

Cartoon crazy 8

The country's long and rich tradition of comic strip art is showcased in the Belgian Comic Strip Museum, which turns 20 this year. Check out our Who's Who in classic Flemish strips

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Flanders' annual celebration of the Week of Flavour alerts all your senses to the wonder of food. We'll help you navigate your way through the astonishing 1,000 activities

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For youngsters with no video game equipment at home, the library system in West Flanders is the new hot ticket. They can game alone or in groups, free of charge

**FOOD, GLORIOUS FOOD: SPECIAL ISSUE - FROM THE FARM TO YOUR PLATE**

Farming in crisis



“It’s hard to see how it could get any worse”, says the largest Flemish farm union

KATHARINE MILL

When European dairy farmers staged their liquid protests in late September, dumping 25 million litres of milk on fields and on roads, Flemish farmers chose a more softly-softly style of demonstration. They handed out 10,000 litres of milk, 300 kilos of meat, five tonnes of vegetables and 2,500 eggs for free.

It was a shocking illustration of how the economic crisis has hit the food sector and how farmers, at the root of the chain, are paying the price. “The biggest challenge for

farmers right now is how to get an income,” says Anne-Marie Vangeenbergh of the largest Flemish farmers’ union, Boerenbond. “This is the first time in a long while that there’s been a crisis in all sectors. It’s hard to see how it could get any worse.” Prices paid to Belgian dairy farmers are about 5% lower than their French counterparts, partly because Belgium depends more on exports: 40% of the milk produced here is transformed into butter and milk powder for the world market.

This is the crux of the milk problem: it costs

farmers 32 eurocents to produce a litre of milk, but earlier this year prices fell, and they could only sell at less than 20 cents a litre. Their protests led to negotiations with food distributors, which committed to pay an extra two cents a litre for six months, bringing the price paid up to 24 cents maximum. “They are still selling below cost price,” says Vangeenbergh. “But there are signs that prices have started rising. The trouble is, we don’t know how far it will get by Christmas.”

“It’s a very bad time to be farming; and

milk producers aren’t the only ones suffering. It’s even worse for pig farmers,” says Guy Depraetere, general secretary of farmers’ union ABS. “Prices are too low to cover the costs of dairy farmers, meat producers and potato growers. Many farmers are facing severe financial problems.”

It was easier in the past, says Depraetere. “The EU would intervene and buy the surplus when there was too much produce. That’s not the case any longer, and it’s difficult to sell everything we produce.”

► *continued on page 5*

Tennis players suspended for one year

Top Flemish tennis players Xavier Malisse and Yanina Wickmayer have been suspended from play for one year by the Flemish Doping Tribunal (VDT). The two players were accused of what Wickmayer’s spokesman Rudi Kuyt called “administrative errors”.

Malisse, 29, from Kortrijk, missed one doping check and failed to provide details of his whereabouts on two occasions, while Wickmayer failed to deliver on three “whereabouts” checks.

The whereabouts requirement laid down by the World Anti-Doping Agency requires athletes to be available for surprise tests for one hour a day, seven days a week. Athletes complained that the new rules had taken over their lives,

and the more stringent requirements made it more likely that they might make a mistake that could result in them being disqualified from competition.

According to Kuyt, that is what happened to Wickmayer: “Yanina has never missed a doping check, and the three whereabouts faults against her have everything to do with the administrative rigmarole,” he said. “A password that doesn’t work, a registered letter sent to an athlete who’s abroad 40 weeks out of 52, and a complete lack of human communication are what’s behind this grotesque misunderstanding.”

Wickmayer was last week in Bali, playing in the B-Masters, where she had

already won her first-round match. Malisse was due to play in Antwerp against Christophe Rochus.

The ruling shocked the tennis world, given the relative lightness of the offences, especially because the VDT’s “prosecutor” had not called for a suspension. The issue has now been taken up by SP.a chairwoman Caroline Gennez, a former youth tennis star, who called on Flanders’ sports minister Philippe Muyters to look into the “other-worldly” decision of the VDT. Wickmayer will appeal her suspension to the Court for Arbitration for Sport in Lausanne. Malisse, however, is expected not to appeal. “This is the end for me,” he said at a press conference. ♦

► www.dopingtribunaal.be

GM pulls out of Opel sale

Future of Opel Antwerp remains uncertain

ALAN HOPE

Unions at Opel Antwerp have vowed to keep on fighting for the survival of their factory, following the dramatic turn of events last week in which General Motors (GM), owner of Opel, withdrew from the sale of the car manufacturer to Magna.

The deal went almost up to the wire: competing bidders had fallen away, and the Canadian-Russian concern was the only horse left in the race. The future didn’t look good for Opel Antwerp, which seemed certain to face closure, leaving Flemish minister-president Kris Peeters

with no other option than to turn to the EU in the hope that they might refuse to allow the state aid package promised by the German government to protect Opel production there. Then all of a sudden last week, the bride changed her mind, and the wedding was off. Opel would no longer be sold. “The case has taken an extraordinary turn,” said Peeters, putting it mildly.

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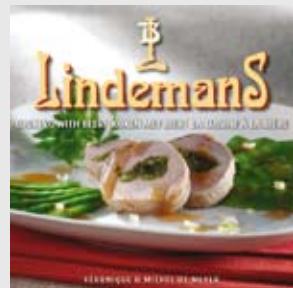
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Win a cookbook !

In celebration of our special food issue, *Flanders Today* has several copies of *Lindemans: Cooking with Beer* to give away. Utilising the nine fruit beers produced by the famous Flemish brewery, recipes are in Dutch, French and English. Send an email with "cookbook" in the subject line to editorial@flanderstoday.eu by Tuesday 17/11. Winners will be notified by 18/11.



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Derek Blyth

News in brief

Leading Dutch dictionary publishers Van Dale will next year include a word invented by advertisers for an ad campaign. The word *fokkie* is utterly unknown in the Netherlands and Suriname, but most of Flanders knows it is a distortion of the word *koffie*, used by ad agency Duval Guillaume in a campaign for Douwe Egberts. The new word was picked up by other media, and the rest is language history. Subscribers to the main Van Dale dictionary will find the word when they receive their 2010 supplement of new words. The inclusion is "the highest possible honour," according to Duval Guillaume creative director Peter Ampe.

The news service of the public broadcaster VRT has received two awards from the Association of International Broadcasters, a group representing TV channels based in 120 countries. The VRT picked up the Editors' Award for its 11-hour live broadcast of the elections on 7 June this year and the award for best coverage of a single event for a Villa Politica programme about the fall of the government of Yves Leterme.

Lego and board games top the wish-lists of children for this year's Sinterklaas (St Nicholas) festivities, according to the main retail chains. Other favourites include Playmobil, building blocks, trucks, Monopoly and merchandising from entertainment brands such as *Star Wars* and *Cars*.

Trade unions representing shop staff have protested at plans by Maasmechelen Village, the outlet-store complex in Limburg, to stay open every Sunday for the next year. Unions pointed out that the law requires shops to close a minimum of seven Sundays a year, although retail businesses established in tourist zones – which include Maasmechelen Village – have more leeway than elsewhere. The Village argued that many of its customers come from other countries, making it impossible to inform them of the closing days if the law were followed. Besides, a spokesman said, shops at the coast remain open 52 Sundays a year.

Belgium's second satellite, the Proba-2, was launched into space last week aboard a Russian Rokot from the base at Plesetsk. Proba (Project for Onboard Autonomy) was built by Kruibeke-based firm Verhaert, is about the size of a washing machine, weighs 135 kilograms and will send back weather information to the European Space Agency. Proba-1, launched in 2001 for a planned lifetime of two years, is still going strong. Proba-2 cost €18 million, financed by the federal government.

Smallest town runs out of politicians



Belgium's smallest municipality, Mesen in West Flanders, has a population of fewer than 1,000, and none of them is a budding politician. Recently, one member of the majority MLM on the municipal council moved to Ypres, leaving a vacancy. Her departure saw the number of members on the council fall below the quorum of seven laid down in the governing decree, effectively leaving the town ungovernable.

Normally, Belgian elections, run on the electoral list system, provide for a number of *opvolgers*, or substitutes, should a directly elected member be forced for any reason to stand down. But Mesen – perhaps better known to English speakers as Messines from its place in the First World War and the presence of both the Irish Peace Park and the Messines Ridge British cemetery – has already used up all of its *opvolgers*. The majority caucus on the council is the mayor's own MLM list, which provides mayor Sandy Evrard and two aldermen, as well as two ordinary members, one of whom has now departed. Two members are CD&V Christian Democrats.

"We only have two choices," Evrard told *Flanders Today*. "We can either go ahead and govern with six, or we can hold new elections. And we're not going to hold elections." The mayor's list, he explained, is sitting on a comfortable majority within the council of 4-2 – something it would be reluctant to disrupt.

The town, as it happens, is facing another shortage: there may be one butcher, one baker, one florist and six hairdressers, but there are no longer any pharmacists within the municipal borders. The federal government last month extended a moratorium on new pharmacies for five years to 2014, and the residents of Mesen now have to travel 2.5 kilometres to get their prescriptions filled. "We're looking at alternatives, such as setting up a bus to let the pharmacist make house calls," mayor Evrard said.

www.mesen.be

Letter of the week

Dear Flanders Today,

My name is Aditya, I'm 10 years old, and I live in Tervuren. I have spotted a spelling error on the front page of Issue #104. On the top left-hand corner where it states the date, it said "4th Noember 2009". It did not have a V between the O and the E. It is not particularly important but I just wanted to point it out.

Regards,

Aditya Sharma

Aditya was absolutely right. We appreciate the feedback, and we apologise for our error. Our "v" is back in place this week.



Peeters calls for “clarity” over closure of Opel

→ *continued from page 1*

GM explained that the about-turn was a result of “improved economic circumstances,” including a boost given to the new cars market in the US by the government’s “cash for duncers” programme. The company itself has changed since filing for Chapter 11 protection on 1 June in New York. That move led to serious restructuring, with the help of \$30 billion in US government aid, which means that GM is now no longer the company it was when the hiving-off of Opel was first debated. The management has changed (with CEO Rick Wagoner replaced by former number two Fritz Henderson), the shareholders have changed, the board has changed, and the prospects for the company in general are different.

However, it remains to be seen if there is any change in the prospects for Opel Antwerp. Both Opel in Germany and German federal and regional politicians were harshly critical of the announcement, with economy minister Rainer Brüderle calling it “completely unacceptable”. The German press described

the decision as “a slap in the face” for chancellor Angela Merkel, after her government had paid €1.5 billion in bridging credit to GM. The loss of the German advantage is in some way a benefit to Opel workers elsewhere – in Poland, England, Spain and Flanders. But unions at Opel Antwerp are reluctant to rejoice: “It would be very foolish to react emotionally just now,” said ABVV representative Rudi Kennes, the face of the Opel Antwerp resistance. But its chances of remaining open are slim. Peeters, meanwhile, has called for clarity. “We need to know as soon as possible what the consequences are for Antwerp,” he said. “GM had a restructuring plan ready, and it was not good for us. Now there is another plan, and we’d like to know what it contains.” He intends to meet with GM representatives this week for discussions. In the meantime, he has called together the Opel working group, consisting of political, business and union representatives, to prepare a response, whatever the outcome may be for Antwerp. ♦



FIFTH COLUMN

ANJA OTTE

Peaceful steadiness

So, our prime minister Herman Van Rompuy (who might become president of the European Council) is the great unknown in Europe. In this country, though, he is not exactly the new kid on the block.

Van Rompuy first entered government in 1993, when he became vice prime minister and budget minister in the Dehaene administrations, which were known for budgetary restraint. Before that, he was president of the Christian Democrat CVP (later renamed CD&V), one of the toughest jobs in Belgian politics.

At the time, Van Rompuy, along with his brother Eric, had gained something of a reputation as a staunch Catholic, with strict views on ethical issues. Some unfortunate remarks of Eric Van Rompuy, former Flemish minister, about a number of Flemish authors such as Tom Lanoye, only reinforced this image. Because of this, Herman Van Rompuy was often portrayed as some kind of Mephisto within his party CVP (which can be a snake pit at times). When his successor divorced, Van Rompuy gave him the advice to “practice the virtue of hypocrisy,” a legendary quote that is often deliberately misinterpreted.

Over the years, this conservative image (or the man himself) has become milder. One thing, however, remains true: Van Rompuy abhors change for the sake of change. He resisted it whenever his party tried to “renew” itself to appeal to the younger generation; he did so again when the government under Guy Verhofstadt promised that everything would be different. He also shuddered when Yves Leterme, spurred on by his party’s small nationalist partner N-VA, headed for confrontation with the francophones.

During the 2003 federal campaign, Verhofstadt portrayed Van Rompuy as a “nasty dream of a pale little man sizing up his office” – a remark for which he later apologised. Van Rompuy’s tactic has always been to sit it out. He did this to such an extent that, up until last year, no-one – and certainly not Van Rompuy – ever thought he would take a prominent role in politics again.

He seemed to have withdrawn to his books and website, where he publishes philosophical reflections and haiku. But how the world turns. By the end of 2008, Van Rompuy – against his will! – had to take over from Yves Leterme as prime minister. And although his government is mostly known for doing nothing, the prime minister has become somewhat of an icon, best summarised by his motto of “peaceful steadiness”.

THE WEEK IN FIGURES

109,448

judicial and administrative arrests made in Belgium in 2008, according to a report from the Committee P. Brussels leads the field, with more than 20,000 arrests, compared to about 7,300 in Antwerp and just over 9,800 on the railway network



41

wind turbines in Flanders, delivering energy to 109,510 families, or 4% of the total energy needs of the region

41,200

Flemish families receiving wind energy live in West Flanders, followed by Antwerp province at 26,300

€22.50

the flat-rate charged by doctors for vaccinations against A/H1N1 flu, including evening and weekend consultations. Two million priority patients, including pregnant women and teachers, will have the charge fully refunded

30,000

long-term unemployed, or one in five, is not fit to take a job, according to the employment and training agency VDAB. The figures include 745 bachelors’ graduates and 289 masters considered “work handicapped” for personal or health reasons

9,720

jobs lost to bankruptcies in Flanders so far this year, according to consultancy Graydon, which tracks company failures. In October, 845 businesses went bust, down from 1,015 in September

132,624

school teachers in Flanders, of whom only 42,376 are men. Education minister Pascal Smet has announced plans to attract more men to the job

6,586,713

people living in Flanders by 2020, according to forecasts by the federal planning bureau. This represents 395,000 more than the estimate for next year. The population of Antwerp will go up from 981,000 to more than 1,048,400, and of Ghent from nearly 522,600 to 554,700

€130,000,000

savings in health-care payments due to new rules forcing doctors and dentists to prescribe generic drugs, according to figures from the health insurance institute Riziv

Champion cyclist De Fauw commits suicide

Belgian multiple-champion cyclist Dimitri De Fauw last week committed suicide following years of depression over a fatal accident in a race and over the fallout from doping allegations he made against teammates.

De Fauw, 28, nicknamed Tarzan for his habit of stripping off his top, came to prominence when he lost the Belgian championship in Tessenderlo in 2001 by a split second to Tom Boonen. He went on to pick up several titles, as well as the reputation for being the team clown, which did not always win him favour.

In 2006, he was involved in an accident during the Six-Day Race in his native Ghent with Spanish rider Isaac Galvez in which Galvez sustained fatal injuries. According to those close to him, De Fauw never recovered from the incident, although it was determined

he was not to blame.

The following year, it was revealed that he had given statements to the authorities regarding widespread doping within his Quick Step team. The allegations later turned out to be largely fabricated, and De Fauw’s reputation was ruined. His speed remained intact, but he increasingly failed to qualify for national selections, according to him for reasons other than sporting. Last year he sustained a serious back injury in a fall.

Lately, things seemed to be looking up for the cyclist, with a seventh place in the Six-Days of Grenoble in France and an eye on the Ghent Six-Days. He returned from Grenoble on 4 November with fellow cyclist Iljo Keisse, promising to phone him soon for a training session. “I’ll never get that call. I have lost a friend,” said Keisse. ♦

National flu vaccine campaign starts

The national vaccination campaign against flu virus A/H1N1 began last weekend with the inoculation of “priority groups” – pregnant women in the second or third trimester, women undergoing fertility therapy, parents of babies under six months, the chronically sick and workers in education, child care and health care. For the time being, these groups are the only ones who will be vaccinated, in a campaign led by doctors and costing €125 million. Late last week, around one million doses of the vaccine were delivered to 42 drugs distributors, who in turn sent them to pharmacies. Another

273,000 doses were added later. Hospitals will receive 242,000 doses for their own staff and general practitioners have been given over 9,500 doses to administer to priority patients.

The cost of the vaccine is being paid by patients, then being fully reimbursed by health insurers. Municipal social aid agencies have been told to organise vaccination sessions so that homeless people in risk groups can be treated. Nine people have so far died in Belgium as a result of the virus, and tens of thousands of new cases are reported every month. ♦



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Farming in crisis

Changes in EU policy put the markets in charge

→ *continued from page 1*

With the changes in the EU's Common Agricultural Policy (CAP), "farmers are more involved in the market, but they aren't used to the volatility," says Joris Relaes, head of cabinet for agriculture in the Flemish region government. "There's been 40 years' stability in milk policy, so they are not used to the changes."

The other major problem, he explains, is that in farming, you can't stop production if prices fall, like you can in, say, the auto industry. "You have to milk the cows and harvest the apples and pears. Agricultural products are not like other products; they're living things." While the Flemish government is generally satisfied with the direction of the EU's CAP reform, it expects new challenges after 2013, when the current budget period ends.

The Flemish and their European colleagues are not alone. Food prices worldwide have fallen due to the global downturn and the financial crisis, but local farmers are feeling the pinch due to the region's high volume of exports and the relative strength of the euro compared to other currencies, which makes prices uncompetitive.

It may come as a surprise to some, but this small, densely populated country is one of the world's major food exporters. Seventy percent of Belgian fruit and vegetables are exported, along with more than 50% of pork products, mainly to neighbouring countries – France, the Netherlands and Germany – but also to Italy, the UK and Russia. Belgium is also the world's largest exporter of pears. Indeed, while agriculture represented just 0.75% of GDP in 2007, farm products account for 5% of national exports, rising to 10% when processed food, drink and tobacco are included – 12 times their share relative to their contribution to GDP.

"We are relatively small, but our supply chain is very flexible," explains Relaes. "And our location means we can quickly supply Germany and the UK." The country has also turned to its advantage an inglorious episode from its past: the 1999 dioxin scandal, when industrial oils entered the poultry food chain, and eggs and most other animal products were pulled from supermarket shelves. "We now have very high standards of food safety," says Relaes.

This competitive edge has come at a price. The number of farms in Belgium fell by 4% in 2008, continuing a year-on-year decline: from 76,000 farms in Flanders in 1980, there were fewer than 31,000 last year. At the same time, while the land area available to farming has barely changed, the average farm size has more than doubled in 30 years, from 12.5 hectares to just under 30 hectares. Over the same period, the sector has lost 45% of its workforce.

This decline in farm labour explains the changing face of Flemish food production. Where once the region produced hops, flax, tobacco and endive, these labour-intensive crops have given way to cereal crops and livestock farming.

"Farms are having to get bigger and bigger to compete on the world market," says Depraetere of ABS, which represents one third of unionised farmers. "We need to find a system that allows medium-sized farms to survive. With the current EU system, we'll lose all medium-sized farms."

Depraetere says that, although the Flemish and Belgian governments are "very understanding of our situation," the big problem is Europe and its desire to let the market decide. "But the market doesn't solve all the problems; we've seen that with the banks."

At present, the Flemish government is helping to improve farmers' liquidity by advancing EU subsidies for rural development, to help them invest in measures to make their businesses more competitive. This is not universally welcomed. Flemish environmental organisation Bond Beter Leefmilieu warns that Flanders is putting all its EU rural development funding into boosting farm competitiveness rather than protecting the environment.

"Countries can choose how to use the subsidies; for us, the most effective solution is to invest in environmental measures," says the organisation's farming expert, Linn Demez. She points to two major problems that are not being addressed: the ongoing high level of nitrates in groundwater, a result of muck-spreading as a means to dispose of the high volumes of manure produced by the region's meat producers; and soil erosion. "Current livestock numbers are unsustainable and need to be reduced so we can deal with their manure," she says. "And one of the worst culprits for soil erosion is cultivation of corn, which is linked to the livestock issue, as it is grown largely for animal feed."

Depraetere thinks the time may have come to restrict supply, but for a different reason. "We think if we produce a little less, we'll get better prices. In some sectors of the internal market, it is possible to regulate supply." He cites the case of the United Potato Growers in the US, which formed in 2005 to limit the size of the potato harvest. "We would need an agreement with potato-growers across northwest Europe to produce 5% less crops," he explains. "It won't be easy, but in the US it has worked; prices have gone up."

He also wants the Belgian food industry to adopt a fair-trade system and for large retailers, like Carrefour and Colruyt, to commit to buying Belgian produce. Indeed, while food prices have risen for consumers in recent years, production prices for meat, cereals and potatoes have fallen, with farmers squeezed to produce more for less.

Relaes agrees that there needs to be a fairer balance between the different players in the food processing chain, where a small number of buyers wield immense power. We can't set prices, but we can look at how prices are set and how this is distributed through the supply chain."

Looking to the future, he believes farmers will have to take one of two directions: either expansion to very large-scale agriculture able to compete on the world market or specialisation in smaller farms with a range of activities, such as leisure and tourism, organic farming or social care. Flanders already subsidises 400 *zorgboerderijen*, or "care farms", which employ mentally disabled adults, many of which have farm shops and provide an organic vegetable service.

Vangeenbergh of the Boerenbond is also trying to see green shoots amid the current crisis. "The world population is growing, and the climate is changing. This part of Europe should have a good climate in the future, which is why it would be a crime if farming disappeared."



The message was clear during the milk farmers demonstration in Brussels last September: costs are killing us

© Eric Vida/Beoga

Farming in figures



© Shutterstock

11.2 million pigs slaughtered in Belgium in 2008

800,000 beef cattle slaughtered in 2008

86,500 farming workforce in 2008

50% share of Belgian land used for agriculture

16% share of household income spent on food in 2008

22% share of household income spent on food in 1978

Trusting the hands that feed you

A VUB history professor says that food just might keep Belgium together

SHARON LIGHT

When it comes to food in Belgium, it's easy enough to rattle off ingredients (endive, chocolate, beer) and typical dishes (*waterzooi, stoemp, frietjes*). But to understand what goes on in the background, look no further than Peter Scholliers.

A history professor at Brussels Free University (VUB), he is a member of their Social & Cultural Food Studies programme (FOST) and is most recently the author of *Food Culture in Belgium*, part of American publisher Greenwood Press' Food Culture around the World series.

The book ranges through the social sciences as it explores significant foods and preparations, both historically and today; typical meals, including a chapter on dishes for special occasions; the development of restaurant dining; and a lot more.

Scholliers has been interested in food studies since the late 1980s, well before it was considered a "fashionable" area of study (back then, he said he was known as the "potato historian", and not in a friendly way). But for the last decade, he has found himself at the forefront of a trendy – and fascinating – research field.

Flanders Today: The book is exhaustive in its subjects: food history, agriculture, eating habits and typical meal. It must have been challenging to write.

Peter Scholliers: I didn't realise how much work it would be! I had to write as a historian, but also as an ethnologist. It was a particularly interesting period to write in because, at that time, Belgium had no government, and there were strong political movements to dissolve Belgium. I had to take a fresh look at my country, and the first question was: "Is there a Belgian cuisine?" The editor was American, so he didn't want a book on Flemish cuisine or Walloon cuisine. I had to ask seemingly obvious questions, such as whether there is a difference between Wallonia, Flanders, and Brussels food, and if so, why?

And are there differences?

The ingredients. Butter is very popular in Wallonia, but the Flemish use more olive oil and margarine. This is partly tradition, but also many margarine producers were based in the



Selling snails the same way for more than half a century. Societies tend to hang onto food traditions in a quickly changing world

Antwerp region. I live in Tervuren. If you go to Overijse or Waterloo, the language clearly changes, but in terms of food, you don't find any clear signs of a difference. However, if you go to the Ardennes, there is a different environment with more forests, and you find game meat. There are woods in Flanders but you wouldn't find wild pigs running around.

The introduction says that your research focuses on "food and identity formation". How do food and identity influence one another?

Identity is not a given; it's created. Some social psychologists believe that food is an identity marker more than religion or language because we physically incorporate food. We take it into our mouths and chew and swallow. It's very intimate. You have to trust the person who feeds you. At the turn of the 20th century, there was a huge Italian immigration to New York. Much of the second and third generations lost their religion and language. What they kept was food, but in a way that does not develop. It's a memory of the food their mothers made. Those Americans now say that the best pizza is in New York, not Italy. It's a nice demonstration of how people keep food as an identity marker. Hence my question in the book: is food able to keep Belgians together?

"You learn with your eyes, but you keep tastes in your memory"

Speaking of separate, the average consumer is now entirely separated from the origins of their food – the farm, the animals.

This is a huge question. I heard that there are new markets appearing – for example, in Antwerp – by local producers, people who grow within the town. This is a new phenomenon to cope with the fact that the food chain is getting longer and longer. Children grow up thinking that milk comes from the supermarket. For the first time in human history, there is no link between the animal and the milk. There are two phenomena occurring: one is globalisation. You can buy almost any food at any time of year. If you talk to a chef or restaurant owner, they always stress "having things in season", but you have no seasons in supermarkets. Then there is this reaction – this "terroirisation" as it's called in America – a move towards knowing the origins of your food.

What about the organic food movement?

I think Belgium is lagging behind. Probably less than 5% of total fresh food in supermarkets here is organic, which is very low. Why is this? In the US, the food chain is much longer than in Belgium. Perhaps it's actually a good sign. Here, many of the farmers are local; it's not organic, but it's a shorter food chain.

How are people learning to cook today?

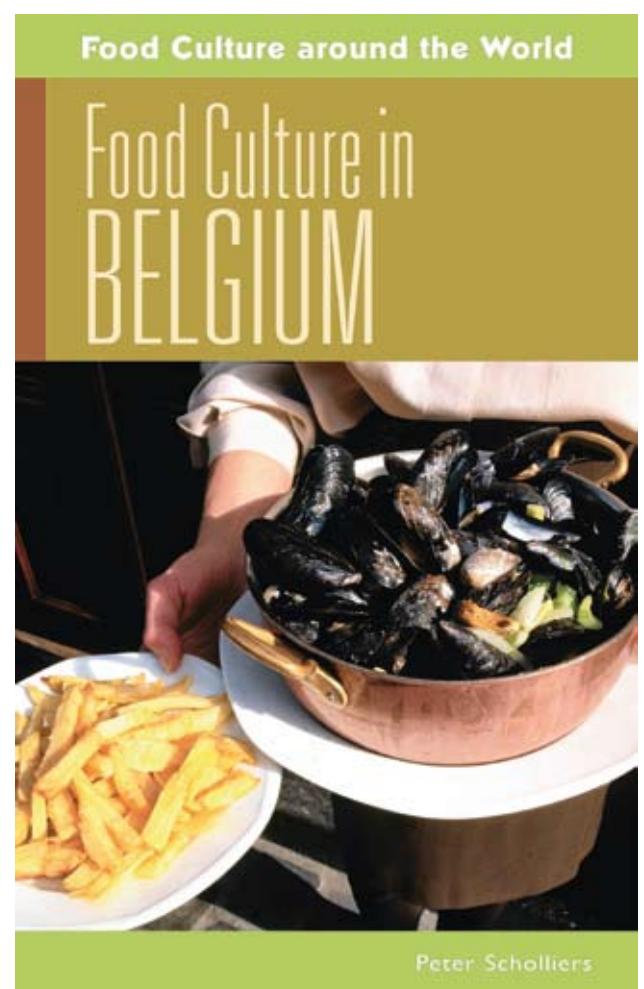
A lot comes from recipe books and television programmes. At a basic level, as a child, you see how things are done. For instance, my mother used to prepare a recipe called een torrentje, a little tower. It was a very local dish in East Flanders, where she grew up, made of cauliflower with minced meat and cheese sauce [a recipe for it appears in the book]. My mother died a couple of years ago, and I tried to re-create it based on my memory of myself as an eater, not as a cook. The first experience was a disaster, but the second try was more successful. My wife noticed that I put in garlic where my mother hadn't. It was interesting in terms of food memory. You learn with your eyes, but you also keep tastes in your memory.



Food journal editor and professor of history Peter Scholliers won Flanders' Culture Prize for food culture last year

What sort of predictions would you make about eating and food culture in Belgium?

Sociologists fear that there is too much automation, particularly with the development of food like individual microwave meals. I have seen it as a threat to family meals, but now I think it's not. The family unit has existed for many years in Belgium, and I don't think that will change. I hope people will continue watching TV, reading books and websites, taking cookery classes and experimenting at home. You can do this in Belgium at a relatively low cost. I think there are some reasons to be optimistic, despite globalisation and the food chain. Having said this, I'm aware that there are more hungry people than 10 years ago. There are some estimates that 5% of people living in Belgium are "hungry", meaning they permanently have too few calories to be healthy. This is accepted; it's a European average. With the economic crisis, you saw right away that there were losers in terms of eating. There are problems worldwide with access to water and food, and in these terms I'm not very optimistic. *



Peter Scholliers

Caring with coffee

A new initiative from Flanders persuades coffee drinkers to support worthy projects

DEREK BLYTH

One year ago, the world was looking into the abyss as the banking system came close to collapse. Some people panicked. Others kept their cool. Ann Vereecken, marketing manager at Douwe Egberts Senseo coffee at Sara Lee Belgium, saw the crisis as a moment for reflection. "People made changes," she says. "They became less materialistic. They saw that everyone is connected."

Vereecken had just started at Sara Lee's Grimbergen office, just outside Brussels. While the Belgian government was battling to save the country's banking system, Vereecken saw an opportunity to take the company's corporate social responsibility one step further and help people caught up in the crisis.

This meant a fresh look at the brand, which sells individual coffee pads. "Senseo is about individual moments," she told me, "but people also want to connect with others."

Vereecken decided that the answer was to give the brand a social awareness without losing its focus on single coffee servings. "We wanted people to think about others who were close to them."

It led to a project called Senseo Community Program, which involves consumers collecting points on coffee packs. But instead of using points to get a free gadget, the coffee drinker can donate them to a local cause that then trades them in for benefits. Vereecken believes this project is a first in Belgium.

But it wasn't easy to get the CEO's approval. "It was a challenge, which is logical, knowing that programmes are always carefully examined before they are launched," she says tactfully.

But the companies she approached to become partners were immediately convinced. "We decided to support it in one short meeting on a Friday afternoon," said Wim Van Winghe, marketing director of Microsoft. "The project fit perfectly into the framework of our corporate citizenship policy."

Vereecken has so far persuaded nine major Belgian companies to join the Senseo Community Programme as partners to help local organisations, such as schools or senior homes, gain access to their products. Microsoft is helping with software and IT training, for instance, Roland helping out with musical instruments, and Philips is involved in providing flat-screen TVs.

The project only launched in September, and Senseo already has 250 organisations looking for points to be

donated to their accounts.



donated to their accounts. And the number is growing each day, Vereecken says. "We get 10 to 15 emails every day asking for support."

I wondered aloud whether the international community would take to this project. "Don't you think foreigners would rather give to an international organisation like Greenpeace or Unicef?" I asked.

But Vereecken insisted that this was a project that everyone, Belgian or not, could relate to. "You are giving to people living in your neighbourhood, so you can see the impact of the points you donate."

The website is in two languages, and an English version will soon follow. So there's really no excuse to ignore this project, unless, that is, you are a tea drinker. ♦

How it works ...

Every pack of Senseo coffee has a sticker that you pull off to read a code. You then go to the Senseo website and click *senseo punten* to register. It took me about two minutes to get through the registration and another minute to type in the code on the Senseo pack. I then had 10 points to donate to a worthy cause.

You begin by selecting a region, a municipality and a cause. Some choices don't yield any organisations – I failed to find a *daklozencentrum* (homeless shelter) in Brussels. No luck either with a *voedselbank* (food bank) in the capital. But the site helpfully puts forward random suggestions, such as that the American Overseas Memorial Day Association needs help obtaining wreaths.

It was a tough choice, but I finally donated those 10 points to a small school for handicapped children in Neder-over-Heembeek.

Interested in registering as a Senseo project? All schools, youth clubs and associations based in Belgium can register online to start receiving points from Senseo customers

→ www.senseo.be



Donate to projects in Brussels and Flanders, like this centre for people with autism in Sint-Truiden, with Senseo points

Nearly 600 jobs to go at Janssen Pharma

Janssen Pharmaceutica, once one of the pearls of Belgian industry, now in the hands of Johnson & Johnson, will cut 558 jobs from its plant in Beerse in the Kempen area of Antwerp province. Earlier in the week, prior to the company's board meeting in Schaffhausen in Switzerland, unions had raised the fear that the job losses could be even worse – up to 1,000.

This is Janssen's fourth restructuring in seven years. This time around, it is partly the result of the move of staff from the Mechelen-based Tibotec-Virco facility to Beerse, which develops drugs for HIV/Aids and other infectious diseases, including tuberculosis. Tibotec will lose 41 jobs, while some 140 sales staff will be moved from Janssen-Cilag,

near Antwerp, to Beerse. Staff who refuse to move will be included in the redundancy measures.

Beerse felt the axe already in 2002, when a first round of restructuring cut half of its research jobs, which now number about 300 (before the influx from Mechelen). About 460 jobs went in 2007, and another 140 last year.

Janssen has always been one of Flanders' most highly regarded companies, with a good reputation for working conditions and industrial relations. In better times, the company researched and developed top-quality medications like anti-psychotic Haldol, diarrhoea medicine Imodium, anti-emetic Motilium and Risperdal, which is used to ease the symptoms of

schizophrenia and bipolar disorder. But those drugs have now passed out of patent, making it possible for the producers of generic versions to make the drugs cheaper and depriving Janssen of the income needed to finance current research for future cures. Cutbacks in health care everywhere – and particularly in the developed world – have also had an impact on the company's revenue.

The cuts will not all be made at once: 318 will go in 2010, and a further 240 over the course of the next three or four years. The cuts are necessary to "ensure the future of the company," according to Tom Heyman, CEO at Beerse. At the same time, the company will change its business plan, develop-

ing only high therapeutic value-added medicines. In addition, the company will adopt an "open innovation model", involving cooperation with outside companies and researchers within a range of 100 kilometres – which means all the way to Ghent, as well as the universities of Antwerp, Brussels, Leuven and Hasselt.

The prospect of a gradual divestment of in-house research – an absolute pillar of the strategy of founder Paul Janssens – worries unions, who see further job cuts looming in the future. "If production goes outside, we're afraid Janssen will only keep a limited number of highly qualified people on staff and outsource all the other services," one representative said. ♦

THE WEEK IN BUSINESS

Banking • BNP Paribas

BNP Paribas, the new owner of Fortis Bank, will move 500 jobs from Paris to Brussels as part of its new global business plan. The bank will group a number of centralised services here, in particular the internet division, including programming and development of online services. Other smaller service centres will deal with factoring, cash management, export financing and business banking.

Banking • Dexia

Dexia bank will not face charges of issuing misleading information to shareholders before and during the banking crisis last year, the Brussels prosecutor's office has decided after seven months of investigation. The case was brought by a French shareholder who claimed to have lost €685,000.

Dairy • Inza

The EU Commission's competition authority gave approval for the dairy foods company Inza, based in Schoten, to take over the brands Yogho! Yogho! and Choco! Choco! from Friesland-Campina. The sale is part of the conditions of the merger between Campina (formerly Melkunie) and Friesland Foods, announced in June.

Entertainment • TEG Belgium

The failures of music festival VTM Live and rock festival Markrock in Leuven in 2008 contributed to the collapse of The Entertainment Group (TEG) owned by Dutch singer Marco Borsato, according to the administrator who was called in to look at the company's accounts. TEG pumped some €10 million into TEG Belgium, which ran the festivals, and media business Lab Venture. TEG Belgium split away from the Dutch parent in May, four months before TEG went broke.

Media • Corelio

Media conglomerate Corelio, which publishes De Standaard as well as Flanders Today, has been named as a possible candidate for the takeover of NRC Handelsblad, the Dutch financial daily. Current owners PCM have to offload the paper as a condition of their takeover by Vlaamse Persgroep, which publishes De Morgen.

Supermarkets • Colruyt

Supermarket chain Colruyt has made a bid for 100% of Foodinvest, the country's third-largest food services company, based in Bornem, for an undisclosed sum. Colruyt is currently not active in that market. Foodinvest had a turnover of €45 million last year. The bid will need to be passed by the competition authorities, but Colruyt expects to sign in January.



A Brussels landmark turns 20, but celebrates a much longer history of the beloved Belgian comic

REBECCA BENOOT

Although Hergé's endearing Tintin (or Kuifje to the Flemish) has become a universal icon, the Belgian comic world has so much more to offer than these exciting adventures of a boy and his dog. It would be tough to find a better opportunity to familiarise yourself with the country's cartoon capers than to visit the Belgian Comic Strip Museum, which is celebrating its 20th anniversary with special exhibitions, including a show of photos of the most exciting events of the last two decades.

In fact, to commemorate the occasion, venues and organisations across Brussels marked 2009 as the year of the Belgian comic strip. Since February, Brussels has been hosting numerous events, exhibitions and walks that illustrate and honour one of the country's most flourishing art forms: the comic book.

Brussels has always had an intimate relationship with the comic strip. The hometown of many talented illustrators who are responsible for making the medium what it is today, the capital launched a comic strip tour in 1991. Nearly 40 murals brighten up the sides of buildings across the city – a celebration of cultural tradition combined with a playful urban community project.

Despite its modest size, Belgium contains the world's highest density of paper heroes and storytellers per square kilometre, making a museum inevitable. The non-profit Belgian Comic Strip Centre that resides in the museum was established in 1984 and consists of French- and Dutch-speaking comic strip artists and others from the comic world. Its first chairman, illustrator and Hergé collaborator Bob de Moor, was also partially responsible for the unique location.

The Belgian Comic Strip Museum is housed in the old Waucquez warehouse in Brussels, designed by Victor Horta in 1906. This stunning example of Art Nouveau architecture – a stone's throw from the Congres train station – offers an ingenious and exuberant contrast with its contemporary contents. Besides bringing attention to this protected monument, the Belgian Comic Strip Centre also wanted to promote the comic strip as a valuable cultural medium.

On entering the museum, you are immediately struck by its timeless grandeur, punctuated by statues of the Smurfs, Tintin and Asterix. To delve more deeply into the architectural history of the location, visit the small exhibit on the right side of the entrance hall. Also located on the ground floor is an impressive comic book library – the largest in the world – that offers the opportunity to browse and explore.

The museum's permanent collection is at the top of a majestic marble staircase and starts off with a brief illustrated introduction on how a comic strip is made, from the initial idea all the way through to the printed product. (The accompanying texts are in French and Dutch, but you can get the English translations at the front desk.)

Next stop: a movie theatre with films on the medium's evolution from illustration to animation. Ray Goossens, you'll learn, opened the first illustration studio in Antwerp in 1940. Despite his wonderful cartoons, he eventually went bankrupt. Les studios Claude Misonne were more successful. In 1946, they brought our most famous character, Tintin, to life using puppets in a form of stop-motion animation.



The entrance hall to the Belgian Comic Strip Museum, housed in a Victor Horta building in the centre of Brussels

You move on to the highlights of the Belgian comic strip industry: a highly entertaining history of original drawings, manuscripts and murals in imaginatively themed rooms. You'll meet the pioneers and their characters and explore their influence on generations to come. You'll also find early versions of the landmark comic magazine *Spirou*, still publishing more than 70 years after it was launched in 1938.

Alongside the permanent exhibition, there are two spaces for temporary shows. On the mezzanine that binds the wings of the upper level is a retrospective photo exhibition curated by Belgian photographer Daniel Fouss that highlights memorable occasions from the past 20 years. Starting with the museum's opening in 1989, there are events such as Lucky Luke's 50th birthday, Garfield creator Jim Davis' visit and shots of the exceptional Japanese manga exhibition earlier this year.

Finally, the second floor is where you'll find the museum's central 20-year celebration exhibition. Canadian artist Daniel Couvreur has selected the most influential international comic strips and graphic novels that are available in Belgium. Each is representative of the evolution of comic strip art at one specific point in time. Here you can admire large reproductions of key works such as *Sin City*, *Black Hole*, *Persepolis* and *Bone*.

At the end of your visit, you'll find the obligatory gift shop, though this one is perhaps more fun than the average museum shop: a wide selection of comic strips, toys, graphic novels and figurines. And for those of you who just can't get enough, you only need cross the street to see the history of comic character Néro at the Marc Sleen Museum.♦

→ www.comicscenter.net
→ www.brusselscomics.com



Kieke-who?

You see them in the newspapers, in the bookshops, as murals and even as statues in town squares. But you don't have a name to put with the face. Here are some of Flanders' most popular comic book heroes (and the guys who draw them).

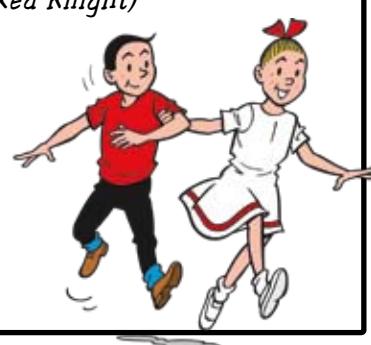
Kiekeboe

This classic strip by **Merho** (Robert Merhotte), which follows the exploits of husband and father Marcel Kiekeboe, wears the crown as Flanders best-selling comic. Inspired by Vandersteen and Sleen, Merho first published the strip – decidedly aimed at adults – in *Het Laatste Nieuws* in 1977. More than 30 years later, he is still one of the illustrators and story writers for the strip, which runs daily in *De Gazet van Antwerpen*.



Suske en Wiske

Known as *Spike and Suzy* in the UK, this boy-and-girl best friend duo get into all kind of trouble when they try to help out friends or others facing some kind of injustice. Creator **Willy Vandersteen** began publishing it in 1945, and the creative baton has been passed down ever since; the strip still runs every day in *De Standaard*. Vandersteen, an Antwerp native who died in 1990, was also responsible for launching the long-running *De Rode Ridder* (*The Red Knight*)



Néro

What would Flanders be without oddball Néro and his ever-expanding family? A good-hearted if rather lazy family man, Néro is the centre of a strip of fantastic characters, including his genius son, who regularly wins Nobel prizes in this and that. First seen from the hand of legendary illustrator **Marc Sleen** in 1947, it was hailed as the first "family" comic of Flanders – appealing equally to both kids and adults. Sleen, in fact, has an entire museum dedicated to him across the street from the comic strip museum.

Lucky Luke

This enduring comic cowboy wandering the American West was created by **Morris** (Maurice de Bevere) in 1946 and continues to this day, despite the illustrator's death eight years ago. Morris is also the genius behind other memorable characters such as the Daltons and Jolly Jumper.

Jommeke

It was all over the news last month when **Jef Nys**, the creator of this light-hearted strip about the adventures of a little, blonde boy, died at age 82. Jommeke has been around for 54 years and has sold more than 50 million albums. See it daily in *Het Nieuwsblad*.



Food, glorious food

See it, feel it, taste it: Week van de Smaak brings you closer to your food

LISA BRADSHAW

If food has a way of bringing family and friends together, it certainly has a way of bringing Flanders together for 11 days a year during the Week van de Smaak, or the Week of Flavour, which kicks off on 12 November. The only annual event that reaches very nearly every municipality in the region and every commune in Brussels, its ambitious programme boasts more than 1,000 activities in a celebration of all things food.

Although you'll find plenty of chances to cook and eat, the Week van de Smaak is particularly impressive for the sheer number of genres: film, exhibitions, readings, walks and tours inundate all of your senses, bringing every aspect of food to sensual life.

Although the programme is about as diverse as it gets, there are two facts that require your attention: Turkey is the guest country this year, and Leuven is 2009's "city of flavour". This gives you two convenient ways to choose from the massive schedule of events: go to Leuven, and eat Turkish (see sidebars).

You can also choose activities by province: the event is so big that every province has its own programme. So in your local market or sandwich shop, you'll find your own province's programme. But on the website you'll find everything – from beer and cheese evenings in Antwerp to eating like a Roman in Limburg to a musi-

cal brunch in Sint-Pieters-Woluwe.

"Flavour inspires and binds," says Flemish culture minister Joke Schauvliege. "A very broad participation is a good thing: that is one of the priorities in my policies. Flavour brings people together."

The event certainly does offer enough to appeal to even those who think a good meal is a plate of fish sticks – namely, children, who are offered EETiKET, an unrivalled food culture programme for kids, which lets them take part in most of what adults are doing during Week van de Smaak – but tailored just for them. Schools, restaurants and museums are participating, and Davidsfonds publisher is presenting a new cookbook, just for little ones from three to seven.

Where there are kids, there is a godparent, and this year's annual honour has been bestowed upon master chef Felix Alen, owner of the reception and catering business Hof te Rhode in Diest. As the "godfather" of the Week van de Smaak, he has personally approved every single event, plays host to eight guest chefs and makes endless appearances – including a "cooking duel" against amateur cooks in Leuven on 13 November and at the Turkish Bazaar in his own city the following day.

Whatever you choose to do for the next 11 days, *eet smaakelijk.* ♦

→ www.weekvandesmaak.be



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Country of Taste: Turkey

You've noticed how cuisine in Flanders can change between provinces and major cities, right? So imagine what that regional diversity must be like in a country the size of Turkey, with culinary traditions that stretch back to the Ottoman Empire. During the Week van de Smaak, master chefs from Turkey will present both contemporary and traditional dishes, bazaars will present cooking wares, and culture experts will talk about Turkish eating rituals and the country's quintessential coffee. There are about 300 opportunities to discover Turkish food, including:

Turkish Brunch in the Mining Museum

Many Turkish families came to the Limburg town of Beringen in the early 20th century to work in the mines. Turkish guest chefs Serkan Bozkurt and Serdar Özkan will serve you lunch, backed by Turkish musicians. A tour of the mines follows. **15 November**

Turkish Bread Battle

Four chefs from different regions of Turkey are split into two teams: who can make the tastiest dish with Turkish bread in 2,000 seconds? Cheer for your favourite team, and taste the final results at Cafe Via in Antwerp. **15 November**

Turkish specialities

Learn how to set a proper table for Turkish tea and even how to bake their buttery, nutty pastries at GC Amfi in Landen. **19 November**



Turkish Wine Tasting

Even if you know nothing about wine, you're invited to take part in this tasting and discussion of Turkish wines, led by wine steward Ilse Notebaert at the Volkskring Hall in Deinze. **13 November**

Theatre Turkish style

Did you know that croissants have their roots in Turkey? Learn this and more during this musical theatre outing by Josette Van Hooydonck and Griet De Meyer in the Bakery Museum in Veurne. **13 & 14 November**



Once awarded the Best Endive in Belgium award, chef Felix Alen is the godfather of the Week van de Smaak

The essence of *smaak*

In Dutch, the verb *smaken* means "to taste", and the noun *smaak* means both "taste" and "flavour" – plus stands in for a few more words, like "palate" and "savour". So, whereas in English, we "taste" a "flavour", in Dutch the words are one and the same, giving the title "Week van de Smaak" several layers of meaning: an emphasis both on the food and the humans, and both on the science of tasting and the emotion of enjoying.

City of Taste: Leuven

More than 70 venues in Leuven are whipping up something to celebrate their home being selected as the official host city of the Week van de Smaak. Since Leuven is not terribly big, this means it will be tough to visit it without running into something *smaak* related. Most notably:

A Sweet Pint of Beer

It's the Belgians versus the Mesopotamians in that age-old struggle: who makes the best beer? Apparently, the peoples of the ancient empire comprising Iraq and parts of Syria and Turkey were quite the brewers, as evidenced by written techniques on stone tablets. Professors from the Catholic University of Leuven explain it all. **19 November**

Fresh goodies with a side of story

The T-huisje in Leuven is always brimming with babble and baked goods, but during the Week van de Smaak, you get an extra babble in the form of storytelling, from poetry to Greek mythology to stories about...wait for it...food. **13-21 November**

Demonstrations in the Muntstraat

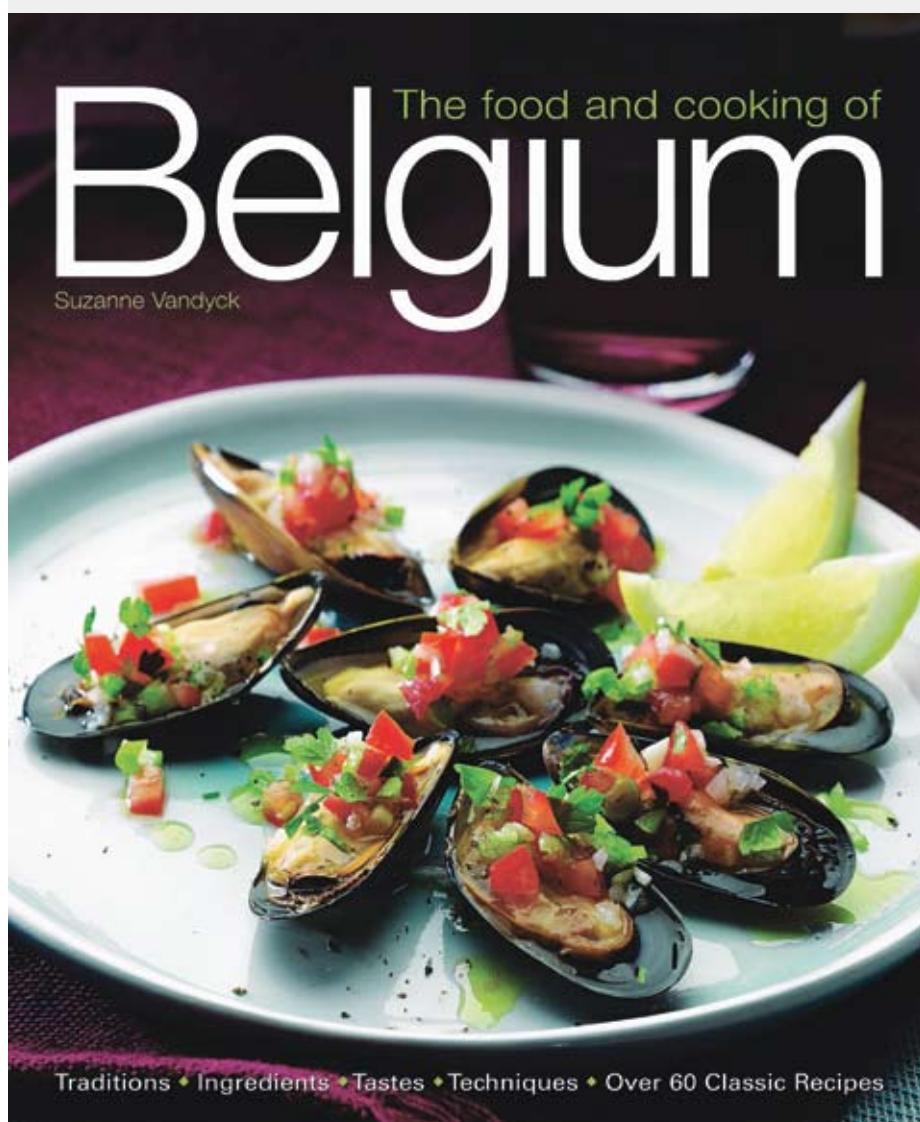
Cooking demonstrations, that is, in Leuven's resident restaurant street, which sits in the shadow of its landmark Gothic town hall. A number of restaurants invite you inside for demonstrations, including "Healthy Japanese" and "How to Make Cocktails". Samples included, of course. **12-19 November**

Ode to a fry

The closing event of the Week van de Smaak merges the guest country with the focus city and the food to end all Belgian food: the *friet*. Long known as "the city of the *freitkoten*" because of the sheer number of French fry sellers in the student city, Leuven lines them all up in the Oude Markt and offers up a new blend of sauces by local chef Jeroen Meus. Next to that is a Turkish topping made of beans, nuts and seeds. If it doesn't rain, this should prove to be a highlight of the Week van de Smaak. **22 November**



© Archibel/Belega



© Julie van Schooten

If you want to cook Belgian, you've got to get your hands dirty: homemade chocolate truffles



Cookbook author Suzanne Vandyck with two of her students in California

Cooking the classics

Some foods are not meant to be made at home but purchased at a store or restaurant. In my mind, sushi, sausage and Belgian chocolates belong to this category. And yet last week I found myself wrist deep in melted chocolate as I attempted to make my very own truffles, at home, from scratch.

Not stopping there, I also made *waterzooi* (a creamy chicken stew), *witloof* (endive) soup and started the process for homemade liquor.

What inspired this madness? *The Food and Cooking of Belgium*, a beautiful, hardback cookbook by Suzanne Vandyck.

I recently attempted (and failed) to make *stoverij*, a Flemish beef stew in a lovely brown beer gravy. I was disappointed with the results, which I partially blamed on a lack of a recipe in English for guidance. In this way, Vandyck's book is a godsend. Not only does it include the classic dishes seen at most Belgian cafes, it is written in English and includes big, colour photos of every dish. To top it all off, each recipe includes both metric and imperial measurements, so that my mismatched kitchen tools from the US and Flanders can be used interchangeably.

Making the book even more universally appealing is the title of each recipe, which number more than 60; they also includes the Dutch and French names of the dishes. This means that while I initially might not have been interested in making Ghent-style chicken stew, I recognised the dish by its Flemish name, *Gentse waterzooi*, and knew it was a dish I wanted to cook.

The 128-page book has sections for all courses: Soups and Appetizers, Snacks and street food, Fish and shellfish, Poultry and game, Meat, Side dishes and salads, Desserts and drinks and, finally, Baking. While the book lacks an index (which I like to have for brainstorming dinner options), this is a minor quibble concerning a gem of a cookbook.

The introduction gives an overview of the history of Belgium and what sets its cuisine apart from other countries. I wish I had read this book when I first moved to Flanders to have a better sense of the food culture. Now I know that soups are thin and pureed, warm meals are eaten only once a day and French fries are a rite of passage.

The book also explains how Belgian cooking has been influenced by other invading or occupying nations. The spices used in many classic dishes, such as nutmeg and cloves, for instance, arrived with the crusaders. Also, Belgian's speciality beers, unique in the world, are incorporated into recipes such as my dismal *stoverij*.

While there is not an obvious distinction between Flemish and Walloon cooking, there are specialties based on province, which are often evidenced in the names of the recipes: the onion soup from Aalst, the apple dumplings from Antwerp.

"Every region in Belgium is unique because it has its own specialities that are sometimes hard to find only a few kilometres away," Vandyck explains to me from her home in the San Francisco Bay area of California. "Limburg's buckwheat pancake exists because buckwheat only thrives in the soil of Limburg. In certain areas, it is easier to grow fruits and vegetables, such as the Haspengouw. Personally, that is what I love about food. It is so much more exciting knowing that an ingredient is only produced in one area due to its soil or certain climate conditions."

Vandyck was born in Hasselt, grew up in the nearby village of Helchteren and went to university in Leuven. Although she studied international business, she gave up the corporate world a decade

ago to devote herself to cooking. She launched World Chefs, a cooking school and catering business in the Bay area, but comes back to Belgium every year to visit her family.

Vandyck was approached by the London publisher Anness for their cookbook series because of her Belgian roots, English writing ability and extensive culinary experience. She penned the book in just seven months, saying that choosing the recipes was easy. "I just went straight back to my childhood memories. I made 75 recipes and about 60 were selected, to appeal to the widest audience range. The *endive au gratin* [endive with ham and cheese sauce], for example, didn't make it, and that was a pity, since that is our family's favourite. But I made sure every recipe had an interesting background."

She did manage to get most of her favourites in the book, though: "certainly the chervil soup, fish gratin Ostend style and the pheasant Brabant style. The duck breast with turnips, plum tart and buckwheat pancakes are from my home province Limburg."

And then she confirms my poor judgment: "The most difficult recipes are the vol-au-vent and the Ghent-style chicken stew because of all the different steps. It's quite time-consuming but well worth it."

This proved true. I enjoyed making the *waterzooi*, as it is comfort food at its finest; warm, filling and utilising traditional ingredients. The stew used a surprisingly small amount of cream, given the smooth, rich flavour. Because the recipe calls for boiling an entire chicken, it created an enormous amount of food and took an extensive amount of time to cook. In future, this recipe seems as if it could easily be adapted to a smaller amount and used to cook leftover roasted chicken. However, given how much everyone ate, this is an ideal dish to make for a crowd, as you can prepare other dishes while it's cooking.

The endive is notoriously bitter, but the soup was not. It was, in a word, divine

Vandyck emphasises that the easiest, "go to" Belgian meal to make is soup. "It regularly appears on my home table since it is easy and comforting. Belgians are soup eaters; even here in sunny California I like to have my soup daily. I also put these soups on the menu of my cooking classes. Americans are used to different soups, and when they try the thinner consistency of Belgian soups, they love it."

I couldn't agree more. The endive soup recipe in *The Food and Cooking of Belgium* follows the same basic recipe I use for all my pureed soups, which made it easy to follow. Still, the end result was unexpected. I chose this particular recipe as a means to make the endive, a classic Belgian ingredient, more palatable to me. The endive is notoriously bitter, but the soup was not. It was, in a word, divine: a creamy first impression, followed by a mild endive aftertaste. Given how quick it was to make and the limited number of ingredients, it quickly shot up to one of my all-time favourite recipes.

My least favourite: the truffles. While this isn't a recipe that requires intense precision, like, say, soufflés, or even constant attention, like risotto, it

A Flemish chef's cookbook in English makes Belgian cuisine accessible

COURTNEY DAVIS



© Julie van Schooten

Your intrepid American reporter cooks up a perfect Gentse waterzooi

was easily one of the most time-intensive recipes I've ever worked on.

Because Vandyck describes it as a two-day process, I doubled the recipe to make it worth it – something I highly recommend. First, I softened the chocolate, then added an ungodly amount of butter. After adding cream, vanilla and liquor, the pans went into the fridge to cool for four hours, interrupted by repeated stirring. Then everything is transferred to glass trays and put back in the fridge to cool overnight.

The next day started with scooping the chocolate into balls. (The recommended use of teaspoons failed me, and I just used my hands.) After another round in the fridge, the balls were finished up with a roll in toppings, then placed back in the fridge one last time. After a constant succession of dirty dishes and chocolate-covered hands, the smell of cocoa made my stomach turn, and I couldn't even bring myself to sample the end result!

However, I had many willing volunteers to sample my three kinds of chocolate truffles – amaretto-flavoured rolled in almonds, a mild mint rolled in coconut and a traditional chocolate rolled in cocoa. I almost hoped that no one would like them, relinquishing me from ever having to recreate the task. Alas, I don't think I've ever had so many unwanted compliments. Every last truffle quickly disappeared.

In fact, all three of Vandyck's recipes, which I was trying for the very first time ended in the same way – devoured. A sign of a good cookbook.

Another sign of a good cookbook is how often you use it. I plan on tackling *stoverij* again and have already begun the process of making homemade liquor. I soaked frozen red lingonberries in sugar and lemons for three days before covering them in vodka to sit for six weeks. The results will be timed to celebrate the Christmas holiday, in which case, I have a feeling I'll be dedicating a few days to creating those damn delicious chocolate truffles again. ♦

The Food and Cooking of Belgium is available in both English and Dutch (*De Belgische keuken*) across Brussels and Flanders

► www.worldchefs.net

Brave new library

Kortrijk launches a gaming system that will travel to libraries in West Flanders

ALAN HOPE

Gone are the days when a library was a place where you could borrow books, look up an encyclopaedia or glance through the newspaper in total silence, under the constant surveillance of a spinster with better hearing than a bat who ate children for breakfast. Nowadays it's all CDs and computers and DVDs – and now even computer games you can play right there in the middle of the library itself.

In Kortrijk you can, anyway, until the end of this month. It's all part of a new initiative by the West Flanders Information Network for Public Libraries (Winob) called Start to Game, and it involves a peripatetic games module, which will circulate around the province over the next two years.

After Kortrijk, the Start to Game module takes in Oostkamp, Koksijde, Moorslede, Ypres and Zonnebeke. After that, it moves on to another six public libraries, which have still to be decided.

The module consists of a four-sided station with, on each side, a different games console: Xbox 360, Wii, PC and Playstation 3. They're each equipped with the requisite controllers (and headphones to keep the noise down). On one side, there are two gaming chairs for playing a Grand Prix type game, with all the buttons and whatnot built into the steering wheels.

Library patrons (in theory anyone with a library pass or an electronic ID, but in practice boys under the age of 14) can sign in at the downstairs desk in return for a controller and play for a half-hour block during certain time periods. All gaming is free.

Flanders Today took along our resident games expert, 11-year-old Oscar, who tried out three of the consoles (not the PC, because you can just do that at home). His verdict: the idea is good, but the choice of games could be better.

The module takes up surprisingly little space – five metres in diameter, including seating, and 2.5 metres high. It's also less noisy than you'd expect. In any event, Kortrijk is a huge library, with sound and vision media on a separate underground floor, where readers and book-browsers are unlikely to be disturbed. But space might not be available on such a scale elsewhere.

Impact on libraries

But isn't this all getting a bit too far away from what a library is supposed to be about? I asked Jurgen Van Lerberghe, who is coordinating the Start to Game action. Not, he replies, if you consider computer games to be, like books and DVDs, just another "cultural product" – a phrase that will have traditionalists reaching for their revolvers.

"The core business of libraries is under pressure anyway, without blaming computer games," he explains. "Libraries have expanded into providing music and images, computer access, classes and workshops. But the thinking behind it has always been to bring people into contact with books."

He notes that only kids without consoles at home are coming in to game. "These are the have-nots we're dealing with here," he says. "We expected that to be the result, but not on the scale we've seen." And young people over the age of 14 don't come in for gaming, either. "The gamers are overwhelmingly foreigners and mostly boys."

Studies in the US have shown, he says, that introducing young people to libraries via other media has a positive effect on the take-up of books on offer. "So that's something to hope for," Van Lerberghe says.

It's because the cost is so prohibitive – the whole Start to Game programme has cost €25,000 so far, including research and development – that it needs to be shared among the 12 participating libraries. But in the future, it could become a more permanent feature – in Kortrijk at least.

The city is building a new central library on the Conservatorioplein opposite the station, due to open in 2014. The hope is that the new building will include something similar to Start to Game, on a smaller scale perhaps, but fully integrated into its surroundings. ♦

► www.kortrijk.be/bibliotheek



© Francis Vliegje/WBAD

Four separate groups can play at the same time at the new gaming console



Flemish-Brabant
& Leuven,
one big painting

Scattered all over the world, and now temporarily united in M, the brand new museum in Leuven: more than 100 unique works by and about Rogier van der Weyden. And there is much more to see in Leuven, the capital of Flemish Brabant. In this student city you will find a rich cultural heritage, the beautiful beguinage and the oldest university of the Low Lands. Moreover, Leuven is an excellent operating base from which to discover the rest of Flemish Brabant, with its breathtaking scenery and delicious regional cuisine.

For more information please
go to www.leuven.be/welcome



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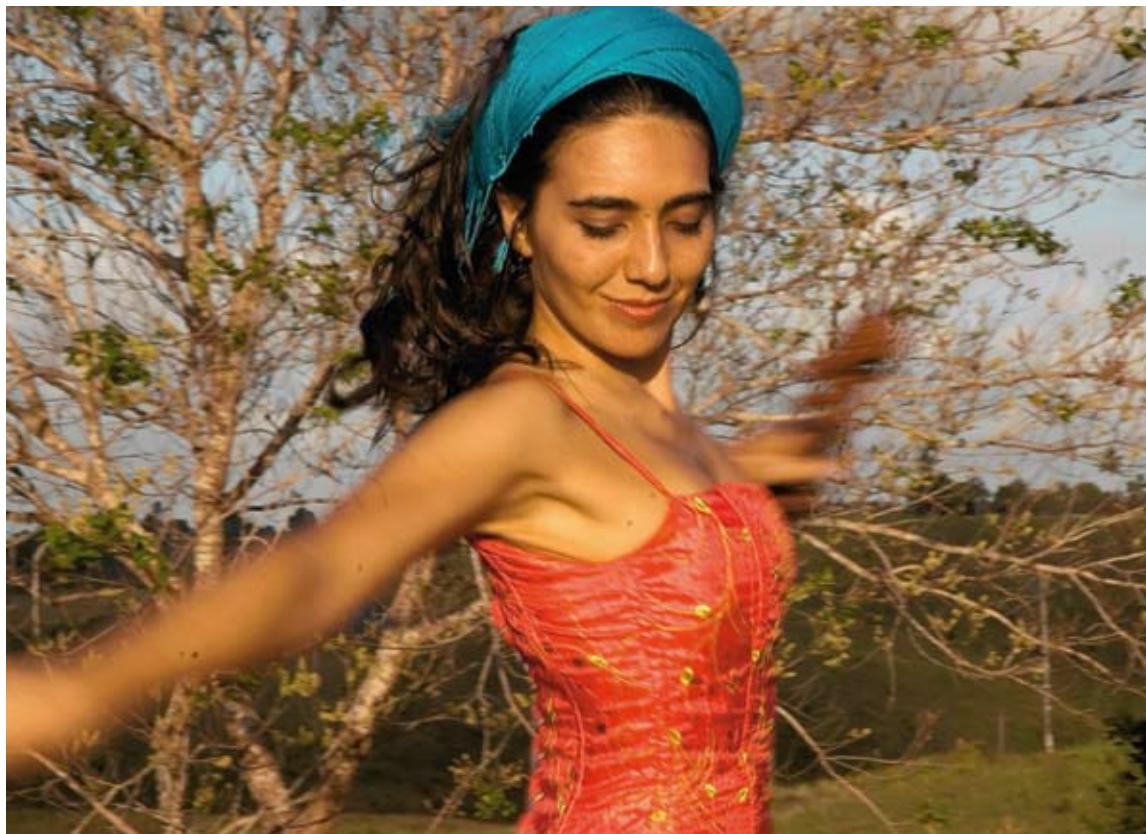
Pieter Laurens Mol – until 4 December →

Twenty-five years in the life of Dutch painter and installation artist Pieter Laurens Mol in the exhibition space at We Project in Brussels

www.weproject.be



FLANDERS TODAY
NOVEMBER 11, 2009



Antwerp

Lotto Arena - Sportpaleis
Schijnpoortweg 119; 0900.26.060,
www.sportpaleis.be
Until NOV 11 20.30 Night of the Proms 2009, featuring Roxette, Orchestral Manoeuvres in the Dark, Sharon den Adel and more
NOV 14 20.00 Jonas Brothers
NOV 18 20.00 Deep Purple



Berchem

CC Berchem
Driekoningenstraat 126; 03.286.88.20,
www.ccberchem.be
NOV 12 20.30 Frank Vander Linden
NOV 14 23.00 The Kids

Borgerhout

Trix
Noordersingel 28; 03.670.09.00,
www.trixonline.be
NOV 11 20.00 The Heavy **NOV 12** 19.00 Anti-Flag + Alexisonfire + Four Year Strong, more **NOV 13** 19.00 Amon Amarth. 19.30 Backfire! + Breakdown + No Turning Back, more **NOV 14** 19.30 The Opposites + Noizboiz + Beatdrunk **NOV 15** 17.00 Lords + Reproach + Vogue + Daybreak, more. 20.00 Alphabeat **NOV 18** 20.00 Team William + The Galacticos + De Staat

DON'T MISS

Nuit Américaine

Until 17 December
KVS, Brussels

"Stored in our memory lies a bank of American images," says Peter De Bruyne, the Bruges-based photographer who learned, to his great surprise, that the night scenes in the American westerns he held so dear in his youth – scenes that struck him as both magical and macabre – were actually filmed during the day. Guided by the film technique of *nuit américaine*, he shot this series of blurred photos – not one digitally manipulated – across the landmarks, icons and clichés of the American west.



→ www.kvs.be

Brussels

Ancienne Belgique
Anspachlaan 110; 02.548.24.24,
www.abconcerts.be
NOV 12 12.30 Leki & The Sweet Mints (free concert, part of Broodje Brussel) 20.00 Maxwell
NOV 13 20.00 Funtime record label party: Break of Day + Exit On The Left + PN + Soon
NOV 17 20.00 Orishas

Le Botanique

Koningsstraat 236; 02.226.12.57
Concerts at 20.00:
NOV 12 Samir Barris **NOV 13** Marcel et son Orchestre. Lio & Phantom **NOV 14** John Vanderslice **NOV 17** Lem + Keiki **NOV 18** Passion Pit

Maison du Peuple

Sint-Gillisvoordeplein 37-39; 02.217.26.00,
www.maison-du-peuple.be
NOV 19 18.00 Jeep Novak

Theatre 140

Eugène Plaskylaan 140; 02.733.97.08,
www.theatre140.be
NOV 11 20.30 Emily Loizeau

VK Club

Schoolstraat 76; 02.414.29.07, www.vkconcerts.be
NOV 11 21.30 The Blackout
NOV 13 21.30 Fall of Troy

VUB - Vrije Universiteit Brussel

Pleinlaan 2; 02.629.21.08,
www.vub.ac.be/cultuur
NOV 12 21.00 The Death Letters and Let Lewis Live

Vorst-Nationaal

Victor Roussealaan 208; 0900.00.991
NOV 11 20.00 Moby
NOV 12-13 20.00 Calogero
NOV 14 20.00 Morrissey + Doll & The Kicks

Ghent

Handelsbeurs
Kouter 29; 09.265.92.01,
www.handelsbeurs.be
NOV 17 20.15 Christopher Cross

Vooruit

St Pietersnieuwstraat 23; 0900.26.060,
www.vooruit.be
NOV 15 20.00 The Hometown Gamblers

Brussels

Ancienne Belgique

Anspachlaan 110; 02.548.24.24,
www.abconcerts.be
NOV 15 20.00 Branford Marsalis

Bar du Marché

Alphonse de Wittestraat 12; 02.644.04.00,
www.bardumarche.be
NOV 15 17.00 Julien Delbrouck and Thibaud Dille



18 to 28 November

Flagey, Brussels
Zuiderpershuis, Antwerp

→ www.voixdefemmes.org



MORE FESTIVALS THIS WEEK

Playground Festival → STUK, Leuven

BITS(&pieces) → Beursschouwburg, Brussels

Day of the Dead → Provinciestraat Church, Antwerp

Beursschouwburg
Auguste Ortsstraat 20-28; 02.550.03.50,
www.beursschouwburg.be
NOV 13 20.30 Bender Banjax

Jazz Station
Leuvensesteenweg 193-195; 02.733.13.78
Concerts at 20.30:
NOV 12 Jazz Station Big Band **NOV 13**
Benefit concert for Palestine with Toine Thys, Cédric Raymond, Pascal Mohy, Alexandre Cavalier and many more **NOV 14**
18.00 Thomas Champagne Trio **NOV 15**
15.00 Daniel Willem Quartet **NOV 18**
Wang Wei feat. Pierre Bernard

L'Alphabet
Waversesteenweg 1387; 02.662.23.00,
www.lalphabet.be
NOV 14 20.30 Crawlin' Kingsnakes
NOV 19 20.30 Gino Lattuca, Nicola Andriani, Bart De Nolf, Mimi Verderame

l'Axess
Havenlaan 86c; 02.420.44.21
NOV 12 21.00 Pierre de Surgères and Bo Van der Werf
NOV 19 21.00 Ivan Paduart & Patrick Deltenre

Le Bar du Matin
Alsembergsesteenweg 172; 02.537.71.59,
<http://bardumatmin.blogspot.com>
NOV 12 21.00 Briskeey
NOV 19 21.00 The Ramirez Brothers

Maison des Arts
Haachtsesteenweg 147; 02.240.34.87
NOV 13 20.30 Nicolas Kummert Trio

www.stekerlapatte.be
Concerts at 20.00:
NOV 12 Zongora
NOV 19 Daniel Barbanel

The Cotton Club - Grand Casino
Duquesnoystraat 14; 02.289.68.66,
www.gcb.be
NOV 14 21.30 Nelson Trio

The Music Village
Steenstraat 50; 02.513.13.45,
www.themusicvillage.com
Concerts at 21.00:
NOV 13-14 Judy Niemack **NOV 17** A3
NOV 18 Mahé Parker **NOV 19** Jean-Louis Rassinfosse, Jean-Philippe Collard-Neven, Fabrice Alleman, Xavier Desandre-Navarre

Théâtre Marni
Vergniestraat 25; 02.639.09.80
NOV 12 20.30 Slang
NOV 14 20.30 Fanny Bériaux

Ghent
Vooruit
St Pietersnieuwstraat 23; 0900.26.060,
www.vooruit.be
NOV 18 20.00 Roy Hargrove Quintet
NOV 19 20.00 Seasick Steve

Sint-Truiden
Academiezaal
Plankstraat 18; 011.70.17.00,
www.academiezaal.be
NOV 18 20.15 Norma Winstone Trio



Brussels

Art Base
Zandstraat 29; 02.217.29.20,
www.art-base.be
NOV 13 20.00 Harsh Wardhan and Carlo Strazzante, classical Indian music

NOV 15 13.30 Madera Suena, traditional and popular Latin-American music

Basilica of Koekelberg
Voorplein 1; 070.222.007, www.070.be
NOV 12-13 20.00 Gospel For Life: Beverley Trotman & choir, benefit concert for Damien Action

Beursschouwburg
Auguste Ortsstraat 20-28; 02.550.03.50,
www.beursschouwburg.be
NOV 18 21.00 Diaspora Sounds

Bozar
Ravensteinstraat 23; 02.507.82.00,
www.bozar.be
NOV 14 20.00 Gilberto Gil with Bem Gil and Jacques Morelenbaum (Brazil)

Flagey
Heilig Kruisplein; 02.641.10.20,
www.flagey.be
NOV 18 20.15 Renata Rosa
NOV 19 20.15 Malouma

Koninklijk Circus
Onderrichtsstraat 81; 02.218.20.15,
www.cirque-royal.org
NOV 18 20.00 Paolo Nutini

Théâtre Molière
Bastionsquare 3; 02.217.26.00,
www.muziekpublique.be
NOV 13 20.00 Shaman voices from Siberia: Julia Charkova, Albina Degtyareva



Antwerp

deSingel
Desguinlei 25; 03.248.28.28,
www.desingel.be
NOV 12 20.00 Collegium Vocale Gent Orchestra and Choir, conducted by Philippe Herreweghe: Purcell
NOV 14 20.00 Leipziger Streichquartett: Mendelssohn-Bartholdy

Brussels

Bozar
Ravensteinstraat 23; 02.507.82.00,
www.bozar.be
Concerts at 20.00:
NOV 11 Collegium Vocale Gent, conducted by Philippe Herreweghe: Purcell
NOV 12 Brussels Philharmonic, conducted by Michel Tabachnik, with Vlaams Radio Koor, Octopus Kamerkoor, Queen Elisabeth Music Chapel soloists: Stockhausen, Beethoven
NOV 13 Belgian National Orchestra, conducted by Andrey Boreyko, with Olga

Pasichnyk, soprano: Berlioz, Lutoslawski, Prokofiev

NOV 15-17 Cecilia Bartoli, mezzo, with Il Giardino Armonico ensemble: works for castrati by Porpora, Caldara, Giacomelli, more
NOV 19 Symfonieorkest Vlaanderen conducted by Kim Seikyo, with Pieter Wispelwey, cello: Dvorak, Britten, Elgar

Miniemerk
Miniemerstraat 62; 02.511.93.84,
www.minimes.net
NOV 14 20.00 Gunar Letzbor, violin: Westhoff, Vilsmayr, Telemann, Bach

Musical Instruments Museum
Hofberg 2; 02.545.01.30, www.mim.be
NOV 14 15.00 Hua Xia, Li-Ling Huang and Kamier Abas play traditional Chinese string instruments (part of Europa China)
NOV 19 20.00 China Blossoms, masters and young talents perform on pipa and zheng instruments (part of Europa China)

Piola Libri
Franklinstraat 66-68; 02.736.93.91,
www.piolalibri.be
NOV 18 19.00 Ensemble Sursum Corda, mediaeval music

Royal Library
Kunstberg; 02.519.57.51, www.kbr.be
NOV 13 12.30 Stéphanie Proot, piano: Chopin, Haydn, Liszt, Prokofiev

Royal Music Conservatory
Regentschapsstraat 30; 02.213.41.37,
www.kcb.be
NOV 16 20.00 Les Muffatti, conducted by Peter Van Heyghen: Sammartini
NOV 18 20.00 Sergio Tiempo, piano: Bach, Chopin, Ginastera, more
NOV 19 20.00 Kopelman Quartet with Elisabeth Leonskaya, piano: Borodin, Shostakovich

Ghent

Vlaamse Opera
Schouwburgstraat 3; 09.268.10.11,
www.vlaamseopera.be
NOV 14 15.00/18.00 Re-Mix Orchestra (improvisation orchestra for 12-17 year-olds and deFilharmonie orchestra members), conducted by British musician Paul Griffiths



Antwerp

Vlaamse Opera
Frankrijklei 1; 070.22.02.02,
www.vlaamseopera.be
Until NOV 21 15.00/20.00 Madame Butterfly, directed by Muhai Tang

Sint-Niklaas

CC Stadsschouwburg
Richard Van Britsomstraat 21; 03.766.30.85, www.ccsint-niklaas.be
Until NOV 15 15.00/20.00 Operette Die Csardasfürstin



Antwerp

deSingel
Desguinlei 25; 03.248.28.28,
www.desingel.be
NOV 18-21 20.00 Rosas in The Song, choreographed by Anne Teresa De Keersmaeker



DON'T MISS

Alfred Hitchcock

Until 30 December
Cinematek, Brussels

Next month, the film *Double Take* by Flemish filmmaker Johan Grimonprez will open in cinemas. A look at the installation of fear during the Cold War, the film stars Alfred Hitchcock himself, thanks to deft editing and modern digital abilities. To get ready for it, visit Cinematek over the next few weeks for a full Hitchcock retrospective: from his first feature-length film, *The Pleasure Garden*, through the early British mysteries and into the famous Hollywood Years of *Psycho* and *The Birds*. See his stab at screwball comedy (*Mr and Mrs Smith*) and both versions of *The Man Who Knew Too Much*, plus readings and conferences.



→ www.cinematek.be

Brussels

Beursschouwburg
Auguste Ortsstraat 20-28; 02.550.03.50,
www.beursschouwburg.be
NOV 11 20.30 Lisbeth Gruwez and Voetvolk present Birth of Prey, dance/performance

Ghent

Handelsbeurs
Kouter 29; 09.265.92.01, www.handelsbeurs.be
NOV 19 20.15 Dos, flamenco dance by Irene Alvarez and Federico Ordoñez, with Carmen Fernandez, voice; Alexander Gavilan and El Rizos, guitar



Bruges

English Theatre of Bruges
Walplein 23; 050.68.79.45, www.tematema.com
NOV 13-15 20.00 Alison Goldie in Lady in Bed (in English)

Brussels

Beursschouwburg
Auguste Ortsstraat 20-28; 02.550.03.50,
www.beursschouwburg.be



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NOV 12 20.30 My Name is... written and performed by Niko Hafkenscheid, Coral Ortega & Sara Sampelayo (in English)
NOV 13-14 20.30/22.00 I: songs, written and choreographed by Nicole Beutler, performed by Sanja Mitrovic (in English)
NOV 13-14 20.30/22.00 Frascati in Violet, written and directed by Bojana Mladenovic, performed by Lilly and Bony (in English)

KVS Bol
Lakensestraat 146; 02.210.11.00, www.kvs.be
Until NOV 27 KVS and Het Toneelhuis present Titus Andronicus by Shakespeare (in Dutch with French and English surtitles)

Kaaistudio's
Onze-Lieve-Vrouw van Vaakstraat 81; 02.201.59.59, www.kaaistudio.be
NOV 12-14 20.30 TTTTg (Triple Trooper Trevor Trumpet girl) by Tine Van Aerschot, with Carly Wijs and Tracy Wright (in English)

Kaaitheater
Sainctelettesquare 20; 02.201.59.59, www.kaaitheater.be
NOV 13-14 20.30 Superamas in Youdream in Process (film/theatre in English)

The Warehouse Studio
Waelhemstraat 69a; 0475.592.703, www.shaksoo.com
Until NOV 14 20.00 The Shakespeare Society presents Julius Caesar, directed by Hugh Down (in English)

Theatre 140
Eugène Plaskylaan 140; 02.733.97.08, www.theatre140.be
NOV 17-18 20.30 Cie Cecilia and Het Paleis in Tous des gagnants, written and staged by Arne Sierens (in Dutch with French surtitles)

Ghent
LOD Bijlokekai
Bijlokekai 3; 09.266.11.21, www.lod.be
NOV 12-24 20.00/22.00 LOD & Zeven presents Naar Medea, part 2, musical theatre by Inne Goris and Pieter De Buysser, music by Eavesdropper



Aalst
Stedelijk Museum 't Gasthuys
Oude Vismarkt 13; 053.73.23.40, www.alst.be/museum
Until DEC 23 Leerlooijer Schotte: Heden versus verleden (Tannery Schotte: Present versus Past), photos of an abandoned tannery before its reconversion by Flemish photographer Henk van Rensbergen.

Antwerp
Cathedral of Our Lady
Handschoenmarkt (03.213.99.51)
Until NOV 15 Reunion: from Quinten Metsys to Peter Paul Rubens, masterpieces from the Royal Museum of Fine Arts return to the cathedral

Contemporary Art Museum (M HKA)
Leuvenstraat 32; 03.238.59.60, www.muhka.be
Until JAN 3 Textiles: Art and the Social Fabric, installations, sculptures, film, flags and banners
Until FEB 26 Collectie XXIV: presentation of the museum's permanent collection

Fashion Museum (MoMu)
28 Nationalestraat; 03.470.27.70, www.momu.be
Until FEB 21 Delvaux: 180 Years of Belgian Luxury, history of the famous leather goods house

Havencentrum Lillo

Scheldelaan 444, Haven 621; www.havencentrum.be
Until DEC 14 Tabula Scaldis: Tafeereel van de Schelde, panoramic drawings and other documents take visitors on a tour of the River Scheldt from end to end

Middelheim Museum

Middelheimlaan 61; 03.828.13.50, www.middelheimmuseum.be
Until DEC 19 Camiel Van Breedam, recycled assemblages by the Flemish artist

Rockox House

Keizerstraat 12; 03.201.92.50, www.rockoxhuis.be
Until NOV 15 A Gift to God, private patronage of religious art during Antwerp's Golden Age

Royal Museum of Fine Arts

Leopold De Waelplaats; 03.238.78.09, www.kmska.be
Until NOV 29 Marcel Maeyer, paintings by the contemporary Flemish artist, former curator at the museum

Until JAN 17 In the Footsteps of Bartók: Lajos Vajda and Hungarian Surrealism

Bruges

Bruggemuseum-Gruuthuse

Dijver 17; www.uitvindingvanbrugge.be
Until APR 25 De uitvinding van Brugge: De stad van Delacenserie (The Discovery of Bruges: The City of Delacenserie), the 19th-century architectural facelift of Bruges, thanks to local architect Louis Delacenserie

Brussels

Argos: Centre for Art and Media

Werfstraat 13; 02.229.00.03, www.argoarts.org
Until DEC 19 Actors & Extras, contemporary artists explore the contrast between the work of actors and extras in cinema

Atomium

Heysel Park; 02.475.45.75, www.atomium.be
Until DEC 13 Africa: Fast forward, joint exhibition at the Atomium and Central Africa Museum, Tervuren, on the African continent today

Bozar (Paleis voor Schone Kunsten)

Ravensteinstraat 23; 02.507.82.00, www.bozar.be
Until JAN 3 The Other World: Puppet Theatre in China (part of Europa China)
Until JAN 10 The State of Things, works by some 50 contemporary Belgian and Chinese artists, selected by Luc Tuymans and Ai Weiwei (part of Europa China)

ISELP

Waterloosesteenweg 31; 02.504.80.70
Until NOV 14 Flesh, drawings by Dany Danino, sculpture by Hughes Dubuisson and ceramics by Sofi Van Saltbommel

KVS

Arduinkaaai 9; 02.210.11.12, www.kvs.be
Until DEC 17 Nuit Américaine, photographs of the America west by Flemish photographer Peter De Bruyne

Le Botanique

Koningsstraat 236; 02.226.12.57
Until NOV 22 Controverses: Een juridische en ethische geschiedenis van de fotografie (Controversy: A Judicial and Ethical History of Photography), portrait, advertising and fine art photography that has been banned or otherwise been the subject of controversy

Museum of the National Band of Belgium
Wildewoudstraat 10; rini@rinihartman.nl
Until DEC 13 Rini Hartman: 8 Visions of Hope, exhibition by the Dutch artist on the eight themes of the UN Millennium Development Goals

Royal Museum of the Armed Forces

Jubelpark 3; 02.737.78.33, www.legermuseum.be
Until FEB 28 Aanvalleuh!, works by Belgium's best comic strip artists
Until APR 11 Dieren in de oorlog (Animals in the War), archive photos and films of animals affected by the First World War

Sint-Gorikshallen

Sint-Goriksplein 25; 02.502.44.24, www.hallessaintgery.be
Until NOV 29 Neighbours.Friends.Family, paintings by young artists from four recent EU member states

WIELS

Van Volxemlaan 354; 02.347.30.33, www.wiels.org
Until DEC 6 Ann Veronica Janssens: Serendipity, installations by the contemporary Belgian artist

Deurle

Museum Dhondt-Dhaenens

Museumlaan 14; 09.282.51.23, www.museumdd.be
Until NOV 29 Absence is the Highest Form of Presence, work by Robert Gober, Julião Sarmento and Luc Tuymans

Geel

Gasthuismuseum

Gasthuisstraat 1; 014.59.14.43, www.gasthuismuseumgeel.net
Until MAR 31 God of Doctor, collection illustrating the history of healing in Geel

Ghent

Stedelijk Museum voor Actuele Kunst (SMAK)

Citadelpark; 09.221.17.03, www.smak.be
Until NOV 15 Raphaël Buedts, furniture objects
Until NOV 22 Nick Ervinck, GNRI-RI sep2009 EITOZOR, installations

Until NOV 22 Sculptural collections by various artists
Until DEC 6 Klaus Scherubel: Mallarmé, Het Boek, installations

Until DEC 6 Coming People 2009: Forwarding backyards, end works by students
Museum of Fine Arts

Fernand Scribedreef 1 – Citadelpark; 09.240.07.00, www.mmskgent.be
Until FEB 7 Roar China! Lu Xun, Masereel and Avant-garde Graphic Art (1919-1949) (part of Europa China)

Until FEB 7 Max Beckmann, prints and paintings from the collection of the Von der Heydt Museum in Wuppertal
Until FEB 7 Fernand Léger's Le Grand Déjeuner, masterpiece painting on loan from the Museum of Modern Art in New York

Grimbergen

CC Strombeek

Gemeenteplein; 02.263.03.43, www.ccstrombeek.be
Until DEC 10 Shot by both Sides, video installations by Pieter Geenen and Johan Grimontrez
Leuven

Museum M

Leopold Vanderkelenstraat 28; 016.20.09.09, www.mleuven.be
Until DEC 6 Rogier van der Weyden 1400 | 1464 Master of Passions, work by the 15th-century Brussels city painter, the first exhibition in Leuven's new museum

STUK

Naamsestraat 96; 016.32.03.20, www.stuk.be

Until JAN 24 Matt Mullican, drawings, sculpture, architectural constructions and performances

Machelen-Zulte

Het Roger Raveelmuseum
Gildestraat 2-8; 09.381.60.00, www.rogerraveelmuseum.be
Until FEB 21 Espace: Raveel en Nederland (Raveel and the Netherlands), paintings

Mechelen

Speelgoedmuseum (Toy Museum)
Nekkerspoelstraat 21; 015.55.70.75, www.speelgoedmuseum.be
Until JAN 3 Thirty-five years of Playmobil

Tervuren

Royal Museum for Central Africa
Leuvensesteenweg 13; 02.769.52.11, www.africamuseum.be
Until DEC 13 Africa. Fast forward, modernity on the African continent (see also the Atomium)

Until JAN 3 Persona: Ritual Masks and Contemporary Art, masks from the museum's and other collections, shown alongside works by contemporary African artists

ANNA JENKINSON

CAFE SPOTLIGHT



Het Veerhuis

The walls of the jazz club Het Veerhuis are covered with photos of New Orleans musicians, including bass player Ed Garland, who recorded with Louis Armstrong's Hot Five; banjoist Father Al Lewis and trumpeter Kid Thomas "Valentine". The faces weren't simply chosen for being New Orleans jazz musicians, but for having actually played at the club in the aptly-named Flemish village Klein Willebroek.

Alongside these images are photos of the club's own jazz band, the Fondy Riverside Bullet Band. Founded in 1970, the band aims to keep New Orleans music alive, be it from the 1920s or the later revival period. On a recent evening when I went along, the band had invited clarinettist and saxophonist Sammy Rimington, whose recordings number 140 LPs and more than 120 CDs.

Located on the banks of the river Rupel in southern Antwerp province, the club was originally a ferrymen's house, hence the name Het Veerhuis (The Ferry House). Its location also means there are lovely night views of the village all lit up and reflected in the river.

Inside is cosy and quirky, with photos and posters on exposed brick walls, flowers, lanterns and what appeared to be a plastic doll's leg hanging from the wooden beams, and handwritten signs all around. Camiel Van Breedam, a well-known artist as well as the band's trombonist and one of its founding members, said that what he particularly likes about Het Veerhuis is the way the Fondy Riverside has put its personal touch on the space – for example, all the red, from the musicians' concert outfits to much of the decor.

A lot of the people who come to the concerts are members of the club, but non-members are welcome for just a few euros on the door. The club is only open every first and third Saturday of the month, so it's best to reserve in advance.

→ www.fondy.be

FACE OF FLANDERS

Herman Van Rompuy

The man who didn't want to be PM could become EU President

Just one year ago, you wouldn't have found anybody tipping Herman Van Rompuy to become prime minister of Belgium. Not even Van Rompuy himself – he is said to have resisted the idea with all the vigour of a papal candidate and only broke when the king himself requested it.

This month, the Belgian prime minister has come from nowhere to become the bookies' favourite for the first permanent president of the European Union. He's lost none of his reluctance: on Facebook last week, he quoted Mark Twain: "Reports of my death are exaggerated." He added: "And also those of my death as prime minister."

Van Rompuy was born in 1947 into a political family. His younger brother Eric is a CD&V member of the Flemish parliament. Sister Christine (known as Tine) is a European Parliament candidate for the left-wing socialist party PVDA. Son Peter is provincial chairman of the youth wing of the CD&V and speechwriter for defence minister Pieter De Crem.

Van Rompuy, who just turned 62, was educated at the Jesuit Sint-Jan Berchmans College in central Brussels, then studied philosophy and economics at the Catholic University of Leuven. His career in politics seems to have been marked more by the effect he had on his superiors – the *éminence grise* Robert Houben, who brought Van Rompuy into the research department, and Leo Tindemans, who brought him into his cabinet – than by any impact he had on voters.

Nevertheless, he is credited with doing a good job in reducing Belgium's horrendous debt burden while budget minister in the 1990s. He also cemented his reputation as an intellectual, later embracing the weblog, on which he publishes his own haiku.

After the Christian Democrats' defeat in the 1999 election, he spent eight years in opposition before becoming speaker of the chamber in 2007, and prime minister



© Wiktor Dabrowski/Belga

18 months later. He came into that job as a safe pair of hands, and that quality may be exactly what the Europeans are looking for. One Dutch report last week spoke of him as "Too new in the job to have done any harm".

Mind you, the idea of a compromise Belgian candidate has been brought out in the past, when both Jean-Luc Dehaene and Guy Verhofstadt were mooted for the job of Commission president. Both were considered good prospects, and both were rejected by a British veto.

→ www.hermanvanrompuy.be

TALKING DUTCH

ALISTAIR MACLEAN



© de Mel

dichter →

Change is in the air. Perhaps it's the season – leaves turning, clocks changing – that makes people leave or change. The Belgian prime minister is one who seems to be on the move: Herman Van Rompuy, the quieter of the two political brothers, the financial wizard always dressed in boring brown, always two steps out of the limelight.

A couple of years ago, he reluctantly became Speaker of the Belgian House of Representatives and last year was dragged struggling to become prime minister. It's then that he started rubbing shoulders with Sarkozy and Merkel and the like. Now, such are his charms that he seems to have slipped past T Blair on the inside track and is the favourite for the new president's chair of the European Council.

I once heard him speak at a local political meeting. Unlike his TV image, in the flesh he was much taller, and he spoke eloquently without notes for 40 minutes with his audience hanging on his every word. Clearly the lesson here is if you must wear brown, don't do so on television.

He has also become *een dichter* – a poet. A master of the haiku, in fact – verses of up to 14 syllables. In recent press conferences, he has avoided saying anything about Europe, radiates reluctance and spouts haiku. His most recent

→ <http://hermanvanrompuy.typepad.com/haiku>

is about the upcoming joint EU presidency with Hungary and Spain: *Drie golven rollen / Samen de haven binnent / Het trio is thuis* – Three waves roll / Into the harbour / The trio is home.

Perhaps his most famous is one I wish I had written: *Haren in de wind / Na jaren is er nog wind / Helaas geen haren* – Hair blows in the wind / After years there is still wind / Sadly no more hair.

As you read the haiku on his website, you soon realise how many-sided HVR is. What do you make of this? *Winterse, witte / vlokken heb ik lief / Korte romance* – Wintery white / flakes I love. / Short romance. Is he flighty or is he a rock? *De wind rolt en raast / ontketend tot een orkaan / maar in mij geen storm* – The wind rolls and rages / grown to a hurricane / but in me no storm. Another autumnal verse is a potted psalm: *Jaar na jaar steeds meer / worden de zomers korter / en de herfst langer* – Year after year / the summers are ever shorter / and the autumns longer.

I'm more of a prose performer than a versifier, but let me try to match Herman: *De toekomst nadert / niet, maar ik steek / de baan over* – the future is not approaching but I cross the road.

No, I don't understand that myself. Thankfully, I have 450 words in which to couch my thoughts.

The last word → → →

Stepping down

"I've fought doping for 25 years because I know the harm it can do. But today I am stepping down. I don't want to be associated with the destruction of careers."

Sports doctor Chris Goossens, following the suspension of Flemish tennis players (see page 1)

Stepping down

"Yves Leterme should realise for himself that he is not suitable to be prime minister. We've already tried with him, and it didn't work."

Béatrice Delvaux, Le Soir editor, on the possible return of former prime minister Yves Leterme

Quit now

"Why not make Belgium the first country in the world to bring in a total smoking ban. No more smoking, anywhere. Belgium could do that."

Pedro Brugada, King Albert's heart surgeon, who gave up smoking 30 years ago

Guilty secret

"Luckily my grandma knows nothing about the internet, or she would be able to follow my games on the computer. And that would be bad for her heart."

Natasha Nies, who represents Belgium in Lingerie Football competitions in the US

SHARON LIGHT

bite

Julie & Julia

Julie & Julia has arrived in Belgium. After months of drooling in anticipation, I finally got to indulge in the Foodie Film of the Year.

First, the requisite background, which I have explained repeatedly in the past month to blank Belgian stares: Julia Child was the woman responsible for bringing French cooking to America with her magnum opus, *Mastering the Art of French Cooking*, and her television show, *The French Chef*.

The fact that there were people who had not heard of her initially left me flabbergasted, but I suppose French cooking is a little less exotic here.

Child followed her diplomat husband to Paris in 1948, where she discovered French cuisine, attended the Cordon Bleu cooking school and began work on her book.

In 2002, New Yorker Julie Powell decided to cook her way through Child's book in one year – 524 recipes in 365 days. She blogged throughout the project, wrote her own book and is now, along with Child, the subject of *Julie & Julia*.

Child is brought exquisitely to life by no less than Meryl Streep, and the interplay with Child's husband, Paul (Stanley Tucci), is food for the soul. But the *real* food of the film comes from Julie's (Amy Adams) cooking project – and much of it is irresistible.

Eric (Chris Messina), Julie's husband, memorably tears into a chocolate cake with his hands, and I only wished I could do the same. Julie spends much of the film terri-

fied of deboning a duck for *Pâté de Canard en Croûte*, saving it for the last day of her year of cooking, but the resulting dish was so impressive (*photo*) that murmurs and groans of delight rustled through the sold-out screening I attended.

Not all her culinary exploits are successful, of course. Her *boeuf bourguignon* looks gorgeous – until she falls asleep with it in the oven and blackens it. Her foray into aspic is a downright disaster (which hit awfully close to home, as my husband had his own aspic adventure, starting with a *New York Times* recipe and ending with his tracking down the New York writer's phone number for a consultation).

Between Julie living out the too-true ups and downs of a foodie fantasy and time spent in the company of Streep's Julia Child, rather than "enjoy the film", I say, "Bon Appétit!"



→ www.julieandjulia.com