourism at its best!

A stroll in Hertog Jan’s garden is an integral part of the gastronomic experience.

The vegetable garden

The vegetable garden is a huge source of inspiration. From Brussels sprouts, known far beyond our borders, to the crunch of endive, which is world-renowned for its flavour: it’s a top seasonal product that we feast on from April until the end of June. Brussels sprouts are known far beyond our borders. The bright green little cabbages brighten up the winter and go perfectly with smoked ham.

The vegetable garden

The power of restaurants lies in the big picture, and the effort the chefs make to surprise their customers. These days, chefs don’t just use the plate to begin a dialogue with their guests. Their cooking philosophy comes through in the design, and the surroundings are every bit as logical. That’s how a concept is created. Our guests are given a taste of the kitchen and can stroll in the gardens with a cocktail based on garden herbs they see growing there. It all adds to the experience.

The complete package

The vegetable garden is a massive part of our farm concept. The experience of a Michelin-star restaurant in the heart of nature is quite something. People come for a story: they come to listen to what the chef has to say. Gert says: ‘The power of restaurants lies in the big picture, and the effort the chefs make to surprise their customers. These days, chefs don’t just use the plate to begin a dialogue with their guests. Their cooking philosophy comes through in the design, and the surroundings are every bit as logical. That’s how a concept is created. Our guests are given a taste of the kitchen and can stroll in the gardens with a cocktail based on garden herbs they see growing there. It all adds to the experience.’

Listen to your customer

Vegetables play a very important role, but Gert stresses that Hertog Jan isn’t a vegetarian restaurant. ‘In creating a dish, the starting point is what the garden is offering at that moment, but I always combine our vegetables with another ingredient from the sea or the land. Like delicious shrimps, secluded and languishing from the North Sea, or our outstanding local pork, from the land.’

Hertog Jan isn’t a vegetarian restaurant. “In creating a dish, the starting point is what the garden is offering at that moment, but I always combine our vegetables with another ingredient from the sea or the land. Like delicious shrimps, secluded and languishing from the North Sea, or our outstanding local pork, from the land.”

The vegetable garden is a huge source of inspiration.

Ingredients from Flemish soil

Our region is known for its outstanding endives, a winter vegetable that’s characterised by its crunchy leaves and lightly bitter taste.

Our snow-white asparagus, also known as white gold, is world-renowned for its flavour. It’s a top seasonal product that we feast on from April until the end of June.

Every year we look forward to the start of the new strawberry season at the end of April. Nothing beats the taste of our juicy, sweet strawberries.

For a long time parsnip was a forgotten vegetable. But the white root with well and truly well-kept and preserved so that even in the colder months, we can put a bit of sunshine on the plate. Peppers we can roast, confit and preserve. With the colder months, we can put a bit of sunshine on the plate. Peppers we can roast, confit and preserve. With the colder months, we can put a bit of sunshine on the plate. Peppers we can roast, confit and preserve. With the colder months, we can put a bit of sunshine on the plate. Peppers we can roast, confit and preserve. With the colder months, we can put a bit of sunshine on the plate. Peppers we can roast, confit and preserve. With the colder months, we can put a bit of sunshine on the plate. Peppers we can roast, confit and preserve. With the colder months, we can put a bit of sunshine on the plate. Peppers we can roast, confit and preserve. With the colder months, we can put a bit of sunshine on the plate. Peppers we can roast, confit and preserve. With the colder months, we can put a bit of sunshine on the plate. Peppers we can roast, confit and preserve. With the colder months, we can put a bit of sunshine on the plate. Peppers we can roast, confit and preserve. With the colder months, we can put a bit of sunshine on the plate. Peppers we can roast, confit and preserve. With the colder months, we can put a bit of sunshine on the plate. Peppers we can roast, confit and preserve. With the colder months, we can put a bit of sunshine on the plate. Peppers we can roast, confit and preserve. With the colder months, we can put a bit of sunshine on the plate. Peppers we can roast, confit and preserve. With the colder months, we can put a bit of sunshine on the plate.
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lanters bring their own style with them for the kitchen. They impress with layers of taste and varied textures rather than exaggerated presentation on the plate. The thought and preparation that goes into them isn’t always seen. An idea often has to mature; it can sometimes take years for it to become a concrete dish,” Gert explains. “For example, since 2008, there’s always been a tomato salad with different tomato varieties on our menu. That might sound simple, but the preparation is immense, to say the least. The process begins a year in advance, with the selection of more than 130 different seeds. The tomato plants are grown and tended with real care and precision. Months later, we pick the ripest fruits by hand, at just the right moment, so that after real care and precision. Months later, we pick the ripest fruits by hand, at just the right moment, so that after complex preparations they can be put on the plate. You might not see it at first glance, but behind every plate there’s an enormous amount of preparation in place.”

Every chef has their own style
You can read a top chef’s unique signature in their dishes. Culinary craftsmanship of the highest level and flawless local products are what unite the creations on the plate. Culinary craftsmanship of the highest level and flawless local products are what unite the creations on the plate.

The Jane ** | GM 17/20
Food is Sergio Herman’s religion. This chef transformed an old chapel into an impressive restaurant. On the plate, his right hand man Hendrik offers surprising dishes with deep, balanced flavors.

Publiek | GM 15/20
An accessible starred restaurant where Gert Delhez is in charge. He gives local vegetables, by-roast and less glamorous cuts of meat the platform they deserve.

La Buvette | GM 15/20
La Buvette is in a former butcher’s shop in the Brussels district of Sint-Gillis. Chef Nicolas Scheidt delights the senses with his unusual combinations and creative flavors.

Hof van Cleve *** | GM 19.5/20
The cream of the crop! This three-Michelin-star restaurant is one of the top 50 in the world. Chef Peter Goossens serves gastronomic creations of the very highest order with an emphasis on Flemish products.

Het Gebaar * | GM 18/20
The restaurant of Roger Van Damme is known for its revolutionary desserts true works of art for the eyes and the taste buds.

A day in the life of Gert De Mangeleer
7.00 Get up and spend time with the children
8.30 Meeting with Joachim at Hertog Jan. We’re both addicted to coffee and during the meeting we’ll drink four or five expressos
10.00 Home at the kitchen, and I usually won’t leave before 23.00
23.00 Time to check my emails and take care of some admin.
1.30 I try and exercise a lot, and four times a week I go running about this time
2.45 Finally home, but I’m too wound up from the shift to sleep, so I watch some TV
3.00 – 4.00 Bedtime!
GASTRONOMY AT EVERY LEVEL

With its 179 Michelin-starred restaurants, Flanders is one of the world’s highest densities of top-class eateries. There are more restaurants with a Michelin star in Bruges alone than in the whole of Denmark. So, anyone who wants to eat at the highest level in Flanders will have no difficulty. There’s no doubt that your taste buds will be spoilt in our incredible restaurants, but even food-lovers with a more limited budget won’t stay hungry for long. Michelin has awarded 179 Flemish restaurants with a Bib Gourmand, a distinction for businesses that offer a three-course menu that features seasonal products for less than €37. Happily, fantastic flavours aren’t reserved only for top restaurants. “The good thing in Flanders is that for such a comparatively small region we have so many good places.” says Gert. Everything is closer together and you can discover so many good things in a shorter time. When I go out to eat, I want to feel that boundaries are being pushed. That the chef isn’t afraid to be bold and open doors. It’s our duty to give something back.”

Don’t mind your manners

“I don’t attach much importance to table manners myself. My wife always says I’m like a farmer at the table. Anyway, the etiquette in restaurants has evolved in recent years, and even in a restaurant like ours the serving staff no longer wear suits. Confusing cutlery is something like Hertog Jan the serving staff no longer wear suits. Confusing cutlery is no longer allowed. In recent years, and even in a restaurant like ours the serving staff no longer wear suits. Confusing cutlery is.

Pots on the table

If you think Gert enjoys fine dining at home, you’d be wrong. “In my kitchen at home there’s no overlap with Hertog Jan. Before, I used to try things out at home and invite friends over, but I’m done with that. Home is home. One plate and a pot on the table, something like a stew made with Duke of Berkshire pork, from a breed of pig that’s raised here in West Flanders.”

What’s next?

With its three Michelin stars, Hertog Jan is right at the top, but that doesn’t mean Gert has no more ambition to show. “Until now we have always grown vertically, but there are limits. Physically, this level is unbelievably difficult. How long can I keep this up? I hope to be able to for a long time, but it’s something to think about. I don’t want to fall into a black hole if the Hertog Jan story ever finishes. Now we’re at the top, I think it’s time to invest our knowledge and experience in some young people from our team so we can start to grow horizontally. Chefs have the name and the fame to put their weight behind new projects and open doors. It’s our duty to give something back.”

The renowned GaultMillau culinary guide has chosen more than 1200 restaurants in Belgium that are most definitely worth visiting.

Sleeping under the stars

Hostellerie St. Nicolas ** | GM 17/20
9000 Gent (Gent)
www.hostellerie-stnicolas.com

Sea Grill ** | GM 18/20
1110 Brussels (Brussels)
www.restaurantseagrill.be

Boury | GM 17/20
8800 Roeselare (Flanders)
www.restaurantboury.be

Bib Gourmand
Michelin has honoured 179 Flemish restaurants with a Bib Gourmand, a distinction for establishments that offer a three-course menu for less than €37, with a focus on seasonal products.

Gault&Millau
The renowned GaultMillau culinary guide has chosen more than 1200 restaurants in Belgium that are most definitely worth visiting.

www.gaultmillau.com

www.viamichelin.com
It was always Dennis Broeckx’s dream to open his own restaurant, and it happened much faster than he first expected. “One evening we were in the café and heard that the premises were for sale; we decided there and then to go for it. Young and foolish, aged just 21, we set off on this adventure. Eleven years later, we’re still here,” he says with a smile. Today, his restaurant L’épicerie du Cirque is a household name in Antwerp and for discerning diners further afield.

Dennis Broeckx is one of Antwerp’s unorthodox food masters. He’s part of the Flanders Kitchen Rebels collective and represents a new generation of top Flemish chefs who want to do things differently. With his strong focus on zero waste, sharing food and casual service, he’s redefining classic cuisine.

Imparting knowledge

“When are the best two months of the year?” says Dennis, beaming, when he’s asked about the Flanders Kitchen Rebels youth programme, in which top chefs introduce 18- to 30-year-olds to Flemish gastronomy. “Young people are a really appreciative and enthusiastic audience. They’re curious about creative dishes and open to innovative ways of serving. Our younger customers don’t care about waiters in suits and strict table manners. The only things that count are good food and a nice atmosphere.” Being a Flanders Kitchen Rebel is something close to his heart. “It’s great to represent a generation. This new class of chefs has different responsibilities from the chefs of yesteryear. Problems such as overfishing are relatively new. The previous generation didn’t have to think about it, but today it’s our duty to make clients more aware of what they’re eating. In fact, I think it’s our responsibility to ensure that fish stocks grow again by putting lesser-known species and bycatch on our menus, before it’s too late.”

It’s not only on the table that there’s a noticeable evolution – the strict hierarchy of the kitchen is gradually disappearing too. “In the heat of the moment, sometimes I still want to run away, but the continual shouting and screaming in the kitchen is over. You don’t achieve anything that way. On the contrary, everyone becomes nervous and that results in worse performances. As chef, it’s your job to get the best out of your team, to fire them up and encourage them to experiment. Everyone has an input; only then can a restaurant grow.”

Dennis Broeckx’s restaurants

L’épicerie du Cirque | 2000 Antwerp

Volkstraat 23
www.lepicerieducirque.be

Comptoir | 2000 Antwerp

Volkstraat 27
www.lepicerieducirque.be (comptoir)

Dennis Broeckx represents a new generation of pioneering chefs.
In search of passionate craftspeople

There can be no fine dining without good products and ingredients. “I’ve been working with the same suppliers for eleven years; every one of them is passionate about their work. A chef has to be able to trust completely the farmers and craftspeople they work with. They mean so much to the smooth running of a restaurant,” he says. “People have become our friends. The chef is the face of the restaurant, but the entire system has to work and that starts with the honest, hardworking people who provide us with our produce.”

Even when it comes to drinks, he insists on local commodities. “We serve local products as much as possible. For example, our Belgian beer is undergoing a real revival. That’s good, because it makes the offering even more diverse. We have so many great, unknown beers here. For me, it’s important to support and offer a platform to small-scale projects and brewers. But culinary entrepreneurship isn’t limited to beer. There’s lots happening here in relation to other drinks, such as gin. So in our restaurant we serve Iwan Gin, a concoction of rhubarb, star anise and cinnamon, developed by entrepreneurs from Antwerp. SFFRN, a gin infused with organic saffron from the Kempen, is the latest addition to my drinks cabinet.”

Indispensable items in Dennis’s pantry

All year round, Uniperense Senioren in Borgerhout makes delicious syrups with fruits and herbs, according to the seasons. Organic farmers and processors make their own preserves the Uniperense with healthy, natural ingredients from which they can make delicious syrups. They’re the ideal base for cocktails or ice tea.

Visit the De Konink City Brewery

The renowned De Konink City Brewery houses numerous culinary surprises. So there for Flemish cheeses, delicious Belgian meal, 100% natural (B)read baked on site and the freshest vegetables straight from the field. To not mention a wide range of Belgian beers.

For years, Michel Van Tricht and his son Frederic have been supplying almost all our top restaurants.

De Konink City Brewery
Boomgaardstraat 1/3, 2018 Antwerp
www.dekonink.be

Butcher’s Store
By De Laet & Van Haver
Cheerful rock’n’roll butchery in the De Konink City Brewery. Boomgaardstraat1/3, 2018 Antwerp
www.butchersstore.com

Elsen Kaashandel
By Fried Elsen
Artisan cheese opener and refiner. Mechelsestraat 36, 3000 Leuven
www.elsenkaashandel.be

Dierendonck
By Hendrik Dierendonck
A passionate butcher who breeds the rare West Flemish Red cow. Albert I Laan 106, 8260 Nieuwpoort
www.dierendonck.be

Horseback fishermen
By the shrimp fishers
Oostduinkerke horseback shrimp fishers are recognized as immaterial cultural heritage. Zweerdstraat 6, 8900 Ypres
www.horsebackshrimp.com

Le Monde des Mille Couleurs
By Pierre Gromier
A colourful world of wild farming that cultivates and honours historical herbs, beautiful flowers and forgotten vegetables. Zwemmerslaan 6, 8900 Ypres
www.restaurantmillecouleurs.be

Ginderella
By Jan and Geert Heyneman
Six make from local Ghent weeds, such as storksbill, Japanese knotweed and swine cress. Coupure Links 625 D, 9000 Ghent
www.ginderella.com
Cooking and food waste often go hand in hand, but Dennis is proof that it needn't be so. He makes a game of throwing away as little as possible and strives for a zero-waste kitchen. “Around the world so much food is wasted, and I do my best not to do that here. Zero waste is something I’m fanatical about. So, I keep a detailed list, of everything that goes in the bin each day, I add up the cost and work out how many people we could have fed. It’s a way of confronting my cooks with the hard facts.

“I get such a kick when we turn supposed waste into something delicious. So, at L’épicerie du Cirque we serve cold-pressed juices. We use the leftover pulp to give our vegetable sauces depth and character. When we roast celery root in the oven, we collect the liquid that’s released. It has an intense flavour. It’s really this quest for zero waste that keeps me awake and makes me creative. Kitchen Rebels is a fantastic platform to get this message out to other chefs so they can start working this way too.”

Nose-to-tail cooking

For Dennis, the same philosophy applies to meat preparation. He prefers to replace sumptuous fillets or tenderloins with less obvious cuts of meat, to make use of the whole animal and not just the most desired parts. “It’s really interesting to work with the lesser-known parts of the animal. We make use of every bit of the pig: the head, the tongue, the snout… We even make crackers from the ears and tail, and grilled pig’s tongue is delicious. Everything gets used, we throw nothing away. Changing perceptions among diners needs to happen. If we get chefs cooking on the mesclun that winds up going to order form, but if we make it more accessible to the diner, then it’s an accessible way for me to introduce my clients to the lesser-known parts of the animal.”

Dennis strives towards a waste-free kitchen, with no bit of vegetable wasted.

We must learn to work with what our farmers, fisherman and butchers offer us

Dennis Broeckx

Zero-waste philosophy

More and more chefs and concerned Flemings are trying to limit their impact on the environment, but there’s still lots of work to be done. Worldwide, a third of the food we produce is lost. Fortunately, Flemish consumers are aware of the problem and are engaging in initiatives to tackle food waste packaging-free shops, stores that offer ‘ugly’ vegetables, available in delis and other food businesses in and around Ghent.

North Sea Chefs

The North Sea Chefs initiative encourages chefs, hobby cooks and consumers to explore unpopular and lesser-known fish, caught by Belgian fishermen, in a responsible way. The organisation is supported by a number of established chefs who act as ambassadors, such as Bruges restauranteur Filip Claeys and Vilhjalmur Sigurdarson.

www.northseachefs.be

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www.northseachefs.be
PLEASURE AT EVERY TABLE AND EVERY BAR

Live to eat

Love comes through the stomach, and the Flemish take this literally. We live to eat, something that’s reflected in our sparkling food culture. Living well is a way of life for us, where pride, hospitality and conviviality come together. It’s no surprise then that small and big events often happen around a full table.

Dennis’s pick

Bistrot du Nord is an intimate spot where discerning diners come for excellent food. The cooking style is robust, pure and without frills, and fits perfectly with the retro interior and the old house.

Dennis Broeckx

Flanders Kitchen Rebels from the city to the countryside

Our chosen Flanders Kitchen Rebels have restaurants across the whole of Flanders and Brussels. You can find the whole list of more than 50 chefs at www.flanderskitchenrebels.com.

Bistrot du Nord

Ganzerik

A trendy, cozy café with no fewer than 12 beers on tap, in the Ghent neighbourhood of Roosgen. Dreefstraat 15, 9000 Ghent

www.facebook.com/ganzerik

De Hoorn

This bar is housed in the cool surroundings of the former Stella Artois brewery in Leuven. Sluisstraat 13, 3000 Leuven

www.dehoorn.eu

Café Baron

A trendy, cozy café with no fewer than 12 beers on tap, in the Ghent neighbourhood of Roosgen. Dreefstraat 15, 9000 Ghent

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Café Baron

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Five years ago, Wim Ballieu said goodbye to exclusive gastronomy and launched a more open food concept. He’s now become a champion of honest and accessible food and was awarded ‘Best Food Concept in Europe’ in 2013. In his Balls & Glory restaurants and food truck, this philosophy is translated into simple, tasty Flemish fare in a new, trendy guise.

Street food is totally honest. As a street food chef, food is all you’ve got to make an impression with.

Wim Ballieu

In Flanders, you don’t have to go to an expensive restaurant to eat good food. Without having to spend too much, you can find culinary treats on the corner of every street. “Quality street food is strongly rooted in our food culture,” says Wim Ballieu. “Just think of the stalls in Brussels selling snails, or the freshly filled sandwiches you can get at almost every bakery, or the mother of all street food, our irresistible golden fries from the frietkot (fries kiosk). Gaining good food is a right, and it must be accessible to everyone. I believe it’s our duty to defend that. Street food ensures that going out to enjoy food isn’t an elite experience.” In days gone by, Wim ran a high-level catering company, but five years ago he changed direction and opened Balls & Glory, an accessible meatball concept. “I wanted to go back to basics and cook for a wider group of people. With tasty filled meatballs, stoemp and free water and fruit, it works really well. But fundamentally, there’s not such a big difference between fine dining and street food. In both sectors, you create good food through your respect for quality ingredients.”

Slow food, served fast

Street food chefs are niche chefs. They often specialise in one dish, perfecting every detail until the taste is perfect. “Street food is honest. As a street food chef, ingredients are all you have to make an impression with. It’s about the essentials,” says Wim. “It’s only what you put on the tray or wrap in the serviette that counts. There’s no trendy décor or pretty plates to make up for poor quality. What you see is what you get.”

One misconception about street food is that it’s fast food, in the negative sense of the word, but in fact it’s the opposite. It takes lots of time and energy to prepare. Try making your own shrimp croquette at home! Even the perfect chip takes a lot of work. They have to be sliced well, have time to cool properly and so on. Most preparation takes place behind the scene, so orders can be served quickly,” he explains. “Street food is often the sort of food you don’t make at home and that you literally go to the street to eat, either because it’s time-consuming or it needs specific skills. Chips from the frietkot, nothing can compete with that. You just can’t make it at home.”

The city atmosphere

“Street food is inextricably linked to the city. It’s something that you experience together in the hustle and bustle. Street food in a forest, that’s not street food, that’s a picnic. You need the chaos of the city: the busker playing guitar nearby, the street art on the walls. In Brussels, the street vibe is lively, and it all adds to the experience,” says Wim. “On Friday afternoon, after work, heading to the Noordzee fish shop together for shrimp croquettes in the sun… it doesn’t get any better than that. For me, street food is a kind of haven in an eternally busy existence. Between two meetings, standing at the bar drinking a coffee, it all breaks up the daily grind.”

Visit Wim Ballieu at one of his restaurants

Balls & Glory, Wim Ballieu’s stuffed meatballs concept, has five restaurants in Belgium. Be sure to try them in Antwerp, Ghent, Brussels (KVS and Beurs) or Leuven!

www.ballsnglory.be

Eating good food is a right, and it must be accessible to everyone.

In both top gastronomy and street food, the chefs really focus on good ingredients.

FLANDERS’ STREET FOOD

WIM BALLIEU
BELGIAN FRIES
THE ROOTS OF FLEMISH STREET FOOD

Street food through the years

While street food may be a relatively new word, the phenomenon of eating in the street has long been ingrained in our culture. "Frites" in French or "frieten" in Dutch were the street foods of the early Dutch and Flemish traders. The stall on the corner at the market square, "frituur," Twenty years ago, they would go around with soup. That was street food. "Dried sausage, wrapped in a napkin at the sniff at the sausage fair. For me that's also street food. These habits and traditions that have been going for generations. People don't realize how deeply ingrained street food is in our lives."

A pillar of Flemish street food culture

Quality materials, know-how and hospitality are the pillars of our street food culture. "We are blessed with a wealth of ingredients. Fish comes fresh from the North Sea, and we know how to breed good pigs, cows and vegetables," says Wim. "We have the knowledge to make seemingly simple dishes delicious. And our hospitality is unique. Tosion and pride is what our fries sellers and street food vendors stand for."

If you take pride, then you care about what you do. You can compare it with a 90-year-old woman who still takes care of herself and puts on makeup every day. She does it because she is proud, because she cares. You also find that sort of pride among our fries sellers. They just want to make the most delicious fries for their customers."

Going the extra mile, that's what distinguishes the Flemings. "Twenty years ago, they would go around with soup. That was street food. Dried sausage, wrapped in a napkin at the sniff at the sausage fair. For me that's also street food. These habits and traditions that have been going for generations. People don't realize how deeply ingrained street food is in our lives."

National pride

Crispy, golden yellow fries, they're our national pride. To this day there's speculation about their origins, but what's certain is that they've been commonplace here since 1800, and have since become part of our cultural heritage. The name frites comes from Frites, a Belgian-French for 'fried potatoes.' In all probability, our bilingual language ensured that our Flemish fries are best known overseas as French fries. Whatever you call them, Flemish fries, made from our bintje potatoes and according to tradition, are the tastiest! We're so delighted to them that since 2000, an annual Week of the Fries has been organised every spring, when we go on mass to the frietkot. For a Fleming, a visit to the frietkot is the best way to round something off. The working week, a day out or a holiday. Because the French fries, the ultimate comfort food, are at the heart of Flanders' street food. You only need think of the grey shrimps dripping, so for me that's just the best."

Flemish street food avant la lettre

Sausage fair

In the days before fridges, when a pig was slaughtered, people would organise an event at which all the pieces of the meat that couldn't be kept would be turned into sausages.

Gentse waterzooi

During the Middle Ages, the waters of Ghent were filled with fish. Gentse waterzooi is originally a peasant's dish based on seven kinds of river fish. Since the 18th century, this typical Flemish meal has been made with chicken, cream and finely chopped vegetables.

Shrimp croquettes

Grey shrimps were once eaten at every meal by people living on the coast. Horseback fishermen would catch them with nets from the North Sea and, once ashore, they would be packed into half-kilo (1.1lbs) bags."

Winkles

On cold days, Brussels natives will always find their way to the winkle vans. These are a typical Brussels phenomenon; for many a long year they've been cooked on the street in a warming, herby broth. Every seller prepares them according to their own secret recipe.

Fries or Belgian fries?

The name French fries implies that this ubiquitous dish can be traced back to France. However, its origins are in Belgium. It's rumoured that French fries got their name during the First World War, when American soldiers were introduced to Frits. Our regional products are the heart of Flanders' street food. They only need think of the grey shrimps dripping, so for me that's just the best."

The bintje, the cook's potato of choice

Our regional products are the heart of Flanders' street food. Thanks to farm shops, farmers' markets, pick-your-own farms and vegetable boxes, consumers can buy fresh, high-quality products straight from the farm, without contributing to food transport distances or packaging waste.

The bintje has the ideal structure, the perfect size and the perfect taste content for making delicious fries neither too hard, not too soft, and large enough. fries have this potato to thank for their bite, according to Wim.

Another indispensable ingredient is beef dripping. "Beef fat gives the fries their typical, characteristic taste and makes them that little bit crispier. Everyone has their preference when it comes to fries. That's what makes it so interesting. One person prefers chunky chips, the other likes them wafer-thin. When they're hand-cut, you get so much variation: big, small, thick and thin. Food preferences are often linked to nostalgia, and they take you to a specific emotion. I was brought up with fries cooked in beef dripping, so for me that's just the best."

The bintje, the potato of choice

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The bintje is the potato of choice.
THE ART OF COOKING FRIES

For the Flemish, fries are anything but a side dish. That’s also the reason why we’re so good at making them. As well as the best potatoes, the Flemish have the pride and the skills to make the best fries in the world. “We don’t see fries as fast food, but as art,” says Wim. “We take the time to prepare them as they should be. From the correct chopping technique to the second cooking, we don’t take any shortcuts. In other places, they don’t take fries as seriously here, the crunchy golden batons get the platform they deserve, and we serve them as they should be very simply, with just a little salt and mayonnaise.”

De Frietketel
Vegans and vegetarians come here too, as the fries are cooked in vegetable oil and it even serves vegan vol-au-vent!

Papegaaistraat 89
9000 Ghent

De Smullende Heks
A firm favourite in Leuven, where you can smother your fries in homemade stew.

Diestsestraat 250
3000 Leuven

Maison Antoine
This Brussels institution has been frying since 1948. It serves our national pride the way it should be.

Jourdanplein 1
1040 Brussels

Frites en Sauce
Ingrid and Guido have been sharing their passion for fries at their frituur on Mechelen’s Korenmarkt.

Korenmarkt
2800 Mechelen

Frituur Korenmarkt
For 40 years, Ingrid and Guido have been sharing their passion for fries at their frituur on Mechelen’s Korenmarkt.

Korenmarkt
2800 Mechelen

Wim’s favourite: in a cone with mayonnaise and beef stew

The art of cooking fries, according to Wim Ballieu

1. Peel the bintje potato thinly. The part just beneath the skin has the most flavour.
2. Slice by hand into chips about 1 cm thick.
3. Rinse the fries very briefly, so enough starch remains.
4. Heat the fat to 105-107°C (220-225°F) and fry the chips for the first time for 5-6 minutes. This is the pre-cooking; the fries will be poached so that the inside becomes soft.
5. Take them out of the fat and let them cool completely.
6. Heat the fat to 70°C (158°F) and add the fries for a second cooking. Once the fries are in the fat, increase the temperature to 180°C (356°F).
7. Remove the fries once they have a nice golden yellow colour and sprinkle them immediately with salt, as once the fat has dried the salt will no longer stick. Shake the fries to distribute the salt.
8. Serve with homemade mayonnaise.

Fritact facts
• In 2016, Belgium had 5,347 fries stands. That means you can find one in every district and village.
• According to recent research, 95% of Flemish people go to the frituur at least once per year, 85% eat fries at least once a month, and more than 80% eat them at least once a week.
• Almost half (48%) of the fries we eat are cooked at home, 24% are takeaway, and 25% are eaten outside the home.
• The most popular order is a small portion of fries with mayonnaise, sometimes supplemented with a frikandel (minced meat hotdog) also known as currywurst.
• Our favourite sauce is mayonnaise (40%), followed by gravy (32%), tartare sauce (13%), ketchup (9%), and Andalouse (7%).

(Source: www.navefri-unafri.be)

Frites en Sauce
Fries are the ultimate comfort food pretty much everyone loves them. But they're too much more than just good food. For many families, they're part of a weekly ritual. Above all, the frietkot is a meeting place. It's not for nothing that our frietkot culture is recognised as intangible cultural heritage. ‘Tray or cone?’ is a tricky question. I often eat tasty fries from a frietkot, says Wim. ‘Only in Flanders do we know this phenomenon of the frituur; they have defined our streetscapes forever. Even the tiniest hamlet has at least one. In other countries, fries are often only served in restaurants. You can't find frietkots as we know them here. Fries stand on their own as a dish and have the platform these crispy gold morsels deserve. But we don't just eat fries at the frituur – they also belong among the Flemish classics at home or in a restaurant. Just think of vol-au-vent, stew, mussels, meatballs in tomato sauce; all of them are delicious with fries.”

‘Tray vs cone’

‘It’s a tricky question. I often eat tasty fries from a cardboard tray, but in a cone they taste that little bit better. On the one hand this is because the cone fits nicely in your hand, and also because in a cone the sauce sits on top. At the start you're greedy, appreciating the richness of the mayonnaise. As you go on, and your hunger is quenched, you come to the plain fries, which are ideal to finish with.”

Flemish classics with fries

- **Vol-au-vent**
  A traditional dish that makes us think of winter. Creamy and full of Flavour, it’s the ultimate comfort food!

- **Mussels**
  Mussels and fries are a match made in heaven. Traditionally the season for these North Sea delicacies runs from July until February and we just love to eat them.

- **Steak tartare**
  A dish based on finely minced Belgian Blue beef mixed with capers, gherkins and creamy egg yolk. This dish brings together the best of what Flanders has to offer: tender delicious meat and a good beer.

- **Beef stew**
  A dish prepared with beef stewed for hours, served in a brown sauce. It's a perfect pairing with fries.

- **Steak tartare**
  This dish brings together the best of what Flanders has to offer: tender delicious meat and a good beer.

Wim’s favourite spots for street food

“The first place I go when I come back from a holiday is the frituur. When I arrive at in Jardin du Luxembourg in Brussels, I like to have our national pride as it should be. I also can’t resist the kibbeling at Boulevard.

Boulevard is my favourite place for a sandwich with pickled herring steak mince. In Ghent I can’t go past the frituur. The cone-shaped candy stall without buying some ice cream. But it is so good. When we take a trip to the flower market in Ghent, we inevitably eat houtje at De Blauwe Kiosk. I hardly ever eat them usually, but it just goes with the atmosphere. Street food is often linked to a particular place or mood. A white sausage with caramelised onions between a crispy bread roll only works at the fair.”

Street food tips

- **Mercado**
  Paradise for food-lovers. A covered market with 13 street food stands in the heart of Antwerp. Mejor 49
  2000 Antwerp

- **Lizzie’s Wafels**
  The place to go in Bruges for scrumptious homemade waffles and fresh coffee. Markt 15
  8000 Bruges

- **De Blauwe Kiosk**
  A Sunday stroll to the flower market, Ghent’s natives flock to the oyster and aperitif bar. Kouter 45
  9000 Ghent

- **De Noordzee**
  Fresh fish. This iconic sandwich bar opened back in 1979. Rondomstraat 19
  1000 Brussels

- **Pistolet Original**
  The contemporary equivalent of De Noordzee. The same concept with a cooler look. Joseph-Sweelincklaan 24
  1000 Brussels

- **Au Suisse**
  A sandwich bar. This iconic sandwich bar opened back in 1979. Anspachlaan 73
  1000 Brussels

- **Holy Food Market**
  Covered food heaven with lots of stalls in the impressive 16th-century Bieienkapel. Beverhoutplein 15
  9000 Ghent

- **Würst**
  This place transforms ordinary hot dogs into haute dogs with a variety of toppings and sauces. Margarethastraat 1
  9000 Ghent
Almost 30 years ago, Herman Van Dender took over his father’s patisserie-chocolaterie. Thanks to his passion for chocolate and his drive to elevate the business to the next level, today he is one of the world’s best chocolatiers. His sophisticated pralines are enjoyed by people as far away as Japan and by those important as members of the Belgian Royal Family.

It’s no secret that Flanders has a long and rich tradition in chocolate. Heritage know-how has been passed from generation to generation. So it was for Herman Van Dender, who learned the art of making pralines from his father. “Flemings are gourmands. We love to eat and drink; it’s been rooted in our culture for generations,” he says. “And over the decades, the craftsmanship around chocolate and pralines has really developed. Another important factor is that two of the world’s biggest chocolate factories, Callebaut and Puratos, are here. Flemish chocolatiers have always had easy access to chocolate, and we’re known around the world for our exceptional pralines.”

Competitions are a big part of Herman’s life. He’s won countless prizes, including the Patisserie World Cup in Lyon. As a renowned member of the jury at the World Chocolate Masters, he judged the creations of chocolatiers from across the globe. “I’ve learned so much from these competitions,” he says. “For the pralines we make, I derive a lot of inspiration from art, sculpture and painting. As a judge, it’s enormously rewarding to see what chocolatiers from other countries and other continents are doing. Everyone working with chocolate comes together and the energy and inspiration is unbelievable.”

Less sugar, more flavour

Like any industry, the chocolate sector is subject to evolution and trends. “Over the past twenty years, the Flemish praline has moved forward. First and foremost, the chocolate we use has become much less sweet – a trend which includes the filling. Heavy buttercreams are making way for refined flavour combinations and complex textures,” Herman explains. “Today they are more layered and nuanced. When you reduce the sugar content, you let the pure chocolate flavours really come into their own. You can clearly taste the various ingredients used in the pralines, such as raspberry ganache or hazelnut praline. Sugar makes the taste superficial and flat; it lowers the quality.”

Not only has chocolate become purer, there are also many more types of chocolate on the market now. “Before, there was white, milk and dark chocolate, and that’s all you had to work with. Today, the varieties and distinctions of taste are much wider. In our workshop we create three kinds of milk chocolate and a dozen or so types of dark chocolate with varying cacao content and beans from various origins.”

Almost 30 years ago, Herman Van Dender took over his father’s patisserie-chocolaterie. Thanks to his passion for chocolate and his drive to elevate the business to the next level, today he is one of the world’s best chocolatiers. His sophisticated pralines are enjoyed by people as far away as Japan and by those important as members of the Belgian Royal Family.
Few years ago, Herman took control of the whole production process, from bean to chocolate. “Like the vast majority of chocolatiers, I’ve spent twenty years working with chocolate from the main factories. This has always been fine, but three years ago I had the urge to take things a step further, and start a small production line to make my own chocolate. It’s the only way to maintain complete control over the product, and allows me to put my own stamp on the flavour of the pralines,” he explains. Initially, Herman continued producing in the small workshop of his praline shop, but soon it became too cramped. “Chef Peter Goossens discovered my homemade chocolates and wanted to serve them at his three Michelin star restaurant, Hof van Cleve. So, the ball began rolling, and other top restaurants followed suit. To meet demand, I had no choice but to move to a bigger site.” Herman doesn’t shy away from innovation and technological developments in the chocolate sector. “Our chocolate is made by incredibly precise and detailed high-tech machines, which means we can guarantee a consistent quality. There’s still so much craftsmanship involved in making pralines. And, of course, the machines must be installed and monitored by craftsmen with experience and expertise. Making chocolate is so much more than just pressing a button.”

Not all cacao beans are equal

Making chocolate begins with choosing the right bean. “There are over 40 varieties between the species of bean,” Herman explains. “Every year I visit two cacao plantations in different countries, to find the best ingredients and to see with my own eyes where the produce I work with comes from, and under what conditions.”

“Did you know?”

In principle, white chocolate isn’t really chocolate at all. It contains no cacao powder, only cacao butter, sugar and milk powder.

Let’s talk about dark chocolate

The days when we had just one sort of dark chocolate are gone. Today, packaging increasingly specifies the origins of the cacao content. So, a 70% chocolate contains that exact amount of cacao, with the rest being sugar. 80% chocolate contains more cacao and will therefore have a different, more bitter taste. The origin of the bean is also very important. Just like wine, there are various terroirs and climates that all have an impact on the taste of the end product.

From roasting to chocolate in seven steps

1. **Roasting the beans**
   The chosen beans are roasted slowly at a low temperature, so they are roasted right to the core without burning. They are then quickly cooled to stop the cooking process at exactly the right moment.

2. **Breaking and peeling the skin**
   The roasted beans are broken into 2-3 mm pieces. The skin comes loose and is hoovered up by a suction system so only the cacao nibs remain.

3. **Grinding the nibs**
   The nibs are grounded and the friction causes the cacao butter to be released. A bean consists of about 50% cacao butter and 50% cacao powder.

4. **Adding the sugar**
   The liquid mass, also known as cacao liquor, is put in a tank to which sugar is then added.

5. **Conching**
   At this stage, the cacao mass is still very bitter. The acidity is reduced by agitation of the mass for about 24 hours (conching) and keeping it warm. At this point, the chocolatier determines the ideal bitterness and taste.

6. **Grinding and storage**
   The chocolate is finely ground and stored in liquid form in tanks, at 40-50°C (105-120°F).

7. **Tempering**
   The final step is tempering, to allow the mass to crystallise. The melted chocolate is cooled to 30°C (85°F) and takes on a fixed, homogenous structure.

Chocolate museums

**Belgian Chocolate Village**
At 900 m², the biggest chocolate museum in Belgium.
De Neckstraat 20-22, 1081 Brussels
www.belgianchocolatevillage.be

**Choco-Story**
Immerse yourself in the history of cacao and chocolate.
Wijnzakstraat 2, 8000 Bruges
www.choco-story-brugge.be

**Choco-Story Brussels**
Come and learn everything about chocolate, from origins to end product.
Guldenhoofdstraat 9-11, 1000 Brussels
www.choco-story-brussels.be
The history of the praline

In 1857, Jean Neuhaus opened a pharmacy in Brussels’ prestigious Galeries Royales Saint Hubert. To make his traditional base mixture, he created a very thin layer of chocolate. His grandson, Jean Neuhaus Jr, inherited his passion for chocolate and had the idea of making the medicine into a luxurious gift. In 1912, he developed the first praline. A few years later, in 1915, his idea took off, developed the elegant cardboard box that transformed pralines into a luxury gift.

In 1886, chocolate factory workers in Lyon mixed hazelnuts with chocolate. This combination of chocolate and hazelnuts became the first praline.

For every two years since 1989, promising young creators in the world of sweets have headed to Lyon, to impress the jury and an enthusiastic audience with their spectacular creations. The Patisserie World Cup is one of the most important international competitions for patisserie, chocolate, ice cream and desserts.

At the cutting edge

Every two years since 1988, promising young creators in the world of sweets have headed to Lyon, to impress the jury and an enthusiastic audience with their spectacular creations. The Patisserie World Cup is one of the most important international competitions for patisserie, chocolate, ice cream and desserts.

Months of preparation are necessary before taking part in international competitions.

The excess chocolate is removed from the mould.

The ganache is still worked by hand.

Chocolates in Flanders and Brussels

There are lots of places offering educational and fun chocolate workshops for anyone who enjoys getting their hands dirty. Under professional guidance, you can learn the tricks of this sweet trade.

The ganache is still worked by hand.

Top secret

In days gone by, a chocolatier would keep their recipes securely guarded from the competition. Today, praline recipes are no great secret. “When I was young, I didn’t do an apprenticeship with a top chocolatier,” Herman recalls. “On my last day I was allowed to choose one of the chef’s recipes to take home with me. What he didn’t know was that during a break, hiding in the toilet, I had already copied out the entire cookbook. In those days, we worked with one or two the same ingredients and the same machines, so it was the recipes that made the difference, they were worth their weight in gold today. It’s about so much more than the recipe. It starts with the beans that we choose ourselves on the plantation, the way in which we make the chocolate, the personalised machines we use. These all play a huge role in the final result.”

Use all your senses, it’s the only way to really taste the essence

Herman Van Dender

Chocolate workshops in Flanders and Brussels

There are lots of places offering educational and fun chocolate workshops for anyone who enjoys getting their hands dirty. Under professional guidance, you can learn the tricks of this sweet trade.

Laurent Gerbaud

In the workshop of Laurent Gerbaud: discover the wonderful world of chocolate and pralines.

Kontineestraat 20
2000 Brussels
www.chocolateriegerbaud.be

Chocolaticious

Grown up and create your own chocolate products in the heart of Antwerp.

Korte Vlierstraat 13
2000 Antwerp
www.chocolaticious.be

Laurent Gerbaud

Discover the wonderful world of chocolate and pralines in the workshop of Laurent Gerbaud.

Kontineestraat 20
2000 Brussels
www.chocolateriegerbaud.be

Chocolato

Learn how to make delicious chocolate bars, drinks, truffles and pralines here.

Sint-Apelinckplein 7
9000 Ghent
www.chocolato.be

Beer hop

Discover the magical combination of beer and chocolate.

Tiensestraat 5
3000 Leuven
www.beerhop.be

Sjolaa

Sjolaa immerses you in the world of our beloved black gold.

Tiensestraat 28
2000 Antwerp
www.sjolaa.be

The cutting edge chocolatiers

HERMAN VAN DENDER

44
“Enjoying a praline is an experience full of flavours, textures and emotions. The sensation in the mouth is also a part of the experience. That mouthfeel is all about how a praline and the filling fuse on the tongue,” Herman says. “I think the success of the Origin pralines lies in the different flavour nuances really coming out. Banana and spices. When you taste them alongside each other, the different flavour nuances really come out.”

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Van Dender’s favourite chocolate

“I’m proud of our Origin pralines. We have four in our collection. Maya is made with a powerful cacao ganache with chocolate from the Caribbean. Peru is lightly bitter with an aroma of pear and hazelnut. In the Venezuela, the Trinitario bean is central, with a mix of nuts, fruit and caramel. The final one, Madagascar, is made with the Forastero bean, with subtle aromas of red fruit, banana and spices. When you taste them alongside each other, the different flavour nuances really come out.”

Tip

Keep chocolate and pralines cool and dry. The fridge is too moist, which makes the chocolate go soft. The ideal temperature is about 12-13°C (53-55°F). Restaurants, for example, keep their pralines in wine fridges, which are too moist, which results in condensation.

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Herman Van Dender
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restaurant, chef, product, and accommodation published in this magazine with
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MORE THAN 350 INSIDER TIPS
PLAN YOUR TRIP TO FLANDERS
“Antwerpse Handjes have been a local culinary speciality since 1934. They are made in the shape of a hand and refer to the legend of Silvius Brabo and the giant Druon Antigoon.”

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3. Burg
4. Church of Our Lady
5. Concertgebouw
6. Godshouse Spanoghe
7. Groeningemuseum
8. Jan Van Eyckplein
9. Markt
10. Rozenhoedkaai

**FOOD**

11. Belgian Pigeon House
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20. Sans Cravate
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www.hofvancleve.be

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Gandstraat 10
9000 Ghent
+32 (0)9 222 60 86
www.vintogent.be

CAFE CONGE
Eckenerstraat 15
9000 Gent
+32 (0)9 282 73 89
www.cafeconge.be

CAFE DEN TURK
Koningin Astridlaan 3
9000 Ghent
+32 (0)9 282 24 79
www.cafeden Turk.be

CAFE GOMEZ
Gandstraat 10
9000 Ghent
+32 (0)9 282 73 89
www.cafegomez.be

Cafe Labath
Ham 39
9000 Ghent
+32 (0)9 330 04 86
www.cafelabath.be

Drinks

BAR BELIEN
Westmallestraat 1
9000 Ghent
+32 (0)9 224 18 05
www.barbelien.be

BAR BIDON
Vlaanderenstraat 64
9000 Ghent
www.barBidon.be

BAR GIRAF
Kramstraat 60
9000 Ghent
+32 (0)9 330 04 86
www.barGiraf.be

BARWIN
Kramstraat 60
9000 Ghent
www.barwin.be

"
LEUVEN
Capital of Flemish Brabant

“LEUVEN IS TRADITION AND CHARACTER”

Leuven, the place to beer

“THE GROTE MARKT IS A PERFECT PLACE TO ENJOY THE SUN ON A TERRACE OVERLOOKING LEUVEN’S EXTRAORDINARY ARCHITECTURE”

“A MUST-SEE IN LEUVEN ARE THE BEGUINAGES: QUINTESSENTIALLY FLEMISH”

“WHATEVER YOU ARE LOOKING FOR IN A CITY, IT CAN BE FOUND IN LEUVEN.”

“WITH THE CHARMING MUNTSTRAAT AS A MAJOR FOODIE HUB AND A SLEEP-DEPRIVED STUDENT POPULATION IN NEED OF WHOLESALE NOURISHMENT, LEUVEN HAS BECOME A HAVEN OF COZY LUNCH SPOTS.”

Nana Van De Poel - The Culture Trip

SIGHTS
1. University Library
2. Botanical Garden
3. Groot Begijnhof
4. Grote Markt
5. M Museum
6. Oude Markt
7. Park Abbey
8. St. Peter’s Church
9. Stella Artois brewery
10. Town Hall
11. Ball & Glory
12. Baracca
13. De Smullende Heks
14. Couvert Couvert
15. EssenCiel
16. Gainsbourg
17. Het land aan de Overkant
18. Noordoever
19. Officina Clandestina
20. Rossi
21. Tafelrond
22. Taste
23. Trente
24. Würst
25. Zappaz

FOOD
21. Tuinhuis
22. Tante
23. Tante
24. Wapp
25. Zappaz
MECHELEN

“With Belgium’s foremost cathedral, a superb central square and a scattering of intriguing museums, Mechelen (Malines in French) is one of Flanders’ most underrated historic cities.”

—Lonely Planet

THE Mechelaar is proud of Gouden Carolus, the award-winning beer brewed here for centuries and Charles V’s favourite Tripel back in the sixteenth century

THE TOP CULINARY SPECIALITY FROM MECHELEN IS MECHELEN COUCOU OR MECHELSE KOEKOEK. IT HAS FIRM MEAT AND IS A CROSSBRED OF THE CUCKOO-COLOURED DOMESTIC CHICKEN AND THE ASIAN CHICKEN

“PART OF WHAT MAKES MECHELEN SO CONVIVIAL IS ITS HUMAN SCALE.”

BREWERY HET ANKER STARTED BREWING BEER 5 GENERATIONS AGO IN THE GRAND BEGuinAGE OF MECHELEN

Get to know Mechelen & region: www.visitmechelen.be
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