

LA MÈN'CHE

THE BEST TRICK-TAKING GAME
(BUT EVEN BETTER)

A game by Matthieu COLLARD & Mélanie DE GROOTE
Illustrated by François D'ALCAMO

Mèn'che is an exceptional card game, packed with come-backs and variations. To date, it is still the best trick-taking game. No less! And yet... Historically a very popular game in the Namur and Bastogne area for nearly two centuries, today it has disappeared from bars and living rooms.

The format we have recorded is believed to have appeared in the 19th century, probably in the Grand Duchy of Luxembourg. It then became a mainstay along the Arlon-Namur axis, and highly popular around Bastogne and Neufchâteau.

Mèn'che was played until the 1950s, when it was slowly but surely ousted by other games such as couyon. Mad Cat Studio has revisited the game of mèn'che from a modern-day stance that remains true to the traditional game, in order to revive this part of Wallonia's cultural heritage, the practices of times gone by, the warmth of evenings by the fire and the ambiance of animated games: In the Ardennes forests, the owls rule the roost. Play your cards carefully to be the first to discard all your tokens!



HELP KEEP MÈN'CHE ALIVE ▼



Contact

pastousalafais@madcatstudio.be



PICONRUE
Musée
de la Grande
Ardenne



Mad Cat Studio 2022
Designed in Belgium

All right reserved
5000 Namur
ed. resp.

www.madcatstudio.be

MÈN'CHE AS PLAYED BY THE COLLARD FAMILY, FROM BASTOGNE ▼

Setting out the authoritative rules for mèn'che is a very delicate task. Each family played their own variation on the game. In times past, it was customary to play according to the rules of the host. Let it be so; you are our guests! Our reference comes from the last witnesses to the old game, the Collard family from Bastogne, and their legacy of a variant of this game that they never stopped playing.

Their traditional game was played with four players, in teams of two, with 32 cards (from the ace to the seven, replacing the seven of spades with the joker). The master cards, called triyonfes, are the queen of clubs (Mite), then the queens of hearts (Coûne) and diamonds (Canète), the joker (Mac Mahon) and the 7 of clubs (Zè). At the start of the game, a grid shape is drawn, replacing money bets in a family setting. This is a horizontal line crossed through by seven vertical bars that represent the seven rounds. The objective is to get rid of all the bars.

DE MODERNE MÈN'CHE ▼

In order to breathe new life into the game of mèn'che, Mad Cat Studio has designed a new game that casts the traditional version in a new light, evoking the rich fauna and flora of the Ardennes:

- ▶ three triyonfes are represented by nocturnal birds of prey: the eagle owl (Mite), the barn owl (Coûne) and the tawny owl (Canète).
- ▶ The two other triyonfes depict deer (Mac-Mahon) and the salamander (Zè).
- ▶ The basic cards represent other animals (wild boar, fox, badger) or vegetation (acorns, black trumpet mushrooms, chestnuts, sycamore seeds), which are chosen to reflect the importance of each card.
- ▶ The buzzard also features on a basic card. It is dressed in an American aviator's jacket with the insignia of the 101st Airborne Division, which defended Bastogne during the Battle of the Ardennes (1944). It carries a pendant which refers to General Mac-Auliffe's famous reply of "Nuts!" in answer to a request from the Germans to surrender.
- ▶ The tokens are the key to the game. They represent the profile of a miner with a helmet and a Davy lamp, drawn by Marcel Rau for the 50 cent coins that were in circulation in Belgium from 1952 to 2001, a half-century during which the game of mèn'che gradually disappeared.

