

« Food, Language and Culture » Anne O'Mahoney Nahnah & Gilles Desmons

We could begin this study by asking ourselves whether or not food is linked to true fluency in French. For an Anglo-Saxon, whose goal is to achieve fluency in the realm of spontaneous French speech, one of the ways to move past the stage of simultaneous translation is perhaps through stimulating subject matter- through the palate, for example- which may take us further than more conversation-plus-grammar courses. It is enough to sit back and listen to the ease and eloquence the French have when they talk about food. They feel it, they taste it and they say it. Is it actually possible to do this in English (linguistically and culturally speaking) or do we have to learn French to rhapsodize over “confit d'oie” and “fraises des bois”? In our study we will examine the powerful influence of the French language on the English language in our subject. Can recipes be translated, not only from the point of view of words, but also and perhaps more importantly so from the cultural interpretations of those words ? English may be the international language of business but French is the global language of the art of cooking and enjoying food. No matter where one goes in France there are parents, children and grandparents dining “en famille”, enjoying their food as they engage in lively discussion. How do they do it? In the views of the historian Jean-Robert Pitte, from the time of the Gauls, the pleasure of eating was linked in France to the pleasure of conversation and discussion, children included. Historically speaking, cooking and eating have been a pleasure in France for centuries. This is not always the case for Anglo-Saxon countries. This is why we will focus our study on Anglo-Saxon expatriates in France. Do Anglo-Saxons in France endeavour to learn French more today than in the past ? Is this linked to the role of food and eating in their lifestyle ? Or are language and pleasure dissociated ? Have food preferences and eating habits given us a very fascinating and approachable avenue for promoting understanding among these two cultures ? Or is it a one way avenue ? Because food is necessary to survival, our entire culture is based on it. It's in our laws, our money, our superstitions, our celebrations and especially our language. Food is a basic need for all of us and though we are conscious that in some parts of the world poverty allows no room for preferences and choices, our study is based on research carried out in affluent cultures. Beyond the biochemical process, we will examine the cultural factors affecting our choices. Here we will also try to identify the rapport Anglo-Saxon expatriates have with food; the link between home and host countries in terms of food products ; the socio-cultural background and the influence of French lifestyle on eating and cooking habits.

Anne O'Mahoney Nahnah est trilingue (anglais/ français/ espagnol). De nationalité irlandaise et américaine, elle vit en France depuis 19 ans. Elle est diplômée de l'Institut Européen des Hautes Etudes Internationales de Nice, professeur d'anglais, responsable du département d'anglais et responsable des expositions artistiques à l'Ecole Supérieure de Commerce de Toulouse.

Après 15 ans passés dans l'expertise de documents et l'édition à Londres (Sotheby's et ISP), **Gilles Desmons**, de nationalité française, est aujourd'hui professeur de langues à l'ESC Toulouse. Il est l'auteur d'un certain nombre d'ouvrages (en anglais et en français) et mène par ailleurs des activités de traduction. Il est diplômé de la Sorbonne-Paris IV (lettres modernes) et de l'Université de North London (Sciences de l'Information).