

# Mayenne 53

The Magazine for  
English Speakers  
in the Mayenne

NEWS - GIFTS - MARKETS - EVENTS - RECIPES - TRADITIONS - CELEBRATIONS

## Laval Christmas Lights 2nd December - 7th January

The BIG Christmas Lights switch on LAUNCH PARTY is on Saturday 2nd December from 6.45pm. Shuttle buses will be operating to reduce congestion in the town centre. As soon as the shuttle bus information is released we will update this [LINK](#).



**Laval's famous Christmas Market**, with 50 decorated chalets will be set up along the river on the banks of the river at Square de Boston from Wednesday 13th to Sunday 17th Dec. From gourmet products to artisan crafts, street food, and designer items, there's something for everyone. Father Christmas will visit the market on Friday from 6.30pm to 8.30pm and Saturday from 3pm to 6pm. Market opening times: Wednesday 13th and Thursday 14th: 11am - 8pm, Friday 15th and Saturday 16th: 11am - 11pm, Sunday 17th: 10am - 8pm.

### Big Wheel

Set in Boston Square, on the banks of the river, the Ferris Wheel will be open to the public from Saturday 2nd December. Opening times: 2pm to 10pm 2nd Dec - 22nd Dec. 11am to midnight 23rd Dec - 7th Jan. From 10am on Saturdays and Christmas market weekends. Prices: Adults: 6€, Children under 10: 4€, Children under 2: Free. VIP cabin with Champagne\*, binoculars and blanket (30min on the Ferris Wheel): €89 for up to 4 people.

### Marché des Lumières Nocturne:

Place des Acacias, Laval, Saturday 9th December from 4.30pm to 11pm. Around thirty craftsmen and designers are taking part in the 8th edition of the night-time "market of lights". It's the perfect opportunity to find that unique, original gift that's missing under the tree!

Enjoy a 4km walk through the streets of the town, accompanied by volunteers from the Comité Départemental de la randonnée pédestre. Saturday 9th and Saturday 16th December from 6pm to 7.30pm. Meeting point: 5.30pm (venue to be confirmed) Buy a lantern for €1.

For more information, contact FFRandonnée Mayenne tel: 02.43.53.12.91 mayenne@ffrandonnee.fr

### Christmas Presents for Families in Need

CLEP in Laval are running their annual campaign to collect presents for families in need in association



with the Secours Populaire Français. To make up a box, just take a cardboard box, and put in something good to eat, something warm, a hobby object, or a hygiene product and a little note saying "Happy Christmas/Joyeuse Fêtes". Please indicate on each parcel whether it is intended for a man (H), a woman (F) or a child (E + age).

You can drop off your box at CLEP 8 Imp. Haute Chiffolière, 53000 Laval from 4th to 19th December Monday to Friday 9AM-6PM, or Saturday 9AM-12PM 2-6PM.

The presents will be distributed to families in social and financial difficulty who use the food bank and receive social support from volunteers from the secours populaire.



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# SPECIAL CHRISTMAS EDITION

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Mayenne.**

If you'd like to become a stockist or an  
advertiser, or for more information about our  
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**[contact@mayenne53.com](mailto:contact@mayenne53.com)**



La Riverie, ZI des Touches, 53000 Laval

<http://www.spa53.fr/>

Since 1845, the SPA (Society for the protection of animals) has been working to protect the welfare of animals throughout France. It carries out a wide range of actions: taking in abandoned and mistreated animals and giving them up for adoption, defending animals in distress, raising public awareness of animal welfare, including among the younger generation and local authorities, etc. Through its rescues in the field and its awareness-raising activities, the SPA works on both the causes and the consequences to eradicate abandonment and mistreatment of animals.

In 2020 the SPA declared a budget of 72.2 million euros, of which 84% comes from the public. In addition to its 710 employees, the association is supported by 4,096 volunteers (2020). The association also manages 55 shelters and 12 dispensaries across France. The dispensaries (Veterinary treatment centres) enable people on low incomes (homeless people, people on minimum welfare benefits, etc.) to have their pets treated, vaccinated, sterilised and identified.

The local SPA branch in Laval currently has 10 members of staff and a team of volunteers. You can donate throughout the year but in winter (and particularly over the festive period) donations drop off and more animals arrive. so why not include a bag of dog or cat biscuits on your Christmas shopping list and drop them in on 10th & 11th December (1.30pm-5pm) when there will be a Christmas fundraising event & car boot sale.

## Christmas Editorial

Welcome to the Special Online Christmas Edition of the Mayenne Magazine. By now, I hope you have all had a chance to read the Autumn/Winter printed edition of the magazine. If not, check our [list of stockists](#) and find your nearest copy. As a lot of information for December wasn't available when the Autumn/Winter edition went to press, we decided to publish our first ONLINE ONLY edition to cover the festive period. We hope you enjoy it and, for those of you who prefer to read a printed magazine, we have made a "Printer-Friendly" version which won't use up too much printer ink!

Christmastime in France can be bittersweet, as despite all the wonderful festive events and celebrations, it's a time when we want to be with friends and family and that's not always possible when you have chosen to make France your home. Some people will embrace the traditions and recipes of our adopted country and others will find comfort in keeping our native traditions, no matter where we come from. In this edition we've included some traditional recipes from English speaking countries all over the world which we hope you'll enjoy!

There's no denying that some French customs and traditions, particularly at this time of year, are very different to other countries. But despite the somewhat unfair reputation of British cooking in France, I find that my French friends and neighbours are as intrigued with how I celebrate Christmas as I am about their traditions. When bridging the gap between our cultures its important to be respectful and so to help anyone invited to dine with a French family this Christmas, we've included an etiquette guide to dining à la française!

It's also the time of year when many people take a moment to help those less fortunate than themselves. Why not read the story on page 1 about the CLEP initiative to collect presents for disadvantaged families or the article on the left about the important work undertaken by the staff and volunteers at the SPA Animal Rescue Centre in Laval.

December & January, more than any other months, can be the most difficult for ex-pats in France. The warm summer evenings seem a distant memory and as the days shorten, so do our opportunities to socialise; it always seems easier to stay huddled up in a blanket in front of the fire rather than brave the dark and the cold in search of a convivial atmosphere. If you are self-employed then winter can be a worrying time as statistically there is less work available in the service industry and for tradesmen/women. In case you are struggling with loneliness or other worries, we've included some contact information for mental health services that support English speakers on our Health & Well-Being page, as well as information about accessing health services over the festive period.

As another year comes to an end, it's normal to look back over the last 12 months and judge our progress (or lack thereof!). I, for one, have been on a roller coaster journey with this magazine; sometimes full of excitement and optimism and other times wondering what I've gotten myself in to! The most important thing, I have discovered, is to keep putting one foot in front of the other and (as a very wise and dear friend once said) remember that whether you believe you can, or you believe you can't, you're right!

I would like to thank everyone who has helped and supported the magazine over the last 12 months: our advertisers, stockists, and readers. Without your participation, none of this would be possible and I hope I can rely on your continued support in 2024. Don't forget to like and follow us on social media and if you have time, please use the links on page 16 to leave a review on Facebook and our Google Business page. Your visible support helps us to gain exposure to a wider audience and, in doing so, increase our advertising revenue which keeps the magazine running.

**Merry Christmas and Happy New Year to you all,** Hayley GILKS Editor



**Dale Franklin**  
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# Christmas wishes from the Mayenne

Merry Christmas  
& Happy New Year  
To all of our family  
and friends in France,  
and the rest of the world  
Lawrence and Sue Nash

To all the lovely people of the  
Mayenne I wish you Joyeux Noël  
Together hope for  
a peaceful world in 2024  
Bonne Santé Ian Parsons

Merry Christmas  
to Shannon Warrick  
and all at 'Maison  
Pampelmousse'  
From James

Merry Christmas to all my  
beautiful friends enjoy  
yourselves stay safe!  
love Dee, Neil  
and family.xxx

Seasons Greetings  
& Bonne Année  
to all our friends at  
Nom de Plume  
from Simon & Megan

We would like to wish  
everyone a very merry  
Christmas and a Happy New  
Year . Thank you to all our  
customers. PJ Holland  
Plumbing and Maintenance

Cheyenne and I would like to take this  
opportunity to wish Cherry, Urban and  
Daisy, and all the caring members of the  
Mayenne 53 Facebook Group,  
a Truly Wonderful Christmas  
and New Year. Without you  
all we would not be  
celebrating together. Thank  
you again. From Barbara



The staff at Le Patis would  
like to wish everyone a  
Merry Christmas  
& Happy New Year.

*Season's  
Greetings*

*to everyone in the Mayenne*  
From  
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CHRISTMAS  
AND  
HAPPY  
NEW YEAR**  
FROM THE  
**DIGGER MAN**

colindiggerman@gmail.com  
WhatsApp +44 7809 903808

**Wishing all Association EuroMayenne  
members, past, present and future,**

**a very Merry Christmas and a  
Happy and Prosperous New Year!**

Where French and Non-French Nationals get together  
[www.euromayenne.org](http://www.euromayenne.org)  
For further information:  
[contact@euromayenne.org](mailto:contact@euromayenne.org)

**I wish all my clients a happy and joyous  
Christmas and prosperous new year  
regards TJ Littleford**

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& Happy New Year**  
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**Wishing all  
our clients & friends  
in the Mayenne a  
Merry Christmas &  
a prosperous  
2024!**

# Christmas Events in the Mayenne



## Bilingual Christmas Carols & Songs with EuroMayenne

The EuroMayenne Association will be hosting an informal afternoon of Christmas carols and songs at La Maison d'Hercule, **93 rue Charles de Gaulle, 53100 Mayenne on Saturday 2nd December from 2pm-6pm.**

The Mayenne Christmas market will be taking place just 650m down the road so why not call in for a mince pie and a glass of mulled wine and join in with the carol singing? Owner of La Maison d'Hercule, Mr Robert Trickey will be accompanying the singing on his grand piano in the salon, the ground floor will be open to the public and there will be a small exhibition about the EuroMayenne association.

### Friday 24th November

**Biern -les-Villages 53290** Christmas Market from 5pm

### Saturday 25th November

**Meslay du Maine 53170** Christmas Market 5pm -10pm

**Aron 53440** Christmas Market 2pm-9pm

**M ral 53230** Christmas Market 3pm-9pm

**Ch teau du Fresne 53640 Champeon** Christmas Market 10am-6pm

**Pr -en-Pail-Saint-Samson 53140** Christmas Market 10am-7.30pm

**Martign -sur-Mayenne 53470** Christmas Lights, entertainment & refreshments

### Sunday 26th November

**Bannes 53340** Christmas Market 10am-6pm

**Argent  53210** Christmas Market 10am-5pm

**Laval 53000** (Association Grenoux) Christmas Market 1pm-6pm

**Meslay du Maine 53170** Christmas Market 10am-5pm

**Andouill  53240** Christmas Market 10am-6pm

**Pontmain 53220** Christmas Market 10am-6pm

**Craon 53400** Christmas Market 9am-7pm, Father Christmas Race 2.30pm

**Ch teau du Fresne 53640 Champeon** Christmas Market 10am-6pm

**Gennes-Longuefuye 53200** Christmas Market 10am-6pm

### Friday 1st December

**Evron 53600** Festive Lights & refreshments from 6.30pm

**Gorron 53120** Festive Lights & refreshments from 5.30pm

**Mayenne 53100** Christmas Market 2pm-9pm

**Saint Pierre la Cour 53410** Christmas Market 5pm-10pm, Torchlight parade & Fireworks

**Louvern  53950** Festive Lights & Refreshments from 7pm

**Bouessay 53290** Christmas Entertainment: Market, crafts for children, carriage rides. 4.30pm

**Juvign  53380** Christmas Market, entertainment & refreshments.

### Saturday 2nd December

**La Chapelle au Riboul 53440** Christmas Market 10am-6pm

**Houssay 53360** Christmas Market 3pm

**Ch mer -le-Roi** Christmas Market 3pm-9pm

**Contest 53100** Christmas Market

**Villaines le Juhel 53700** Christmas Market & Entertainment From 9am

**Gesvres 53370** Christmas Market From 2pm to 6pm

**Montign  le Brillant 53970** Christmas Market from 4pm

**Colombiers du Plessis 53120** Christmas Market from 1pm, fireworks 6pm

**Mezangers 53600** Christmas Market from 11am

**Bais 53160** Christmas Market 3pm-7pm

**Mayenne 53100** Christmas Market 2pm-9pm

**Bazougers 53170** Christmas Market, Festive Lights, Fireworks & refreshments from 7pm

**Mayenne 53100 (EuroMayenne)** Christmas Carols & refreshments 2pm-6pm

**Vaiges 53480** Christmas Market 5pm-11pm

**Sainte Suzanne et Chammes 53270** French Christmas Carol Concert at 8pm 25 

**St Berthevin la Tanniere 53220** Christmas Market 4pm-11pm

**Ch teau du Fresne 53640 Champeon** Christmas Market 10am-6pm



**L'Avenue Robert Buron,   Laval 53000** Christmas refreshments & entertainment 3pm-6pm

**Val-du-Maine 53340** Christmas Market 9am-1.30

**Laval 53000** Christmas Lights at 6.45pm

### Sunday 3rd December

**Fougerolles du Plessis 53190** Christmas Market 9.30am-5pm

**Ruill -Froid-Fonds 53170** Christmas Market 10am-2pm

**Sainte Suzanne et Chammes 53270** Clairbois Christmas Market 10am-7pm

**Genest Saint Isle 53940** Christmas Market 10am-5.30pm

# Christmas Events in the Mayenne

**Mayenne 53100** Christmas Market 10am-7pm

**Bourgon 53410** Christmas Market 9am-5pm Christmas meal to be booked in advance on 06 48 69 85 56

**Louvern  53950** Christmas Market 9am-6pm

**Montsurs 53150** Christmas Market 9am-6pm

**Lassay les Ch teaux 53110** Christmas Market 10am-5.30pm

**Ch teau du Fresne 53640 Champeon** Christmas Market 10am-6pm

**Craon 53400** Christmas Market 10am-6pm

**Montenay 53500** Christmas Market 10am-6pm

## Friday 8th December

**Chemaz  53200** Christmas Market 6pm-11pm

**St Pierre des Landes** Christmas Lights, entertainment & refreshments from 7.30pm

## Saturday 9th December

**Saint Berthevin 53940** Christmas Market 4pm-11pm

**Chateau Gontier 53200** Christmas Market 11am-8pm

**St Loup du Gast 53300** Christmas Lights & Refreshments 5pm-11pm

**Jublains 53160** Christmas Market 4pm-9pm

**Gorron 53120 (Tasse de Bonheur)** Christmas Market 9am-6pm

**Laval 53000** Christmas Market 4.30pm-11pm

**St Mars sur Colmont 53300** Christmas Market 5pm

**Parn  sur Roc 53260** Christmas lights, refreshments & fireworks 6.30pm

**St Ouen-les-Vallons 53150** Christmas Market from 4pm

**Saint-Pierre-sur-Orthe 53160** Christmas Market & refreshments from 2.30pm to 8pm

**Mayenne 53100** Christmas Entertainment & Activities for children from 11am

**Saint Fraimbault de Pri res 53300** Christmas Market 3pm-7pm

**Saint Poix 53540** Christmas Market 3pm-10pm

## Sunday 10th December

**Saint Berthevin 53940** Christmas Market 10am-6pm

**Gorron 53120 (Tasse de Bonheur)** Christmas Market 9am-6pm

**Courcit  53700** Christmas Market 10am-6pm Fireworks 7pm

**Ern e 53500** Christmas Market 10am-6pm

**La Baconni re 53240** Christmas Market 10am-6pm

**Landivy 53190** Christmas Market 10am-6pm

**Parn  sur Roc 53260** Christmas Market 2pm-6pm

**Evron 53600** Christmas Concert from 4pm

**Ambri res-les-Vall es 53300** Christmas Market from 2pm, Fireworks.

**St Georges-Buttavent 53100** Christmas Party for Dogs at Wouaf Parc Reservation required 15 

**Chateau Gontier 53200** Christmas Market 11am-8pm

## Tuesday 12th December

**Le Ham 53250** Christmas Market From 2pm

## Wednesday 13th December

**Laval 53000** Christmas Market 11am-8pm

**Mayenne 53100** Family Christmas Craft Afternoon "Les Possibles" 2pm-6pm

## Thursday 14th December

**Laval 53000** Christmas Market 11am-8pm

## Friday 15th December

**Laval 53000** Christmas Market 11am-11pm

## Saturday 16th December

**Fromenti res 53200** Christmas Market 4pm-10pm, Fireworks 8pm

**Couesmes-Vauc  53300** Festive refreshments - see mairie for info

**Laval 53000** Christmas Market 11am-11pm

**Mayenne 53100** La Haute Mayenne Orchestra: Christmas Concert 4pm-8pm 5 

## Sunday 17th December

**Fougerolles du Plessis 53190** Bilingual Church & Carol service 3pm

**Bourgneu la For t 53410** Christmas Market 10am-6pm

**Ath e 53400** Christmas Concert 6.30pm

**Laval 53000** Eglise St Jean Choir Concert 5pm

**Laval 53000** The Nutcracker: Ballet & orchestra 37 

**Evron 53600** Christmas Market from 10.30am-9pm

**Javron-les-Chapelles 53250** Christmas Market from 11.30am

**Laval 53000** Christmas Market 10am-10pm

**Evron 53600** Christmas Concert from 4.30pm

**Saint Fort 53200** Christmas Market 10am-6pm

**Sainte-Suzanne 53270** Christmas Market 10am-6pm

**Mayenne 53100** Christmas family fun: Father Christmas, carriage rides & magician 10am-12pm; 2pm-5pm

**Grezen-Bou re 53290** Christmas Market 9.30am-6pm

## Thursday 21st December

**Saint Berthevin 53940** (Le Lien, Quartier Colbert) Christmas Concert 4.30pm

**Chateau Gontier 53200** Concert from 6.30pm

## Friday 22nd December

**Chailland 53420** Christmas Market 5pm-7pm

## Saturday 23rd December

**Mayenne 53100** Christmas family fun: Father Christmas, carriage rides & magician 10am-12pm; 2pm-5pm

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# A Feast for the Senses: A Traditional French Christmas Eve

As the holiday season approaches, the French are gearing up for one of their most cherished and indulgent traditions – the Christmas Eve feast. In France, Christmas Eve, known as "Réveillon," is a time for families and friends to come together and celebrate the joy of the season over a gastronomic masterpiece. A traditional French Christmas Eve meal typically begins with aperitifs and amuse-bouches (literally "mouth pleasers") which are bite-size hors d'oeuvres. A glass of champagne or sparkling wine is often the first order of the evening, to accompany delectable appetizers like foie gras, oysters, or smoked salmon. These delicacies set the stage for the lavish courses that follow.

The meal then progresses to a series of savory delights, usually starting with a warm and comforting soup, such as the famous chestnut soup or a rich, velvety bisque. Following this, a seafood course often takes center stage. Oysters, langoustines, and mussels are popular choices, prepared in various tantalizing ways. The pièce de résistance of the meal is undoubtedly the main course. While the choices vary by region, roasted meats are a common sight on French Christmas tables. The classic "chapon" or capon, a castrated rooster known for its tender meat, is a popular choice. Duck and goose are also favorites.

Accompaniments such as gratin dauphinois (scalloped potatoes), homemade cranberry sauce, and a variety of breads enhance the richness of the main course. The French place a strong emphasis on pairing the meal with the perfect wine, and it's not uncommon for each course to be accompanied by a different (carefully selected) wine to enhance the flavors of each specific dish.

Of course, no French Christmas Eve meal is complete without a delectable assortment of cheeses. Dessert is the grand finale, and the French do not disappoint with modern desserts like cheesecake or the classic chocolate mousse, as well as traditional favorites like the Bûche de Noël (Chocolate Yule log) and Galette des rois (a puff pastry with almond filling) and an array of pastries. In some regions, the "13 desserts" tradition is upheld, which features an assortment of sweets and fruits to finish the meal.

French Christmas Eve meals are about more than just food; they are about celebrating the joys of family life and the bonds of friendship, a time to savor the traditions that have been passed down through generations and to create new memories with loved ones.

## Wine selection for Beginners

Choosing the right wine to complement your meal need not be a daunting task. Here's a concise guide to help you make the perfect match:

- 1. Match Intensity:** Consider the weight of the wine and the dish. Light wines (Sauvignon Blanc, Pinot Noir) go well with delicate foods, while full-bodied wines (Cabernet Sauvignon, Syrah) suit heartier dishes.
- 2. Harmonize Flavors:** Seek complementary flavors. A Chardonnay enhances buttery seafood, while a spicy Shiraz elevates barbecue.
- 3. Balance Acidity:** Pair high-acid wines (Riesling) with rich, creamy dishes, and low-acid wines (Malbec) with grilled meats.

### Main Course Tips:

- **Seafood:** Opt for Sauvignon Blanc or Albariño.
- **Poultry:** Choose Chardonnay or Pinot Noir.
- **Red Meat:** Select Cabernet Sauvignon, Merlot, or Malbec.
- **Vegetarian/Spicy:** Zinfandel or Gewürztraminer.

### Dessert and Wine:

- **Chocolate:** Try Port, Merlot, or sweet Riesling.
- **Fruity Desserts:** Go for Muscat or Prosecco.
- **Cheeses:** Match cheese types with Chardonnay, dessert wine, or sparkling wine.

In the end, let your palate guide you. Wine pairing is about enhancing your dining experience and enjoying the journey through the world of wine and food. Cheers!



## La Tourte Mayennais the ultimate winter comfort food



In 2013, France Bleu Mayenne Radio station launched a culinary competition to create a regional dish to reflect the department of Mayenne. The station's listeners chose 3 ingredients to be included: Beef, Apples & Entrammes Cheese. The winning dish was Piccata de Bouef but runners-up Fabrice Sorin et Alexandre Arnaud thought their Torte Mayennais had what it takes to be a commercial success. They contacted Jean-Rémy Cousin from Les Goronnaises Butchers, the managers of Entrammes cheese, as well as the president of "Tables de la Mayenne, Didier Peschard.

Ten years on, the torte is still available to buy from Les Goronnaises:

[https://www.lesgoronnaises.com/boutique/index.php?id\\_product=37&controller=product](https://www.lesgoronnaises.com/boutique/index.php?id_product=37&controller=product)

Or try making the recipe on page 7

## Christmas Trees For Sale

La Lande - 53800 CONGRIER

(Renazé exit, towards Pouancé)

Mobile : 07 77 08 58 45

Opening times:

Open every Wednesday and weekend

(Saturdays and Sundays)

in December, before Christmas.

9am to 12pm and 2pm to 4pm.

# Christmas in the Mayenne: Festive Food

## La Tourte Mayennais

Ingredients:

Braising Steak  
4/6 apples  
2 small Entrammes cheeses  
4 carrots  
4 shallots  
salt and pepper  
Pommeau/Calvados/Brandy  
water  
red wine  
2 bay leaves  
shortcrust pastry (Pâte Brisée x 2)

Preparation :

Cook the whole chuck in a casserole dish with 2 carrots, 2 shallots and 2 bay leaves, water and red wine. Leave to cook over a low heat until the meat is very soft.

Peel and core the apples and dice them finely. Fry in butter without browning, then set aside. Dice 2 carrots and chop the 2 shallots, set aside.

For the Entrammes, trim around the edges of the cheeses to remove the rind, then cut into slices (around 6 per cheese).

Once the beef is well cooked, use a fork to pull the meat apart. If it is well cooked, it will fall apart on its own; for a pie, you will need the equivalent of 1/2 cooked chuck.

In a casserole dish, sweat the carrots and shallots, deglaze with a glass of pommeau, then add the shredded meat, season with salt and pepper and mix well (if the mixture is too dry, add a little of the beef cooking juices). Set aside.

In a pie dish (height 6/8 cm, diameter 25/30 cm), place a shortcrust pastry in the base (keeping the edges against the side of the dish), place the beef, apples and slices of Entrammes in succession. Close the pie using the 2nd shortcrust pastry. Fold the edges so that the mixture cannot escape. Brush the pie with egg yolk.

Place in the oven at 182° for 20 minutes, then at 150° for 25 minutes.

Enjoy warm or hot with a salad.

**ESCAPE TO THE CHÂTEAU:** With the launch of their new book "The Château: Forever Home" the Mayenne's most famous ex-pat family has been keeping busy! The Strawbridges have just come back from a whirlwind UK book tour. This latest book includes stories about how Dick and Angel coped with the impact of Covid on their wedding events business, their ongoing renovations, and post-pandemic issues. You can order the book, for delivery to France, [HERE](#).

**A Christmas message from Château de la Motte Husson: Wishing all of your readers a wonderful Christmas and a healthy and happy 2024! With love from Angel, Dick, Dorothy, Arthur, and the whole Chateau team! Xx**

To get us all in the Christmas spirit, Angel has shared her White Christmas Eggnog recipe below. For more recipes and craft ideas, visit the Escape to the Château website: <https://thechateau.tv/blog/>



### Angel's White Christmas Eggnog

Ingredients:

2 large free-range eggs  
1 large free-range egg yolk  
50g granulated sugar  
300ml whole milk  
1 tsp vanilla extract  
80ml golden rum  
50ml bourbon  
100ml whipped cream  
1/4 tsp freshly grated nutmeg,  
plus extra to decorate  
1 tbsp icing sugar  
Red currants or white currants to decorate.

Method:

1)

In a large mixing bowl whisk together the eggs, egg yolks and sugar until smooth. Pour the mixture into a large heavy-based saucepan, gradually adding the milk, blending well. Heat the mixture slowly over low heat, stirring constantly until the mixture reaches 71-77c on a sugar thermometer or until the mixture coats the back of a wooden spoon.

2)

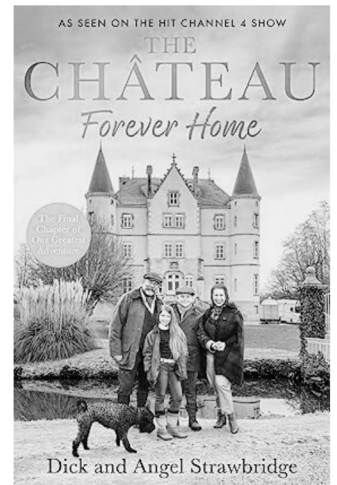
Pour the custard through a fine sieve into a large bowl and stir in the vanilla, rum, bourbon and nutmeg. Cover the surface of the custard with cling film and chill, then refrigerate for at least 3 hours or overnight.

3)

Just before serving, whip the cream to very soft peaks, beating in the icing sugar as you go. Gently fold the cream into the custard until evenly incorporated.

4)

Pour the eggnog into glasses and decorate with the red currants and some grated nutmeg.



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**Closed Saturday to Tuesday.**



# Christmas in the Mayenne: Festive Food

## Christmas Recipes from the English Speaking World

### Gingerbread



#### Ingredients:

- 375 g plain flour
- 1 tsp bicarbonate of soda
- 3 tpsps ground ginger
- 120 g unsalted butter (cold & cubed)
- 175 g light brown sugar
- 5 tpsps golden syrup
- 1 medium egg

#### Instructions:

Preheat the oven to 180°C and line your baking trays with greaseproof paper. Add the flour, bicarbonate of soda, and ginger to a large bowl and add the butter. Rub the mixture together with your fingers until it resembles breadcrumbs! (Alternatively, put the ingredients in a food processor). Add the sugar and mix well, then add the golden syrup and egg - knead with your hands until it is a smooth dough. Roll the dough out onto a lightly floured work surface to 1/2cm thickness and cut out your desired shapes. Place them on the lined baking trays and bake in the oven for 10-11 minutes, cool on a wire rack fully, and then decorate.

#### Icing:

##### Ingredients

- 1 egg whites
- 1 cup icing sugar sifted
- 2 drops liquid food colouring

#### Method:

Place the egg white in a clean, dry bowl and beat with an electric mixer until soft peaks form. Gradually add the icing sugar and beat again. Divide icing into bowls. Add food colouring to each bowl and stir until combined. Spoon the icing into a piping bag and go for it!

Recipe courtesy of Une Tasse de Bonheur, 1 Rue Corbeau Paris, 53120 Gorrion.



### Canadian Christmas Cake

#### INGREDIENTS

- 150g finely chopped blanched almonds,
- 360g Plain flour
- 1 ½ tsp baking powder
- ¾ tsp nutmeg
- ½ tsp salt
- ¼ tsp ground cloves
- 240 g butter, softened
- 250g white sugar
- 6 eggs
- 150g golden raisins
- 110g currants
- 110g quartered glacé cherries
- 110g chopped candied pineapple
- 180g whole blanched almonds (optional)

#### For Glazing

- 2 tbsp white sugar
- 2 tbsp water

#### METHOD

- Preheat oven to 150°C (300°F).
- Grease a 25cm loaf tin. Sprinkle sides with 2 tbsp of the finely chopped almonds.
- Mix the flour, baking powder, nutmeg, salt and cloves in a medium bowl; stir well, then set aside.
- In a large bowl, beat the butter and sugar together with an electric mixer until well blended. Beat in the eggs, one at a time (Don't worry if the batter looks slightly curdled).

### Australian Ice Cream Cake

by Vanessa WILLIAMSON

An Australian Christmas is a fusion of international Christmas traditions, celebrated from Christmas Eve to Boxing Day. Many Australian Christmas feasts are cold as it's usually a hot summer day. This ice cream based, Christmas pudding is a classic example of Aussie Christmas fayre and a huge favorite with my family. It's easy to make with the possibility of lots of variations, and ideal for Christmas in hot climates or for those who just love ice cream.

The base recipe is easy, just 250g of your choice of marinated fruits, nuts, and even chocolate mixed with homemade or shop-bought vanilla Ice cream.

#### Ingredients:

- 1 litre Vanilla Ice cream
- 250g Dried fruit, nuts and chocolate e.g. cranberries, walnuts, glacé cherries, white chocolate chips, citrus peel, dried apricots, roasted almonds, soaked in 75ml of Brandy.

#### Method:

Line a Pyrex pudding bowl, grease with soft butter then line with cling-film and chill in the freezer. Place your favorite vanilla ice cream in a bowl and leave to soften slightly. Mix in the marinated dried fruit & nuts.

Spoon the ice cream mixture into the greased, lined basin and press down firmly. Cover with cling-film and freeze for several hours or overnight. Remove from the freezer 5 minutes before serving and turn out onto a serving plate and slice in wedges to serve. Or serve, with an ice cream scoop, into cones or as a side desert.



Recipe courtesy of Vanessa Williamson, Hôtel de Hercé 53100 Mayenne



Gradually add the flour, baking powder and spices and mix well. Fold in the remaining chopped almonds, raisins, currants, cherries and pineapple.

Pour the batter into the prepared pan. Smooth the surface, then decorate with the whole almonds, if you want to or use more dried/candied fruit.

Bake in a preheated oven at 150°C (300°F) for 1 hour and 15 minutes.

Towards the end of the baking time, combine the ingredients for the glaze (sugar and water) in small saucepan. Simmer over a medium heat for 1 minute. Remove the cake from the oven and brush the top with the sugar syrup glaze. Cool the cake in the tin for 15 minutes, then remove and cool completely on a wire rack.

### Classic Scottish Shortbread

#### Ingredients:

- 150g plain flour, and a little extra for dusting
- 100g butter, chilled and cubed
- 50g caster sugar, plus 1 tbsp for sprinkling

#### Method:

Heat the oven to 170°C/150°C fan/gas 3. Put the flour, butter and sugar into a bowl. Using your hands, combine the ingredients until the mixture looks like breadcrumbs, then knead it together to form a dough.

On a lightly floured surface, use a rolling pin to roll out the dough to ½ cm thick. Cut the dough into fingers and place on a lined baking tray. Use a fork to create decorative patterns and sprinkle with the remaining caster sugar.

Chill the dough in the fridge for 20 mins, then bake for 15-20 mins until golden brown. Remove the shortbread fingers from the oven and leave to cool on the tray for 10 mins.



Hôtel de Hercé  
Boutique B&B in the centre of Mayenne  
19 Pl. Cheverus, 53100 Mayenne





# Christmas in the Mayenne: Festive Food

## Yuletide Yearning: A Taste of Home

### Home-made Mincemeat

#### Ingredients:

500g Sultanas & raisins,  
300g Glacé Cherries, Dates, Prunes, Dried Apricots, Candied peel, dried Cranberries, etc.  
50g Flaked Almonds  
50ml Apple Juice  
125g unsalted Butter  
200g Muscavado Sugar  
1.5 teaspoons ground cinnamon  
1 teaspoon allspice/quatre épices  
1 Orange (finely grated zest & juice)  
200ml Brandy/Calvados

Makes approximately 4 jars of mincemeat.

#### Preparation:

Wash your jam jars in warm soapy water and rinse thoroughly. Place on a baking tray and put into a cold oven. Turn the oven on and set to 150 C/300 F/Gas 2. Once the oven has come to temperature, leave for a further 15 to 20 minutes. Turn the oven off and leave the door closed until you have finished making the mincemeat and are ready to fill the jars.

#### Method:

Put all the ingredients, except the Calvados, in a large saucepan and stir well. On a low heat, keep stirring until the butter has melted. Then simmer for 10 minutes, stirring regularly.

Leave the mixture to cool down for 20-30 minutes, then stir in the Calvados. Remove the jars from the oven and fill with mincemeat. Once the mincemeat has cooled down to room temperature you should store the jars for 2 weeks to mature, but you can use it straightaway if necessary.



### THERE'S STILL TIME TO ORDER FOR DELIVERY BEFORE CHRISTMAS:

Deadline: 30-11-2023

Preparation: 08-12-2023

Sorting: 11-12-2023

Delivery From: 12-12-2023

\*

Deadline: 07-12-2023

Preparation: 15-12-2023

Sorting: 18-12-2023

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### Seasonal treats from abroad

Due to import restrictions on certain food items, it's not easy to get hold of some of the traditional Christmas culinary treats from other countries. If you have family coming to France for the festive period, make sure they know about the import rules:

Here's a list of what you can ask friends or family to bring into France from outside the EU:

Permitted food items:

- Fruits and vegetables:
- Packaged food items: Non-perishable packaged food items, such as cereals, pasta, canned goods, and snacks, are generally allowed.
- Baked goods: Baked goods, such as bread, cakes, and biscuits, are permitted as long as they do not contain any meat or dairy products.
- Honey: Small quantities of honey for personal consumption are permitted.
- Powdered milk for babies and infants, and baby food: These items are allowed up to a total weight of 2kg.
- Eggs and egg products: Small quantities for personal consumption are allowed.

### Restricted or prohibited food items:

- Meat and dairy products: All meat and dairy products, including bacon, cheese, ham sandwiches, milk, suet puddings, custard, cakes and chocolates containing milk, are prohibited.

Luckily there are suppliers of international food items who deliver to France as well as France-based businesses that stock all the tastes of home

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# The Mayenne 53 Magazine for English Speakers

## Mastering La Convivialité: A Guide to Proper Etiquette When Dining at a French Home.

Eating in France is more than just enjoying good food—it's like stepping into a cultural maze with its own set of rules. But don't worry, we've got your back! In this article, we'll break down the dos and don'ts of French dining in easy-to-understand language. From what time to arrive to what time to leave and everything in between, we've got the lowdown on how to make your experience smooth and leave a good impression.

Firstly, let's look at an invitation to an *Apero* (aperitifs). Depending on the day and the season, your invitation may be at any time of the day but during the festive period, you can expect it to be around 7-7.30 pm. *Apero* is just drinks and "nibbles" but at Christmas time even the nibbles can be quite impressive. You can expect any of the following: crisps, charcuterie, cheese, dips, pickles, pastries & fruits. Popular drinks are Kir Royale (Fruit liqueur and sparkling wine), Pastis (Pernod), beer, Martini, white wine, and sparkling or sweet wine. In winter, *Apero* should not last more than 2 hours as your hosts will wait for you to leave before preparing their evening meal. You should look out for subtle signs that the *Apero* is over, such as your host not refilling your glass or the "nibbles" bowls. It should be noted that aperitifs are also served when you are invited for an actual meal but are a smaller, simpler version and merely the warm-up act for the feast that follows!

### Before you arrive

Whether you have been invited for a meal or *Aperitifs*, your host has probably given you a precise time to arrive and you should not (under any circumstances) arrive early. The French are firm believers in the "Quart heure de politesse" and the Mayenne is no exception. In fact the "Quart heure mayennais" is deeply ingrained in the locals' psyches. If you are invited for 7pm, then 7.10-7.15pm is considered an appropriate arrival time. Anything more than 15 minutes late and you risk appearing rude.

### Gifts for the hosts

Most guests will bring some token gifts for the hosts. Plants are preferred over cut flowers as the host does not have to go and find a vase and deal with the flowers when they should be preparing the meal. A bottle of wine is always appreciated but here there are 2 important things to bear in mind. 1 - the wine must always be French, and 2 - Don't expect to be served the wine you brought during the meal, your hosts will have carefully selected the wines for each course; so your bottle might be put in the wine rack for another day. You could also offer chocolates or some kind of sweet selection.

### Bisous or no bisous?

Even at larger gatherings, you should greet every person individually. If you have met them socially before then you can assume that a kiss on each cheek will be an acceptable greeting. Any new acquaintances should be greeted with a handshake or, in some cases, just a nod and "Hello".

### À table!

When the meal is served, everyone will take their place at the table and the host(s) will bring you your food and offer you a glass of wine. You should never top up your wineglass yourself as this is akin to accusing your hosts of neglecting their guests. Everyone will wait for the hosts to wish them "Bon Appetit" before starting to eat. You will be expected to eat everything on your plate to show your appreciation but do not ask for more, merely accept a second helping if it is offered. Try and ration your wine consumption so that your empty plate coincides with an empty glass as the next course could well have a different type of wine to accompany it.

Any French meal worth its salt will consist of at least 5 courses: aperitifs, starter, main course, cheese course, and dessert. At Christmas and other special occasions, you can expect an extra 2 courses: aperitifs, starter, fish (sometimes followed by a palate cleansing sorbet), main course, salad, cheese, and dessert; followed by coffee and a "digestif" such as brandy, calvados, or a liqueur.

### And now, the end is near...

The French will spend as much time talking as they do eating so you can expect a meal to take at least 2-3 hours, sometimes 4-5. Try to avoid talking about money, politics, or religion but most other subjects are acceptable. Remember Somerset Maugham's famous quote "At a dinner party one should eat wisely but not too well, and talk well but not too wisely" By the time you put your dessert



spoon down or sip your last drop of calvados your hosts will have built up a sizeable pile of washing up and will not be offended if you offer to help, however, wait for them to make the first move to clear the table. And even though you feel like you could go into winter hibernation after eating all that, if there's daylight left your hosts may well suggest a short walk. If the majority of the guests are pulling on their walking shoes then you should too!

If there are French guests there with you, watch for their cue to leave. And as you bid your hosts *au revoir*, remember to compliment their food and hospitality and enjoy the afterglow of a true French feast. Then start planning for the return match at your house!

**Coming Soon** TO **Mayenne53.com**

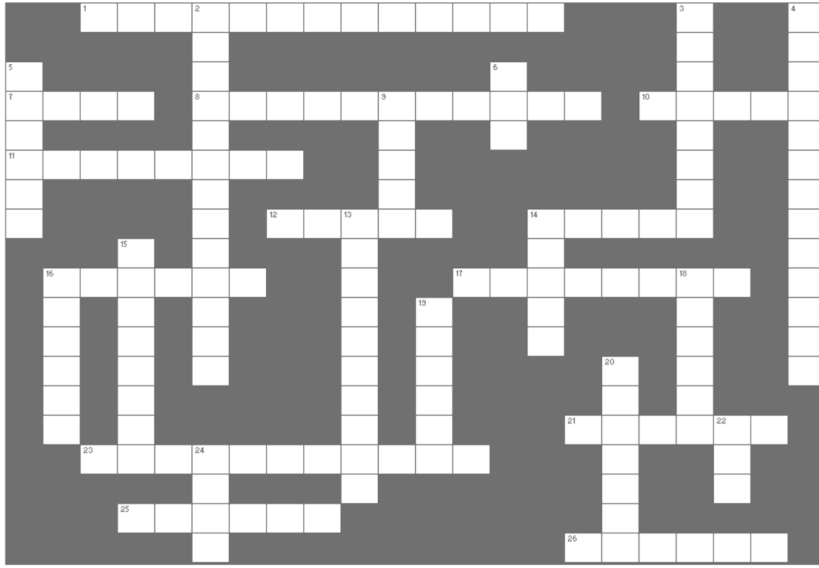
All the Christmas & New Year opening times for Supermarkets in the Mayenne

Join our Facebook group: **Mayenne 53 Group for English Speakers** or subscribe to our mailing list to be notified when the festive opening hours are published!



# Improve your French!

Christmas Crossword: English clues & French answers



ACROSS	DOWN
1 SNOWFLAKE (6,2,5)	2 NUTCRACKER (13)
7 SLED (4)	3 & 10 ACROSS HAPPY HOLIDAYS (8,5)
8 CHRISTMAS TREE (5,2,4)	4 MIDNIGHT MASS (5,2,6)
10 SEE 3 DOWN	5 BELL (6)
11 WREATH (8)	6 KING (3)
12 WINTER (5)	9 TURKEY (5)
14 ANGELS (5)	13 JINGLE BELLS French version (4,2,4)
16 SHEPHERD (6)	14 ADVENT (5)
17 CHIMNEY (8)	15 SLEIGH (8)
21 PRESENT (6)	16 CANDLE (6)
23 YULE LOG (5,2,4)	18 STAR (6)
25 BOW in a ribbon (5)	19 MANGER (6)
26 FRANKINCENSE (6)	20 COAL (7)
	22 DONKEY (3)
	24 HOLLY (4)

Click [HERE](#) to download/print a printer-friendly version.



## LOCAL HEROES: Ambroise Paré 1510-1590

Arguably Mayenne's most famous son, Ambroise Paré was born in approximately 1510 in Bourg-Herent, at that time a small hamlet near Laval. In fact, in the Avesnières sector of Laval, you will find a small, weathered sign informing you of the approximate location of his family home, long since demolished.

At the age of 20, he left Laval to go to Paris to train as a Barber-Surgeon in the Hôtel-Dieu; where he stayed for 3 years acquiring the knowledge he would later put to good use on the battlefield. During a 40-year career, he developed the cauterizing technique to deal with wounds inflicted by the recently invented "portable firearms" and the ligation of blood vessels during amputations, as well as developing hand, arm, and leg prostheses; the designs of which remained barely unchanged until the First World War. It was also here that he gained experience in postmortem investigations, eventually writing a book "Reports in Court" about the writing of legal reports in relation to medicine. His writings and instructions are widely acknowledged to be the beginning of modern forensic pathology. Noted for his ability to diagnose and treat difficult cases, Henry II appointed him "First Surgeon" and Paré continued in this role during the reigns of Francis II, Charles IX, and Henry III.

Unable to speak Latin, in 1575, he became the first surgeon to publish his complete works in French. After retiring from the battlefield, he dedicated his time to lobbying the likes of Catherine de Medici, and other people of influence, to raise the status of the Surgeon which was considered a manual art and despised by the Faculty of Medicine. He also fought against the use of magical remedies such as unicorn powder or "mummy" juice, sold by unscrupulous doctors and apothecaries. He also campaigned tirelessly to train young surgeons according to his methods.

He died in Paris on 20 December 1590 from natural causes in his 80th year and was buried at the church of Saint André-des-Arts having never returned home to the Mayenne.



82 Rue du Ponceau, 53000 Laval

Artist's impression of the new development at Place du 11 Novembre, LAVAL.



Credit: Agence Pyralis - SABH Architecte

Normally, a bronze statue of him takes pride of place in Place du 11 Novembre in the centre of Laval but with the ongoing redevelopment work to create a Gourmet Food Hall, the statue has been removed for maintenance and as a precaution against damage. For now, the plan is to reinstate the statue once the 18-million-euro project is completed (currently on schedule for July 2025). The plan includes a panoramic terrace offering views of the river and an adjoining covered area that will allow cultural, associative, or commercial events to be organized throughout the year.



### CHRISTMAS MORNING

A clear and cold and silent night.  
Anaemic moon in pale disguise  
sailing the deep-dark midnight skies -  
her charted voyage through sparks of light  
that glint and glitter, sharp and bright.

The blush of winter's morning glow  
that pinks the adolescent day,  
and rising early, I survey  
how gleaming meadow pastures show  
with gems the silver frosts bestow.

A stillness in the crystal air!  
A morning stroll...the crunch of ice  
and hiss of stiff grass in the vice  
of winter's rime, bent folded where  
my footsteps tread with absent care.

A sudden movement... soundless flight,  
as from a hidden hedgerow haunt  
of twisted twig and branches gaunt,  
a magpie, stirred by sense of fright,  
spreads wings of black and purest white.

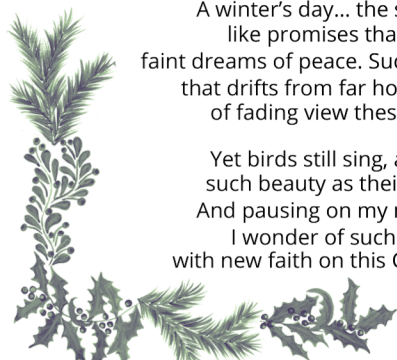
Nearby a holly bush with leaves  
of polished green enamel, waits  
the blackbird's visit...woven fates  
of scarlet fruit, which then achieves  
the scattered seed by gifted thieves.

Outlined against a morning sky,  
a buzzard floats in arcs of grace,  
defying chasms of clear space.  
The curve of wing, as wheeling high,  
it glides in beauty slowly by.

A winter's day... the sun's pale rays  
like promises that still evoke  
faint dreams of peace. Such hope, like smoke,  
that drifts from far homes in the haze  
of fading view these misty days.

Yet birds still sing, and so adorn  
such beauty as their songs extol.  
And pausing on my morning stroll,  
I wonder of such joy reborn  
with new faith on this Christmas morn.

by Toby Wren



### Bilingual Christmas Carols: English vs French

Despite the many differences in customs between France and English speaking countries at Christmastime, when it comes to Christmas songs there are many crossovers.

Here are just a few:

Jingle Bells	Vive le Vent
Silent Night	Douce Nuit
Away in a Manger	L'enfant de la Promesse
We wish you a Merry Christmas	Nous Chantons un Joyeux Noël
I saw Three Ships	J'ai vu Trois Navires
Winter Wonderland	Au Royaume du Bonhomme Hiver
O Christmas Tree	Mon Beau Sapin
Rudolph the red-nosed Reindeer	le petit renne au nez rouge
White Christmas	Noël Blanc
Here Comes Santa Claus	Voici le Père Noël
12 Days of Christmas	12 jours de Noël

#### Lost in Translation?

Whilst many songs are a straightforward translation with a few tweaks, you can't help but wonder what happened with the 12 Days of Christmas. Your first thought may well be about the three French hens, and whether the French version has English hens. But in fact that is the least strange lyric! Whilst the amount of livestock and people in the English version might give your true love some serious problems you could still expect some points for being romantic, unlike the gifts in the French version:

Un moineau tout en haut du pommier = A sparrow at the top of the apple tree, Deux caramels = Two caramels, Trois petites poules = Three little hens, Quatre pissenlits = Four dandelions, Cinq gros poussins = Five large chicks, Six poésies = Six poems, Sept pincettes = Seven tweezers, Huit parapluies = Eight umbrellas, Neuf bonnets neufs = Nine new bonnets, Dix bigoudis = Ten curlers, Onze pierres poncees = Eleven pumice stones, Douze ventouses = Twelve suction cups

English version: A partridge in a pear tree, Two turtle doves, Three French hens, Four calling birds, Five golden rings, Six geese a-laying, Seven swans a-swimming, Eight maids a-milking, Nine ladies dancing, 10 lords a-leaping, 11 pipers piping, 12 drummers drumming.

**P.A.G.E.(Poetry Appreciation Group Experience) was formed in 2010 and publishes a free monthly internet magazine of illustrated poetry. Membership is free, for further information contact Geoff Evans: geoffevans129@gmail.com**

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**Meridien**  
Travels the World



Claire Wilby

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Based on the travels of a real horse, the book takes you on a journey with Meridien to foreign lands. You will meet the friends he makes along the way and share in his experiences of different cultures.

Written by Claire Wilby, the book is aimed at 8-13 year olds as well as animal loving adults! Claire is English but now lives in the Mayenne and started writing the stories (based on her real life adventures with her horse Meridien) during the Covid lockdown. The book is available from Amazon on Kindle and in Paperback in [English](#), [French](#) & [German](#).

# Made in the Mayenne: Gift Guide



### Les Savons de Raphaël

Les Savons de Raphaël produce a selection of local, natural and zero waste cosmetics, soaps and hand/body creams. Located in Mayenne since 2010, Les Savons de Raphaël also stock a wide selection of shampoos, conditioners, balms, deodorants, toothpastes and face creams.

All their products are natural, mostly organic, some of them vegan, and not tested on animals.

30 Rue Saint-Martin, 53100 Mayenne. Tel: 0243085457

[www.lessavonsderaphael.fr](http://www.lessavonsderaphael.fr)



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# Made in the Mayenne: Gift Guide

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Opaline

• LA SAVONNERIE •

La Peuvrie,  
53410 Launay-Villiers  
Tel: 0601895388

Brisanne, La Bazouge-de-Chemeré,

Tel: 06 71 26 66 79

[mohairdumaine@orange.fr](mailto:mohairdumaine@orange.fr)

**Mohair  
du  
Maine**

[mohairdumaine.fr](http://mohairdumaine.fr)

## Toy Shops in the Mayenne

**King Jouet**

140 Rue de la Peyrennière,  
53100 Mayenne

20 Rue de la Fougetterie,  
53200 Château-Gontier-  
sur-Mayenne



3 Rue du Lieutenant,  
53000 Laval

**Joué Club**

la passion du jouet

370 Bd François Mitterrand,  
53100 Mayenne

30 Bd Louis Armand,  
53940 Saint-Berthevin

**bonhomme de bois**

9 Rue des Déportés, 53000 Laval

*une poule sur un mur*  
2 Pl. du Pilori, 53200 Château-  
Gontier-sur-Mayenne

**MICROMANIA ZING**

Centre commercial La Mayenne,  
53000 Laval

**MA BOUTIK  
DE JEUX**



8B Av. Razilly,  
53200 Château-Gontier-sur-Mayenne

**fnac**

5 Rue du  
Général de  
Gaulle, 53000  
Laval

# The Mayenne 53 Magazine for English Speakers

## CHRISTMAS EDITION

### Health & Well-Being

#### Medical Emergencies during the Christmas holidays Who to call.....

The holiday season may well be the time for cheer and joy but can also be a time when medical emergencies occur. Suzy Morgan-Champion, our resident Medical Care Interpreter based in Désertines (53), gives an insight into getting help during this out of hours festive period.

In France, doctors' surgeries and pharmacies are closed on the public holidays of Christmas Day and New Year's Day, with some practices taking a few days off. On the other hand, statistics show that it's during these holidays that we need medical help the most, with issues like food or alcohol poisoning, falls, flu and heart attacks topping the charts.

#### Who to call if you're feeling ill:

On-call doctors are available to help you at Christmas, New Year's (and all other public holidays), during the week from 8 p.m. to 8 a.m. and at weekends. The consultation will be more expensive out of hours but you will still be reimbursed through CPAM or MSA to around 70% of the fee.

\* If you have (or suspect that you have) a clear medical emergency call 15. This number is reserved for life-threatening health emergencies. A doctor or an ambulance will be arranged if necessary. You must be able to speak French;

\* If you don't speak French and wish to call yourself: call 112, which is the European emergency line for health, fire or police. You will be given advice in English by a doctor or the service can arrange for an ambulance to be sent;

\* For non-emergencies that require a doctor, you can call the national health helpline on 116 117. These French-only volunteer GPs can help you find a doctor or dentist, or arrange a home-visit from the doctor on call.

\* You can find telephone numbers (French-speaking only) for local on-call medical centres by Googling maison médicale de garde followed by your town, city, or department name. You will be given an appointment with the on-call GP.

\* SOS Médecin is a private home emergency medical service, available 24/7 days a week, 24 hours a day. You can talk with a French-speaking doctor and arrange a home visit, or for a prescription to be left with the out of hours pharmacy. From a landline, dial 3624 (0.15 cts/minute).

\* www.qare.fr is for non-emergency online consultations if you want to see a French-only speaking doctor without travelling, open 7 days a week from 6am to 12am, although bear in mind, the number of doctors working over Christmas will be greatly reduced. The consultations are reimbursed in the same way as your usual medical visits.

Obviously, these numbers, except the English speaking European emergency line (112) will require you to speak enough French to correctly treat your emergency. Although, as Suzy Morgan-Champion remarks, it is not as easy as all that, especially when we're stressed or when our interlocutor does not feel the need to speak slowly...! Suzy offers a remunerated interpretation service for the English-speaking community and is available at on-call rates over the Christmas and New Year festivities, should you have an emergency. For more information contact:

**Medical Care Interpreter**  
SUZY MORGAN-CHAMPION  
+33 (0) 06 21 43 88 76  
suzchampion.icloud@me.com  
For all your medical  
translating needs



#### Useful Contact Info during the festive period

##### Hospitals in or near the Mayenne

Centre Hospitalier du Nord-Mayenne  
186 Rue de la Baudrerie, 53100 Mayenne  
<https://www.ch-mayenne.fr/>

Centre Hospitalier de Laval - 33, rue du Haut Rocher BP CS 91  
525 53015 Laval cedex  
<https://www.chlaval.fr/>

Hôpital Saint-Julien  
Château-Gontier

1, quai Georges Lefèvre 53200 CHATEAU-GONTIER SUR MAYENNE  
<https://www.ch-hautanjou.fr/>

Hospital Center De Fougères  
133 Rue de la Forêt, 35300 Fougères  
<https://www.ch-fougeres.fr/annuaire/liste-des-services>

##### Emergency Services Information:

15 - SAMU (Ambulance)

16 - Police

17 - Pompiers (Fire Brigade)

112 - European Emergency Line

114 - Emergency number for the deaf and the hard of hearing

116 117 GP Advice Line

**For a full list of pharmacies in the Mayenne, or your nearest out-of-hours pharmacy, visit our [directory page](#).**

Samaritans 00 44 8457 90 90 90

Befrienders Worldwide  
<https://help.befrienders.org>

Bereavement and terminal illness  
<https://www.bsnavar.org>

Women for Women France  
Domestic violence resources  
[www.womenforwomenfrance.org/en](http://www.womenforwomenfrance.org/en)

SOS HELP  
Listening service: 01 46 21 46 46  
<http://www.soshelpline.org>  
from 3pm to 11pm daily.

<https://www.counsellinginfrance.com/HELPLINES.htm>

**From 22nd December until 3rd January, the Facebook Group: Mayenne Group for English Speakers will activate Anonymous Posts without Admin approval so if you need some emotional support or even some practical help you can post 100% anonymously. There will also be a Group Chat activated for people struggling during the festive period. To join the group, click [HERE](#).**

# The Mayenne 53 Magazine for English Speakers

## CHRISTMAS EDITION

### Life in the Mayenne: Kate & Pete in Congrier (53800)

Kate & Pete moved into their village house in Congrier, SW Mayenne in October 2020 in the middle of a Covid lockdown. Pete, originally from Berkshire, and Kate, from West Yorkshire, had been living in Tenerife for 8 years and were starting to get itchy feet when they stumbled across an advert for some properties for sale in the Mayenne. Knowing nothing about the department and being unable to view "in person" because of COVID-19 travel restrictions, they jumped in with both feet and bought the house based on a video viewing.



Luckily Pete is a qualified plumber and heating engineer so he managed to do most of the renovation work himself. Kate works locally as a housekeeper and acts as a collection point for The Trading Post (a supplier of British groceries to expats in Southern France) after persuading them to extend their delivery service to southern Mayenne! After 3 years, both Kate and Pete are still trying to improve their French, not least so they can communicate with their lovely French neighbours who, from the moment they moved in, have been so kind and helpful to them. Although foreign buyers seem more familiar with the north of the department, Kate & Pete were surprised to find quite a few English speakers around Congrier, and through The Trading Post



collection days, she has now met even more. There's also a local craft group, a regular pub quiz, and Renazé cinema shows English-speaking films so life is never boring!

With their two rescue dogs, Honey & Nala, Kate and Pete love exploring the many country walks on their doorstep. The village of Congrier, with a population of 888 (in 2020), is a peaceful, quiet village with a small bar, restaurant & épicerie and, according to Kate, their forever home, "Mayenne is a lovely region to be in. I don't think we could find another region as beautiful". Pete & Kate's advice to anyone considering moving to the Mayenne is to take your time and do your research, and, most importantly, don't be scared to ask for help!



If you've enjoyed reading the magazine, please take a minute to leave us a review on Google [HERE](#) or head over to our [Facebook Page](#) and leave a review there. Alternatively, send us a testimonial by email: [contact@mayenne53.com](mailto:contact@mayenne53.com) and we'll print it on the website.

## DIGGER MAN

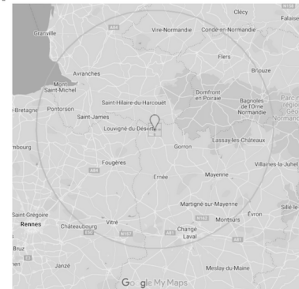
### DIGGING 4 U

[www.diggerman.fr](http://www.diggerman.fr)

WhatsApp +44 7809 903808

[colindiggerman@gmail.com](mailto:colindiggerman@gmail.com) Drainage Projects, Swimming Pools, Driveways, etc.

Covering NW  
Mayenne & parts of  
Manche (50), Orne (61)  
& Ille & Villaine (35)  
Within a 50km radius  
of Fougerolles du  
Plessis (53190)



### Veterinary Care over the Holidays



Whilst veterinary emergencies are rare it's worth taking some precautions at this time of year. Firstly, make sure you have the contact information for your vet to hand. You can find all the vets in the Mayenne listed [HERE](#) on our directory page.

If you have an elderly pet or one that is likely to need veterinary care over the holidays, speak to your vet about their emergency care arrangements. Most vets will offer a 24 hour call out service, and how to access it will usually be explained in their out-of-hours answerphone message. Listen several times if necessary to make sure you have noted down the correct number. French phone numbers are usually given in groups of 2 e.g. 06 88 etc so be ready to write it down.

Before you call, write down in French what has happened so you can communicate it clearly to the vet. Estimate how long it will take you to drive your pet to the veterinary clinic and tell the vet so they can coordinate their arrival time with yours. Some vets will already be at the clinic but others might be on call at home and need to travel to meet you. Take photos of anything relevant to the "incident" to help you explain what has happened. Pet emergencies can make you panic and miss out important information, try to remain calm and speak clearly so the vet will fully understand the circumstances that led to the emergency.

And don't forget to call in with a bottle of wine or a box of biscuits before Christmas to thank all the veterinary staff for all their hard work this year!

## N & P SERVICES

### Gîtes Management & Maintenance Services

Covering North  
Mayenne (53),  
South-East Manche  
(50) & West Orne (61)

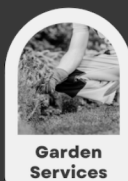
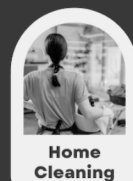
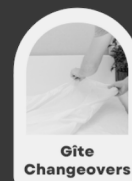
Honest, reliable & affordable couple, offering services around your home and garden. French registered and ACRO checked. No job too small.



#### Contact Us

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+33 (0) 640875561  
+44 (0) 740724735  
+44 (0) 7876133321



**FESTIVE FACT:  
Pine needles  
and Poinsettia  
are poisonous  
when ingested  
by dogs**

### DON'T MISS OUT!

Register online to automatically receive the next edition of the magazine straight to your inbox. Visit the website: [www.mayenne53.com](http://www.mayenne53.com)

- Online business directory
- English Language films in cinemas (updated weekly!)
- What's On Page: Events, exhibitions etc.
- Local News & Weather

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