

Au revoir to long lunch as French tighten belts

Level 2 • Intermediate

1 Key words

Fill the gaps using these key words from the text.

bankruptcy
brasserie

skip
critic

aperitif
discount

obsession
trade union

baguette
distinguishes

1. An _____ is an alcoholic drink that is drunk before a meal.
2. A _____ is an organization that aims to improve pay and conditions of work.
3. An _____ is an emotional state in which something is so important to you that you are always thinking about it in a way that seems extreme to other people.
4. A _____ is a reduction in the price of something.
5. _____ is a situation in which a company formally admits it has no money and cannot pay what it owes.
6. A _____ is someone whose job is to write their opinions about books, films or restaurants.
7. If something _____ one thing from another thing, it highlights the difference or differences between them.
8. A _____ is a restaurant or bar, especially one that serves French food.
9. If you _____ a meal, you avoid having it.
10. A _____ is a long, thin loaf of bread made in the French style.

2 Find the information

Look in the text and find this information as quickly as possible.

1. How many French restaurants, cafés and bars went bankrupt in the first three months of 2008?
2. What was the average time people spent on restaurant meals in France in 1975?
3. What was the average time people spent on restaurant meals in France in 2005?
4. What is the percentage increase in restaurants going bankrupt compared to last year?
5. What has the fall in the percentage of restaurant customers been since the start of 2008?
6. What was the percentage loss of business in holiday destinations like the Côte d'Azur?

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- 3,000 restaurants and bars go bust in three months
- Starters and wine out, baguettes and burgers in

Angelique Chrisafis in Paris
September 24, 2008

- 1 It is seen as a sign of civilized eating, one which distinguishes well-fed French workers from the English who eat sandwiches at their desks. But France's tradition of the three-course restaurant lunch is in danger of disappearing for ever as a result of the economic crisis. Around 3,000 traditional French restaurants, cafés and bars went bust in the first three months of 2008 and trade unions are predicting that more will close as people worry about making ends meet. The number of French restaurants going bankrupt rose by 25% from last year, and the number of cafés forced to close rose by 56%.
- 2 Le Figaro's well-known restaurant critic, François Simon, said yesterday that the unwillingness of French consumers to spend money had changed national eating habits and was pushing restaurant owners towards bankruptcy. Diners were now skipping the traditional aperitif, avoiding starters, drinking tap water, not having wine or coffee and – at most – sharing a pudding.
- 3 Even the city's smartest restaurants were getting impatient with smaller orders. In one restaurant near Paris' Gare de Lyon, he reported, two couples were asked to leave by an angry restaurant owner because they would not order starters. The restaurant chain Hippopotamus was now offering discounts to regular customers and special-offer hamburgers, which had become more popular than French steak dishes. Office workers were increasingly buying take-away baguettes and supermarket lunches.
- 4 Making ends meet with low salaries and rising food prices has become a national obsession as problems in the French economy continue. Regular TV reports describe the desperation of people forced to eat cheap tinned vegetables or look through bins at markets for food. The restaurant sector has experienced the third highest number of bankruptcies in France this year, after the construction and building trades, according to the credit insurance group Euler Hermes SFAC.
- 5 The time French people spend on eating meals in restaurants has already gone down: in 1975, a lunch out would take an average of one and a half hours. By 2005, it had fallen to 32 minutes. Danièle Deleval, vice president of the UMIH restaurant and hotel union, said: "We're very worried. Since the start of the year, the number of restaurant customers has dropped, on average, 20% and we're seeing no signs of improvement."
- 6 Jean Guillaume, owner of Le Bouquet brasserie on Boulevard Haussmann in Paris' smart 8th district, said: "Lunch customers used to order a main course, dessert, coffee and a bottle of wine. Now they're just having a main course with tap water, and giving up the rest. Of 75 customers in this lunchtime, none had a bottle of wine ... It's the end of a tradition of lunching out and it looks like figures will stay this low for two to three years." The nearby bakery, however, was busy selling take-away baguettes, with queues down the street at midday.
- 7 Restaurant and bar owners are still suffering from a poor summer with fewer international tourists visiting Paris, especially Americans and Japanese. And in Toulouse, café owners complained that customers would try to make one drink last as long as possible. Even in French holiday destinations, like Arcachon in the west or the Côte d'Azur in the south, restaurant owners said business was down by at least 10%.

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3 Comprehension check

Are these sentences *True (T)* or *False (F)* according to the text?

1. French people are spending less money on going to restaurants.
2. French people are spending less time eating lunch in restaurants.
3. The tradition of the traditional French three-course meal might disappear for ever.
4. People's eating habits are changing because they are worried about their diet.
5. The restaurant sector has experienced the highest number of bankruptcies in France this year.
6. Business at bakeries has also fallen dramatically.

4 Find the word

Find the following words and expressions in the text.

1. A two-word expression meaning *to become bankrupt*. (para 1)
2. A three-word expression meaning *to just have enough money to buy the things you need*. (para 1)
3. A noun meaning *a refusal to do something*. (para 2)
4. An adverb meaning *more and more over a period of time*. (para 3)
5. A noun meaning *the worry and anger people feel in a bad situation*. (para 4)
6. A two-word expression meaning *the person occupying the position immediately below the president*. (para 5)
7. A noun meaning *sweet food that you eat after the main course*. (para 6)
8. A noun meaning *a place where someone goes or is going*. (para 7)

5 Word building

Complete the table.

	verb	noun
1.	close	
2.	improve	
3.	predict	
4.	construct	
5.	insure	
6.	complain	
7.	describe	
8.	sell	

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6 Two-word expressions

Match the words in the left-hand column with those in the right-hand column to make two-word expressions from the text.

- | | |
|---------------|----------------|
| 1. special | a. water |
| 2. tap | b. offer |
| 3. eating | c. course |
| 4. office | d. habits |
| 5. national | e. owner |
| 6. main | f. destination |
| 7. restaurant | g. obsession |
| 8. holiday | h. worker |

7 Discussion

Do you often eat in restaurants? What kind of food do you like? How much money would you spend on a restaurant meal?

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KEY

1 Key words

1. aperitif
2. trade union
3. obsession
4. discount
5. bankruptcy
6. critic
7. distinguishes
8. brasserie
9. skip
10. baguette

2 Find the information

1. around 3,000
2. one and a half hours
3. 32 minutes
4. 25%
5. 20%
6. at least 10%

3 Comprehension check

1. T
2. T
3. T
4. F
5. F
6. F

4 Find the word

1. go bust
2. make ends meet
3. unwillingness
4. increasingly
5. desperation
6. vice president
7. dessert
8. destination

5 Word building

	verb	noun
1.	close	closure
2.	improve	improvement
3.	predict	prediction
4.	construct	construction
5.	insure	insurance
6.	complain	complaint
7.	describe	description
8.	sell	sale

6 Two-word expressions

1. special offer
2. tap water
3. eating habits
4. office worker
5. national obsession
6. main course
7. restaurant owner
8. holiday destination