

French Verbs for Cooking: Learn Everyday French



Food is at the heart of French culture, and learning French recipes is a great way to practice your knowledge of the French language and culture. Plus, it's delicious ;) .That's three reasons for you to try cooking French dishes at home!

However, you might not know all the obscure vocabulary words in a French cookbook yet. Don't worry!

Today, I'll teach all the most important French verbs you need to cook from a French recipe.

Learning goals: This is what you'll be able to do after watching this lesson

- **Beginner:** Learn the 6 main French verbs for cooking (in a pan)
- **Intermediate:** Discover examples using those French verbs
- **Advanced:** Learn all the sentences and stories in the lesson

Bonjour c'est Géraldine, Bienvenue sur Comme une Française.
C'est parti !

Take your pen and notebook.

Let's learn French that matters, together.

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1) Mijoter

Mijoter means “to simmer” / “to stew.”

For example:

Le boeuf bourguignon mijote depuis ce matin.

The beef Burgundy has been stewing since this morning.

In a cookbook, you’ll often find the constructions:

- “**faire** + cooking verb” ☞ “make the preparation [do something]”
- “**laisser** + cooking verb” ☞ “Let it [do something]”

For instance:

Faire mijoter 4 heures à feu doux (= “Make the dish simmer for four hours, on low heat”)

Laisser mijoter 4 heures (= “Let it simmer for four hours”)

The French verb “**mijoter**” is also a metaphorical way to say “to plot / to scheme / to think hard.”

For instance: **Qu’est-ce que tu mijotes ?** = “What are you plotting? What are you secretly planning to do?”

See also “**avoir une idée derrière la tête**” = “to have an idea behind your head” (literally) = “to have something in mind, a secret hunch, a secret motive, a secret plan” (figuratively)

A synonym of “**mijoter**” is “**mitonner**.” It’s often used in the fixed sentence: “**mitonner des bons petits plats**” = cooking simple and tasty food at home.

Alexandra nous a mitonné des bons petits plats.

Alexandra cooked great food for us all.

Be careful though: in French slang, the similar-sounding verb “**mythoner**” means “to lie”, like **mentir** (common) or **pipeauter** (colloquial).

Un mytho [pronounced “meetow”] can be a lie or a liar, short for **un mythomane** (= “a

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pathological liar”).

[A recent TV series](#) made popular the character of *Serge Le Mytho* (“Liar Serge,” whose lies are so extravagant they’re as entertaining as a movie night), and he [got his own short TV series you can watch online](#).

2) Bouillir

Bouillir means “to boil, to put in boiling water.”

For instance:

Faire bouillir les oeufs pendant 5 minutes.

Boil the eggs for 5 minutes.

It’s a complicated, irregular French verb to conjugate, so French people try to stick to the infinitive form of the verb!

From “**bouillir**” we also have **le bouillon** (= “broth,” or “stock” as in “chicken stock.”)



French food comes with its own vocabulary and cultural rules. An outsider can feel confused if they don’t know about the good manners at the tables, or how to taste wine or cut cheese.

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The French expression **Faire bouillir la marmite** means “have the pot boiling” (literally) or “bring home the bacon / put food on the table” (figuratively).

For instance:

Chez les Martin, c'est le salaire de Pauline qui fait bouillir la marmite.

In the Martins' family, Pauline's salary brings home the bacon.

Finally, the French verb **Pocher** means “to poach” (for cooking), as in **un oeuf poché** (= “a poached egg.”)

Marie sait très bien pocher les oeufs.

Marie makes very good poached eggs.

That's why I made the course “Insider French” — to share our secret rules and traditions about food. [Click here learn more about this unique program.](#)

3) Cuire au bain-marie

Cuire au bain-marie means “cook in a bain-marie / a water bath / a double boiler.”

It comes from “**bain**” (= bath) and “**Marie**” (= its alleged XVIth Century alchemist inventor **Marie-la-Juive**, “Marie the Jewess”)

For instance:

Faire fondre le chocolat au bain-marie.

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Melt the chocolate in a bain-marie.

(**fondre** = to melt)

4) **Faire revenir**

Faire revenir = “to brown” (when talking about cooking)

For instance:

Faire revenir les poireaux dans du beurre.

Brown the leeks in butter.

(The cooking context gives this special meaning to the verb “**revenir**”. It usually means “to come back / to return”).

This French verb has a lot of synonyms, with different literal translation but the same intended meaning:

Faire dorer = “to gold” (literally)

Faire blondir = “to make blond” (literally)

Poêler = “to pan” (literally)

Saisir = “to handle” (literally)



There are many other uses for **revenir**. For instance, the expression:

Ne pas en revenir means “Being very surprised / astonished / I can’t believe it”

Je n’en reviens pas ! (or in common spoken French “**J’en reviens pas !**”) = “I can’t believe it!”

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Faire rissoler = “to fry” (especially for bacon)

Faire sauter = “to jump” (literally) (especially for potatoes)

Faire frire = “to fry”

5) Couvrir

Couvrir means “to cover” as in “to put a lid on it.”

For instance:

Couvrir et laisser mijoter 2 heures à feu doux.

“Cover and let it simmer for two hours on low heat.”

For this, we use **un couvercle** (= a lid).

Be careful, it’s not the same thing as **une couverture** (= “a cover” / “a book cover” / “a blanket”).

Couvrir is simply “put a lid on top of it.” If you want to be specific with what you cover something with, we use:

Recouvrir [quelque chose A] de [quelque chose B]

“To cover [something A] with [something B]”

For instance :

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Je recouvre le gâteau de crème chantilly.

I cover the cake with whipped cream.

6) Réduire

Réduire = to reduce (both literally and figuratively for cooking)

In details, it means:

Faire épaissir par évaporation = to let water evaporate from the dish, so it becomes thicker and tastier

For instance:

Réduire une sauce = "Reducing a sauce"

The "opposite" would be:

déglacer to deglaze with water, wine... to add a liquid in a pot, so you can make a sauce out of the tasty stuff stuck in the bottom

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Quiz!

That's a lot to learn! Did you remember a few of the French verbs we just saw? Let's test your knowledge! How do you say the following, in French:

- To boil
- To simmer
- To brown

(Answers: *bouillir / mijoter / faire revenir*)

-- Lesson Recap: What did you learn today? --

- Mijoter
- Bouillir

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- Cuire au bain-marie
- Faire revenir
- Couvrir
- Réduire

ET TOI ?

In the comments, write one sentence using one (or more) of the French verbs we learned today, using the French imperative.

Partage le plat français que tu aimes cuisiner.

Share a French dish you like to cook (to give ideas to other students. You can post a link to the recipe!)

For example, you can write: *“Je fais souvent de la quiche lorraine parce que ma petite-fille adore ça. Voici la recette que j'utilise pour la cuisiner à la maison.”*

And now:

👉 If you enjoyed this lesson (and/or learned something new) – why not **share this lesson with a francophile friend**? You can talk about it afterwards! You'll learn much more if you have social support from your friends :)

👉 **Double your Frenchness!** Get my 10-day “**Everyday French Crash Course**” and learn **more spoken French** for free. Students love it! Start now and you'll get **Lesson 01** right in your inbox, straight away.

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Allez, salut :)