

## **French Words in English** **(The 'Brush up your French' Holiday Game)**

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*(Revised 2005)*

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Since the Norman Conquest of England in 1066 C.E. (A.D.), many *thousands* of French words have become part of the vocabulary of English and have acquired a native English pronunciation and spelling. Over the centuries, speakers of both languages have continued to borrow useful and attractive words from one another, as needed. With the present international dominance of the English language, the numbers of current English borrowings by French far outnumber those by English, hence the unabating ultra-nationalistic outcry by purists in France against "*le Franglais*".

However, a close look at current English language usage, particularly in the media, reveals quite a large number of interesting borrowings from French *which still retain their basic French flavour*. The enduring Frenchness of these English words is to be detected above all; in their French spelling (perhaps with accents amputated – especially in the haste of composing for the print media and the Internet); but a further telltale feature is their approximately French pronunciation (or enough of the latter to present a potential problem for the unwary who only encounter them in print – like *abattoir* and *reservoir* in Australia, which are rendered with an *-ore* ending). For the hundreds of millions of English speakers who do not speak French, and are unaware of its distinctively different 'un-English' sounds system, the pronunciation of such borrowed words (and phrases) can sometimes cause unease, embarrassment, or error.

The following list of over 600 French words, *presented in creatively Anglo-friendly spellings*, is intended to serve as both an entertaining checklist and an informal quiz to remind us all of the extent of the use of such French words in media usage and in educated writing and conversation. For anyone needing access to any of the original French spellings, these (and a selected number of strategic synonyms or definitions in plain English) are included at the end of the article to for readers' further entertainment and possible benefit. Also included at the end is an Appendix for 'Lexi-gourmets' (or 'Lexi-gourmands', perhaps).

As a party game, the list could be used for you to compete with one another in:

- a) recognising the words in their anglicised form below – the easy bit;
- b) (somewhat more demanding), adding extra examples of 'real' French words and expressions currently used in English. (Please send them to me for the next revision!)

Although I have searched around quite a bit, this selection of contemporary French-sounding/looking words (etc.) is slightly arbitrary and selective (particularly with reference to gastronomic and oenological terminology, where many terms have been omitted). To avoid complicating the game and being labelled a pedant to boot (if this uncharitable thought has not already flitted through your mind), technical terms (like *bouchée*, *boucle*, *chicane*, *renvoi*, etc.) have also been omitted. A list of 150 of these deliberate omissions (mainly gastronomic and technical) is included at the end of this article, to which readers are invited to add their own favourites.

Much easier to omit from consideration were words which, although fairly obviously of French origin and form, did not fit the chosen criterion of still retaining a reasonably *distinct* French flavour in English usage. For such words, a close French pronunciation (by those in the know) would probably sound affected *de nos jours*. Examples abound for us to play with by pronouncing them *firstly* in the normal English manner and *then*, if known, *à la française*.

*Try the following 100 examples:*

absinthe, accoutrements, adieu, adroit, affaire, amateur, aplomb, bagatelle, banal, baton, biscuit, blancmange, blonde, brassiere, brunette, buffet, bureau, camouflage, canard, carousel, champagne, chandelier, chiffon, cigarette (and the many other words in *-ette*, that we owe to French), comedienne, communiqué, complaisant, console, coquette, corset, courier, courtesan, de luxe, debauchee, debonair, dessert, detour, divorcee [and many other nouns containing the anglicised version of the French feminine ending, *-ée*], doyen, doyenne, employee, enclave, - a brief pause, and on we go:

Encore!, environs, epaulettes, etiquette, finesse, grandeur [but see **folie des grandeurs**], guillotine, habitué, haricot, legerdemain, libertine, lieutenant, limousine, locale, maisonette, maladroit, mannequin, margarine, marinade, marionette, mayonnaise, mêlée, meringue, millionaire, nocturne, omelette, pastille, peloton, petit beurre, petit bourgeois, poignant, portmanteau, queue, raisin, rationale, Renaissance, repertoire, reveille, reverie, ricochet, riposte, rouge, sortie, suede, suite, surveillance, terrain, tour, travaux, and turquoise.

Even without these omissions, it is to be hoped that the items offered below (in their unorthodox but hopefully recognisable anglicised forms) will be current enough to engage the interest and interactive participation of most readers.

Bonne chance! (*Bun shahnse!*)

*(Ici je voudrais témoigner ma reconnaissance à Madame (ou Mademoiselle) Florence Romrod pour la gentillesse de m'avoir envoyé des corrections très utiles de la version antérieure de ce petit glossaire.)*

### **Essential Notes:**

**1.** In the approximate “phonetic” representations in the first list below, two of the most characteristic French sounds are dealt with as follows:

a) French ‘j’ or ‘ge’ (like the ‘s’ in ‘measure’ or in ‘decision’) is represented by **zh**. Thus, *Jacques* = *Zhak*; *Jean* = *Zhon*.

b) French uses of the frequent unstressed ‘schwa’ vowel sound (ə - also common to English) usually appear as ‘e’ (e.g. ‘de’, ‘le’) but are pronounced like the ‘a’ in English ‘**a**mount – and three times in ‘**a** moment **a**go’, as my indispensable *New Oxford Dictionary of English* tells me. This *shwa* sound will be represented in this article by ‘**uh**’, thus: ‘de’ = ‘duh’; ‘genre’ = ‘zhon-ruh’.

Although these subterfuges should simplify most doubts in respect of those two sounds, the French nasal vowels which some of us find difficult to pronounce are only roughly approximated below. (You either know them or you don't.) As for the characteristic and very un-English throaty French 'r' sound, it has been left for the reader to supply, omit, or imply. (e.g. *trwa*, *nwa(r)* used as transliterations for *trois* and *noir*). Sorry if the game is sounding a bit complicated. It isn't, really. You'll quickly get the hang of things and a smile or two will quickly spread across your *visage*.

**2. Unlike English words, French words are usually (but not always) stressed on the LAST syllable: e.g. PaRIS, BasTILLE, bouQUET garNI, croiSSANT, ingéNUE, etc.** In phrases, the last word tends to bear the major stress, thus *filet mignon*, *entente cordiale*.

## Basic List of French Words in English with Spellings in Anglicised “Phonetics”

abba twa(r)	Bass tea	bree-co-luhr	core-don bluh (or blur)
ah la ...	bass-teed	bree-osh	core-don sanny-tare
ah la cart	battery duh kwee-zeen	brick-ah-brack	core duh ba-lay
ah la mod	be-blow	brode-ree on-glezz	core sazh
ah-coosh-mong	be-czar [or tsar]	broo-ah-ah	core-tezh
ah-ee-olly	be-day	b'yan pon-song	core-zhet
Ah-lan [Aust. A lane]	be-strow	ca-bal	coze say-leb-ruh
ah-moor pro-pruh	be-yay do	ca-ba-ray	cree dew Kerr
ah-muse-girl	bear-serz	Ca-bear-nay (So-veen-yon)	crem
ah-nee-zet	bees you [or bee Zhoo]	ca-druh [NOT ca-dray]	crem broo-lay
ah-pay-ree-teef	beesk	ca-fay	crem ca-ra-mel
ah-pear-sue	bell	ca-fay oh lay	crem duh ca-ca-oh
ah-pray mwa luh	bell ay-pock	ca-na-pay	crem duh la crem
day-lyouzh	bell let-ruh	ca-preess	crem duh mon-th
ah-pray voo	bet nwar	ca-raff	crem fresh
ah-pro-po	bewt [OZ: beaut!]	ca-ree-yon	crem on-glez
ah-ree-veest	blah-zay	ca-shay	crep
ah-tash-ay	blong-ket duh voe	Ca-cease	crep duh sheen
ah-tuh-lyay	blue-zon	ca-ta-log rays-on-ay	crep Sue-zet
ah-vwa-dew-pwa	boh	Ca-torz Zhwee-yay	crew-dee-tay
ah-von-guard	boh mond	car-tea-ay	crock-muh-s'yure
ah-zhon prov-okka-ter	boh zar	cart blonsh	croo-pea-ay
aid duh com	boh zhest	cash	croo-ton
aid may-mwa(r)	Boh-zho-lay	clee-shay	crow-Kay
am-pass	bom-buh gla-say	cleek	crow-shay
ann-sue-see-on	bon-om-me	co-tuh-ree	cue-ray
ann-sue-see-onss	Bong ah-pay-tea	co-zuh-ree	cue-ret
ann tare nass-yoh-nahl	bong boosh	cock-ee san Zhack	cue-vay
ann-zhay-new	bong-ket	cock-oh-van	cull-duh-sack
are noo-voh	bong mow [not mott = clod]	com-ee (sheff)	dare-n'yay cree
arry-air pong-say	Bong-swa(r)	com-eel foh	day-back-luh
ay-cla	bong vee-ver	com-see com-sa	day-bew [not boo]
ay-Claire	bong vee-von	con-core day-lay-gonse	day-bew-tont
ay-lass	bong vwa-yazh	con-fee	day-cla-say
ay-leet	Bong zhoor	con-fee-Don [male]	day-col-tay
Ay-Len	boo-Dan	con-fee-dontt [female]	day-coo-pazh
ay-long	boo-dwa(r)	con-oss-er	day-core
ay-me-nonce greez	boo-fong (1)	con-sea-air-zh	day-marsh
ay-me-gray	boo-fong (2)	con-truh-Tom	day-moh-day
ay-pa-tay lay boor-zhwa	boo-Kay	con-truh zhoor	day-noo-mong
ay-shuh-long	boo-kay gar-nee	cont ron-due	day-ra-see-nay
ay-twee	boeey-ah-Bess	coo	day-tont
ba-ca-rah	boeey-ye	coo day-ta	day-zha view [not voo]
ba-dee-nazh	boeey-yong	coo duh-ee	dee-ah-bluh-ree
ba-get	bool	coo duh foo-druh	dee-ree-zheest
ba-lay	bool-vard	coo duh grass	dee-ree-zheezm
bahl mass-kay	bool-vard-yay	coo duh man	dee-zhess-teef
bahl mew-zett	bore-dell	coo duh met-ruh	Dee-uh ay mon drwa
ban-Marie	bore-zhwa	coo duh tay-ah-truh	dee-stang-gay
	bore-zhwa-zee	coo pay	dee-stray
	boo-teek	coo-shett	dew zhoor
	boorss	core	
	bra-suh-ree	core on-glay	

derry-air	froo-froo	Mar-keys	oh gra-tan
doo-blon-ton-druh	frwee duh mare	Mar-say	Oh la la!
doo-sir	fwa gra [see also 'pa-tay']	Mar-say-yez	oh, Nat, you're 'Elle'
doosh		mare-see	oh pair
dossy-ay	ga-man	Mared!	oh ruh-vwa(r)
dress-azh	ga-mean	matey-ay	oh-bare-zheen
drwa duh sen-yer	gaff	may-die-yong	oh-tell
duh-me mond	gar-knee	may-lonzh	oh-ter
duh-me tass	ga-toe	may-nazh ah trwa	om-ba-ra duh ree-
duh oat on bah	Ghee [the boy's name]	May-s'yer	shess
duh ree-gur	ghee-shay	may-zon cloze	om-ba-ra duh shwa
duh tro	Goal-waz	Me-dee	om-bee-onse
	goo-ash	me-li-yuh	om-bon-pwan
e-day feeks	goor-may	me-zair	on block
e-dee-oh sa-von	goor-mong	meal-fuh-ee	on croot
ess-ca-lop	go-sh	meez-on-sen	on daze-ah-be-yay
ess-ca-role	go-Sheree	met-ruh doe-tell	on fa-mee
ess-car-go	grong l'yooks	mon ah-moor	on mass
ess-pree	Grong Marny-ay	mon-den	on pass-ong
ess-pree duh core	Grong Pree	Mon-sen-yer	on root
ex-po-zay		mong-kay	on-see-an ray-zheem
extra-or-dee-nair	kel dom-azh	monzh-too	on sweet
	keysh	moo	on-fong ga-tay
fam fa-tal	krwa-son	Moo-lan Roozh	on-fong tare-ee-bluh
fan duh s'yek-luh	kwee-zeen	mool ma-reen-yair	on-klave
far-see	kwon-trow	moose	on-sant
fate		moose-lean	on-shon-tay
fate accom-plea	lan-zhuh-ree	mow-teef	on-som-bluh
fay dee-vair	lar zhess	mow zhewst	On-tont cor-dee-Al
fee duh zhwa	la vee on Roz	Muh-s'yer	on-tour-azh
fee-lay	lee-cur [or Kerr]	my-oh zhown	on-tract
fee-lay me-nyon	lessay-fair	mwa-ray	on-tray
fee-on-say	lessay-passay		on-truh-coat
feelm nwar	lezz-ma-zhess-tay	na-eef	on-truh noo
feen	long duh sha	na-eve-tay	on-truh-po
feenz-erb	long-gur	nay-gee-zhay	on-truh pruh-ner
feesh	loop	neesh [not nitch]	on-wee
feess	loosh	new-onse	on-zhombe-mong
fer-ye-ton	lore-nyet	No-bless oh-bleezh	Onny swa key mal ee
fet shom-pet-ruh		nom duh gair	ponce
fett voh zher	Ma-dam	nom duh plyoom	oo-tray
fla-ner	ma-duh-Len	nong-pa-ray	or con-core
flom-bay	ma-key	noo-vel kwee-zeen	or der-vruh
flur duh lee	ma-key-yazh	noo-vel vag	or duh com-bah
foat duh myuh	ma lezz	noo-voh reesh	
foe	ma-ket		pa duh bask
foe pa	ma-rong gla-say	oat coot-yoor	pa duh duh
folly ah durr	ma-say-dwan	oat kwee-zeen	Pa-ree
Folly Bare-zhair	ma-seef	ob-zhay dar	pa-say
folly day gron-durr	ma-sir	ob-zhay troo-vay	pa-steesh
fon-due	ma-sirs	obey ee-sonse	pa-tay
force ma-zher	[not ma-sooz // mass-	oh coo-rong	pa-tay duh fwa gra
free-song	ooze]	oh duh col-on-yuh	pa-tee-suh-ree
free-zay	Mad-mwa-zell	oh duh Neil	pa-twa
frezz	made-san song fron-t'yair	oh duh la-vand	pair
from-azh fray	mal duh mare	oh duh twa-lett	pan-ash
from-bwahz	mal due s'yek-luh	oh duh vee	panss-nay
fron-glay	Mar-dee grah	oh Fay	par excell-onse

par-fay	quaf yure	Shar-donnay	Too-shay!
par-Kay		shar-zhay da-fair	tour dorry-zon
par-tare	ra-con-ter	shay [plus name]	tour duh force
parry mew-tew-ell	ra-goo	shay-der-vruh	Tour duh France
pass par-too	ra-pore	she-can	tour-nuh-doe
pass-teesh	ra-pore-teur	she-she	tra-ee-zon day Claire
Pass-teess	ra-prosh-mong	sheek	[or: d'éclair]
pay-zazh	ra-ta-too-ee	sheen-yon	tray
pay-zon	raise-on day-ta	sheff	tree-azh
pay-tea-yon	raise-on debt-ruh	shershay la fam	tree-co
pay-tonk	raise-you-May	shezz lon-guh [not lounge]	tromp luh-ee
pea-cong	ray-zheem	shom-bray	troo-so
Pea-no nwa(r)	Ray-pon-day seal voo play	shom-peen-yong	troov-eye
pea-swa(r)	[R.S.V.P.]	Shomz Ay-lee-zay	
pea-zay	ray-vay-yong	shone-song	uh-ee duh berf
pear-see-flazh	Re-Anne nuh va plyou	shoo-croot	va-lay
pen-ywa(r)	re-skay	show-fur	van blong
pew-ray	rest-or-ah-ter	shuh-man duh fair	van don-er
pieced [ or: peest]	rezzer vwa(r)	so-brie-kay	van duh ta-bluh
Plyou sa shanzh ...	ron-day-voo	so-tay	van ordy-narevan
(plyou say la mem	ron-tee-ay	so've key puh	roe-zay
shows)	roo-ay	So-veen-yong	van roozh
P.S. duh Raisy	roe-mon ah clay	som-uh-lee-ay	vant-ay-uh'n
Stonse	roe-mon flerv	son	vee-nyet
po-pee-ette	roe-tee-suh-ree	son frwa	vee-shi-swahz
pon-see-on	roe-zay	son pa-ray	Veev (la Fronse,
pon-shone [for --]	rose-ray	son purr ay son ruh-prosh	etc.)!
pooss-ca-fay	Ruh-no	son soo-see	Veev la dee-fay-
port-cosh-air	ruh-pesh-azh	sonnay lew-mee-air	ronse!
possed rest-ont	ruh-pore-tazh	soo	veez-ah-vee
potto-fuh	ruh-preez [not 'prize']	soo-bree-kay (soh-bree-	vollow-von
pour-bwa(r)	1. noun; 2. verb	kay)	volt-fass
pour on-coo-rah-	ruh-shershay	soo-flay	vuh-debt
zhay laze	ruh-vuh-nong	soo-sheff	vuh-loo-er
oat-ruh	ruh-vuh-nong ah no moo-	soo-tan	vuh-loo-tay
pray-see	tong	sore-bay	vwa-la
premmey-air	ruh-troo-say	soup's on	vwa-see
pree d'yuh		soup dew zhoor	vwa-yer
pree feeks	sa-long	sue-prem	
pret ah pore-tay	sa-von	sue-ksay duh scone-dall	zha-bow
pro-fee-tuh-role	sam-pa-teek	swa dee-zong	zha-loo-zee
pro-tay-zhay	sav-wa fair	swa-n'yay	Zhak
Pro-vonse	Say la vee	swa-ray	Zhan
pruh-m'yay crew	Say-me-yong	swa-sont nuhf	zhee-go
puh-tee bore-zhwa	say-onss		zheet
puh-tee burr	Sea moan	ta-blow (vee-von)	zher dess-pree
puh-tee foor	see-nay-ma vay-ree-tay	ta-bluh dote	zhew
puh-tee Mal	See-tro-an	tare-eeen	Zhon
puh-tee pwa	Sen-yer	tay don-son	zhon-darm
puh-tee pwang	sen-yon	tea-zan	zhong-ruh
puh-teet bore-zhwa-	sha-Gran	teak	[NOT zhong-ray]
zee	sha-po	tet-ah-tet	zhuh-ness dore-ay
Purr-zho	sha-po duh pie	tet-besh	zhuh'n say kwa
	sha-toe	tet duh Kew-vay	zhwa duh veev-ruh
qua fur	sha-tuh-Len	tong me-yuh	
qua furs	shack'n ah song goo	too coor	

## Cheat Sheet

(In the order of the approximations already given. With acknowledgements for invaluable assistance from *The New Oxford Dictionary of English*, 1998.)

### Notes:

1. The tilde sign (~) is used where a brief gloss or definition seems *redundant* or *inadequate*. **For more information on these items, the major English dictionaries should be consulted.**

2. Nowadays, as one of their economies with the English language, print media often dispense with French accents in words like the ones listed. This is to be regretted and on occasion it is distinctly misleading (e.g. 'pate', for 'pâté'; similarly for 'emigre' and 'declasse', for émigré and déclassé, respectively. (My word processing spell checker has just insisted on the two acute accents for émigré, but was silent about 'pate' and '\*declasse', so I hope it will digest what this little glossary reports.) However, on the Internet, accents (at least in the European languages) seem to be a bit of a barrier for international commerce and intercourse, even for native speakers of those languages, and are being dropped right, left and centre, especially in URLs, search engine requests, email addresses and titles. Perhaps this will lead to a more widespread dropping of printed accents, but surely this would cause problems and misunderstandings, like the one described above and other more serious ones.

### [Reminder:

*In order to facilitate the checking process for readers (where necessary), the French words and phrases below follow the highly idiosyncratic order of the FIRST anglicised list, not orthodox alphabetical order.]*

**abattoir**, slaughter-house  
**à la ...**, in the ... way; like ...  
**à la carte**, ~  
**à la mode**, ~  
**accouchement**, giving birth  
**aïoli**, mayonnaise seasoned with garlic  
**Alain**, ~  
**amour propre**, self-respect  
**amuse-gueule**, small savoury  
**Après moi le déluge**, ~  
(expression of irresponsibility by person in authority)  
**Après vous**, After you  
**apéritif**, ~  
**aperçu**, brief reference or comment  
**à propos**, apropos  
**arriviste**, determined self-seeking person  
**attaché**, ~  
**atelier**, workshop, studio

**avoirduois**, system of weights and measures  
**avant-garde**, new and unusual [adj. and noun]  
**agent provocateur**, ~  
**aide de camp**, ~  
**aide-mémoire**, reminder  
**impasse**, ~  
**insouciant**, indifferent, casual  
**insouciance**, indifference  
**L'Internationale**, ~  
(revolutionary anthem)  
**ingénue**, innocent/naive young woman  
**art nouveau**, (early 20th century style)  
**arriere-pensée**, ulterior motive  
**éclat**, ~  
**éclair**, (pastrycake)  
**Hélas!**, ~  
**Hélène**, ~  
**élite**, ~

**élan**, ~  
**éminence grise**, ~  
**émigré**, emigrant  
**épater les bourgeois**, to deliberately shock conventional people  
**échelon**, level, rung, rank  
**étui**, small ornamental case  
  
**baccarat**, (card game)  
**badinage**, witty conversation, repartee  
**baguette**, French stick  
**ballet**, ~  
**bal masqué**, masked ball  
**bal musette**, dance hall with accordion music  
**bain marie**, ~  
**Bastille**, ~  
**bastide**, country house (S. France)  
**batterie de cuisine**, set of kitchen utensils

**bibelot(s)**, trinket(s),  
 knickknacks  
**bidet**, ~  
**bistro**, ~  
**billet doux**, love letter  
**berçeuse**, lullaby  
**bijou**, jewel, gem  
**bisque**, rich seafood soup  
**belle**, beautiful girl or woman  
**belle époque**, (early 20<sup>th</sup>  
 century period)  
**belles-lettres**, essays  
**bête noire**,  
 someone/something you detest  
**butte**, (USA) flat-topped  
 steep-sided hill  
**blasé**, not easy to impress  
**blanquette de veau**, veal stew  
 in white sauce  
**blouson**, short jacket  
**beau**, boyfriend, suitor  
**beau monde**, fashionable  
 society  
**beaux arts**, fine arts  
**beau geste**, noble act  
**Beaujolais (Nouveau)**, ~  
**bombe glacée**, frozen  
 icecream dessert  
**bonhomie**, cheerful  
 friendliness  
**bon appétit**, ~  
**bonne bouche**, appetising  
 tidbit  
**banquette**, upholstered bench  
**bon mot**, witticism  
**Bonsoir**, ~  
**bon viveur**, ~  
**bon vivant**, ~  
**bon voyage**, ~  
**Bonjour**  
**boudin**, black pudding  
**boudoir**, woman's bedroom  
**bouffant** (1), standing up  
 (hair)  
**bouffon** (2), fool, clown  
**bouquet**, ~  
**bouquet garni**, selection of  
 flowering herbs tied in a  
 bundle  
**bouillabaisse**, rich, spicy fish  
 stew  
**bouilli**, stewed/boiled meat  
**bouillon**, stock  
**boule(s)**, French bowls  
**boulevard**, ~  
**boulevardier**, fashionable  
 socialite  
**bordel**, brothel

**bourgeois**, ~  
**bourgeoisie**, ~  
**boutique**, ~  
**Bourse**, foreign Stock  
 Exchange  
**brasserie**, ~  
**bricoleur**, handyman; D.I.Y.  
 enthusiast  
**brioche**, sweet breakfast roll  
**bric-à-brac**, ~  
**broderie anglaise**, open  
 embroidery  
**brouhaha**, fuss; upheaval  
**bien pensant**, orthodox  
  
**cabal**, secret clique or faction  
**cabaret**, ~  
**Cabernet (Sauvignon)**, ~  
**cadre**, ~  
**café**, ~  
**café au lait**, ~  
**canapé**, savoury  
**caprice**, ~  
**carafe**, ~  
**carillon**, peal of bells  
**cachet**, prestige  
**Cassis**, ~  
**catalogue raisonné**,  
 descriptive catalogue  
**Quatorze Juillet**, 14 July (Fr.  
 National Day)  
**quartier**, district, suburb  
**carte blanche**, a free hand  
**cache**, ~  
**cliché**, ~  
**clique**, ~  
**coterie**, close group  
**causerie**, informal talk, chat  
**coquilles Saint Jacques**,  
 scallops  
**coq au vin**, chicken casserole  
 in wine  
**commis (chef)**, junior chef  
**comme il faut**, correct  
 (behaviour)  
**comme ci, comme ça**, so-so;  
 middling  
**concours d'élégance**, parade  
 of classic cars  
**con-fee**, ~  
**confidant**, ~ (male)  
**confidante**, ~ (female)  
**connaisseur**, connoisseur  
**concierge**, caretaker, janitor  
**contretemps**, unexpected  
 setback, disagreement  
**contre-jour**, ~  
**compte rendu**, formal report

**coup**, ~  
**coup d'État**, ~  
**coup d'oeil**, glance  
**coup de foudre**,  
 (metaphorical) lightning strike  
**coup de grâce**, finishing off,  
 finishing stroke  
**coup de main**, surprise attack  
**coup de maître**, masterstroke  
**coup de théâtre**, dramatic  
 turn of events  
**coupé**, ~  
**couchette**, bunk  
**corps**, ~  
**cor anglais**, ~  
**cordons bleus**, blue ribbon (in  
 cooking)  
**cordons sanitaires**, quarantined  
 area  
**corps de ballet**, ~  
**corsage**, spray of flowers;  
 upper part of dress  
**cortège**, solemn funeral  
 procession  
**courgette**, ~ (zucchini)  
**cause célèbre**, major public  
 controversy  
**cri du coeur**, desperate appeal  
**crème**, ~  
**crème brûlée**, ~  
**crème caramel**, ~  
**crème de cacao**, chocolate-  
 flavoured liqueur  
**crème de la crème**, the very  
 best  
**crème de menthe**, ~  
**crème fraîche**, thick cream  
**crème anglaise**, egg custard  
**crêpe**, ~  
**crêpe de Chine**, silk fabric  
**crêpe Suzette**, ~  
**crudités**, ~  
**croque-monsieur**, grilled  
 cheese and ham sandwich  
**croupier**, ~  
**croûton**, small piece of fried  
 bread  
**croquet**, ~  
**crochet**, ~  
**curé**, parish priest  
**curette**, small surgical  
 instrument  
**cuvée**, type, blend, or batch of  
 wine  
**cul-de-sac**, dead-end street;  
  
**dernier cri**, very latest fashion  
**débâcle**, fiasco, failure



**début**, ~  
**débutante**, ~  
**déclassé**, fallen in social status  
**décolleté**, (with) a low neckline  
**découpage**, ~  
**décor**, ~  
**démarche**, political initiative  
**démodé**, out of fashion  
**dénouement**, final part, resolution of drama, climax  
**déraciné**, uprooted  
**détente**, easing of bad relations  
**déjà vu**, ~  
**diablerie**, mischief  
**dirigiste**, supporter of state control  
**dirigisme**, state control  
**digestif**, ~  
**Dieu et mon Droit**, God and my right  
 [motto of the British monarchy]  
**distingué**, distinguished (looking)  
**distraît**, absent-minded  
**du jour**, currently popular  
**derrière**, bottom (euphemism)  
**douceur**, financial inducement/softener  
**double entendre**, ~  
**douche**, shower  
**dossier**, collection of documents  
**dressage**, horse training  
**droit de seigneur**, ~  
**demi monde**, ~  
**demitasse**, small coffee cup  
**de haut en bas**, condescending(ly)  
**de rigueur**, required, unavoidable  
**de trop**, superfluous, unwelcome  
  
**idée fixe**, obsession  
**idiot savant**, ~  
**escalope**, ~  
**escarole**, endive  
**escargot**, edible snail  
**esprit**, vivacity, wit  
**esprit de corps**, ~  
**exposé**, ~  
**extraordinaire**, (e.g. a salesman ex..)

**fin de siècle**, ~  
**farci**, stuffed  
**fête**, ~  
**fait accompli**, ~  
**faits divers**, news item(s)  
**fille de joie**, prostitute  
**filet**, steak  
**filet mignon**, ~  
**fiancé / fiancée**, ~  
**film noir**, morbid film  
**fine**, special French brandy  
**fines herbes**, chopped fresh herbs  
**fil**, son; – the Younger  
**feuilleton**, ~  
**fête champêtre**, rural festival  
**flâneur**, idler; stroller  
**Faites vos jeux!** Place your bets!  
**flambé**, ~  
**fleur de lys**, ~  
**faux**, false, imitation  
**faux pas**, tactless or clumsy words or act  
**folie à deux**, shared delusion  
**Folies Bergère**, (renowned Parisian variety theatre)  
**folie des grandeurs**, delusions of grandeur  
**fondue**, ~  
**force majeure**, unforeseen obstacle or circumstances  
**faute de mieux**, for want of (a) better  
**frisson**, shiver  
**frisé**, curly endive  
**fromage frais**, unripened cheese  
**framboise**, raspberry  
**Français**, ~  
**frou-frou**, rustling noise (as of skirts); frills  
**fruits de mer**, seafood  
**foie gras**, fatted goose liver; see *pâté*

**gamin**, cheeky/appealing urchin  
**gamine**, cheeky/appealing urchin (female)  
**gaffe**, embarrassing blunder  
**garni**, garnished  
**gâteau**, cake  
**Guy**, ~  
**guichet**, booking office (window)

**Gauloise**, brand of cigarette (black tobacco)  
**gouache**, (method of painting)  
**gourmet**, food connoisseur  
**gourmand**, also a gourmet but with tendency to excess  
**gauche**, clumsy  
**gaucherie**, clumsiness  
**grand luxe**, ~  
**Grand Marnier**, ~  
**Grand Prix**, ~

**Quel dommage!** What a pity!  
**quiche**, ~  
**cuisine**, ~  
**croissant**, ~  
**Cointreau**, ~

**lingerie**, ~  
**largesse**, great generosity  
**La Vie en Rose**, (song title)  
**liqueur**, ~  
**lèse-majesté**, insulting a monarch; treason  
**laissez-faire**, ~  
**laissez-passer**, special pass  
**langue de chat**, very thin biscuit  
**longueur(s)**, boring passage or time  
**loupe**, small magnifying glass  
**louche**, rakish, disreputable  
**lorgnette**, opera glasses

**Madame**, Madam  
**madeleine / Madeleine**, small sponge cake /Madeleine [name]  
**maquis**, maquis; resistance fighter  
**maquillage**, makeup, cosmetics  
**malaise**, discomfort, uneasiness  
**maquette**, model  
**marrons glacés**, crystallised chestnuts  
**macédoine**, mixture of diced vegetables  
**massif**, group of mountains  
**masseur**, ~  
**masseuse**, ~  
**Mademoiselle**, Miss  
**médecins sans frontières**, ~  
**mal de mer**, seasickness  
**mal du siècle**, world weariness  
**Mardi Gras**, ~ (Festival)

**Marquise**, ~  
**Marseille**, Marseilles  
**Marseillaise**, (French National anthem)  
**Merci**, Thank you  
**Merde!**, Shit! Damn!  
**métier**, occupation  
**médailleurs**, small round pieces of meat  
**mélange**, mixture  
**ménage à trois**, threesome  
**Messieurs**, Gentlemen  
**maison close**, brothel  
**Midi**, south  
**milieu**, ~  
**mizaire**, (card game)  
**millefeuille**, rich layered cake  
**mise-en-scène**, setting, staging  
**maître d'hôtel**, maître d'  
**mon amour**, my love  
**mondaine**, worldly, fashionable  
**Monseigneur**, ~  
**manqué**, unfulfilled  
**mangetout**, type of pea  
**moue**, pout  
**Moulin Rouge**, ~ (lit. Red Windmill)  
**moules marinières**, (mussel dish)  
**mousse**, ~  
**mousseline**, muslin-like fabric  
**motif**, ~  
**mot juste**, the correct word (for the context)  
**Monsieur**, Mr.  
**maillot jaune**, winner's or leader's yellow jersey  
**moiré**, rippled (effect); rippled fabric  
  
**naïf**, primitive  
**naïveté**, naivete  
**négligé**, woman's flimsy dressing robe; négligée  
**niche**, ~  
**nuance**, ~  
**Noblesse oblige**. (the responsibilities of privilege)  
**nom de guerre**, assumed name  
**nom de plume**, (writer's) pseudonym  
**nonpareil**, unrivalled  
**nouvelle cuisine**, ~  
**nouvelle vague**, New Wave  
**nouveau riche**, ~  
  
**haute couture**, high fashion

**haute cuisine**, ~  
**objet(s) d'art**, ~  
**objet(s) trouvé(s)**, lucky find  
**obéissance**, deferential respect  
**au courant**, up to date; up to speed  
**eau de Cologne**, ~  
**eau de Nile**, ~  
**eau de lavande**, lavender water  
**eau de toilette**, ~  
**eau de vie**, brandy  
**au fait**, up to date  
**au gratin**, with grilled grated cheese  
**Oh là là!** Well, well!  
**au naturel**, simple; unelaborated  
**au pair**, ~  
**Au revoir**, ~  
**aubergine**, ~ (eggplant)  
**opéra bouffe**, ~  
**hôtel**, hotel  
**hauteur**, haughtiness; arrogance  
**embarras de richesses**, too many resources  
**embarras de choix**, too many choices  
**ambiance**, background  
**embonpoint**, corpulence  
**en bloc**, all together  
**en croûte**, in a pastry case  
**en deshabille**, scantily clad  
**en famille**, within/inside the family  
**en masse**, all together  
**en passant**, incidentally  
**en route**, on the way  
**ancien regime**, replaced (political) system  
**en suite**, adjoining  
**enfant gâté**, spoiled child  
**enfant terrible**, unconventional person  
**enceinte**, pregnant  
**enchanté**, delighted; nice to meet you  
**ensemble**, group  
**Entente Cordiale**, ~  
**entourage**, group of attendants  
**entr'acte**, interval  
**entrée**, ~  
**entrecôte**, sirloin; (US) rib steak  
**entre nous**, just between the two of us

**entrepôt**, distribution port or city  
**entrepreneur**, ~  
**ennui**, boredom  
**enjambement**, overlapping sentence (poetry)  
**Honi soit qui mal y pense**, Evil be to he who evil thinks (Motto of the Order of the Garter)  
**outré**, shocking  
**hors-concours**, unequalled; not competing  
**hors-d'oeuvre**, ~  
**hors de combat**, out of action  
  
**pas de basque**, ~  
**pas de deux**, ~  
**Paris**, ~  
**passé**, out of date, outdated  
**pâté**, paste; pâté de foie gras  
**pâté de foie gras**, ~  
**pâtisserie**, cakes and pastries (shop)  
**patois**, local dialect  
**père**, father; – the Elder  
**panache**, great confidence  
**panss-nez**, glasses perched on nose  
**par excellence**, the best; the prime example (of)  
**parfait**, (cold dessert)  
**parquet**, (wooden flooring)  
**pari mutuel**, ~  
**parterre**, ~  
**passe-partout**, ~  
**pastiche**, (artistic/humorous) imitation  
**Pastis**, ~  
**paysage**, landscape, rural scene  
**paysan**, peasant; peasant-style, rustic  
**pétillant**, sparkling  
**pétanque**, bowling game  
**piquant**, ~  
**Pinot noir**, ~  
**pissoir**, public urinal  
**pisé**, stiff clay  
**persiflage**, banter  
**peignoir**, woman's light dressing gown  
**purée**, ~  
**piste**, track  
**Plus ça change ... (plus c'est la même chose)**,  
 The more things change, the more they stay the same.

**pièce de résistance**, the most important item  
**paupiette**, slice of fish or meat  
**pension**, bed and breakfast establishment  
**penchant**, inclination (for)  
**pousse-café**, ~  
**porte-cochère**, covered entrance  
**poste restante**, ~  
**pot-au-feu**, stew  
**pourboire**, tip, gratuity  
**pour encourager les autres**, to serve as an example  
**précis**, ~  
**Première**, ~  
**prie-Dieu**, prayer stool  
**prix fixe**, fixed price  
**profiteroles**, ~  
**protégé / protégée**, ~  
**Provence**, ~  
**premier cru**, superior grade wine or vineyard  
**petit four**, fancy biscuit or cake  
**petit mal**, mild form of epilepsy  
**petits pois**, peas  
**petit point**, (style of embroidery)  
**petite bourgeoisie**, ~  
**Peugeot**, ~  
**pied-à-terre**, small (spare) dwelling

**coiffeur**, hairdresser  
**coiffeuse**, hairdresser (female)  
**coiffure**, ~

**raconteur**, skilful storyteller  
**ragoût**, stew  
**rapport**, ~  
**rapporteur**, reporter (of meeting)  
**rapprochement**, resumption of relations  
**ratatouille**, vegetable dish  
**raison d'État**, political reason for action  
**raison d'être**, justification (for existence)  
**résumé**, ~  
**régime**, ~  
**Répondez, s'il vous plaît** (R.S.V.P.), ~  
**réveillon**, Christmas Eve celebration

**Rien ne va plus!** No more bets!  
**risqué**, liable to shock  
**restaurateur**, restaurant manager or owner  
**réservoir**, ~  
**rendezvous**, ~  
**rentier**, person living from investments  
**roué**, rake, debauchee  
**roman à clef**, novel based on real people whose identity is thinly disguised  
**roman fleuve**, saga; series of novels on same family, etc.  
**rôtisserie**, cooking spit; restaurant  
**rosé**, ~  
**roseraie**, rose garden; rosery  
**repêchage**, ~  
**reportage**, reporting  
**Renault**, ~  
**reprise**, repeat  
**recherché**, rare, obscure  
**revenant**, ghost, back from the dead  
**Revenons à nos moutons**, Let's get back to the subject.  
**retroussé**, turned up (nose)

**salon**, ~  
**savant**, distinguished scientist  
**sympathique**, ~  
**savoir faire**, correct behaviour  
**C'est la vie**. That's life.  
**séance**, ~  
**Simone**, ~  
**cinéma vérité**, (realistic cinema)  
**Citroën**, ~  
**Seigneur**, Lord  
**saignant**, rare (meat)  
**chagrin**, ~  
**chapeau**, hat  
**chapeau de paille**, straw hat  
**château**, castle  
**châtelaine**, lady of the manor/castle  
**Chacun à son goût**, Each to his/her own taste  
**Chardonnay**, ~  
**Chargé d'Affaires**, ambassador's deputy  
**Chez**, (at the home/shop of)  
**chef d'oeuvre**, masterpiece  
**chicane**, chicanery (and technical meanings)

**chichi**, pretentious (elegance)  
**chic**, ~  
**chignon**, knot or coil of gathered hair  
**chef**, ~  
**cherchez la femme**, there's a woman involved ...  
**chaise longue**, open-ended sofa (for lying on)  
**chambré**, at room temperature  
**champignon**, small mushroom  
**Champs Élysées**, ~  
**chanson**, song  
**choucroute**, sauerkraut  
**chauffeur**, ~  
**chemin de fer**, (card game)  
**sobriquet**, nickname  
**sauté**, ~  
**Sauve qui peut!** Everyone for himself!  
**Sauvignon**, ~  
**sommelier**, wine waiter  
**sans**, without  
**sang-froid**, supreme composure  
**sans pareil**, unequalled  
**sans peur et sans reproche**, with no fear or guilt  
**sans souci**, without worries  
**son et lumière**, ~  
**sou**, small French coin  
**soufflé**, ~  
**sous-chef**, under-chef  
**soutane**, cassock  
**sorbet**, water ice  
**soupçon**, a tiny bit  
**soupe du jour**, soup of the day  
**suprême**, (in) rich creamy sauce  
**succès de scandale**, ~  
**soi-disant**, so-called  
**soigné**, well-groomed/cared for  
**soirée**, ~  
**soixante-neuf**, ~ (sixty-nine)

**tableau (vivant)**, (lifelike) scene  
**table d'hôte**, fixed price meal  
**terrine**, ~  
**thé dansant**, ~  
**tisane**, ~  
**tic**, mannerism; twitch  
**tête-à-tête**, close conversation  
**tête-bêche**, ~ (important philatelic term)

**tête de cuvée**, wine from first pressing  
**tant mieux**, so much the better  
**tout court**, simply  
**Touché!** Well said! (and fencing term)  
**tour d'horizon**, broad survey  
**tour de force**, very skilful performance  
**Tour de France**, ~  
**tournedos**, (cut of beef)  
**(la) trahison des clercs**, betrayal of (group) standards by artists, writers, etc.  
**trait(s)**, feature(s); characteristic  
**triage**, sorting (esp. medical)  
**tricot**, fine knitwear  
**trompe l'oeil**, illusion (in art, etc.)  
**trousseau**, ~  
**trouvaille**, lucky find  
  
**oeil de boeuf**, small round window

**valet**, ~  
**vin blanc**, ~  
**vin d'honneur**, reception for special guest  
**vin de table**, ~  
**vin ordinaire**, ~  
**vin rosé**, ~  
**vin rouge**, ~  
**vingt-et-un**, ~ (card game)  
**vichyssoise**, (chilled) potato and leek soup  
**vignette**, ~  
**Vive (la France, etc.)**, ~  
**Vive la différence!** ~  
**vis-à-vis**, in relation to  
**vol-au-vent**, ~  
**volte-face**, turnaround, reversal  
**vedette**, star  
**velours**, velvet  
**velouté**, ~ (sauce)  
**voilà**, there you are! Bingo!  
**voici**, here it is  
**voyeur**, ~

**jabot**, frill, ruffle  
**jalousie**, slatted blind or shutter  
**Jacques**, Jack  
**Jeanne**, Jean  
**gigot**, leg of lamb/mutton  
**gîte**, rural holiday house; lodging  
**jeu(x) d'esprit**, display of cleverness  
**jus**, sauce  
**Jean**, John  
**gendarme**, (paramilitary) policeman  
**genre**, type  
**jeunesse dorée**, gilded youth  
**je ne sais quoi**, a little something  
**joie de vivre**, ~  
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For other articles on French and Spanish, see: [www.briansteel.net/writings/](http://www.briansteel.net/writings/)

**Appendix follows on next page**

## Appendix for Lexiphiles

### (Deliberate omissions, mainly gastronomic and technical)

absinthe	demoiselle	papillote: en papillote
agiotage	dentelle	Parmesan
aiguille	doyen, doyenne	pas de chat,
andouillettes	Dubonnet	pas de quart
art déco(ratif)	Écraser l'infâme	pas de trois
baisemain	embouchure	pas de bourrée
basque(s)	en garde	passenterie
bavarois	entrechat	pavé
Béarnaise	énarque [ < E.N.A.]	Pernod
beau sabreur	équivoque	pelisse
béchamel	fainéant	petit pain
bêche de mer	faux naïf	petite
becquerel	fête galante	pince-nez
Bénédictine	fiche	piqué
blanc de blancs	fouetté	portemanteau
blancmange	fricandeau	premier grand cru
bombé	fricassée	profiteroles
bonbon	fromage blanc	réchauffé
bonne femme	Fronde	remoulade
bouchée	frondeur	revanche
bouchée	frottage	revêtement
bouclé	galantine	Ricard
bougie	galère	rôle
boulle	galette	roulade
Bourbon	georgette	sans-culotte
bricolage	glissade	Sauvignon Blanc
Brie	glissé	sottisier
bustier	grenadine	soubise,
Calvados	Gruyère	soubresaut
carillon	haute bourgeoisie	soubrette,
cartouche	haute école	sous vide
cep < cèpe	hollandaise	succès d'estime
chaise	jeu d'esprit	tartare
Chanson de Geste	L'État, c'est moi!	terroir
chanteuse	langouste	tic douloureux
Chateaubriand	langoustine	tonneau
chef de cabinet	langue d'Oïl	tourniquet
Chenin Blanc	langue d'Oc	tricoteuse
claire de lune	liaison	triple sec
claque	lorgnette	valise
Cognac	marc	vigneron
colporteur	marmite	vinaigrette
contredanse	marque	voile
coquelicot	mayonnaise	voix céleste
coquette	Merlot	volet
Corniche	microfiche	
cornichon	milliard	
corsetière	mise-en-place	*****
couchant	Monégasque	
crème de cassis	Muscadet	
croquebouche	nacelle	
cuvette	nouveau roman	
daguerréotype	nouvelle vague	
dégringolade	opéra bouffe	

**Your additions, corrections , and suggestions:**

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