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Un restaurant

In the 19th century, many more *restaurants* opened to serve workers and craftsmen too, and soon articles about good *restaurants* started to appear in the press. Michelin, the tyre company, produced LE GUIDE ROUGE in 1900 to help people travelling by car, and in 1920 it included *restaurants* for the first time. It became very popular and the famous three-star rating system was introduced in 1931.

Today, if you want to choose a good *restaurant* in France, the number of Michelin stars it is attributed can still guide you. For a lower budget, you can also look for *restaurants* with the Logis de France label. Or, you can just wander around and make your own choice by reading the menus displayed. The good thing about France is that even modest *restaurants* can still delight you with excellent food.



THE 41 PAINTINGS ON THE WALLS AND CEILINGS OF THE FAMOUS LE TRAIN BLEU RESTAURANT IN PARIS ARE ADMIRER BY MORE THAN 500 DINERS EVERY DAY.

CULTURAL TIPS

Most *restaurant* prices are now TTC, *toutes taxes comprises*. The price on the menu usually includes a service charge as well as any taxes. In the past these were added to your bill at the end. You can still leave a tip, as this is always appreciated, but there is no fixed percentage. In expensive *restaurants*, only the menu of the person who has reserved the table will have the prices marked on it.

It is considered good manners in France to keep your hands resting on the table when you are not eating. It is also customary to keep your fork in your left hand. However, manners are becoming more relaxed and it is noticeable that people do not dress up as much for a meal out as in the past.

YOU WILL HEAR

- *Vous avez réservé ?*
Did you reserve?
- *Je peux prendre votre manteau ?*
Can I take your coat?
- *Vous êtes prêts à passer votre commande ?*
Are you ready to order?
- *Quelle cuisson pour la viande ? Bien cuite ou rosée ?*
How do you like your meat cooked?
- *Vous avez choisi votre vin ?*
Have you chosen your wine?
- *Je vous souhaite bon appétit.*
Enjoy your meal.
- *Je peux débarrasser ?*
Can I clear the table?
- *Qu'est-ce que vous souhaitez prendre pour le dessert ?*
What would you like for dessert?
- *Je vous propose un petit digestif ?*
Can I suggest a liqueur?
- *Je vous souhaite une très bonne fin de soirée.*
Have an excellent evening.

Une boulangerie

HISTORY AND TRADITIONS

Being a *boulangier* in France was initially a dangerous trade and early *boulangeries* had barred windows to prevent angry crowds from attacking them as they were considered to be charging excessively high prices. It was only in the early 19th century, as crop failures and famine became less common, and notably with the opening of the Zang Boulangerie bringing the Austrian tradition of *les petits pains viennois* to Paris, that *boulangeries* began to change. By the mid-19th century they had become highly decorated shops, with engraved windows and marble counters. *Boulangeries* soon opened in rural areas also and improved techniques led to the flowering of the French breadmaking tradition in the mid-20th century. The French *baguette* became reputed worldwide, and by the end of the century numerous special and regional breads were also being made.

In rural areas, the evening meal traditionally consisted of soup with bread in it. How well certain breads absorbed the moisture without losing their texture was a serious topic of conversation.

In 1995, with competition from large industrialised bakers growing, a law was passed to ensure that only when the complete breadmaking process was carried out at the place of sale could the word *boulangerie* be used.

French people used to go out two or three times a day to buy a fresh loaf for each meal. This was mainly because a *baguette* quickly becomes hard, but also because people had memories of the war, when bread was rationed and often eaten stale, so being able to shop for fresh bread was a sign of improved times. Nowadays, a busy lifestyle means that most French people purchase their bread once a day.



USEFUL PHRASES

- *Je voudrais une baguette bien cuite, s’il vous plaît.*
I’d like a nice, crisp baguette, please.
- *Je préfère pas trop cuite, s’il vous plaît.*
Not too crisp for me, please.
- *Vous pouvez me le trancher, s’il vous plaît ?*
Can you slice it for me, please?
- *Vous pouvez ne me donner que la moitié, s’il vous plaît ?*
Can you give me just half a loaf, please?
- *Je prendrai deux parts de pizza, s’il vous plaît.*
I’ll have two slices of pizza, please.
- *Je voudrais une quiche aux poireaux, s’il vous plaît.*
I’d like a leek quiche, please.
- *Deux pains au chocolat, s’il vous plaît.*
Two chocolate-filled pastries, please.
- *Vous avez un pain complet ?*
Do you have a wholemeal/whole wheat loaf?



Une pâtisserie chocolaterie



CULTURAL TIPS

In France, Easter is associated with bell-shaped chocolates. The church bells are silenced from the Thursday before Easter as a sign of mourning. It is said they have gone to Rome. On their return they bring back chocolate eggs and bells, which they drop in gardens for children to find.

La galette des Rois is a round, flat cake with marzipan filling eaten on Twelfth Night. Traditionally, the youngest child present hides under the table and decides which person receives each slice. Hidden inside the cake is a small charm and the person who finds it wears the cardboard crown given with the cake for the rest of the meal.

Les madeleines de Commercy, small oval sponge cakes, are, of course, the cakes that triggered the flood of childhood memories for Proust when he ate one dipped in a cup of tea. The famous French writer recounts the incident in the first novel of *À LA RECHERCHE DU TEMPS PERDU*, one of the great classics of French literature.



HISTORY AND TRADITIONS

Catherine de Medicis brought the practice of eating something sweet at the end of a meal from Italy. The word dessert comes from the French *desservir*, meaning to clear the table, after which sweet delicacies were brought for guests. It was considered a sign of wealth that the table could be reset, and the word desserts came to refer to the sweet dishes themselves. Initially only the aristocracy served desserts and this remained true until the 19th century.

When chocolate was introduced to France in the 17th century, chefs began to include chocolate in desserts too and François Massialot invented *la crème au chocolat*. In 1730, Nicolas Stohrer left Versailles and opened a *pâtisserie* in Paris. It is still a renowned *pâtisserie* today.

At the court of Louis XIV, desserts were rich and elaborate. Great *pâtissiers* such as Vatel and Antonin Carême designed complicated, architectural-like structures. But when Carême also introduced the measuring of exact quantities, he took the first step towards creating recipes that could be copied by others.

USEFUL PHRASES

- *Je prendrai la grande tarte aux fruits, s'il vous plaît.*
I'll take the large fruit tart, please.
- *Je voudrais quatre gâteaux individuels, s'il vous plaît.*
I would like four small cakes, please.
- *Je préfère un dessert glacé, s'il vous plaît.*
I prefer a frozen dessert, please.
- *Avez-vous des mille-feuilles ?*
Do you have any vanilla cream slices?
- *Je voudrais un ballotin de 500g, s'il vous plaît.*
I'd like a 500g box of chocolates, please.
- *Vous pouvez me mettre une sélection, s'il vous plaît ?*
Can you give me a selection, please?
- *Je préfère le chocolat noir.*
I prefer dark chocolate.
- *Vous pouvez me faire un paquet-cadeau, s'il vous plaît ?*
Can you giftwrap it for me, please?