

I've now lived in France for an aggregate period of about 18 months. As with any culture, there are both positive and negative aspects to French life. I've compiled this little list of some of the most charming facets of French life as a reminder that France is comprised of more than the sandwich maker at Subway who refuses to speak French to me and the commuter on the metro who won't stop hitting on me because I accidentally smiled at him. Please excuse any generalizations and know that these are just personal observations.

Things I love about the French #1: Beauty Regiment

It is 100% okay to not do your hair or wear a lot of make-up. The greater part of the woman I've observed wear their hair very naturally. French people, it seems, strongly believe in being attractive, but they find that beauty comes from within. The best way to be beautiful is to do so naturally. I love looking around me and seeing woman who are comfortable enough with the way they look that they don't need a bunch of make-up or "perfect" hair in order to feel good about themselves.

Things I love about the French #2: The way they eat

From the moment I arrived in France, I have done nothing but stuff my face. It's down right blasphemous to turn down a slice of tarte tatin, right? Who am I to say no to such a delectable treat? And, I mean, you have to have at least two slices of bread with every meal. Otherwise, all the leftover juices from the poppyseed chicken you just ate would go to waste, so it's only practical. You'd think that surrounded by all of this deliciousness that I'm prepping myself to be rolled onto my Oregon-bound flight. Surprisingly, not at all. I haven't gained a single ounce (okay, maybe a few ounces...). The secret: balance. In France you don't deny yourself, but you also don't eat a 1/4 pound hamburger paired with bottomless steak fries. Lunch and dinner normally include a fair share of veggies and are followed by fruit or yogurt. Artificial ingredients are avoided, replaced by fresher options. They've got

the whole balance thing down and I'm certainly reaping the benefits.



A delicious meal for a friend's birthday. Points for presentation!

Things I love about the French #3: Kiwis!

The fruit, not New Zealanders. Although New Zealanders are pretty cool, too.

Okay, maybe I only notice this because I adore kiwis and eat a ridiculous amount of them, but it seems that the French share my love for the fruit. My old host family had them as a dessert option at all times of the year. Maybe because they really are super delicious, or maybe it's because they are so accessible. One Saturday I walked through my favorite market in Lyon (the one at La Croix-Rousse), and bought a plateau of 12 kiwis for 2 euros. That's 16 cents a kiwi. What?! I felt like I was robbing the guy. But he was really nice and even gave me a discount on the cherry tomatoes I bought from him, saying "God bless America" after he

asked me where I was from.

No, sir, God bless France for providing me with all the kiwis I could ever desire.