

**April in New Hampshire** ... the ski slopes close down, frost heaves hit new heights and mud season is at its peak. Time to get away to someplace like ... Paris! Now, April in Paris, that's a whole different story. I've had the good fortune to spend an April weekend or two in Paris. The chestnut trees are in bloom and beds of daffodils bob in the breeze. The air is spring-like and a whole lot warmer than New Hampshire. Indeed, unlike New Hampshire, a foot of new snow isn't blanketing the town. Parisians can thank the Gulf Stream for that.

**Don't tell me you were asleep** the day your science teacher gave his illuminating lecture on this wondrous current? Without going into detail, let's just say the Gulf Stream is the reason that April in Paris is a good bit warmer than the Granite State. If all this snow and mud has got you feeling glum, how about we take a tour of the City of Light?

**Paris is a city for walkers** so you will need comfortable shoes. Let's start the tour by taking in the magnificence of the Champs-Élysées and the Jardin des Tuileries. Then we can wander over to the Seine and contemplate the river with all its grandeur. You'll want to pause to enjoy the ancient architecture as we cross a few of its many bridges. While we're out and about, let's stop in and see the beautiful rose window at Notre-Dame Cathedral and marvel at the Church of Saint-Sulpice.

**Next, it's time to delight in Paris' old world charm.** We'll wander over cobblestones and down narrow streets. You never know what charming bistro or amazing shop you will discover. When you need a break, we can stop for a leisurely coffee at a sidewalk café. If it's a sunny day, we can probably sit outside. People-watching is one of my favorite activities in Paris.

**When mid-day hunger pains strike,** we'll pick up an elegant picnic at the Marché St-Germain. The fruits and vegetables are gorgeous. The beautiful breads and cheeses take an ordinary picnic to a whole new level. We'll add a view of the Seine or the Eiffel Tower or more people-watching at the luxurious Luxembourg Garden. Our picnic will be a feast for the eyes as well as the stomach!

**Paris is not immune to April showers** so if it rains during the trip, and it probably will, we can visit the museum. From the ancient Egyptians to the Mona Lisa, you can easily spend an entire week or more at the Louvre. The Musée d'Orsay is a must for fans of impressionism and post-impressionism. Built in a beaux arts railway station, it makes for a fascinating afternoon. Rain or shine, the Centre Georges Pompidou is a fun place to visit. From the jugglers and musicians out front to the cinemas and National Museum of Modern Art inside, the Centre Pompidou is not-to-be-missed.

**At the end of a busy day,** there is nothing better than dinner in a cozy bistro. No need to rush, take it easy and relax over a long, leisurely meal. The food and wine in Paris are nothing short of wonderful. After all that walking, feel free to indulge in a traditional five-course dinner. Each course will be loaded with flavor but you shouldn't worry about overindulging. Portions are smaller than a typical American restaurant.

**Oops, daydream and tour over.** Don't despair; instead, enjoy a walk around Pleasant Lake and a beautiful bistro dinner at home. Pick up a bunch of daffodils, download Ella Fitzgerald's version of *April in Paris* and gather friends and family around your table for a taste of Paris.

Here's to a little Parisian spring charm and bon appétit!

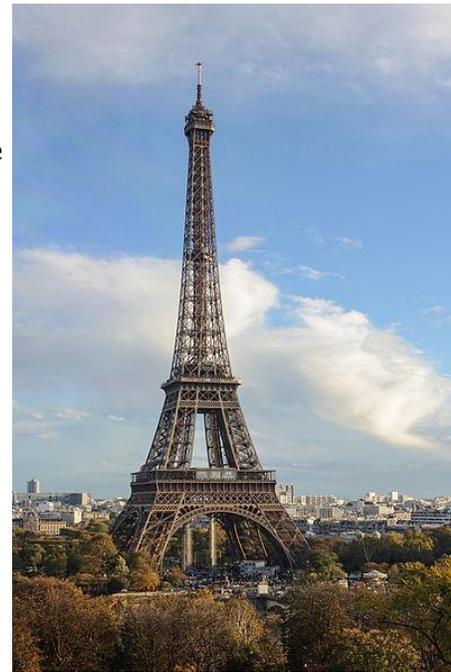


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### Coq au Vin au Printemps

*Roast chicken is a typical bistro meal. Add veggies for a typical spring bistro meal! Enjoy!*

Serves 8

- 8 skin-on, bone-in chicken thighs
- 2 teaspoons herbs de Provence
- Kosher salt and freshly ground pepper
- 1 tablespoon Dijon mustard
- 3 cloves garlic, minced
- Juice of 1 lemon
- 1 1/2 cups or more chicken stock or broth
- 3/4 cup or more dry white wine
- 1 pound whole mushrooms, trimmed and halved or quartered
- 1-2 tablespoons olive oil
- 8 ounces fresh (peeled and trimmed) or frozen pearl onions
- 1/2 cup sour cream (optional)
- 1 1/2 pounds asparagus, trimmed and chopped
- 1 pound baby spinach



Preheat the oven to 450 degrees. Place a roasting pan large enough to hold the chicken in a single layer in the oven for 10 minutes.

Sprinkle the chicken with 1 teaspoons herb and season with salt and pepper. Place the chicken, skin-side down in the hot roasting pan. Return the pan to the oven and roast the chicken at 450 degrees for 15 minutes.

While the chicken roasts, put the mushrooms in a bowl, drizzle with olive oil and toss to coat. Add the onions, sprinkle with the remaining herbs, season with salt and pepper and toss again.

Put the mustard and garlic in a measuring cup, whisking constantly slowly add the lemon juice, stock and wine.

Turn the chicken, add the wine and broth mixture and scatter the mushrooms and onions around the pan. Return the pan to the oven. Continue roasting, adding more wine and broth if necessary, for about 45 minutes or until the chicken is cooked-through and golden and the vegetables are tender and caramelized.

Put the sour cream in a small bowl. A few spoonfuls at a time, whisk 1/2-1 cup of the hot braising liquid into the sour cream. Moving the chicken around if necessary, stir the sour cream and asparagus into the vegetables and around the chicken. Return the pan to the oven for about 5 minutes.

Remove the chicken from the pan and keep warm. Add the spinach and toss to combine. Return the pan to the oven for 2-3 minutes or until the spinach has wilted.

Transfer the vegetables to a large platter or individual plates, top with the chicken and serve.