Bonjour et Bienvenue au deuxième Podcast: Café France. Today we will be talking about how to read a menu in a restaurant in France.

If you’re going to eat in a restaurant in France, there are a couple of important points to remember. The first is that the word “menu” in French is a false cognate. If you want to ask for what we call a menu in English, you need to ask for “la carte s’il vous plaît”.

If you click below on the button for “la carte”, a menu or “une carte” will show on your screen. This is an example of what “une carte” might look like “dans un restaurant”. We see that “entrée” is listed first; this is also a false cognate in that “entrée” translates to English as appetizer. This restaurant offers “les escargots de bourgogne” or “une salade de chèvre” as the “entrée”. “Délicieuse!”

Following the “entrée” are “les plats”, or main dishes. We see “la choucroute strasbourgeoise” and “le bœuf bourguignon” as the restaurant’s offerings for main dishes.

Of course a meal would not be complete without cheese, “fromage”, and “dessert”. The choices of cheese are “brie” and “le bleu d’Auvergne”, a blue cheese from the Auvergne region. For dessert, “Le restaurant Le Mouton Noir” offers “la mousse au chocolat” and “la crème brulée”. Umm, j’adore les desserts français!

Now click on the button, “le menu”. As we just said, “le menu” does not mean menu, but rather a combination of “un entrée, un plat et un dessert”. There is usually a choice “un choix” between several “entrées”, “plats”, and “desserts” but the price is set. The choice of “entrées” is either “le jambon cru d’Auvergne” OR “le foie gras de canard”. Again, we see a choice between “la ratatouille de maison” OR “le cassoulet toulousain” for “le plat”. And lastly, for “dessert”, we must try and decide between “une tarte citron” or “une mille feuille”.

Finally, click on “le formule petit déjeuner”. Here we see “une carte” for breakfast, “le petit déjeuner”. Un formule, is much like “un menu” in that the choices are set along with the price. However “un formule” usually has fewer choices and is often found for “le petit déjeuner” and lunch, “le déjeuner”.

In our “carte” we see that “le formule express” is an abbreviated version of “le formule petit déjeuner”. “Le formule express” offers the choice of “un chocolat chaud” or “un café” and the choice between “un croissant” OR “un pain au chocolat”. “Le formule petit déjeuner” is expanded with “un jus de fruit” and “le pain avec le beurre et la confiture” or bread with butter and jam.

Overall, it’s important to remember to ask for “la carte, s’il vous plaît” to see what the restaurant offers before ordering.