

Every Color Under the Sun

Fourth day in Paris. First one to post on the class blog.

Funnily enough, out of the entire 12-person group I'm pretty sure I have tried the least food in Paris so far, thanks to jet lag throwing my sleep schedule and therefore meal times for a big loop. The entire day I thought through the different foods I have tried thus far, wondering again and again what to write about. Would it be the creamy clam linguine we were served at Baieta earlier this afternoon? Maybe the deliciously steamy, fluffy Nutella-filled crepes I would pick up in the middle of my strolls through the streets of Paris? I'm also very tempted to rave about the wonderfully tangy orange juice I finally got to try straight out of the pressers, seen in many of the markets and cafes.

I guess Paris is set on constantly surprising me, because I've decided I want to highlight something I never expected to eat here in Paris, something I literally just picked up on my way back to the dorm 10 minutes before sitting down to write this very post— falafel.

My expectations for this trip were nothing short of the typical tourist mindset, especially being a first timer in Europe. I expected my activities and meal plans to consist of nothing but what would be considered “French”. Only widely known French foods such as baguettes, escargot, and foie gras ran through my head and I would react only with confusion whenever I would hear of others’ trying foods of different cultures in Paris, such as when I read in an article before the trip of how one blogger’s favorite food in Paris was pho. In my mind, I could not understand why one would spend their short, valuable time in the City of Lights eating food seemingly mismatching to the country’s culture. Little did I know at the time of the true melting pot that lies in France, made unignorably, amazingly obvious through the multicultural spread of culinary talent in the capital, Paris.

As soon as I stepped onto the streets of Paris upon my arrival, or more so into the interior of my taxi cab from the airport, I could notice right away from peering out the window the grand variety of ethnic cuisine in the city. No two restaurants next to each other were of the same culture, Lebanese food next to Vietnamese noodle shops just around the corner from Irish pubs and so on, I felt as if I were seeing every color under the sun through the different banners each restaurant sported.

I thought of this first impression of Paris today as I trekked back to the dorm from the Seine, stomach growling after a long day of exploring while my fingers tapped impatiently on my phone screen searching for a quick but filling pick-me-up. First thing I saw which was closest to me was a place called Maoz Vegetarian, a small falafel joint and probably the most casual place I have been to so far in the city. The place had great Google reviews so even as someone who typically does not especially enjoy falafel if given other options, I had high hopes. I was also starving so that may have been a push as well.

The falafel came out freshly made with a crisp, chewy outside breaking into a beautifully savory inside. With the addition of free toppings such as tomatoes, peppers, and mixed veggies, the wrap tasted of a wonderful blend of fresh, savory and slightly spicy from the peppers, just how I like my food. Walking past the Sainte Michel statue after picking up my falafel wrap, I laughed a little as I remembered my reluctance just a few weeks back to try food of cultures other than French. Coming from America, it's sometimes easy to forget how much of a melting pot other countries are as well and Paris is a great example of how diversity changes the landscape of food culture in an area. For myself, I'm glad I realized this earlier on rather than later. I can't imagine all the amazing food I would have missed out on otherwise.