

## What is Nouvelle Cuisine?

The 1970's brought a great deal of upheaval and new ideas to the forefront, and the world of cuisine was no exception. In June of 1975, the British magazine Harpers & Queen coined a term to refer to a new type of food that was sweeping the world: Nouvelle Cuisine.

What is nouvelle cuisine? It is, in a word, the marriage of health-conscious California to traditional France. Consider it an updated version of French cuisine- flavorful food with a light-handed, healthy approach. It's difficult to define nouvelle cuisine in more specific terms because of its huge impact on the way food in general is prepared today. Nouvelle cuisine opened doors to a new generation of restaurant-goers who loved rich tastes and fresh combinations, but didn't want their bodies to pay for it later.

With this new lighter menu came a new style of cooking as well. Chefs in nouvelle cuisine restaurants used shorter cooking times and fresher ingredients, cutting down on the multiple steps that got in the way of the natural flavors of the food. In a world that was waking up to faster-moving times and stricter diets, this new cuisine caught on with incredible speed.

Like any other trend, nouvelle cuisine was often widely misunderstood and misrepresented. Depending on what regional restaurant you visited, you might have been subjected to a low-calorie meal with tiny portions and been told it was nouvelle cuisine. Many chefs and consumers alike did not grasp the concept that lighter did not necessarily mean less.

One of the main goals of nouvelle cuisine was to excite more than just the sense of taste. A skilled nouvelle chef would be able to produce a meal that was artistically arranged on the plate and contained a wonderful mix of smells, textures, and flavors. Oils and fresh spices were used extensively to bring out the natural flavor of the fresh vegetables and pastas in these meals.

The way we cook at home today owes a great deal to nouvelle cuisine. Olive oil, vinaigrette, and fresh herbs are common today in many American kitchens, mainly due to the influence of the nouvelle cuisine movement. Restaurants, too, have taken their cue: before the appearance of nouvelle cuisine, portions were heavier and larger, and consumers went to restaurants expecting to come out full, but not necessarily sated. Nowadays fine restaurants base their expertise on combining flavors, not smothering them; and on their presenting food that satisfies, not simply fills, an empty stomach.

There is still a debate on whether nouvelle cuisine has disappeared from the radar. It has certainly influenced other fields of cooking, but nobody is sure if it can be considered a movement of its own in the current times. Then again, a trend that catches on so quickly is almost always destined to develop in other ways and spread to other things, losing its identity as a separate entity along the way.

## About the Author

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