

# The Sweet Life in Paris: Delicious Adventures in the World's Most Glorious - and Perplexing - City

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From the New York Times bestselling author of *My Paris Kitchen* and *L'Appart*, a deliciously funny, offbeat, and irreverent look at the city of lights, cheese, chocolate, and other confections.

Like so many others, David Lebovitz dreamed about living in Paris ever since he first visited the city and after a nearly two-decade career as a pastry chef and cookbook author, he finally moved to Paris to start a new life. Having crammed all his worldly belongings into three suitcases, he arrived, hopes high, at his new apartment in the lively Bastille neighborhood. But he soon discovered it's a different world en France.

From learning the ironclad rules of social conduct to the mysteries of men's footwear, from shopkeepers who work so hard not to sell you anything to the etiquette of working the right way around the cheese plate, here is David's story of how he came to fall in love with—and even understand—this glorious, yet sometimes maddening, city.

When did he realize he had morphed into un vrai parisien? It might have been when he found himself considering a purchase of men's dress socks with cartoon characters on them. Or perhaps the time he went to a bank with 135 euros in hand to make a 134-euro payment, was told the bank had no change that day, and thought it was completely normal. Or when he found himself dressing up to take out the garbage because he had come to accept that in Paris appearances and image mean everything.

Once you stop laughing, the more than fifty original recipes, for dishes both savory and sweet, such as Pork Loin with Brown Sugar-Bourbon Glaze, Braised Turkey in Beaujolais Nouveau with Prunes, Bacon and Bleu Cheese Cake, Chocolate-Coconut Marshmallows, Chocolate Spice Bread, Lemon-Glazed Madeleines, and Mocha-Creme Fraiche Cake, will have you running to the kitchen for your own taste of Parisian living.

DAVID LEBOVITZ has been a professional cook and baker for most of his life; he spent nearly thirteen years at Berkeley's Chez Panisse until he left the restaurant business in 1999 to write books. He is the author of six books, including *My Paris Kitchen*, *The Perfect Scoop*, and *The Sweet Life in Paris*. David has been featured in *Bon Appetit*, *Food & Wine*, *Cook's Illustrated*, the *Los Angeles Times*, *Saveur*, *Travel + Leisure*, the *New York Times*, and more. He moved to Paris in 2004 and turned [davidlebovitz.com](http://davidlebovitz.com) into one of the first phenomenally popular food and living blogs.

INTRODUCTION

I distinctly remember the exact moment when I became Parisian. It wasn't the moment when I found myself seriously considering buying dress socks with goofy cartoon characters on them. Nor was it the time I went to my bank with 135 in hand to make a payment for 134, and thought it completely normal when the teller told me that the bank didn't have any change that day.

And I'm sure it wasn't when I ran into the fiftysomething receptionist from my doctor's office sunbathing topless by the Seine, à la française, and I didn't avert my eyes (much as I wanted to).

It wasn't when my shoulder bag caught the sweater of a young boy in La Maison du

Chocolat and, as it started to unravel, I ignored his woeful cries. "C'est pas ma faute!" I reasoned to myself before walking away. After all, who in their right mind would wear a sweater to a chocolate shop, anyway? It could have been the moment when I listened intently as two Parisian friends explained to me why the French are so determined to clip the pointed tips off haricots verts before cooking them. Was it because that's where the radiation collects in the green beans, as one person insisted? Or was it to prevent the little points from getting stuck in your teeth, which the other one assured me would happen? Even though I didn't remember ever getting a string bean end lodged between my teeth, nor did I think radiation had the ability to slide around in vegetables, I found myself nodding in agreement.

No, the exact moment happened just a few months after I'd arrived in Paris. I was spending a lazy Sunday in my apartment lounging around in faded sweatpants and a loose, tattered sweatshirt, my ideal outfit for doing nothing in particular. By late afternoon, I'd finally mustered the energy to take the elevator downstairs to the inner courtyard of my apartment building to empty the garbage. With the elevator door exactly three steps from my front door and the garbage room just five steps from the elevator landing at the bottom, the trip involves basically four movements-walk out the door, take the elevator down, dump the garbage, and go back up.

The whole process should take maybe forty-five seconds. So I extracted myself from the sofa, shaved, changed into a pair of real pants, tucked in a clean wrinkle-free shirt, and slipped on a pair of shoes and socks before heading toward the door with my little plastic sac for the poubelle. God forbid I should run into someone from my building while wearing my Sunday worst. And that, mes amis, was when I realized I had become Parisian.

The unspoken rule if you plan to live here-but equally good to adopt even if you're just coming for a visit-is knowing that you're going to be judged on how you look and how you present yourself. Yes, even if you're just dumping your garbage. You don't want anyone else, such as a neighbor (or worse, one of those garbagemen in their nifty green outfits), to think you're a slob, do you?

Since only 20 percent of Americans have passports, we don't get out as much as we should, and our dealings with foreigners are usually on our own turf where they have to play by our rules. We're not so good at adapting to others, since we're rarely in a position that requires us to do it. I've heard a variety of complaints from visitors (and uttered a few myself) expecting things to be like they are back home: "Why don't they have doggie bags?" "How come there's no ice?" "Why can't I pick something up off the store shelf?" or "Why is our waiter flirting with those Swedish girls and having a cigarette when we asked for our check over thirty minutes ago?"

I wonder why when we travel outside the United States we expect people to behave like Americans-even in their own country. Think about it for a minute: how many waiters, taxi drivers, hotel clerks, shopkeepers, and others in your hometown could or would respond to a French person who spoke only French? If you don't speak French and have traveled to Paris, you were probably helped by a number of people who speak pretty good English.

And almost all Europeans coming to our shores make it a point to adapt to our customs. Well, almost all. Don't ask a waiter who's just been stiffed on his 18 percent tip.

Every culture has certain rules. In America for some unknown reason, you can't get wine at fast-food restaurants, and spending a few minutes digging deeply inside your nose on public transit is frowned upon. In Paris, the rules dictate one shouldn't dress in grungy jeans and a ripped T-shirt, unless it says "Let's Sex! . . . NOW!!" painted in gold lettering across the front. To live in a foreign country you need to learn the rules, especially if you plan to stay. And I had to learn plenty.

Like so many other people, I dreamed about living in Paris ever since my first visit in the '80s, during that rite of passage every American student fresh out of college used to embark upon, before kids decided it was less of a hassle to explore the world with RAM rather than a Railpass. Why bother getting lost in the labyrinth of historic cities, dining on regional delicacies, sleeping with total strangers in youth hostels, and soaping up in communal showers with a team of Italian soccer players? Yes, I suppose it's far better to stay home and experience Europe through a computer screen. But back then, I had quite a time doing most of those things. (I'll leave it to your imagination to guess which ones.) But explore I did. I spent almost a year traipsing around the continent after college doing nothing in particular except learning about European cultures, primarily by pulling up a stool or chair and eating what the locals ate. During that time, I made it through almost every country in Europe and tried whatever local delicacies were to be had: oozing raw-milk cheeses in France and hearty, grain-packed breads in Germany; Belgian milk chocolates that when sniffed, could transport you to a dairy farm in the countryside; and crispy-skin fish grilled over gnarled branches in the souks of Istanbul. And of course, lots of buttery pastries and crusty breads smeared with plenty of golden-yellow butter in Paris, the likes of which I'd never tasted before.

After months of criss-crossing Europe, in dire need of a good, deep scrubbing and a proper haircut to rein in my unruly mop of curls (which definitely earned me the term dirty blond), I eventually ran out of steam-and money-and returned to the States. During the carefree time I'd spent traipsing from country to country, I hadn't given any thought to my future and what I'd do after I returned. Why spoil the fun? Back in America, after seeing a world outside of our sometimes isolating borders, I didn't quite know where I would fit in and hadn't a clue as to where to go or what to do with my life.

I'd read about "California cuisine," which was a new and exciting concept just emerging back then. And something to do with food seemed like an interesting option, since I didn't see Europe through my eyes, but my stomach. Everything I'd tasted was a far cry from my college days, when I worked at a vegetarian restaurant ladling out peanut butter-thickened soups and dishing up desserts made by our long-haired baker, who added his own unique touches to anything he baked. In fact, I can still smell his fruit cobblers filled with apples and kidney beans, baked and scented with his signature handful of cumin, which gave them a distinctly unpleasant odor.

On second thought, that might have been him.

Fortunately, the European style of cooking was gaining a foothold in northern California, and there was a new appreciation for fine foods and cooking du marché : buying locally produced foods at their peak of freshness, which was a daily ritual in Europe. It seemed like common sense to me, and simply the right way to eat. So I packed up and moved to San Francisco, just across the bay from Berkeley, where an exciting culinary revolution was simmering. And I hoped cumin-scented desserts weren't a part of it.

Shopping the outdoor markets of the Bay Area, I discovered farmers who were raising things like blood oranges with tangy, wildly colored juices and tight bunches of deep-violet radicchio, which people at the time assumed were runty heads of cabbage. Laura Chenel was producing European-style moist rounds of fresh goat cheese in Sonoma, which were so unfamiliar that Americans were mistaking them for tofu (especially in Berkeley). And viticulturists in Napa Valley were producing hearty wines, like Zinfandel and Pinot Noir, which had a great affinity for the newly celebrated regional cuisine, which was liberally seasoned with lots of fragrant garlic, branches of rosemary and thyme, and drizzled with locally pressed olive oil—a big improvement over the bland "salad oil" I grew up with.

I was thrilled—no, astounded—to find the culinary counterparts to everything I had eaten in Europe. I savored the hand-dipped ultrafine chocolates of Alice Medrich at Cocolat, which rivaled those I had swooned over in swanky French chocolate boutiques. I'd line up daily for a boule of pain au levain that Steve Sullivan would pull out of his fired-up brick oven every morning over at Acme Bread, and was ecstatic to find many of the pungent cheeses I remembered so fondly from Europe stacked up at the Cheese Board Collective in Berkeley, just across from Chez Panisse. Since I believed that if I was really going to pursue a restaurant career I should start at the top, I applied for a job at Chez Panisse, where Alice Waters was leading this culinary revolution I wanted to enlist in. I sent a letter to the restaurant, waited a few weeks, and got no response. Despite the lack of acknowledgment or enthusiasm on their part, I presented myself at the now-famous redwood archway, ready to embark on my lifelong career as a chef. I marched inside, where a busy waiter, who was rushing by holding a tray of wineglasses and wearing a white shirt, tie, and long apron, looking remarkably like a garçon in Paris, pointed me toward the bright kitchen in the back of the dining room.

The kitchen staff was working at full throttle. Some were maniacally rolling out ultrathin, nearly transparent sheets of pasta. Others were painstakingly trimming carrots tinier than a baby's pinky, their peelers thwacking against the countertop at warp speed, spewing bright orange curlicues, then tossing each denuded root into a stainless steel bin with a little plunk before seamlessly moving on to the next one. One cook was busy layering moist rounds of goat cheese in well-worn earthenware crocks, ripping apart bunches of thyme and layering them between whole cloves of garlic and pinelike branches of rosemary. In the back, I noticed some women intently guarding the oven doors, checking inside every few moments. I had no idea at the time that they were scrupulously watching the progress of Lindsey Shere's famous almond tarts—making sure they didn't cook a second too long and were taken out just when they reached their precise degree of caramelization.

I went over to speak with the chef, who was at the epicenter of it all, directing the chaos around her. Overwhelmed by it all, I asked in my most timid voice if there was any possibility . . . any way at all . . . she could perhaps find a place for me at Chez Panisse-the Greatest Restaurant in America.

She closed her eyes and put down her knife midslice, then turned around to look at me. And in front of the entire kitchen staff, she proceeded to tell me off, saying she had no idea who I was and how could I think that I could just walk into the restaurant unannounced and ask for a job? Then she picked up her knife and started chopping again, which I took as a pretty good indication that I should leave.

And that was the end of my first job interview in laid-back California. So I went to work at another restaurant in San Francisco, where I found myself in way over my head and in a job that was downright horrible. The chef was a complete nutcase and should have traded his chef's jacket for a more restrictive padded one, with buckles in the rear. My Sunday brunch shift would begin with his breaking open and smashing to bits all the scones I had carefully rolled out, cut, and baked that morning, verifying that each one was, indeed, flaky. And by my last shift (ever), I was so flustered by it all that, as I struggled to keep up with the barrage of orders that came streaming in, I neglected a pot of simmering fryer oil, which turned into a raging fire.

Cumin-scented cobbles were beginning to seem not quite so bad after all. (I do have a few good memories of that place, though. I still get a chuckle when I think how one of my coworkers, who was teaching me a few words in Vietnamese, taught me how to say "sweet potatoes" in his native language, which actually meant "blow job." Nowadays I wonder what the other prep cooks were thinking when I called downstairs and asked one of them to come upstairs because I desperately needed some "sweet potatoes.")

After each day of work, I'd drag myself home and collapse in a defeated heap, near tears. Waking up the next morning, I found myself filled with so much dread that I could barely heave myself out of bed. So when I heard the news that the chef at Chez Panisse was leaving to open her own place, I plotted my escape-a triumphant return to where I rightfully belonged. At least I thought so. After scoring an interview with the new chef and undergoing the final scrutiny of Alice Waters herself, I was soon proudly working at Chez Panisse.

(I have to mention that the original chef who disparaged me turned out to be a terrific person, warm and supportive of up-and-coming chefs, and someone I like and respect very much. Although not French, she was my first encounter with a short-fuse French- style temperament and good practice for things to come.)

In all, I spent nearly thirteen years cooking at Chez Panisse, most of it working in the pastry department, joining the select few who've mastered Lindsey's famed, and notoriously tricky, almond tart. I'm not one for hero worship, but I will certainly say that Alice Waters was a formidable force, and she kept the hundred-plus cooks who worked there on their toes at all times. Someone once said, "You don't know terror until you've heard the sound of

Alice's footsteps coming toward you."

And how true that was. I quickly learned that the faster those little feet were racing toward me, the more trouble I was going to be in. For all my smart-alecky retorts, though, Alice was almost always right, and each upbraiding was actually a valuable lesson for a young cook like me. Alice was committed to instilling in us her ideas for using seasonal and local ingredients long before the idea became such an overused cliché that airline menus are now touting "locally grown" ingredients. And she inspired us to put those ideas into action in the food we were cooking. Lindsey Shere, the co-owner of the restaurant and executive pastry chef, was also a constant, and lasting, source of inspiration. From Lindsey, I learned that making our deceptively simple desserts was often far more difficult than...

#### Other Books

The Book of Dust : La Belle Sauvage, Buku 1 Trilogi The Book of Dust Malcolm anak pemilik penginapan, anak satu-satunya. Dia memiliki cukup banyak teman, tapi yang membuatnya paling bahagia adalah saat bermain berdua dengan daemonymya Asta di kano mereka, La Belle Sauvage. Kehidupan Malcolm Polstead di pub tepi Sungai Thames aman dan bahagia, nyaris monoton. Tetapi, pada suatu musim dingin ketika hujan tak kunjung berhenti, kekuatan sains, agama, dan politik berbentrok, dan sementara cuaca kian memburuk, segala yang Malcolm yakini hancur berkeping-keping. Pertautannya dengan bayi bernama Lyra memaksa Malcolm menghadapi tantangan terbesar dalam hidup dan melakukan perjalanan berbahaya, yang akan mengubah dirinya dan Lyra untuk selamanya.... ----- Dua puluh dua tahun setelah terbitnya trilogi His Dark Materials yang luar biasa, Philip Pullman kembali mengisahkan dunia paralel yang epik ini dalam novel terbaru yang ditulis dengan lihai: buku pertama trilogi The Book of Dust yang sudah lama dinantikan. "Buku yang penuh pesona... Sangat seru." –The New York Times  
? ? ? ? ? . Buku 1 Trilogi The Book of Dust Malcolm anak pemilik penginapan, anak satu-satunya."