

bon appétit!

Meet the everyday side of French food.

by Marygrace Taylor

If you're trying to serve more fun, good-for-you meals this school year, French-style food might not be the first thing that comes to mind. After all, the French have a deserved reputation for eating indulgently, with ingredients like butter, cream, chocolate, and wine occupying space in most of the country's well-known dishes. But there's more to French fare than croissants and crème brûlée—and most of it's more nutritious and family-friendly than you think.

BEYOND THE BUTTER

The French don't apologize for enjoying steak frites and macarons, but that's not all they eat: Parents, schools, and society in general place equal importance on teaching kids to love fresh, seasonal, whole foods. In France, adults tend to "believe that teaching healthy eating routines is as important as teaching children how to read," says Karen Le Billon, author of *French Kids Eat Everything*. For lunch, schools typically serve dishes like tomato or grated carrot salad, roast chicken, a crêpe with ham and cheese, and, for dessert, seasonal fruit (plus, students drink water instead of flavored milk, juice, or sports drinks). For dinner, families often enjoy simple dishes like vegetable soup with bread and cheese, fish, lentils, or an omelet, says Elizabeth Bard, author of *Lunch in Paris: A Love Story, with Recipes*.

And whether they're munching on celery or croissants, the French take portion sizes seriously. "The French eat foods like cheese and bacon in small portions, and only at set mealtimes. American culture considers these foods 'bad' because we overindulge; we have not yet mastered the art of moderation," Bard says. What's more, most French kids tend to eat only one snack a day (a late-afternoon mini-meal called *gouter*), cutting out much of the excess sugar and calories many American kids eat between meals.



Quiche Marañère

"Marañère" literally means produce—something this easy-to-make quiche has plenty of. Serve it alongside a green salad and fresh baguette for a simple dinner, and enjoy room-temperature leftovers for lunch the next day.

Active time: 10 minutes

Total time: 1 hour

1	tablespoon unsalted butter	4	large eggs
1	leek (white and light green part only), thinly sliced	1½	cups whole milk
	Salt	1	cup shredded Gruyère cheese
1	bunch Swiss chard, tough stems removed and leaves thinly sliced	1	9-inch whole wheat pie shell

1. Preheat the oven to 350° and set out a baking sheet.
2. Melt the butter in a large skillet over medium heat. Add the leek with a pinch of salt and sauté until it begins to soften, about 3 minutes. Add the Swiss chard with another pinch of salt and sauté 5 more minutes, until the chard has wilted completely. Remove from heat and set aside.
3. In a medium bowl, add the eggs and a big pinch of salt and beat well. Add the milk, cheese, and vegetables and mix to combine.
4. Pour the mixture into the pie shell. Place on the baking sheet and bake 50 minutes, or until the top of the quiche begins to turn golden brown. Serve warm or at room temperature.

Serves 8

Per serving: calories 249, fat 18 g, protein 11 g, carbohydrates 13 g, dietary fiber 2 g

Good-for-you foods like vegetables and lentils are common on French dinner tables, but that doesn't mean French kids are never picky, or that their parents have a technique that only works in France. The secret is one you may have heard: Introduce the good stuff early—and often, says Le Billon. Babies are often served vegetable purees—like leek and potato or carrot with nutmeg—topped with a bit of *crème fraîche* (a rich cream similar to sour cream), while more experienced eaters simply get whatever the adults are eating—be it beets, beans, or even rabbit. “At the end of the day, it's up to us as parents to decide what our kids consider ‘normal’ food,” Bard says. In other words, if kids are served whole, healthy foods from the beginning—without fuss—they'll be more likely to accept those foods as par for the course later on.

MAKE YOUR MEALS MORE FRENCH!

Giving your meals a touch of French *je ne sais quoi* is easier than *un, deux, trois*. Four easy ways to get started with your kids:

- **Use fresh, seasonal ingredients** They don't need much to shine, meaning you get meals that feel special with minimal effort. “My favorite 30-minute meal is whole sea bass or trout drizzled with olive oil and stuffed with herbs and lemon. Most people think whole fish is a big production, but it's ready in no time at all,” Bard says.

- **Punch up your veggies** Make them irresistible with a drizzle of olive oil, a pat of butter, or a dollop of *crème fraîche*.

- **Simplify dessert** Cookies or ice cream should be a treat, not a nightly event. Most of the time, finish your meals with fresh or poached fruit, yogurt with a swirl of jam, or a piece of good-quality chocolate with herbal tea.

- **Make dinner a family event** Take the time to sit down together minus cell phones, computers, or TV. Kids love to copy adults, says Bard, and are more likely to eat what you eat when the meal is shared as a family.

RAW EGGS?!

Traditional chocolate mousse calls for them, but raw eggs could contain the bacteria salmonella, which may cause intestinal infection. Minimize your family's risk by choosing pasteurized eggs, which are quickly heated to high temperatures to kill potentially harmful bacteria. Still unsure? Some modern mousse recipes use heavy whipping cream and cooked egg instead of raw egg.

Mousse au Chocolat avec Framboise

A small helping of this rich, creamy dessert—with raspberries!—is all it takes to satisfy a sweet tooth.

Active time: 15 minutes

Total time: 1 hour, 15 minutes

1½	cups dark chocolate chips	3	eggs, yolks and whites divided and brought to room temperature
2	tablespoons unsalted butter, cubed	½	teaspoon cream of tartar
¼	cup granulated sugar, divided	1	cup raspberries
1	teaspoon vanilla extract		

1. Fill a medium stockpot with a few inches of water and bring to a simmer. Place a large, heatproof bowl on top of the stockpot (make sure the bottom of the bowl doesn't touch the water). Add the chocolate chips, butter, and three tablespoons of the sugar, stirring occasionally until the chocolate and butter are completely melted, 2 to 3 minutes. Stir in the vanilla extract and remove the mixture from the heat. Allow to cool for about a minute.
2. Whisk the egg yolks into the chocolate mixture, one at a time. Set aside.
3. Place the egg whites in the bowl of a stand mixer or a large bowl. Beat with the whisk attachment or with a hand-held mixer, starting on low speed. Once the egg whites begin to foam, add the cream of tartar and beat on medium-high speed until the egg whites form soft peaks, 2 to 3 minutes. Add the remaining tablespoon of sugar and continue beating until the egg whites form stiff, shiny peaks that point straight up without collapsing, 2 to 3 more minutes.
4. Gently fold a third of the egg whites into the chocolate mixture with a spatula. Repeat with the remaining egg whites. Transfer to a serving bowl or individual ramekins and refrigerate for an hour. Serve topped with raspberries.

Serves 6

Per serving: calories 194, fat 10 g, protein 4 g, carbohydrates 21 g, dietary fiber 2 g



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