

Unit 6: Food, Drink & Going Out (La Nourriture et les Sorties)

Food, glorious food! And drinks! This unit is all about navigating cafés and restaurants in French. You'll learn how to order politely, talk about "some" of something, and even handle the bill. Get ready to satisfy your French cravings!

Lesson 16: At the Café (Au café)

Thoughts: Your first real-world French scenario! We'll learn how to order drinks and snacks politely. The key here is the verb **vouloir** (to want) and its super polite form, **je voudrais** (I would like).

Casual Introduction: Imagine you've just arrived in Paris, you're a bit tired from exploring, and you spot a charming little café. You want to order a coffee, but how do you do it politely? In English, we say "I would like..." In French, we have a similar polite phrase that uses the verb "to want." Let's get you ready to order your first *café* or *croissant*!

Grammar Spotlight: The Verb VOULOIR (To want)

Vouloir is an irregular verb, but it's incredibly useful. You'll use it all the time.

VOULOIR - Present Tense Conjugation

Subject Pronoun	VOULOIR Form	English Equivalent
Je	veux	I want
Tu	veux	You want
Il / Elle / On	veut	He/She/One wants
Nous	voulons	We want
Vous	voulez	You want
Ils / Elles	veulent	They want

Pronunciation Notes:

- **veux, veut, veulent** all sound similar (like "vuh" or "vuh-l" for **veulent**). The 'x' and 't' are silent.
- **voulons** has the 'oo' sound.
- **voulez** sounds like "voo-lay."

Polite Requests: Je voudrais... (I would like...)

While *Je veux* means "I want," it can sound a bit direct or demanding in French, especially when ordering. The polite way to say "I would like..." is to use the **conditional form** of *vouloir*:

- **Je voudrais...** (ZHUH voo-DRAY) - I would like...

- **Nous voudrions...** (NOO voo-DREE-ohn) - We would like...
- **Vous voudriez...?** (VOO voo-DREE-yay?) - Would you like...? (Polite question)

Czech Connection: This is similar to saying "Chtěl bych" (I would like - masculine) or "Chtěla bych" (I would like - feminine) in Czech. You're already used to using a slightly different verb form for polite requests!

Ordering at the Café

When you order, you'll combine **Je voudrais** with the item, and always add **s'il vous plaît** (formal, if you please) or **s'il te plaît** (informal, if you please).

- **S'il vous plaît** (SEEL voo PLEH) - Please (formal / plural)
- **S'il te plaît** (SEEL tuh PLEH) - Please (informal)

Example Dialogue:

Serveur: Bonjour ! (Hello!) **Vous:** Bonjour. Je voudrais un café, s'il vous plaît. (Hello. I would like a coffee, please.) **Serveur:** Un café, très bien. Et avec ça ? (A coffee, very good. And with that?) **Vous:** Je voudrais aussi un croissant, s'il vous plaît. (I would also like a croissant, please.) **Serveur:** Voilà ! (Here you go!) **Vous:** Merci ! (Thank you!)

Vocabulary Box: At the Café

French Phrase / Item	English Translation	Notes
un café (m)	a coffee	Can be espresso-sized unless specified
un thé (m)	a tea	
une eau (f)	a water	Often implies bottled water
un jus d'orange (m)	an orange juice	
un croissant (m)	a croissant	
un pain au chocolat (m)	a chocolate croissant	Literally "bread with chocolate"
une baguette (f)	a baguette	French bread
s'il vous plaît	please (formal/pl.)	Essential for politeness
s'il te plaît	please (informal)	
aussi	also	
Voilà !	Here you go! / There it is!	Very common, useful word

Cultural Note: Café Culture

French cafés are places for quick coffees, people-watching, and sometimes a light snack. Don't expect huge mugs of coffee; a *café* is typically a small, strong espresso. If you want a larger coffee with milk, you might ask for *un café au lait* or *un grand crème*. Tipping is usually not expected for just a coffee, as service is included (*service compris*).

Exercises/Quiz:

1. Conjugate **vouloir** for the following pronouns:

- a) Je __
- b) Nous __
- c) Ils __
- d) Tu __

2. Translate into French using **je voudrais** and **s'il vous plaît**:

- a) I would like a tea, please.
- b) I would like an orange juice, please.
- c) I would like a croissant, please.

3. Fill in the blank with the correct form of **vouloir**:

- a) Elle __ un café. (She wants a coffee.)
- b) Nous __ un pain au chocolat. (We want a chocolate croissant.)
- c) Vous __ de l'eau ? (Do you want some water?)

Solutions:

1. a) veux, b) voulons, c) veulent, d) veux
2. a) Je voudrais un thé, s'il vous plaît. b) Je voudrais un jus d'orange, s'il vous plaît. c) Je voudrais un croissant, s'il vous plaît.
3. a) veut, b) voulons, c) voulez

Lesson 17: Some Coffee, Some Water (Les articles partitifs)

Thoughts: This is a new grammatical concept for English speakers, but it's essential for talking about food and drink. We're learning how to say "some" or "any" when you're not talking about a specific quantity or a whole item.

Casual Introduction: When you say "I drink coffee" in English, you're talking about coffee in general. But if you say "I'd like *some* coffee," you're asking for an unspecified amount. French has special little words for this "some" or "any" idea, especially with food and drink. They're called **partitive articles**, because they refer to a *part* of something.

Grammar Spotlight: The Partitive Articles

Partitive articles combine the preposition **de** (of/from) with the definite articles (**le, la, l', les**). They mean "some" or "any" and are used with uncountable nouns (like water, sugar) or when you're talking about an unspecified quantity of a countable noun (like "some bread," not "a loaf of bread").

Here are the forms:

- **du** (doo) - **some / any (masculine singular)**
 - Used before masculine singular nouns that start with a consonant.
 - *Example:* Je voudrais **du** pain. (I would like some bread.)
 - *Example:* Il mange **du** fromage. (He eats some cheese.)
- **de la** (duh lah) - **some / any (feminine singular)**
 - Used before feminine singular nouns that start with a consonant.
 - *Example:* Tu bois **de la** bière. (You drink some beer.)
 - *Example:* Nous mangeons **de la** viande. (We eat some meat.)

- **de l'** (duh l') - **some / any (masculine or feminine singular before a vowel sound)**
 - Used before singular nouns (masculine or feminine) that start with a vowel sound (a, e, i, o, u, or silent h).
 - *Example:* Je voudrais ****de l'****eau. (I would like some water.)
 - *Example:* Il achète ****de l'****huile. (He buys some oil.)
- **des** (day) - **some / any (plural for all genders)**
 - Used before plural nouns (masculine or feminine).
 - *Example:* J'ai **des** légumes. (I have some vegetables.)
 - *Example:* Elle mange **des** frites. (She eats some fries.)

Summary Table:

Article	Gender & Number	Example (French)	Example (English)
du	Masculine Singular	du pain	some bread
de la	Feminine Singular	de la viande	some meat
de l'	Vowel/H Singular	de l'eau	some water
des	Plural (all genders)	des frites	some fries

Negation with Partitive Articles

This is a very important rule! When you make a sentence negative using **ne...pas**, all partitive articles (**du, de la, de l', des**) change to simply **de** or **d'** (if the next word starts with a vowel sound).

- **Positive:** Je mange **du** pain. (I eat some bread.)
- **Negative:** Je **ne** mange **pas de** pain. (I don't eat any bread.)
- **Positive:** Nous avons **des** légumes. (We have some vegetables.)
- **Negative:** Nous **n'avons pas de** légumes. (We don't have any vegetables.)
- **Positive:** Elle boit ****de l'****eau. (She drinks some water.)
- **Negative:** Elle **ne** boit ****pas d'****eau. (She doesn't drink any water.)

Example Sentences:

- Tu veux **du** café ? (Do you want some coffee?)
- Oui, je voudrais **du** café. (Yes, I would like some coffee.)
- Non, je **ne** veux **pas de** café. (No, I don't want any coffee.)
- Nous achetons **de la** confiture. (We are buying some jam.)
- Ils mangent **des** fruits. (They are eating some fruit.)
- Vous n'avez ****pas d'****argent. (You don't have any money.)

Vocabulary Box:

French Noun (with gender)	English Translation
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French Noun (with gender)	English Translation
le pain (m)	bread
le fromage (m)	cheese
la bière (f)	beer
la viande (f)	meat
l'eau (f)	water
l'huile (f)	oil
les légumes (m, pl)	vegetables
les frites (f, pl)	fries
la confiture (f)	jam
l'argent (m)	money
le riz (m)	rice
le sucre (m)	sugar

Exercises/Quiz:

1. **Fill in the blank with the correct partitive article (du, de la, de l', des):**

- a) Je voudrais __ riz. (rice - masculine)
- b) Tu bois __ eau. (water - feminine, vowel)
- c) Il mange __ frites. (fries - plural)
- d) Nous achetons __ viande. (meat - feminine)

2. **Make these sentences negative (remember **de** or **d'**!):**

- a) J'ai du pain.
- b) Elle boit de la bière.
- c) Ils mangent des légumes.

3. **Translate into French:**

- a) I would like some cheese.
- b) We don't have any money.
- c) Do you (formal) want some sugar?

Solutions:

1. a) du, b) de l', c) des, d) de la
2. a) Je n'ai pas de pain. b) Elle ne boit pas de bière. c) Ils ne mangent pas de légumes.
3. a) Je voudrais du fromage. b) Nous n'avons pas d'argent. c) Vous voulez du sucre ?

Lesson 18: At the Restaurant (Au restaurant)

Thoughts: This lesson brings it all together! You'll learn vocabulary for different meals and common food items, and practice a full dialogue for ordering and paying in a French restaurant. We'll also touch on dining

etiquette.

Casual Introduction: Dining out in France is a wonderful experience! It's not just about the food, but the atmosphere, the conversation, and the pace. You'll often find that meals are savored, not rushed. Knowing a few key phrases will make you feel much more comfortable and allow you to fully enjoy the experience. Let's learn to order like a pro!

Meals of the Day (Les repas)

- **le petit-déjeuner** (luh puh-TEE DAY-zhuh-nay) - breakfast
- **le déjeuner** (luh DAY-zhuh-nay) - lunch
- **le dîner** (luh DEE-nay) - dinner

Common Food Categories

- **la viande** (lah vyahnd) - meat (e.g., *le poulet* - chicken, *le bœuf* - beef)
- **le poisson** (luh pwah-sohn) - fish
- **les légumes** (lay lay-GOOM) - vegetables (always plural in French!)
- **les fruits** (lay frwee) - fruit (plural in French too!)
- **le pain** (luh pang) - bread
- **le fromage** (luh froh-MAHZH) - cheese
- **le dessert** (luh day-SEHR) - dessert
- **une boisson** (oon bwah-SOHN) - a drink

At the Restaurant: Key Phrases

- **La carte, s'il vous plaît.** (Lah kahrt, seel voo pleh) - The menu, please. (This is for the full menu with all dishes)
- **Le menu, s'il vous plaît.** (Luh muh-NEW, seel voo pleh) - The set menu, please. (Often a fixed-price, multi-course meal)
- **Je voudrais...** (I would like...) - Use this to order your dishes.
- **Comme entrée, je voudrais...** (Kohm ahn-TRAY...) - As a starter, I would like...
- **Comme plat principal, je voudrais...** (Kohm plah pran-see-PAHL...) - As a main course, I would like...
- **Comme dessert, je voudrais...** (Kohm day-SEHR...) - As a dessert, I would like...
- **L'addition, s'il vous plaît.** (Lah-dee-SYOHN, seel voo pleh) - The bill, please.

Example Restaurant Dialogue:

Serveur: Bonjour, Monsieur-Dame. Vous avez une réservation ? (Hello, Sir-Madam. Do you have a reservation?) **Vous:** Bonjour. Non, pas de réservation. Une table pour deux, s'il vous plaît. (Hello. No, no reservation. A table for two, please.) **Serveur:** Bien sûr. Suivez-moi. (Of course. Follow me.) (*Later, at the table*) **Serveur:** Voici la carte. (Here is the menu.) **Vous:** Merci. (*After looking at the menu*) **Serveur:** Vous avez choisi ? (Have you chosen?) **Vous:** Oui, merci. Comme plat principal, je voudrais du poisson avec des légumes. (Yes, thank you. As a main course, I would like some fish with some vegetables.) **Serveur:** Très bien. Et comme boisson ? (Very good. And for a drink?) **Vous:** Je voudrais de l'eau, s'il vous plaît. (I would like some water, please.) (*After the meal*) **Vous:** L'addition, s'il vous plaît. (The bill, please.) **Serveur:** Oui, tout de suite. (Yes, right away.)

Cultural Note: French Dining Etiquette and Tipping

- **Pace:** French meals are generally slower and more relaxed than in some other countries. Don't expect your food to arrive immediately, and don't feel rushed to leave.
- **Bread:** Bread is usually served automatically and is meant to be eaten with your meal, often used to push food onto your fork or soak up sauces. Don't eat it all before your meal arrives!
- **Water:** Tap water (*une carafe d'eau*) is free and common. You can ask for it instead of bottled water.
- **Service Compris:** In France, service charge (*service compris*) is legally included in the price of your meal. This means you are **not** obligated to leave an additional tip.
- **Tipping:** If you want to leave a small extra tip for excellent service, rounding up to the nearest euro or leaving a few euros (e.g., 5-10% for exceptional service) is appreciated but entirely optional. It's not like the US where 15-20% is expected.
- **"Monsieur-Dame":** A polite way for staff to address a couple without knowing their names or marital status.

Exercises/Quiz:

1. Translate these meal names into French:

- a) breakfast
- b) lunch
- c) dinner

2. Fill in the blanks with the correct partitive article (du, de la, de l', des):

- a) Je voudrais __ poulet. (chicken - masculine)
- b) Nous mangeons __ fruits. (fruits - plural)
- c) Il boit __ bière. (beer - feminine)

3. Translate these restaurant phrases into French:

- a) The menu, please. (full menu)
- b) The bill, please.
- c) As a dessert, I would like some cheese.

4. True or False:

- a) In France, you must always leave a 15% tip.
- b) *La carte* is the same as *le menu*.

Solutions:

1. a) le petit-déjeuner, b) le déjeuner, c) le dîner
2. a) du, b) des, c) de la
3. a) La carte, s'il vous plaît. b) L'addition, s'il vous plaît. c) Comme dessert, je voudrais du fromage.
4. a) False (service is included, tipping is optional and smaller) b) False (La carte is the full menu, Le menu is often a set, fixed-price meal)

Key Takeaways for Unit 6: Food, Drink & Going Out

- **Ordering Politely:** Use **Je voudrais...** (I would like...) for polite requests, always followed by **s'il vous plaît**.
- **The Verb VOULOIR (to want):** Irregular, but essential. *Je veux, Tu veux, Il/Elle/On veut, Nous voulons, Vous voulez, Ils/Elles veulent.*
- **Partitive Articles (Some/Any):** Use these to talk about unspecified quantities of food/drink.
 - **du** (masculine singular)

- **de la** (feminine singular)
- **de l'** (before vowel/h, singular)
- **des** (plural)
- **Crucial Negation Rule:** In negative sentences (**ne...pas**), all partitive articles become **de** or **d'**.
- **Restaurant Vocabulary:** Learn the names of meals (**petit-déjeuner, déjeuner, dîner**) and common food categories (**viande, poisson, légumes, fruits, pain, fromage, dessert**).
- **Restaurant Phrases:** **La carte** (full menu), **Le menu** (set menu), **L'addition** (the bill).
- **Cultural Note:** French dining is often slower. Service is included in the price, so tipping is optional and typically smaller than in some other countries.

You're now equipped to order with confidence at a French café or restaurant! Enjoy your delicious French journey!