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THE AMBASSADORS
OF BELGIAN HOSPITALITY

 | LANNOO

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Kathleen Billen has had a career as an attorney specialising in tax law. Together with her husband Ambassador Johan Verkammen and their four sons, she has travelled around the wide diplomatic world. From Hong Kong over Brussels to Lebanon, Senegal and most recently Canada. During her stay in Dakar, she wrote a travel guide about Senegal with the best Belgian addresses.

Dr. Kristin van de Voorde-Heidbüchel is a dentist and specialist in orthodontics. She is married to Baron Willem van de Voorde, Honorary Secretary to the Queen and Ambassador of Belgium to Vienna, and more recently to Berlin. With her husband and their children Alexander, Bruno, Elinor and Sibylla, she discovered Germany, Japan, Austria, Slovakia and Slovenia.

Hospitality is a very important concept in every language and in every culture. New encounters, generosity, respect, conviviality, gastronomy, etiquette, these are just a few facets of a hospitable experience. Gourmet Belgium, with its rich gastronomic heritage, is without a doubt a welcoming country at the heart of Europe.

All over the world, Belgian diplomats and their partners have the privilege to meet and receive personalities from the most diverse backgrounds. They thus contribute to promoting Belgian hospitality and gastronomy abroad. As Belgium has so much to offer in this field, the men and women who represent our country do this with great pride, to further enhance the country's image abroad. Didn't an American president once say, *'It is easy to love a country famous for chocolate and beer'*? Indeed, in the diplomatic as well as in the business world, people who have already got to know one another around a gourmet and welcoming table in a friendly atmosphere, will exchange their views more smoothly, have more pleasant negotiations and iron out obstacles more easily.

And what an amazing table it can be! It was impressive to have a chance to meet so many talented Belgians and to bring them together for this book. In their domain, each of them is an ambassador for our country, our culture and, also, our hospitality. You cannot deny that taking a break in our busy lives to enjoy each other's company around a friendly table, nourishes relationships and friendships ... and even love. Although it might be a passion and a talent to cook, mix cocktails, produce wine, brew beer, create new chocolate flavours, discover authentic cheese, design tableware, or make inspiring speeches, it has no real value if you cannot share it with others.

The greatest pleasure for us is to share this with you. In so doing, we unveil a little of what Belgium has to offer and how the embassies of Belgium, to the best of their abilities, try to put our country on the map by showing its hospitality. A very special thank you goes to the Federal Public Service Foreign Affairs, Foreign Trade and Development Cooperation who has supported our project from the start and to all our colleagues in the 27 Belgian Embassies and Consulates General of Belgium who kindly agreed to be involved.

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Kathleen Billen

Kristin van de Voorde-Heidbüchel

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7 top chefs

CREATE A MENU FOR
21 EMBASSIES OF BELGIUM

Full of dynamism and creativity, chef Maxime Collard has definitely put the Belgian Ardennes on the map. Born and raised in this beautiful region of forests and hills, with an abundance of wildlife and freshwater fish, his cooking maintains the perfect balance between his passion for the terroir and for contemporary cuisine with an international edge. His elegant, award-winning restaurant, '**La Table de Maxime**', is located in Our, a typical Ardennes village, nestled in a loop of the river to which it owes its name, which is said to be one of the most beautiful rural hamlets in Wallonia.

www.maximecollard.be

The talented Collard took inspiration for his menu from the **Embassies of Belgium in Budapest** (Hungary), **Canberra** (Australia) and **Pretoria** (South-Africa).

Maxime Collard

A taste of the soul of the Ardennes



Budapest ^(HUNGARY)

Starter: Goose liver Maxime's way

If there is one mouth-watering specialty from Hungary that is rarely absent from festive dinner tables, it must be goose liver. Chef Maxime has created a deliciously colourful dish to do justice to this ingredient, which is Hungary's national pride, by combining surprising textures, sweet and salty tones, as well as vegetables and herbs from his own garden.

Pretoria ^(SOUTH-AFRICA)

Main dish: Kudu of the Ardennes forests

There is no shortage of game either in South Africa or in the Ardennes forests. Wild boar, deer and mouflon – distant relative of the South African Kudu – are hunted in season and are paid a final tribute by horns blowing in alternating tones. With his preparation of fillet of young deer, which he combines with our much beloved gingerbread ('pain d'épice'), Chef Maxime also pays tribute to this noble animal.

Canberra ^(AUSTRALIA)

Dessert: Lamington chocolate delight

Lamington cakes are an Australian national dish, named after Lamington, a former governor of Queensland (a province in Australia). The square dessert, covered in chocolate and coconut, has inspired Chef Collard to create a new, refined and state-of-the-art Belgian chocolate mousse dessert offering an explosion of tastes.



Serves 6

Lamington chocolate delight

// Canberra

Chocolate praline mousse, hazelnut biscuit, speculoos and coffee ice cream

Lotus speculoos ice cream

300 ml (10.1 fl oz) milk // 200 ml (6.8 fl oz) whipping cream (35% fat) // 3 egg yolks // 80 g (¼ cup) sugar // 40 g (1.4 oz) crushed Lotus speculoos biscuits

Whisk the egg yolks and sugar until thick and creamy. Heat the milk and cream together, then add the eggs and sugar and stir over a gentle heat until the mixture coats the back of the wooden spoon. Allow to cool before pouring into an ice cream maker with the ground speculoos. When the ice cream is ready put into silicone quenelle moulds and store in the freezer.

Coffee ice cream

300 ml (10.1 fl oz) milk // 200 ml (6.8 fl oz) whipping cream (35% fat) // 3 egg yolks // 80 g (¼ cup) sugar // 20 ml (0.7 fl oz) coffee concentrate

Prepare in the same way as the speculoos ice cream, using coffee concentrate instead of the ground speculoos.

Chocolate praline mousse

250 g (8.8 oz) 70% dark chocolate // 50 g (1.8 oz) milk chocolate // 50 g (1.8 oz) praline // 20 g (1.5 el) butter // 2 egg yolks // 10 g (0.35 oz) sugar // 1 egg white // 1 sheet of gelatine // 80 ml (2.7 fl oz) whipping cream

Melt the chocolate with the praline and butter in a bain-marie. Whip the egg whites until they hold peaks. Whisk the egg yolks and sugar until thick and creamy, and gently add the melted chocolate, followed by the egg whites and the gelatine (which has been softened in cold water). Whip the cream to soft peaks and add to the mousse. Divide the mixture between square silicone moulds and moulds in the shape of quenelles and balls. Put in the fridge. When set, spray the balls and quenelles using metallic bronze and copper food colour sprays. Keep cool.

Hazelnut biscuit

40 g (⅓ cup) flour // 40 g (¼ cup) ground hazelnuts // 40 g (1.4 oz) sugar // 80 g (2.8 oz) egg white // 65 g (2.3 oz) sugar // 55 g (1.9 oz) egg yolk // 105 g (3.7 oz) butter, melted

Whisk the egg whites and sugar to form stiff peaks. Add the egg yolks. Stir in the flour, ground hazelnuts and sugar. Finally, add the melted butter. Thickly spread the mixture onto a baking sheet to a height of approximately 2 cm (0.8 inch). Bake for about 10 minutes at 180 °C (356 °F). When cool, cut into small circles using a pastry cutter.

Gingerbread tuile

100 g (0.4 cup) melted butter // 200 g (1 cup) sugar // 100 g (3.5 oz) flour // 50 ml (1.7 fl oz) water // 50 g (1.8 oz) egg white // 2 g (1 dr) gingerbread spices (cinnamon, ginger, clove, nutmeg, aniseed)

Mix all the ingredients together and spread a thin layer of dough onto a baking sheet lined with greaseproof paper. Bake for 10 minutes at 180 °C (356 °F). When cool, spray with metallic bronze food colour. Break into leaf-shaped pieces.

Assembly

Place the various chocolate mousse shapes on a plate. Garnish to taste with a line of crushed hazelnuts, the hazelnut biscuits and the leaf-shaped tuiles on each side. Add the ice cream quenelles to the plate just before serving.



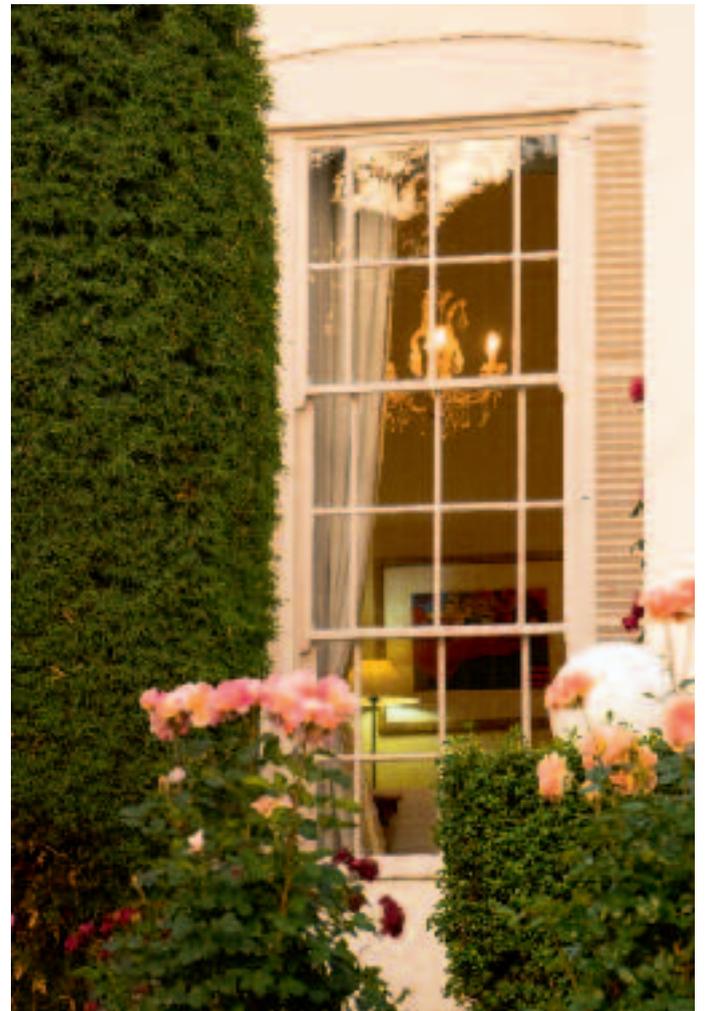
If you're a chocolate lover, you're in for an extra treat. Enhance the delicious dessert with **Ardenne Stout**. Dark brown like chocolate, its taste also reminds of chocolate, a hint of coffee, a trace of cinnamon and roasted aromas with a bitter touch.

www.brasserie-debastogne.be





Canberra



Serves 12 or more

From Flanders fields

// London

Floral tartlet with Belgian speculoos
and fromage frais cream

Lotus speculoos base

625 g (22 oz) Lotus speculoos biscuits, crumbled // 200 g (1 2/3 cup) flour // 100 g (3.5 oz) butter

Knead the crushed speculoos with the butter and flour until they form a ball. Roll out very thinly and cut into 7 cm (2.8 inch) rounds. Bake at 160 °C (320 °F) for 15 minutes. Allow to cool.

Fromage frais cream

250 g (8.8 oz) fromage frais // 80 g (2.8 oz) soured cream // 80 g (2.8 oz) cream // 50 g (1.8 oz) egg // 30 g (1 oz) egg yolk // 100 g (1/2 cup) sugar // 5 g (0.2 oz) leaf gelatine

Mix the fromage frais, the soured cream and the cream in a saucepan and heat until it comes to the boil. Whisk together the egg yolk, egg and sugar, beat well and add this mixture to the fromage frais. Heat to 85 °C (185 °F) before adding the gelatine, previously soaked in cold water. Process the mixture in a blender, and strain through a fine sieve. Allow it to firm up in the fridge before using it to fill a piping bag.

Iced rose pearls

500 g (1.1 lbs) yoghurt // 500 g (1.1 lbs) rose tea (1 l (1 quart) water, 500 g (2 1/2 cup) sugar, 250 g (8.8 oz) fresh rose petals) // 5 g (0.2 oz) gelatine

Infuse the sugar and rose petals for 15 minutes in boiling water to make the tea. Strain the tea and mix with the yoghurt and the soaked gelatine. Fill spherical moulds (smaller than a marble) with the mixture and freeze until firm.

Assembly

Fresh green herbs such as basil, different varieties of mint, marigold, fennel, lemon verbena, candyleaf, clover ... // Assorted edible flowers such as marigold, hot lips, begonia, sage, fennel, mint ... // 1 carton blueberries

Pipe 6 rosettes of the fromage frais cream onto each speculoos base. Place a blueberry next to each rosette. Decorate with the fresh herbs and flowers and, just before serving, add 3 iced pearls onto each tartlet.



This elegant dessert topped with fresh flowers and herbs requires a fresh-tasting and mild beer. **Cuvée des trolls**, named after Tolkien's trilogy, is a blonde unfiltered brew which is full in the mouth and has plenty of fruity citrus aromas.

That's thanks to the addition of dried orange zest to this beer's ingredient's list. With its light bitter finish, it enhances the freshness of the dessert without being dominant.

www.dubuisson.com



Beer, the ambassador of Belgian diversity



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Many beer enthusiasts regard Belgium as the home of beer. Being an intrinsic part of Belgian DNA, it is also recognised by UNESCO, which has put Belgian beer culture on its Intangible Cultural Heritage list.

Beer is as old as civilization itself. It was the common drink in Western Europe, until the Romans gradually progressed to wine. They associated beer with 'barbarians', such as the *Belgae* ... And this idea that drinking wine is more civilised than drinking beer would persist for many centuries to come ... But today that statement no longer applies, in fact the opposite is true.

In this region the rise of this amber-coloured elixir goes back to the monks and nuns of the Middle Ages. They brewed table beer (a light version for the nuns and the ordinary people, and a stronger version for the monks themselves) because the drinking water was often contaminated and made people sick. They added herbs to vary the taste and hops to allow it to be stored for longer.

The various traditional production methods have been carefully passed down from generation to generation, each further enhancing and refining the beer. *Rochefort, Rodenbach, Achel, Chimay, Duvel, Gulden Draak, Hoegaarden, Leffe, Maredsous, Orval, Westmalle, Corsendonk, De Koninck* ... these are just a few of the traditional beers that are still available today, and which have given Belgian beers such prominence worldwide. Meanwhile, in parallel, there is an increasing number of high-quality 'newcomers'. Over the past twenty years there has been a new vibrancy in the beer sector, with young, passionate brewers, trendy micro-breweries and a new generation of beer drinkers particularly fond of specialty beers. Modern techniques and fresh ingredients, combined with traditional know-how, have given rise to the next generation of outstanding brewers. The University of Leuven, the city where the world's biggest brewery AB Inbev has its registered seat, even offers an academic course on the 'technology of beer brewing'!

But what is it that actually makes Belgian beer culture so unique? It can be summarised in one word: diversity! No country in the world offers so many different styles of beer. And, on top of that, within each beer style there are countless beers, over 1500 Belgian beers in total, with about 700 different taste profiles and varying alcohol percentages. From high fermentation to low, and from spontaneous to mixed, from light to dark and from sweet to sour. From ordinary Pils to Trappist beers, from dark beers through red and golden to white beers, from the cloudy and slightly sour Gueuze-Lambic to the more alcoholic Tripel and Quadrupel ... There is something for everyone.

Because the range of Belgian beers perfectly reflects the diversity of the country, with its different languages and cultures, Belgian beer is the perfect ambassador of Belgian diversity to bring to your dining table. Cheers!

BELGIAN BEER FOR DUMMIES

Which types of beer should you be able to recognise?

Pils / Lager: This is the most popular beer type and includes *Stella Artois, Jupiler, Maes, Primus, Cristal, Vedett* ... They all have a light golden colour with a distinctive taste of hops.

Trappist: Different styles of beer brewed by Cistercian monks in six abbeys in Belgium: *Achel, Chimay, Orval, Rochefort, Westmalle, and Westvleteren*. Notably, the Westvleteren 12 was voted the best beer in the world by RateBeer for several years in a row. In total, there are currently only 11 Trappist beers in the world.

Abbey beer or monastery beer: Collective name for beers with a monastic origin but brewed outside the monastery walls: for example *Sint-Bernardus, Ename, Grimbergen, Tongerlo, Straffe Hendrik, Maredsous, Leffe, Floreffe, Aulne, Villers, Corsendonk* ... The most famous versions are either the relatively dark brown and sweet 'dubbel', or the sharper, and usually heavier blonde 'tripel'.

White beer: White beer is an unfiltered cloudy wheat beer with hints of coriander and orange zest. Its ancestors are the beers from the medieval duchy of Brabant. Examples include *Hoegaarden, Brugs* or *St. Bernardus white beer, Blanche de Namur* ...

Lambic & Gueuze: Lambic is a deep gold to amber-coloured flat beer derived from spontaneous fermentation, which gives the beer its special, sharper and more sour taste. Lambic is one of the oldest Belgian beer styles and originates from the Brussels region. Gueuze is produced by mixing young and old lambic together. In this category you will find *Mort Subite, Belle-Vue, Boon, Cantillon, Lindemans, Tilquin, 3 Fonteinen* ... Also the sweet fruity Kriek Lambic is very popular. Cherries (kriek) are added to lambic before it is completely fermented, giving an extra boost to the process while the cherry kernels add woody notes (*Oude Kriek 3 Fonteinen*). Other types of fruit are also used to make variations on this beer type.

Specialty beer: All other unclassified beers are commonly called specialty beers. Their taste varies greatly, ranging from sweet to bitter, spicy to fruity, light to strong. Think of *Bourgogne des Flandres, Brugse Zot, Delirium Tremens, Duchesse de Bourgogne, Kasteelbier, La Chouffe, Liefmans Goudenband, Lucifer, Omer, Reserve Royale* ...





Egmont Palace, Tapestry Room – Reception Area for Foreign Guests

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