



LA CANTINE

November 26, 2009



I was on the phone to Courtney the other day and she was talking about getting packed lunches ready for her sons to take to school. I almost fell off my chair!

Here in France (or at least at my kids' state-run schools) there is no way a sandwich is ever going to be introduced onto the school premises.

It seems like one of the main responsibilities that the French State has taken upon itself is to educate its masses into making every little French inhabitant a culinary expert.

My little girl has been going to the local maternelle since she was 3 years old. At lunch time she, and another 150 kids roughly her size, get taken to the cantine. They all sit down around the table and get served a 3/4 course meal. They start with a starter (salad, soup or similar), continue with a main course, then get a piece of cheese and finish off with a dessert. The weekly menu is hung outside the school for the whole neighbourhood to see. And if I don't have time to check it outside the school I can read about it on my town hall's website!

Now, I am sure that the quality of the food is not comparable to some of the gourmet restaurants here in Paris, but my kids now know the difference between a good ripe camembert and one that has not reached its perfect runniness. In my book, this is as important a lesson as learning her ABCs!

I also reckon it makes for very unfussy eaters. There is nothing like watching your peers eat the same food as you to make you finish your plate...

- Emilie

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