

# In Defense Of French Bread

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*American Way - Sojourns*

Ever since King Dagobert I recognized bread-making as a bona fide trade back in the seventh century, the savory scent of French bread has wafted through history. After all, the French Revolution might never have occurred had Marie Antoinette not uttered her fatal faux pas: *Il's ont plus de pain, qu'ils mangent de la brioche* ("They have no bread, let them eat cake"). Marie lost her head, bread guilds evolved, and boulangeries (bakery shops) proliferated, delighting gourmands and simple palates alike.

For centuries, boulangers have gotten up before dawn to select the flour, knead the dough, and bake their bread on the premises. The sumptuous results crusty loaves of ficelles (skinny flutes), betards (plump ovals), and pain de campagne (country bread) - send even the most unsuspecting nose aquiver.

But in the last decade, bread chains and supermarkets have given rise to what amounts to heresy - mass produced baguettes - causing culinary consternation among Parisian boulangers. In defense of a savorous national tradition, the French government recently decreed that the 5,000 bakers who don't conceive, knead, or bake their loaves on-site may no longer hang a shingle espousing to be a blue-blooded boulangerie.

C'est la vie! Your nose can't always be your guide, even in Paris. So next time you shell out francs for your daily bread, check for that coveted word and seal of approval: *boulangerie*.