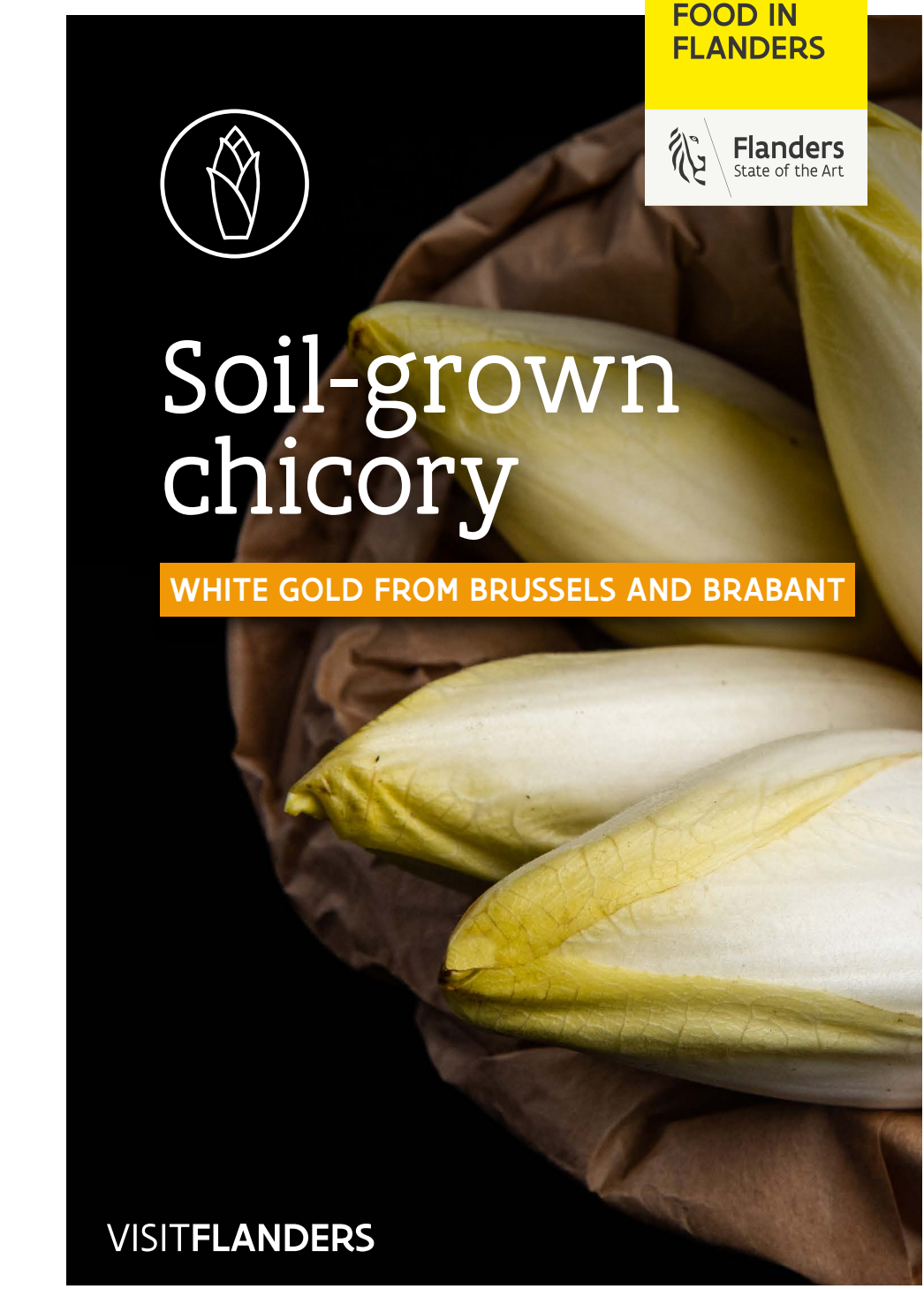
FOOD IN FLANDERS

Flanders
State of the Art

Soil-grown chicory

WHITE GOLD FROM BRUSSELS AND BRABANT



VISITFLANDERS



“A delicious taste sensation from Brussels cellars

Soil-grown chicory from Brussels and Brabant

In Flanders, a delicious taste sensation grows in darkness and silence. Brussels and Brabant soil-grown chicory is a cornerstone of our culinary culture. You won't find this delicacy anywhere else– not grown like this and not of this quality.

And yet this story began purely by chance. Sometime in the 1830s, a gardener at the Brussels Botanical Garden discovered that chicory roots developed snow-white leaves when left in the dark. Soil-grown chicory was born. This typically Belgian vegetable is still cultivated with great care. The traditional 'forcing' process in dark cellars gives it the characteristic shape and slightly bitter flavour that make soil-grown chicory so special.

Thanks to this tradition, we're able to enjoy chicory of the very highest quality every autumn. It really comes into its own in an unrivalled classic dish: braised chicory wrapped in ham, covered in cheese sauce and baked au gratin in the oven. Proper comfort food.



Brussels or Brabant?

**Soil-grown chicory originated in Brussels but it is also a Brabant speciality.
So, what is the difference?**

Brussels soil-grown chicory follows the most traditional method. Growers cultivate their own seeds and place the roots in open soil, covered with a layer of dirt. This creates the typical crispness, bittersweet flavour and delicate leaf structure. Brussels soil-grown chicory has a European Protected Geographical Indication (PGI).

The Brabant variant is subject to less strict rules. Growers do not have to cultivate their own seeds and may also buy them. They also have more freedom regarding the type of soil in which the chicory grows. As a result, Brabant soil-grown chicory can also be grown outside Brabant. You will find it throughout Flanders. This variant proudly bears the regional product label.

Vibrant Brussels, the rolling landscape of Brabant

Both regions are proud of their culinary icons, but they also have plenty more to offer. They complement each other perfectly. Vibrant Brussels is historic and trendy, bureaucratic and bizarre, stylish yet unpretentious. Brabant, meanwhile, is a green paradise of rolling landscapes and majestic castles. A wonderful setting for long walks and cycle rides. The best of both worlds.

Did you know ...

That delicious soil-grown chicory was actually a happy accident? The story begins in the Brussels Botanical Garden, sometime around 1830. Gardener Frans Bresiers had stored chicory roots in a dark cellar and thought no more about them. When he found those roots again months later, he noticed delicate white leaves sprouting from them. And they were delicious.

© Piet De Kersgieter

WITLOOFMUSEUM, KAMPENHOUT

Located in the heart of Brabant, the Witloofmuseum (Chicory Museum) tells you everything you could possibly want or need to know about this white gold. It explains the origins and history of soil-grown chicory and the differences between open soil cultivation and hydroponics, and shares loads of stories about auctions, parades, beauty pageants and much more. Terms such as 'forcing shed', 'chicory head' and other jargon will soon no longer be a mystery to you.

Dorpsstraat 9b, 1910 Kampenhout
www.kampenhout.be/witloofmuseum
bookings via toerisme@kampenhout.be

BRUSSELS GRONDWITLOOF SCHOEVAERTS, KAMPENHOUT

The Schoevaerts family has been involved in chicory cultivation for three generations. Danny and Bieke grow six varieties, producing some 25 tonnes of chicory each year. They happily welcome visitors, for groups of up to 50 people, in Dutch only.

Leuvensesteenweg 202, 1910 Buken (Kampenhout)
www.traditioneelgrondwitloof.be
Guided tours in Dutch only



Experience **soil-grown chicory**

Brussels and Brabant want to share their passion for soil-grown chicory with the world. These museums and chicory growers will provide a warm welcome.

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GRONDWITLOOF 'T GROOTVELD, KAMPENHOUT

At 't Grootveld, chicory grower/arable farmer/draught horse breeder Wim takes you to the chicory beds, where you can see the tradition and craftsmanship for yourself. You can also taste chicory that has just been harvested. It doesn't get any fresher than this.

Oude Brusselsebaan 6, 1910 Nederokkerzeel (Kampenhout)
www.brusselsgrondwitloofvantgrootveld.be
Guided tours in Dutch only

GRONDWITLOOF DE VALCK - DE ROOS, WOLVERTEM

De Valck-De Roos is a family business with deep roots. Wim and Elke are both fourth-generation chicory growers, who have been running their own business since 2009. Elke will gladly take you on a guided tour that ends with a few tasty samples.

Schriekstraat 43, 1861 Wolvertem
T +32 476-54 58 52
Elkederoos89@hotmail.com

GUY AND KOEN VERTONGEN, ASSE

Guy Vertongen took over his father's chicory farm in 1980. With his son Koen, the third generation is now also active in the business. At this family farm, they're happy to provide insight into the daily work, from sowing and bedding the roots to harvesting.

Oude Dendermondsebaan 62, 1730 Asse
T +32 475-57 09 66
guyvertongen@skynet.be
Guided tours in Dutch only

VOLLEGRONDWITLOOF ABTS-GOOVAERTS, BIERBEEK

Jos and Monique have been running this small-scale family business since 1983, and their children and grandchildren regularly lend a hand. Schools and groups are welcome for a free guided tour. With a bit of luck, you may even get to sample the product.

Oude Geldenaaksebaan 31, 3360 Bierbeek
T +32 485-59 79 74

jos.abts1@scarlet.be

FARM SHOP SALENS - VAN DER ELST, ERPS-KWERPS

The Salens family has been involved in soil-grown chicory for four generations. Family patriarch Luc will share all the secrets of his wonderful product.

Vosseputten 10, 3071 Kortenberg (Erps-Kwerps)

www.salensbvba.be

FV VAN HAESENDONCK

Van Haesendonck Farm is investing in the future. The four brothers and one sister who run the farm recently opened a large new shed for chicory cultivation. An educational visit here concludes with delicious chicory soup.

Van Asschevoetweg 10, 1982 Weerde (Zemst)
T +32 15 61 27 07

www.landbouwvanhaesendonck.be

info@landbouwvanhaesendonck.be
Guided tours in Dutch, French and English.



© Kris Vlegels

Farm shop

From the field to your plate is easier than you think. At the addresses below, you can buy soil-grown chicory directly from the growers.

Brussels soil-grown chicory

Thierry and Danny Dewinter
Vanheylenstraat 24,
1820 Steenokkerzeel
witloofdewinter@telenet.be
T +32 473 51 43 38

Hof de Soete
Drogenbosstraat 3, 3020 Herent
ingriddockx@proximus.be
T +32 472 41 72 19

Jos Nijs
Rillaarsebaan 127, 3200 Gelrode
josnijs@telenet.be
T +32 496 64 97 01

Thomas Cools
Hauwlandweg 1, 1982 Weerde
www.grondwitloof.be/thomas-cools
grondwitloof@skynet.be
T +32 494 18 63 86

Grondwitloof Van Bael
Damweg 29, 3150 Haacht
www.grondwitloofvanbael.be
T +32 497 18 12 97

Dirk Bergen
Walenweg 41, 1930 Nossegem (Zaventem)
T +32 496 25 84 91

Hoeve De Koperen Ketel
Altenaken 84, 3320 Hoegaarden
www.hoevedekoperenketel.be
erosmits@hotmail.com
T +32 476 32 01 17

Koeweidehof
Koeweidestraat 25,
1785 Merchtem
koeweidehof@outlook.com
T +32 472 76 80 95

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Brabant soil-grown chicory

Goossens – Saerens
Kruishede 4/2, 1840 Buggenhout
www.goossensmalderen.be
info@goossensmalderen.be
T +32 476 41 43 67

Kris Bernaerts
Wilgen 8, 3150 Haacht
bernaertskris@telenet.be
T +32 478 48 39 24

Koen Verstappen
Reigersweg 8, 9255 Buggenhout
verstappen_koen@hotmail.com
T +32 477 17 68 64


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Soil-grown chicory

Wilfried Minoodt and Monique Hendrickx
Hazelbeek 51, 9420 Erpe-Mere (Aaigem)
wilfried.minoodt@telenet.be
T +32 478 63 40 17

De Polkenhoeve
Polken 95, 9190 Stekene
www.depolkenhoeve.be
info@depolkenhoeve.be
T +32 485 51 07 26

Dirk Debusschere
Bloemgatstraat 3a,
8850 Meulebeke
dirkdebusschere@skynet.be
T +32 479 89 89 92

Koen Depreiter
Lenteakkerstraat 42,
8770 Ingelmunster
koen.depreiter@telenet.be
T +32 476 48 90 80

Kris Andries
Kiezelstraat 1a, 9968 Assenede
els.wille@live.be
T +32 9 373 68 61


© Kris Vlegels



Chicory rolls are a classic of Flemish cuisine. Naturally, you can also order them at numerous restaurants throughout Flanders. The following are the very best according to Gault&Millau.

West Flanders

Bistro Chou

A cosy, homely atmosphere with red-and-white checked tablecloths and nostalgic classics such as chicory rolls on the menu.

Smedenstraat 119, 8300 Knokke-Heist • T +32 50 65 84 24

Brasserie Rubens

A landmark in elegant Knokke. This brasserie guarantees classic dishes with a sea view.

Knokke **www.rubens-knokke.be/en**

East Flanders

De Vlaamsche Pot

Slow food a stone's throw from the Grote Markt (Market Square) in Bruges. Traditional dishes and an extensive range of Belgian beers.

Bruges **www.devlaamschepot.be/en**

Brasserie Mozarthuys

An accessible brasserie in the historic centre of Bruges. Flemish classics and Brugse Zot on tap.

Bruges **www.mozarthuys.com**

't Vosken

Brasserie right next to Ghent's St Bavo's Cathedral, home to the famous Ghent Altarpiece. Unpretentious menu full of traditional classics.

Ghent **www.tvosken.be/en**

De Hoogpoort

Brasserie in the heart of Temse, where you can enjoy breakfast, lunch or dinner featuring classics of Flemish cuisine.

Temse **www.dehoogpoort.be**

Antwerp

De Bomma

Food like grandma used to make. A homage to traditional, home-style cuisine with a touch of nostalgia.

Antwerp **www.restaurantdebomma.be/eng**

Bobonne

An interior full of bric-a-brac, antiques and curiosities in Middelheim Park. And the menu is just as nostalgic.

Antwerp **www.bobonne-antwerpen.be**

De Arme Duivel

Once a traditional pub, now a restaurant that pays tribute to the classics of Flemish cuisine.

Antwerp **www.armeduivel.be/en**

Matterhorn

Named after a Swiss mountain, yet an ode to Flemish cuisine. A lovely place in the heart of Antwerp.

Antwerp **www.matterhornantwerp.be/en**

Limburg

Maison Matthis

Trendy restaurant along the water in Hasselt's marina. From breakfast and snacks to Flemish classics such as chicory gratin.

Hasselt **www.maison-mathis.be**

Brabant

Grand Café Paal 26

Contemporary brasserie with high vaulted ceilings, impressive chandeliers and a focus on regional and seasonal dishes. Also in Leuven, Heverlee and Oud-Heverlee.

Paal **www.gcpaal26.be/en**

Labo Café

The taproom of Brouwerij Van Campenhout in the heart of the chicory-growing region. Try their delicious Witlov beer and culinary classics.

Kampenhout **www.brouwerijvancampenhout.be/labo-cafe**

Eetstamenee Onder Den Toren

A fixture in the heart of the chicory-growing region. This authentic eatery has been serving honest, seasonal cuisine for six (!) generations.

Kampenhout **www.eet-stamenee.be**

De Valck

A popular establishment in the historic heart of Leuven for decades. A restaurant with a passion for artisanal and regional products.

Leuven **www.devalck.be/en/462-2**

Bouillon Bruxelles

An elegant brasserie in the heart of Brussels. An ode to our culinary culture set within a grand Art Deco interior.

Brussels **www.bouillonbruxelles.com/en**

A warm **embrace**

Soil-grown chicory is a versatile delicacy. When the sun is shining, it provides the perfect slightly bitter note in a fresh salad. In winter dishes, caramelised chicory makes a deliciously sweet side dish. But soil-grown chicory truly comes into its own in an absolute classic of Flemish cuisine.



Carefully braised chicory heads, wrapped in a slice of ham, covered with cheese sauce and baked until golden in the oven. You first bite through a golden crust. Then you taste the subtle bitterness of meltingly soft chicory heads combined with the rich cheese sauce. It's the perfect combination of refinement and comfort, a dish that feels like a warm embrace.

‘Seeing the snow-white heads appear is like magic.’

Thomas Cools has had a life-long passion for the iconic Brussels soil-grown chicory. As a child, when his father was away, he would secretly dig chicory heads out of their earthen beds. ‘I still find it magical to see the snow-white heads appear when you clear away the black soil,’ he says.

As the fourth generation running Grondwitloof Familie Cools, he gets to experience this magic a lot. This farm’s chicory tastes fresh and fruity with a subtle bitterness. ‘Even when my great-grandfather started the business, people were enthusiastic about the sweet taste of his chicory. We still grow our own variety from back in those days and receive compliments about its mild flavour. Chicory can be an acquired taste, but we often hear that even children enjoy ours.’

At the Cools family farm, you can buy not only soil-grown chicory, but also delicious chicory croquettes. The outer leaves of a chicory head are usually removed and often end up on the compost heap, but not with Thomas. He uses them as the basis for his chicory croquettes. A fine example of innovative, circular thinking.



Thomas is passionate about this wonderful product, and he is not the only one. Flanders has a small army of enthusiastic culinary ambassadors. GOESTING is a colourful collection of chefs, chocolatiers, brewers, hostesses and culinary makers all united by a common goal: to share the hidden stories of our food culture.

DISCOVER OUR AMBASSADORS AT
WWW.VISITFLANDERS.COM/EN/GOESTING

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Publisher
Leen Gysen, VISIT**FLANDERS**
POSTAL ADDRESS: Koning Albert II-laan 15 bus 640, 1210 Brussels

Legal deposit
D/2026/5635/56

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