

Foreword

Many words in the English vocabulary are of French origin, most coming from the Anglo-Norman spoken by the upper classes in England for several hundred years after the Norman Conquest, before the language settled into what became Modern English. Thoroughly English words of French origin, such as art, competition, force, machine, money, police, publicity, role, routine and table, are pronounced according to English rules of phonology, rather than French, and are commonly used by English speakers without any consciousness of their French origin.

Contents

A

apéritifs with amuse-gueules

à la carte

lit. "on the card, i.e. menu"; In restaurants it refers to ordering individual dishes "à la carte" rather than a fixed-price meal "menu". In America "à la Carte Menu" can be found, an oxymoron and a pleonasm.

A propos

Regarding/concerning (the correct French syntax is à propos de)

aide-de-camp

lit. "camp helper"; A military officer who serves as an adjutant to a higher-ranking officer, prince or other high political dignitary.

aide-mémoire

lit. "memory aid"; an object or memorandum to assist in remembrance, or a diplomatic paper proposing the major points of discussion.

amour propre

"Self-love", Self-respect.

Amuse-bouche or **amuse-gueule**

lit. "mouth-amuser"; a single, bite-sized hors d'œuvre. In France, the exact expression used is amuse-gueule, gueule being slang for mouth (gueule is the mouth of a carnivorous animal; when used to describe the mouth of a human, it is vulgar), although the expression in itself is not vulgar. The expression refers to a small mouthful of food, served at the discretion of the chef before a meal as an hors d'œuvre or between main courses.

ancien régime

A sociopolitical or other system that no longer exists, an allusion to pre-revolutionary France (used with capital letters in French with this meaning: Ancien Régime.)

aperçu

A preview; a first impression; initial insight.

apéritif or **aperitif**

lit. "[drink] opening the appetite", a before-meal drink. In colloquial French, un apéritif is usually shortened to un apéro.

appellation contrôlée

Supervised use of a name. For the conventional use of the term, see Appellation d'origine contrôlée.

appetence

1. A natural craving or desire 2. An attraction or affinity; From French word "Appétence", derived from "Appétit" (Appetite).

après moi, le déluge

lit. "After me, the deluge", a remark attributed to Louis XV of France in reference to the impending end of a functioning French monarchy and predicting the French Revolution. It is derived from Madame de Pompadour's après nous, le déluge, "after us, the deluge". The Royal Air Force No. 617 Squadron, famously known as the "Dambusters", uses this as its motto.

arête

A narrow ridge. In French, also fishbone; edge of a polyhedron or graph; bridge of the nose.

armoire

A type of cabinet; wardrobe.

arrière-pensée

Ulterior motive; concealed thought, plan, or motive.

art nouveau

A style of decoration and architecture of the late 19th and early 20th centuries. It takes a capital in French (Art nouveau).

attaché

A person attached to an embassy; in French it is also the past participle of the verbe "attacher" : to fasten, to tighten, to be linked.

attaque au fer

An attack on the opponent's blade in fencing, *e.g beat, expulsion, pressure.

*e.g : exempli gratia

au contraire

On the contrary.

au courant

Up-to-date; abreast of current affairs.

au fait

Being conversant in or with, or instructed in or with.

au gratin

"With gratings", anything that is grated onto a food dish. In English, specifically 'with cheese'.

au jus

Lit. "with juice", referring to a food course served with sauce. Often redundantly formulated, as in 'Open-faced steak sandwich, served with au jus.' No longer used in French, except for the colloquial, être au jus (to be informed).

au naturel

1. a. Nude. b. In a natural state: an au naturel hairstyle. 2. Cooked simply.

au pair

A young foreigner who does domestic chores in exchange for room and board. In France, those chores are mainly child care/education.

au revoir !

"See you later!" In French, a contraction of Au plaisir de vous revoir (to the pleasure of seeing you again).

avant-garde (pl. avant-gardes)

Applied to cutting-edge or radically innovative movements in art, music and literature; figuratively "on the edge", literally, a military term, meaning "vanguard" (which is a corruption of avant-garde) or "advance guard", in other words, "first to attack" (antonym of arrière-garde).

avant la lettre

Used to describe something or someone seen as a forerunner of something (such as an artistic or political movement) before that something was recognized and named, e.g., "a post-modernist avant la lettre", "a feminist avant la lettre". The expression literally means "before the letter", i.e., "before it had a name". The French modern form of this expression is avant l'heure.

avoir du pois

Used in Middle English, avoir de pois : commodities sold by weight, alteration of Old French avoir de peis = "goods of weight"

B

baguette

A long, narrow loaf of bread with a crisp crust, often called "French bread" or "French stick" in the United Kingdom. In French, a baguette is any long and narrow stick-like object, for example a "chopstick". Also, a rectangular diamond, cut to twenty-five facets.

banquette

A long upholstered bench or a sofa.

beaucoup de

Used interchangeably with the English equivalent of "lots of/many/a great number of". Appropriate when the speaker wants to convey a greater positive connotation and/or greater emphasis. Often used as an informal expression, mostly in small regional dialect-pockets in the Canadian Prairies and the American South, especially in Alberta and Louisiana respectively.

beau geste

lit. "beautiful gesture", a gracious gesture, noble in form but often futile or meaningless in substance. This French expression has been pressing at the door of standard English with only partial success, since the appearance of P. C. Wren's Beau Geste (1924), the first of his Foreign Legion novels.

Beaux-Arts

Monumental architectural style of the early 20th century made famous by the Académie des Beaux-Arts.

bel esprit (pl. beaux esprits)

lit. "fine mind"; a cultivated, highly intelligent person.