

ESSENTIAL FRENCH CHEESE CULTURE AND VOCABULARY



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French Cheese Vocabulary & Culture: A Tasty Guide for French Learners



France isn't just famed for its wine. It's also a kingdom of cheese. Did you know that one-third of French people eat cheese every day? France is the biggest consumer of cheese, with no less than 26 kilograms per year and per person!

There are over **1,200 varieties** each with its own story, flavor, and regional pride. 46 cheeses are AOP ([Appellation d'Origine Protégée](#)) which guarantees geographical origin and traditional expertise. Whether you're a tourist, a

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French learner, or a cheese lover, understanding French cheese culture and vocabulary will help you navigate markets, restaurants, and dinner parties like a local.

In this guide, you'll learn:

- ✓ Essential cheese vocabulary
- ✓ How to buy, taste, and talk about cheese in French
- ✓ Cheese etiquette—do's and don'ts
- ✓ How to enjoy cheese like a true French person

Essential French Cheese Vocabulary

Le couteau à fromage	Cheese knife	Passe-moi le couteau à fromage.	Pass me the cheese knife.
La planche à fromage	Cheese board	On a préparé une belle planche.	We prepared a nice cheese board.
Coulant(e)	Runny/creamy	Ce camembert est bien coulant !	This camembert is nice and runny!
La croûte	Rind/crust	La croûte est comestible.	The rind is edible.
Frais	Fresh	Ce fromage de chèvre est frais.	This goat cheese is fresh.
Affiné(e)	Aged/ripened	Ce comté est affiné 18 mois.	This comté is aged for 18 months.
Fort(e)	Strong	Ce roquefort est très fort !	This Roquefort is very strong!
Doux/Douce	Mild	Ce brie est doux.	This brie is mild.

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Le fromager/la fromagère	Cheese seller	Le fromager m'a conseillé un morbier.	The cheesemonger recommended Morbier.
Le lait cru	Raw milk	Ce fromage est au lait cru.	This cheese is made with raw milk.
Le lait pasteurisé	Pasteurized milk	La plupart sont au lait pasteurisé.	Most are made with pasteurized milk.
À pâte molle	Soft cheese	Le camembert est à pâte molle.	Camembert is a soft cheese.
À pâte dure	Hard cheese	Le beaufort est à pâte dure.	Beaufort is a hard cheese.

How to Buy Cheese in France

À la fromagerie - At the cheese shop

- **Greet politely:** Start with "**Bonjour !**" and end with "**Merci, au revoir !**"
- **Ask for advice:**
 - "*Quels fromages locaux recommandez-vous ?*" Which local cheeses do you recommend?
 - "*Je cherche un fromage doux/fort/coulant...*" I'm looking for a mild/strong/runny cheese...
 - "*Je voudrais goûter ce fromage, c'est possible?*" I would like to try this cheese, is that possible?
- **Specify quantity:**
 - "*Je voudrais un morceau de [nom du fromage], s'il vous plaît.*" I'd like a piece of [name of the cheese], please.
 - "*J'ai cinq personnes à dîner, vous pouvez me faire un assortiment?*" I have five people coming over for dinner. Can you put together a selection for me?

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Au supermarché - At the Supermarket

You'll find cheeses in all French supermarkets, they are usually industrial cheeses, but can be decent and will be less expensive. Some supermarkets have a proper "fromagerie" where you can talk to someone and get your fromage "à la coupe".

- Look for the "**fromagerie**" or "**fromages**" section.
- Pre-packaged cheeses are convenient, but for the best quality, buy "**à la coupe**" (cut to order).

Cheese Etiquette: Do's and Don'ts

À table - At the Table

Do:

- Serve cheese at room temperature after the meal and before dessert
- Use a separate knife for each cheese
- Taste in order: from mild to strong
- [Cut the cheese properly](#)
- Have good quality fresh bread(s) from a good bakery
- Offer [wines](#) for people who drink alcohol

Don't:

- Rush the cheese course
- Use the same knife for all cheeses
- Remove the rind unless it's inedible
- Serve cheese after dessert
- Serve cheese with crackers (bread instead)

How to Enjoy Cheese Like a True French Person

Le plateau de fromages parfait - The Perfect Cheese Plate

Include:

- 1 soft cheese (camembert, brie...)
- 1 hard cheese (comté, beaufort...)
- 1 goat cheese (crottin de Chavignol, cabécou...)

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- 1 blue cheese (roquefort, bleu d'Auvergne...)
- Accompaniments: pain de qualité, walnuts, grapes, honey, jams, wine.

Accords Fromages et Vins - Cheese and Wine Pairing

- Soft cheeses: Champagne or light red wine
- Hard cheeses: full-bodied red (Bordeaux)
- Goat cheeses: crisp white (Sancerre)
- Blue cheeses: sweet wine (Sauternes)

That said, most people in France will drink red or white with the cheese after a meal. If you go to a cheese and wine party you could try these pairings and experiment. Refer to the how to cut cheese properly link above to avoid any "faux-pas".

Régalez-vous! Enjoy!

Quel est votre fromage français préféré ? What's your favorite French cheese?

Voici quelque uns de nos préférés - Here are some of our favorites:

Lait de vache : Saint Nectaire, Reblochon, Beaufort, Cantal vieux, Comté 24 mois ou + Brie de Meaux , Langres, Camembert...

Lait de Chèvre : Pélardon, Cabécou, Pouligny-Saint-Pierre, Crottin de Chavignol...

Lait de brebis : Tomme de brebis, Roquefort, Ossau Iraty...

Want to Master French Cheese (and Language) Like a Pro?

At [Love Learning Languages](#), we offer **self-learning courses** and **immersion weeks** in France. Whether you want to learn French from scratch or perfect your skills while enjoying the best of French gastronomy, we've got you covered!

- **Self-Learning Courses:** [Learn at your own pace](#).
- **Immersion Weeks:** [Join Jennifer in France](#) for a full cultural and linguistic experience including cheese tastings!

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