

# Cultural Awareness Monthly Highlight: France



Photo by Sara Sullivan

**Culture:** The culture of France has been shaped by geography, historical events, and by foreign groups. France has played an important role in cinema, fashion, cuisine, literature, technology, science and mathematics. Marseilles was the trade port in France to import goods coming from Africa and the main trade artery to bring the precious items to either Germany, Europe or England through the Rhone River. It is a beautiful city rich in history. The plague outbreak which decimated most of Europe in the 14th century. The coastal rocky shorelines between Marseilles and Nice is stunning and one of the most popular tourist destination during the summer.

**Arts:** France is famous for the 'beaux-arts' with many masters of the arts such as the many great painters, artisans and sculptors. Famous French painters are: Claude Monet, Pierre-Auguste Renoir, Edgar Degas, Paul Cezanne and Auguste Rodin is certainly one of the most famous French sculptors.

**Language:** French is the official language in France and the second major language in Europe. French is one of the Romance languages, along with Italian and Spanish, with origins in the Latin language. Today, French is the second most studied language after English and spoken by more than 300 million people around the world as first or second language. Phrases: Good Day- Bonjour, Hi- Salut, Bye- Au Revoir, Thank You- Merci.

**Music:** The music of France reflects a diverse array of styles. In the field of Classical, France has produced a number of prominent romantic composers, while folk and popular music have seen the rise of the chanson and cabaret style. France is also the 5th largest market by value in the world, and its music industry has produced many internationally renowned artists, especially in the nouvelle chanson and electronic music.

## Fun Facts:

- In Feb. 2016, France was the first country in the world to ban supermarkets from throwing away or destroying unsold food. Shops must donate wastage to food banks or charities.
- Paris, the capital of France, has a population of 66.9 million people
- The French motto (translated) is: Liberty, Equality, Fraternity



## Celebrations:

- Bastille Day, July 14th: To celebrate the French national day
- Labor Day, May 1st: To celebrate workers rights
- Easter, March 27th: A day were they make an omelette with 15,000 fresh eggs
- Victory in Europe Day, May 18th: Anniversary of Charles de Gaulle announced the end of World War



Napoleon Bonaparte (1769-1821)  
Military and Political Leader



Marseilles, France



Louvre Museum



Coco Chanel (1883 - 1971)  
Fashion/Chanel No.5 perfume

## Recipes to Try:

### Bouillabaisse

Bouillabaisse was originally the fare of the local fishermen, who on returning from a fishing expedition sorted their catch : some to be sold on the local market, some to be kept to be eaten at home. This is a traditional dish to Marseilles. It is a simple family dish which has been improved and modified over the years to the point that today some bouillabaisse include shell-fish.

#### Ingredients:

- 1 (1- to 1 1/4 -lb) live lobster
- 2 large tomatoes, peeled and coarsely chopped
- 1 large onion, chopped
- 4 garlic cloves, chopped
- 1/2 cup extra-virgin olive oil
- 1 lb boiling potatoes
- 1/3 cup finely chopped fennel fronds (sometimes called anise)
- 1 Turkish or 1/2 California bay leaf
- 1/4 teaspoon crumbled saffron threads
- 1 1/2 tablespoons coarse sea salt
- 1/2 teaspoon black pepper
- 9 cups white fish stock (or store-bought)
- 3 pounds white fish fillets (such as monkfish, turbot, red snapper, striped bass, porgy, grouper, and/or cod), cut into 2-inch pieces
- 1/2 pound cockles or small hard-shelled clams, scrubbed
- 1/2 pound cultivated mussels, scrubbed and any beards removed
- 1/2 pound large shrimp in shells
- Garlic and Saffron Mayonnaise (Rouille), for serving



#### Directions:

1. Plunge lobster headfirst into a 6- to 8-quart pot of boiling water, then cook, covered, 2 minutes from time lobster enters water. Transfer lobster with tongs to a colander and let stand until cool enough to handle. Discard hot water in pot. Put lobster in a shallow baking pan. Twist off claws with knuckles from body, then crack claws with a mallet or rolling pin and separate claws from knuckles. Halve body and tail lengthwise through shell with kitchen shears, then cut crosswise through shell into 2-inch pieces. Reserve lobster juices that accumulate in baking pan.
2. Cook tomatoes, onion, and garlic in oil in cleaned 6- to 8-quart pot over moderate heat, stirring occasionally, until onion is softened, 5 to 7 minutes. Meanwhile, peel potatoes and cut into 1/2-inch cubes. Stir potatoes into tomatoes with fennel fronds, bay leaf, saffron, sea salt, and pepper. Add stock and bring to a boil, then reduce heat and simmer, covered, until potatoes are almost tender, 8 to 10 minutes.
3. Add thicker pieces of fish and cockles to soup and simmer, covered, 2 minutes. Stir in mussels, shrimp, lobster, including juices, and remaining fish and simmer, covered, until they are just cooked through and mussels open wide, about 5 minutes.
4. Stir 3 tablespoons broth from soup into rouille until blended.
5. Arrange 2 croutons in each of 6 to 8 deep soup bowls. Carefully transfer fish and shellfish from soup to croutons with a slotted spoon, then ladle some broth with vegetables over seafood.
6. Top each serving with 1 teaspoon rouille and serve remainder on the side.