

THE FUCKING FRENCH

KISS



Le French Kiss
not a French concept

*A French Guide to Love, Seduction,
and Why You're Doing Both Wrong*

thefuckingfrench.com

INTRODUCTION

The French Kiss was not invented by the French.

It was attributed to us by everyone else.

We accepted the credit.

This is very French.

In France, we don't say "French Kiss." We say *embrasser*. To kiss. No nationality required.

The idea that kissing needed a nationality, a name, and an international reputation — this came from outside France.

The French looked at this development and said nothing. We just continued kissing. Correctly.

What the French do differently:

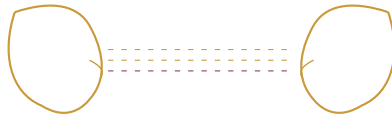
- We don't say "I love you" easily. We show it.
- We don't chase. We attract.
- We don't perform romance. We practice it.
- We argue. Constantly. We consider this intimacy.
- We eat together. We consider this love.
- We are late. When we arrive, we are fully there.

This book will not teach you to be French. You cannot learn to be French. You can learn to understand us. Which is, frankly, more useful.



CHAPTER I

What is a French Kiss?



La Bise

2 or 3? nobody knows.

La Bise: 2 kisses, or 3? The great French uncertainty.

Nobody in France knows what a French Kiss is. This is because in France, there is no such thing.

There is *embrasser quelqu'un* — to kiss someone, or to embrace them. In French the body and the affection are the same word.

There is *se faire la bise* — two kisses on the cheek, the entirely non-romantic greeting that foreigners find confusing and French people perform automatically on every person they meet, including their accountant.

There is *un bisou* — a small kiss, the kind you give a child or a grandmother.

And there is *un baiser* — which technically means a kiss but in practice means something considerably more intimate, which is why French people have stopped using it in polite company.

But the French Kiss, as a named technique, as a cultural export? This does not exist in France. We just kiss.

How it became French:

During the First World War, American soldiers arrived in France. They encountered French women. They encountered a level of directness they

were not accustomed to. They went home. They told their friends. By the 1920s, a type of kiss had been named after an entire country.

The country was not consulted. The country did not object. The country was too busy kissing to notice.

On the bise:

Two kisses on the cheek, or sometimes one, or sometimes three or four depending on the region. Standing with someone, unsure if this is a two-bise or three-bise region, both of you leaning in then pulling back then leaning in again —

This dance of uncertain cheeks is the most French thing that exists. It is more French than the Eiffel Tower. It is more French than wine.



CHAPTER II

How Not to Say I Love You

In English, "I love you" is said frequently. People say it to their partners, their children, their friends. Some people end phone calls with it.

In French, *je t'aime* is not said frequently.

Je t'aime is said carefully. When it is true, when it has been considered, when the speaker is prepared for the weight of it.

It is not said at the end of a phone call. It is not said lightly.

This does not mean the French don't love. The French love enormously. They love loudly and passionately and with complete commitment. They just don't say so very often. They show it instead.

How French people say I love you without saying it:

They cook for you. They cook well. They spend time on it. The sauce is the love. Be patient.

They argue with you. The French argue with people they respect. If a French person stops arguing with you, be worried.

They remember. What you said three weeks ago at dinner. The wine you liked. The French pay attention. They file it away. They bring it back.

They are present. When a French person is with you, they are with you. Not on their phone. Not thinking about work.

They criticise you. Only people who love you tell you the truth. Everyone else is polite.

The first "je t'aime":

In France, the first *je t'aime* is irreversible. You cannot unsay it. The French understand this. So they wait. Sometimes a very long time. Their partners, if not French, find this agonising. The French consider this reasonable. Both things are true.



CHAPTER III

The Art of Being Unavailable



L'indisponibilité
strategic. always.

Three messages. No reply. In déjeuner.

The French do not respond to messages immediately.

This is not rudeness. This is *ne pas se rendre trop disponible* — not making yourself too available — which is considered a basic principle of healthy human interaction.

If you are always available, you have no life of your own. If you have no life, you are not interesting. If you are not interesting, why would anyone want to spend time with you?

The French are strategically unavailable. Not as a game. As a genuine statement that they have things to do, thoughts to think, books to read, dinners to prepare, wines to drink.

They will get back to you. When they have finished. Probably this evening. Maybe tomorrow.

The non-French partner will send a message and receive no reply for three hours. They will cycle through: ignored → something is wrong → they're angry → they're dead → they're fine, they're just French. The French person will reply when they finish their lunch. They will have had an excellent lunch.

On being late:

The French are late. An invitation for 8pm means arrival between 8:15 and 8:45. This is not rude. This is normal.

When a French person finally arrives, they arrive *fully*. They put down their bag. They embrace everyone. They look at the room. They are here now, completely, and they will not be checking their phone.

The forty minutes of waiting is the price of this presence. It is almost always worth it.



CHAPTER IV

French Flirting

French flirting is not obvious. This is the point. If the flirting is obvious, it has already failed.

How French people flirt:

They look at you. Direct, held for a moment longer than necessary, then released. Three seconds maximum. This contains more information than a twenty-minute conversation in other cultures.

They disagree with you. Not aggressively. Thoughtfully. To say: I am paying attention to your ideas and I find them interesting enough to argue with. This is, in France, a form of foreplay.

They are interested in your opinion. Not your job, your apartment, your ambitions. Your opinion. On a film. A political development. Something that reveals how you think.

They feed you. If a French person cooks for you, invites you to a long dinner, opens a good bottle — this is not hospitality. This is a declaration.

They are honest about you. They notice something true. They say it. French compliments are specific and true. More valuable than general ones.

What French flirting is not:

— Loud.

— Performative.

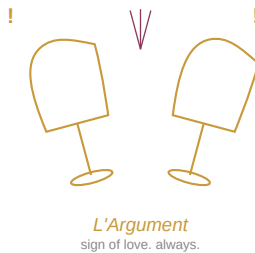
— A series of techniques learned from a book.

The French would never read a book about flirting. They would, however, read a book about how other cultures fail at it. This is that book.



CHAPTER V

The Argument



French couples argue. This is not a problem. This is the relationship.

An argument in France is a sign that two people are genuinely engaged with each other. People who don't argue have stopped listening. People who don't argue have decided that the other person's opinion doesn't matter enough to challenge.

The structure of a French argument:

It begins at the dinner table. Almost always at the dinner table.

Someone says something. Someone else disagrees. The positions are stated, refined, challenged, restated.

Someone brings up something from two months ago. This is not a dirty tactic. This is evidence.

Someone pours more wine.

Eventually someone concedes a point — a sign of intelligence, not weakness. Or the argument is tabled for tomorrow.

Both outcomes involve finishing the wine.

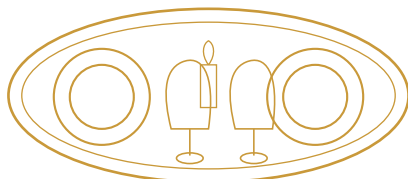
The non-French partner will ask: are we okay? The French partner will say: of course. Why? The non-French partner: we were arguing. The French partner: yes. So? This conversation will itself become an argument. This is fine.



CHAPTER VI

The Dinner Table

Where everything happens in France



La Table

where everything happens

The table. Two plates. Two glasses. One candle. Everything.

The dinner table is where everything happens in France. Love is declared. Love is ended. The dinner is where the French do the work of a relationship: talking, listening, arguing, planning, remembering, being together without screens.

A French dinner lasts two hours at minimum. Three is normal. Four on a weekend. Five if the wine is good and someone has said something interesting.

Nobody leaves early. Nobody suggests moving to the sofa. You stay at the table. You stay in the conversation.

Seduction at the French dinner table:

— You cook well. You don't apologise for the food. You chose it. You made it.

— You open the wine early and let it breathe and then talk about whether you opened it early enough.

— You pay attention to what they eat, what they leave, what they come back to.

— You disagree about something. Not everything. Something.

— You don't look at your phone. Not once. For three hours.

— This is, in the age of the smartphone, the most radical act of seduction available.



CHAPTER VII

Valentine's Day

Why French people don't do it. Except they do.

Valentine's Day in France is not the industrial production of love that it is elsewhere.

There are no giant stuffed animals. No helium balloons shaped like hearts. No cards that play songs when you open them.

There is dinner. A good dinner. At home or at a restaurant chosen carefully. Something to drink slightly better than usual. Perhaps flowers — one type, chosen specifically.

The French do not need a calendar to tell them when to love. They find the suggestion slightly offensive. They do Valentine's Day anyway because their non-French partners expect it. And because any occasion for a good dinner is a valid occasion. And because the French are, beneath everything, pragmatic about pleasure.



CHAPTER VIII

The French Kiss in Africa

Field notes from Pointe-Noire and Walvis Bay

This chapter was written in Pointe-Noire. Or Walvis Bay. Or on a plane between the two. The geography is complicated. The observations are not.

When you are French and you live in Africa, you see love differently. Not better. Differently.

In France, love is private. It happens in apartments, at dinner tables, in conversations that last too long and leave the wine unfinished.

In Congo, in Namibia — love is more visible. More declared. More immediate. Someone sees someone and says so. There is less of the French calculation, the strategic unavailability, the careful timing of the first *je t'aime*.

There is also less of the French depth. The French invest slowly. But when they invest, they invest completely.

The expat and love:

- You are late to things, which confuses people.
- You argue at dinner, which alarms people.
- You don't say I love you very often, which worries people.
- You cook for people instead, which confuses them because they were expecting words.
- You are present in a way that other people aren't, which eventually they notice.

The bise in Namibia:

In Namibia, people shake hands. Firmly. The French do the bise. This caused confusion for approximately the first three months. After six months, people were offended if they didn't get it. After a year, the French person's office in Walvis Bay had become the only office in Namibia where everyone greeted each other with two kisses.

The French person considered this a small cultural victory. It was.



CHAPTER IX

The Seven Rules of French Love

Because every French thing has rules. Even the things that seem like they don't.

I

Never Chase

The French do not chase. They make themselves worth finding. Chasing suggests desperation. Being worth finding suggests confidence. The French are very confident. Sometimes this is justified.

II

Feed People

The dinner is not a metaphor. It is the relationship. Invest accordingly. Know how to cook at least three things well. Know which wine to open. Know when to open another.

III

Argue About Things That Matter

Not about who left the light on. About ideas. About the film you just saw. The argument is how the French say: I take you seriously.

IV

Be Present or Be Absent

At the table, no phone. In the conversation, no distractions. If you cannot be fully there, don't come. The French would rather you cancel than arrive distracted.

V

Say Less Than You Feel

Not because you feel less. Because what is unsaid has weight. Je t'aime means more because it is rare. The French economy of expression is precision, not coldness.

VI

The Bise is Mandatory

You greet everyone. You leave everyone. Two kisses, every time. The bise says: I see you. You exist to me as a person, not just as a function.

VII

Stay at the Table

When the dinner is good, stay. When the conversation is good, stay. When the wine is gone, open another and stay. The French stay until the evening ends itself. Naturally. Like a good argument, or a good love.



CONCLUSION

The French Kiss is not a technique.

It is an approach.

It is slow and confident and occasionally infuriating.

It involves a lot of time at the dinner table and not enough immediate reassurance and arguments about things that should probably not be argued about.

And a fundamental belief that the person in front of you deserves your full attention and the best bottle you have.

It is the most demanding approach to love in the world.

It is also, we believe, the correct one.

You don't have to be French to love like this.

But it helps to have eaten with us.

Pull up a chair. We'll open something.

Fin.

Coming next:

THE FUCKING FRENCH BBQ

Why Your Braai is Wrong and How to Fix It

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