

# Bûche de Noël

*Pronounced: boosh / duh / noh el*

From [Debra F. Weber](#),

[frenchfood.about.com/cs/dessertcoffee/a/buchedenoeel.htm?terms=buche+de+noel](http://frenchfood.about.com/cs/dessertcoffee/a/buchedenoeel.htm?terms=buche+de+noel)

## Classic French Christmas Dessert

The origins of this most famous and delicious of French pastries can be traced back to the ancient Celtic tradition of celebrating the winter solstice. On this day, the shortest of the year, the Celts would search for a large trunk of either oak, beech, elm or cherry and would burn it. The burning log was a symbol of the rebirth of the sun as well as an offering of thanks to the sun for returning to the earth.

This pagan tradition was not snuffed out by the Catholic church and during the middle ages the logs and the ceremony of the burning log became more elaborate. The logs themselves would be decorated with ribbons and greenery. Then the youngest and the oldest member of each family would carry the log to the hearth and set it ablaze. It would burn through the night and the ashes would be collected the next day to be used during the year. They were thought to help cure various sicknesses and protect the house from storms, lightening and the evil powers of the Devil.

The tradition of actually burning the log began to disappear with the arrival of small stoves and the disappearance of large hearths. The big log was replaced by a smaller branch that was set in the middle of the table and surrounded by little "*friandises*" (sweets, delicacies) that were given as treats to guests. It is this branch that was eventually transformed into the cake we know as the *Bûche de Noël*.

Whether it was a *Parisienne* or *Lyonnaise* creation is still the subject of a heated debate. It is first mentioned and described in 1879 and since that time it has become "THE" dessert served at Christmas dinners.



## "Yule Log" ~ traditional French Christmas cake.

Adapted from: <http://frenchfood.about.com/od/desserts/r/dfwbuche.htm>

### INGREDIENTS:

4 eggs, separated, at room temperature  
3/4 cup sugar  
1 teaspoon pure vanilla extract  
pinch of cream of tartar  
3/4 cup cake flour, sifted

For the chocolate mousse filling & frosting:  
1 cup whipping cream  
9 oz. chopped bittersweet chocolate

### PREPARATION:

*Preheat oven to 375°F. with rack in the center of the oven. Grease the bottom of a 15 x 10-inch jelly roll pan and line with parchment paper.*

1. Put the eggs yolks into a large bowl.
1. Remove 2 tablespoons of the sugar from the 3/4 cup measure and set aside. Beat the remaining sugar and eggs together until pale.
2. Beat in the vanilla.
3. In another grease-free, clean bowl, beat the egg whites with a pinch of the cream of tartar until they hold soft peaks.
4. Add the reserved sugar and continue beating until the whites are glossy and hold stiff peaks.
5. Divide the flour in half and gently fold it into the egg mixture in 2 batches.
6. Add one-quarter of the egg whites into the batter to lighten the mixture. Fold in the remaining whites.
7. Pour the batter into the pan and gently spread it evenly into the corners with a spatula. Bake 15 minutes.
8. While the cake is baking, spread a dishtowel flat and lay a piece of parchment paper, the size of the cake, on top of the towel. Sprinkle the paper with some powdered sugar.
9. Invert the cake onto the paper and carefully peel off the lining paper. Slowly, roll up the cake with the paper inside, and starting from a short side. Wrap the towel around the cake, place on a rack and allow to cool.

### Prepare the filling & frosting:

1. Put the chopped chocolate in a bowl. Bring the cream to a boil and pour it over the chocolate. Stir until it has melted.
2. With an electric mixer, beat the chocolate until it is fluffy and has thickened to a spreading consistency.
3. When the cake is cooled, unroll it. Spread one-third of the chocolate evenly over the surface. Roll the cake up again, using the paper to help move it forward.
4. Cut off about one-quarter of the cake at an angle. Place it against the side of the larger piece of cake, to resemble a branch from a tree trunk.
5. Spread the remaining chocolate mixture over the rest of the cake. Using a fork, press the back side of the tines against the chocolate and lightly drag through to resemble bark.

### To serve:

The cake may be made up to two days ahead and stored covered in the refrigerator. Before serving, add some decorations, such as sprigs of holly, or other figurines. Dust with confectioner's sugar to resemble snow.