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La cuisine française

French restaurants have earned the reputation of serving some of the best cuisine in the world. You can grab a sandwich from a sidewalk stand, spend some time at a café or eat a meal consisting of many courses at an elegant restaurant.



While walking downtown, people often grab a simple snack, such as a sandwich, hot dog, crêpe or slice of pizza, from a sidewalk stand. People with more time usually stop at a café where they can talk with friends, read the newspaper or watch people strolling by as they eat their food. Since menus are displayed outside cafés, you know in advance what is available and how much it will cost. In nice weather people usually sit on la terrasse (terrace) outside in front of a café. Tourists in Paris visit some of the world-famous cafés, such as the Deux Magots, the Café de Flore and Fouquet's.

Can you recognize what's in a salade niçoise? It gets its name from the city of Nice.

Since each region of France and each French-speaking country has its own specialty, there is something available for every taste and budget. You can order choucroute garnie (sauerkraut with meat) from the Alsace region near Germany, a crêpe from Brittany or a salade niçoise (salad made with lettuce, cold vegetables hard-cooked eggs, olives, anchovies, tuna and a vinaigrette dressing) from the city of Nice on the Riviera. Of course, each region produces its own cheese, wine and even candy to share with the rest of the country. North African restaurants serve couscous, a dish of steamed semolina usually accompanied by a meat stew and a variety of sauces. Creole cuisine, from Martinique and Guadeloupe, is fairly spicy and uses many different fruits and seafoods. La tourtière, a meat pot pie, originated in Quebec. Spicy Cajun cuisine from New Orleans is popular throughout the world.

In eating formally at a restaurant, people can choose either certain courses from the menu or a full-course meal at a fixed price. They may eat various courses, starting with an hors-d'oeuvre, such as crudités (raw vegetables, often shredded), then a meat and vegetable course, a salad, cheese and finally dessert. Some fixed-price meals may have only three courses. Diners eat fresh bread throughout the entire meal. A small cup of espresso is served at the end. You can expect to wait a while between courses at a French restaurant. French people do not like to eat quickly and often spend hours at the table. They take great pleasure in eating well. It is often said that a good meal is composed of three parts: good food, plenty of time and good conversation.



In Brittany, as in other regions of France, people enjoy sitting on the terrasse of their favorite café when it's bright and sunny.

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FYI:



Inside the Café des Deux Magots are magots, statues of Chinese commercial agents. These statues are left over from a hosiery store that once stood there. The café was a favorite rendezvous of postwar existentialists, such as Albert Camus, Jean-Paul Sartre and Simone de Beauvoir. Ernest Hemingway and James Joyce also spent time there.



Couscous, a spicy meat stew on a bed of semolina, is a popular main course.

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Répondez aux questions.

1. What are three types of French eating establishments?

2. What can you order to eat at a sidewalk stand?

3. Besides eating, what do people do at cafés?

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4. How can you decide where you want to eat before sitting down?

5. What are two regional specialties in France?

6. What is a specialty from North Africa?

7. What are five courses a typical French restaurant serves?

8. Why may the service seem slow to an American who dines at a French restaurant?



Even on Paris's most famous street, les Champs Élysées, you can get a quick bite to eat.

9. For a French person, what three ingredients compose a good meal?



La Tour d'Argent, a world-renowned restaurant in Paris, is famous for its breathtaking view of Notre-Dame.