



## Searching for Family and Traditions at the French Table: Book Two: Savoring the Olde Ways Series

**Carole Bumpus**

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*Searching for Family and Traditions at the French Table: Book Two is an eloquent melting pot of a travel memoir, concerned with cuisine and culture, too.*

Carole Bumpus's *Searching for Family and Traditions at the French Table: Book Two* is a culinary travelogue of French proportions.

Picking up from where the first book ended, Bumpus continues moving through France to write about families, food, and traditional values. She and Josiane head down the Champs Élysées, past the Arc de Triomphe, and onto the motorway that sweeps them north. They travel through Nord-Pas-de-Calais, Normandy, Brittany, the Loire Valley, and Auvergne, meeting with a variety of memorable people as they taste and discover traditional recipes and unravel the mystery surrounding Josiane's family history.

Bumpus's prose is lyrical, conveying the romance of France in each location, interview, and observation. As the pair drives along the A16 through the open countryside, morning light dances across kilometers of bright yellow canola fields. In Brittany, both Bumpus and Josiane experience a feeling that is as inexplicable as the task of "attempting to separate the color blue from water." While driving through the Loire Valley, en route to a troglodyte cave and a truffle farm, Bumpus rolls down the window to hear the call of a redwing blackbird and observes a mélange of vineyards wherein rows of vines appear to be marching like soldiers up the slope.

Bumpus's attention to detail creates a rich sense of people and places. The Gallic "puff," which is best described as a puff of air emitted from the mouth, becomes shorthand for moments when words fail. On other occasions, there is no substitute for the charming French phrases, including "kenavo, au revoir," meaning "goodbye for now." While dining in a hotel in the Loire, the mustard-yellow provincial wallpaper and damask curtains are as sumptuous as the sophisticated food that is served.

The food that Bumpus tastes and writes about is unforgettable, thanks to the array of included recipes with unusual names. In Le Havre, Bumpus learns that a mirror egg is another word for sunny-side up, and woofs down a soufflé-like omelet, prepared in a long-handled copper pan, at Mother Poulard's in Mont Michel. The stereotypical crème brûlée has much competition in Crémets d'Anjou, a soft cream pudding that is ringed with fresh strawberries, and Apples in a Nightdress, an apple pastry consumed at breakfast.

In among the geography, history, and food are human stories of belonging and connection. Louissette, an Algerian refugee living in Rouen, recounts how she was not permitted to take any belongings when she fled, but managed to collect treasures from her former life in the years that followed. In another interview, M. Barreaux refers to September 11, 2001, as the moment he realized that "we are all from the same family—humanity." When the mystery surrounding Josiane's family tree is unravelled, Bumpus affirms that the search for identity is a "haunting, but human desire."

Eloquent and packed with history, geography, and recipes, *Searching for Family and Traditions at the French Table: Book Two* is a melting pot text—a travel memoir that's concerned with cuisine and culture, too.

BIANCA BOWERS (June 29, 2020)

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