

WEDNESDAY, JULY 13, 2011

## A Well-Mannered American Living In Paris



Lauren Sarafan and Susan Oubari

Bastille Day is on July 14th. We thought this would be a good excuse to talk about an American who's happily living in Paris and how it's affected her own etiquette. Her name is [Susan Oubari](#). We learned about Susan after reading about her on a popular site [EyePreferParis](#) and in a book, *Paris Revealed, The Secret Life of Paris*. Besides managing a household and family, Susan is in the business of style. She refers to herself as a Personal Art Director. She will art direct whatever

facet of your life that needs it. [Susan blogs along with her friend and writer, Lauren Sarafan](#) who lives miles and hours away in Los Angeles.

We asked Susan and Lauren (a frequent visitor) how their experiences have shaped or re-shaped their codes of behavior.

### How has living in Paris affected your own etiquette?

Since living in Paris I have become more aware of etiquette... This is what I've learned since then and I would advise to anyone coming to Paris:

- 1) Say "Bonjour, Madame or Monsieur" upon arriving in a store, restaurant, café, etc, don't forget to say, "Au revoir, merci!!!" with a smile as you leave! (You'll get brownie points, I swear.)
- 2) In a store, after having said, " Bonjour,"make sure you say, "Would you mind if I take a look around please?" Don't get upset when the saleswoman follows you and puts the coat hangers back into their perfect 1-inch separation position. (C'est la vie!)
- 3) At the dinner table, put your napkin on your lap once the hostess has done so and keep your hands above the table. Don't sit or eat before the hosts. When pouring wine the glass should be no more than three-quarters full. If you're giving a dinner party, set the table with the forks "prongs down" (it is very offensive to do it the American

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way “prongs up”)

4) Try to talk less (or at least less loudly), I know it is hard to do.

5) Parisians can be snobby, so I make a point to be overly friendly and correct when conversing with them. My French friends do the same. I would rather make more of an effort than have them make me feel like they want to spank me!

### **Is there a basic difference between Americans and Parisians when it comes to etiquette?**

Americans are more spontaneous and less contrived. Parisians are too married to their rules.

### **When Yvonne, lived in Milan, Italians would make fun of her accent when she spoke Italian. Do you encounter this? If so, how do you handle it?**

Actually, the Parisians don't seem to tease in general. Their humor is different, if anything; they can even enjoy a good Canadian or American accent. The Canadian accent has become quite fashionable lately due to Canadian celebrities. If by chance I can't get myself understood on the phone, I sometimes just say, "Hey, I'm American and trying my best!"

*Lauren: My best friend's 13-year-old son is so embarrassed by my French and constantly telling me not to speak and to allow him to ask for anything we need. No one has ever made me feel bad about trying.*

### **Are men and women expected to split the check?**

I've been married forever; I haven't gone on a date for 20 years! But I can't imagine the woman paying for herself on a date. The men always pay, and sometimes one man pays for everyone, and then the next time the other man foots the bill. Men pay for the women. I make sure I send flowers the next day if another couple pays for my husband and me at a restaurant.

*Lauren: I just see men paying for women. I enjoy being a girl.*

D'accord!

Posted by Yvonne&Yvettetiquette at 8:15 AM 

Labels: [an american in Paris](#), [Diner en Blanc](#), [dinner parties](#), [France](#), [French bread](#), [French dating](#), [Lauren Sarafan](#), [living abroad](#), [Midnight in Paris](#), [Paris nightlife](#), [Susan Oubari](#)

Reactions: [funny \(0\)](#) [interesting \(0\)](#) [cool \(0\)](#)

## 2 comments:

**Anonymous said...**

Thanks! I have family living in Paris so I'll keep this in mind...  
Charelle

[July 13, 2011 at 9:33 AM](#)

**Anonymous said...**

This is great info for travel to Paris.

Thank you.

[July 13, 2011 at 9:28 PM](#)

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