

beautiful BÛCHES

NOTHING SAYS THE HOLIDAY SEASON IN FRANCE QUITE LIKE THE BÛCHE DE NOËL, A YULE LOG CAKE AS COMMON TO FESTIVE TABLES AS OYSTERS AND PERFECTLY CHILLED CHAMPAGNE. FOR PASTRY CHEFS AND BAKERS, IT'S AN IMPORTANT AND OPPORTUNE MOMENT OF THE YEAR TO FLEX THEIR CREATIVITY. THESE ARE A FEW OF THE EXQUISITE BÛCHES HELPING FRANCE RING IN THE FESTIVE PERIOD WITH STYLE.



LA GLACERIE

13 Rue du Temple, 75004
laglacierie.fr

For several years, Meilleur Ouvrier de France pastry chef David Wesmaël has been bringing his award-winning ice cream-making expertise to the holiday table with his *bûches glacées*. With a textured and colorful theme (animal print, marble, and more), his “nomadic” collection of cakes is all the more special because the cakes fit perfectly into cold-sealing tubes that can be shipped throughout France. The flavors themselves were inspired by far-flung adventures, such as the *Madagasikara*, which blends mango and Madagascan vanilla ice creams with a lime and banana center, or the *Stromboli*, which nods to Sicily with its pistachio ice cream center married with an almond iced mousse, strawberry and lemon sorbet for freshness, and a lemony-almond crust for texture and crunch.



LA MAISON DU CHOCOLAT

Multiple locations
laisonduchocolat.com/en_fr/stores

Every year, Meilleur Ouvrier de France and head chocolatier of La Maison du Chocolat Nicolas Cloiseau sets a high creative bar for the Maison’s holiday spread. He and his team begin with a labor-intensive artistic statement piece, designed as a giant ornament and produced in very limited quantities (10 to be exact), from which the *bûche* and a series of chocolate stocking stuffers emerge. Cut into the crunchy almond *bûche* and you’ll find a dark, single-origin chocolate mousse (96% from São Tomé), almond praliné, and bed of fresh and puréed violet figs. Affixed to the *bûche* itself are eight chocolate ornaments, each a different size and decorated with a total of 572 precise perforations—almost too beautiful to slice.

PIERRE HERME

Multiple boutiques
pierreherme.com/les-buches-de-noel-2021

Elegance on the holiday table is a clear objective of nearly every Pierre Hermé *bûche*, year after year. The top chef’s signature flavors, such as the *Ispahan* (rose water, lychee and raspberry) and *Infiniment Noisette* (hazelnut) are annual favorites woven into new shapes each year, but there are plenty of new concoctions, too. Take the *Kokoro*: its smooth shape and illustrated embellishment on the outer coating may look simple but belies its exotic composition. The citrus-soaked baba crust and coconut shortbread layer add a spongy, crunchy touch to balance the smoothness of a passion fruit gelée and flavors of caramelized and spiced pineapple. Lime zest brings a brightness to the vanilla cream layered throughout. The overall *mélange* of fruity and citrus flavors tastes like a stroll through a sun-drenched garden—the perfect antidote to the beginning of winter.



NINA METAYER, LA DÉLICATISSERIE

Online and at Printemps du Goût
59 Rue de Caumartin, 75009 Paris, France
delicatissierie.com/en/christmas-logs-2021-by-nina-metayer

After working her way through a number of luxury hotel pastry kitchens, it's been through her solo work that Nina Métayer has shined most. She's earned ample attention since launching her online pastry shop, Délicatesserie, most of all during Christmas for her elegant update to a traditional log cake meant to play on texture and flavors. Walk in the Forest, as she calls it, is also vegan, using almond and soy milks and vegan chocolate by Linnolat. A crunchy chocolate shortbread is layered with an airy hazelnut and almond mousse, light and smooth chamomile cream, and crushed cocoa beans with dried kaffir lime leaves. Fine dark chocolate leaves delicately affixed to the mousse add a refined and crunchy decorative touch.

BEYOND THE BÛCHE

Seasonal pastry is equally as important to the end-of-year festivities at the city's best hotels and bakeries as they transform their spaces into refined winter wonderlands. To get into the spirit, here's where to head for festive teatime or to pick up provisions for your own *gôûter* at home.

BONTEMPS PÂTISSERIE- JARDIN SECRET TEA SALON

57 Rue de Bretagne, 75003 Paris, France

Known for its retro-chic décor and focus on the French sablé, this sweet destination in the Marais has expanded in recent years, adding a cozy tea salon where guests can linger over pastry chef-owner Fiona Leluc's shortbread treats. Order a selection of mini cookies with seasonal fillings (blood orange, passion fruit, chestnut, and more), a generous piece of lemon or orange tart, or mini chocolate fondant and pecan bars with a pot of tea, all served on vintage porcelain dishware.

LE PRINCE DE GALLES

33 Avenue George V, 75008 Paris, France

Tristan Rousselot, who got his start teaching and cooking at the Escoffier cooking school at the Ritz Paris, is one of the most promising young stars in the Parisian pastry scene. At the Prince de Galles, you'll find miniatures of the chef's take on classic pastries, from the flan to Paris-Brest, updated with just enough boldness to win over pastry lovers hungry for originality.

LIMBAR, CHEVAL BLANC HOTEL

8 Quai du Louvre, 75001 Paris, France
limbar.fr

Doubling as a tea salon by day and a bar by night, the woody Limbar lounge on the ground floor of the Cheval Blanc hotel offers an intimate backdrop to sample Maxime Frédéric's refined pastries. The visionary chef, known for his previous work at the Four Seasons George V, celebrates France's regional sweets—from his signature vanilla Annécien cake (from, you guessed it, Annecy) and the Parisian flan to the gâteau Basque and canelé from Bordeaux.



HÔTEL DE CRILLON

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Matthieu Carlin, the head pastry chef at the grand Hôtel de Crillon, kept dessert lovers of all ages in mind with his holiday bûche in the shape of a sleigh one can easily imagine gliding along through a winter wonderland. Beneath the base in dark chocolate sits a hazelnut dacquoise with lightly roasted Piedmont hazelnuts for added crunch. A *fromage blanc* mousse softens the taste, while the lemon *crèmeux* and marmalade add a fresh, slightly sour flavor. A dulce de leche filling in the center is the indulgent touch fit for celebration.

RITZ PARIS

15 Place Vendôme, 75001 Paris
ritzparis.com/en-GB

After a heavy holiday meal, you might think a light and fruity sliver of bûche would be the most suitable finish. But for Ritz Paris head pastry chef and avowed chocolate lover François Perret, it's the perfect moment for indulgence. Inspired by Swiss Christmases in honor of César Ritz's upbringing in Switzerland, the chef's Christmas tree-shaped cake is as richly chocolaty as one might imagine for a Swiss Alpine holiday. The tree features a crunchy, chocolate flourless crust and is filled with an airy mousse made of intense, grand cru chocolate (72%—cacao beans that chef Perret hand-selects in Panama) along with a praliné of toasted and caramelized almonds. A golden *guirland* runs across each layer of the tree's coating. Topping it off is a golden chocolate star that gives the *sapin de Noël* its ritzy touch.



MAISON ALEPH

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maisonaleph.com

Levantine pastries take center stage at Myriam Sabet's beloved pastry shop Maison Aleph. Known for mixing French technique with textures and flavors from the Levant, such as kadaïf angel hair nests made with clarified butter and filled with flavored creams or candied fruit, Sabet extended her approach to traditionally shaped bûches in a suite of combinations. Perhaps the most original of all four is the Grenade Marron bûche, where pomegranate, the emblematic fruit of the Mediterranean, gets paired with chestnut, a fixture of the French winter palate. The rolled sponge cake base is made of chestnut flour and filled with a silky chestnut mousse, chestnut cream inserts, confit pomegranate and seeds, all on a crispy candied chestnut crust. The pure pistachio, lemon almond, and hazelnut halva bûches all have a similar structure, built on a light sponge cake and incorporating the best ingredients available. ☑

AD
HOUSE?