



## PODCAST EPISODE #1 – FULL TRANSCRIPT

**TOPIC: Fussy French Terms**

**GUEST: Dr. Ariane Helou, PhD**



**HOST: Nickie Jurado:** [00:00:00.15] You're listening to the [Kitchen Scene Investigator podcast](#).

**HOST: Nickie Jurado:** [00:00:14.82] Hi, love. Welcome to Kitchen Scene Investigator. I'm your host, Nickie Jurado through this podcast. I dig deep into my experiences in food, wine, and hospitality with the help of a few friends to help you gain swagger along your culinary journey.

**HOST: Nickie Jurado:** [00:00:31.26] But first, some housekeeping. Please support this podcast by subscribing wherever you get your podcasts. I would love your constructive feedback. For more information about the podcast and kitchen scene investigator, visit my Web site. Kitchen scene investigator, dot com.

**HOST: Nickie Jurado:** [00:00:48.54] All right. [On today's show](#), we are going to talk about those fussy French words.

**HOST: Nickie Jurado:** [00:00:53.28] They're popping up on menus everywhere. I used to see this all the time at the restaurant. People would come in dressed to the nines, ready to have this amazing experience. And they would sit at the table, look at the menu and go, uh what?

**HOST: Nickie Jurado:** [00:01:08.16] They get stuck on like, this is shar. Shar. Shar, What's a shar cootry?

**HOST: Nickie Jurado:** [00:01:13.56] Oh, and my favorite of all time. May I please have a glass of rose? Oh, she's so cute. But honestly, honestly, that's something I used to think about all the time.



**HOST: Nickie Jurado:** [00:01:26.71] Like, wouldn't it be great if we had a cheat sheet? Right. Like a cheat sheet that breaks down those top French terms that are popping up all over the place. I mean, these restaurants are not even French and they have all these French terms on it and it can really take you out of the experience.

**HOST: Nickie Jurado:** [00:01:43.98] So that got me thinking, what if I invite one of my favorite people on the planet to come and help break down those fussy French terms? Well, lo and behold ladies and gentlemen, please allow me to introduce you to my very first guest, [Dr. Ariane Helou](#), Hello. Hi. Welcome to Kitchen Scene Investigator. Just a quick recap on her amazingness. Ariane is a French professor at UCLA, has focused on culinary history, is a translator, a dramaturg, and my favorite part, an amazing performing artist. All of that in one person, an amazing dynamo. And she is here to be our guest, our expert guest and be our eyes and ears to help us learn about these damn fussy terms. We're going to go through fussy French and then we will close the show with rapid-fire questions that I would ask every guest. What are you drinking? What's making you happy? And your favorite food gift to bring to a friend or to give to a friend? Ariane, welcome.

**GUEST: Dr. Ariane Helou, PhD:** [00:02:53.37] Thank you so much. I'm really excited to be here and I'm so honored to be your first guest on this podcast. That's really exciting.

**HOST: Nickie Jurado:** [00:03:00.24] Very exciting, right.

**HOST: Nickie Jurado:** [00:03:02.10] So I looked at the top 25 restaurants on TripAdvisor. I figured that's that's an even playing field. Right. And of course, I looked at some of my favorite Michelin-starred restaurants, but I went down to even like local joints and eateries that are, you know, everyday eateries. And I looked at those menus and I saw that there are about 20 25 terms that show up on every single menu. Right. And I was thinking, why don't we do? Ah, why don't we do the audience a service and go through these terms to help them, you know, gain confidence; the next time they're out to eat. They can, you know, saddle up to the edge of their seat with some confidence in order charcuterie. I just love saying the word right.

**GUEST: Dr. Ariane Helou, PhD:** [00:03:51.60] It's a great word.

**HOST: Nickie Jurado:** [00:03:52.23] Right. So why don't we, you know what, let's go through this like a menu. Let's start from the top, **amuse bouche**. I mean, just saying the word moves

amuse bouche is like, I have a secret. I want to run up to somebody. And say in their ear, a  
amuse bouche, like I know something.

**GUEST: Dr. Ariane Helou, PhD:** [00:04:13.41] Please let me watch when you do that because  
I want to see their reaction.

**HOST: Nickie Jurado:** [00:04:18.54] I'll get arrested in L.A., but am I even pronouncing that  
correctly?

**GUEST: Dr. Ariane Helou, PhD:** [00:04:23.64] Yeah, pretty close. It's amuse bouche. If we  
want to be very correct.

**HOST: Nickie Jurado:** [00:04:28.57] Amuse bouche.

**GUEST: Dr. Ariane Helou, PhD:** [00:04:31.25] Amuse bouche.

**HOST: Nickie Jurado:** [00:04:32.40] Amuse bouche. Well, I feel so luxurious.

**GUEST: Dr. Ariane Helou, PhD:** [00:04:36.78] Nicely done. So **it's a phrase that literally  
means amuses or entertains the mouth.** And it's a little bite of something that is presented at  
the start of a meal to kind of whet your appetite. Open up the palate. It's a chance for the chef  
to kind of get creative with something that, you know, maybe you wouldn't order it, but it's really  
exciting when it's just kind of presented to you.

**HOST: Nickie Jurado:** [00:05:00.36] I love I love this part of a menu. In fact, when I was still  
working in the restaurant business, it was really interesting to see how a chef would use a  
amuse bouche because it's not really a course. So it's. Like this tantalizing first little bite, but it  
was still an opportunity for the cooks in the kitchen to show their creativity. So the chef that I  
worked with, Chef Seth Greenberg, he would use it as a way to vet skill and creativity and talent  
because some of the amuse bouche was gorgeous and composed the little plates. And you  
can tell the creativity in the cook and and their ambition to, you know, work their way up the  
brigade by how creative it was.

**HOST: Nickie Jurado:** [00:05:47.24] But let me be serious. A lot of these were awful. They  
were terrible. There were many times where I was on the floor and an amuse bouche of radish  
and salted butter would come out. And I was like, wait, am I not understanding something here?  
Like who would send out radish and butter?



**GUEST: Dr. Ariane Helou, PhD:** [00:06:09.89] Well, I have to say, I'm a big fan of radishes with salted butter. That's a really classic French kind of appetizer. But as an amuse bouche, it's a little unusual. The great thing and the scary thing about an amuse bouche is that it's such a challenge. It's like the the chef has to present their whole thesis of their creative work in one bite. And when it works, it's miraculous. And when it doesn't, as you said, it's it's a little bit it can be a little confusing or a little off putting. So, something like radishes and salted butter, it's a really classic combination. But on its own, it's not. Yeah, it kind of has the most exciting...

**HOST: Nickie Jurado:** [00:06:48.77] It hits flat.

**HOST: Nickie Jurado:** [00:06:49.97] I was really fortunate to work with chefs that thought outside of the box of what an initial flavor should be. So um they they developed amazing [agua frescas](#). So basically flavored water from fresh fruit. Right. And they would send out like cucumber mint or strawberry basil agua fresca and they would be so delicious that customers would want to use them as the base for a drink.

**HOST: Nickie Jurado:** [00:07:26.12] Another thing that the chef used to use as a new amuse bouche was [gougères](#). Goo gères. Yeah. Oh my lord. My French is so bad.

**GUEST: Dr. Ariane Helou, PhD:** [00:07:37.10] You're doing great.

**HOST: Nickie Jurado:** [00:07:37.83] So sad. I'm fired.

**GUEST: Dr. Ariane Helou, PhD:** [00:07:42.86] It's actually what's important. I mean, what's important in the kitchen is not how you're pronouncing it, but how you're preparing it.

**HOST: Nickie Jurado:** [00:07:48.68] True. True. But. But if I were to have, you know, public school French and be semi ok at saying this, what what's the proper way of saying it?

**GUEST: Dr. Ariane Helou, PhD:** [00:07:58.37] [Gougères](#).

**HOST: Nickie Jurado:** [00:07:59.51] Oh, Lord. , Gougères.

**GUEST: Dr. Ariane Helou, PhD:** [00:08:02.48] Don't worry about the "r" the "r" is hard. Try it. It's like gougères.

**HOST: Nickie Jurado:** [00:08:08.09] Gougères, Oh I like that.

**GUEST: Dr. Ariane Helou, PhD:** [00:08:08.99] With an American "r". Ah. Well just well it's a little bit fusion-y. But it's a little easier. A little easier to say.

**HOST: Nickie Jurado:** [00:08:14.54] Folks. She's letting me off the hook by using this wonderful term fusion. Meanwhile, we all know my French is bad, you know...

**GUEST: Dr. Ariane Helou, PhD:** [00:08:22.34] It's great. I would probably not be quite so lenient with one of my language students because of course, when you're learning a language, the point is to really learn the language. But when you're learning these terms to use, when you're ordering in a restaurant, when you're cooking in your kitchen, when you're reading a cookbook, you know, it's not about the language. It's more about the technique and what these words mean. So we can be a little flexible today.

**HOST: Nickie Jurado:** [00:08:45.14] Well, thank you for letting me off the hook.

**HOST: Nickie Jurado:** [00:08:47.42] But I'd like that idea about it being more about the experience and the process versus exact pronunciation or, you know, really hitting it out of the ballpark, you know, in the beginning. Because I think that I mean, that's that's part of the cooking process, too. Right, to allow yourself comfort in exploration. I mean, that's why I started this podcast is to to share that enthusiasm for exploring. And exploring [Gougères](#) was one of my favorite things to do, because initially, you know, I have made pâte à choux before; the dough that Gougères are made from. But it was good.

**GUEST: Dr. Ariane Helou, PhD:** [00:09:33.89] We haven't said what a Gougère is yet.

**HOST: Nickie Jurado:** [00:09:36.02] Well, that would be a really good idea.

**GUEST: Dr. Ariane Helou, PhD:** [00:09:38.91] A Gougère is basically a little cloud of deliciousness, full of cheese.

**HOST: Nickie Jurado:** [00:09:44.88] We love cheese.



**GUEST: Dr. Ariane Helou, PhD:** [00:09:47.27] It's made from [pâte à choux](#), which is a specific kind of pastry preparation, which will maybe say a little more about in a minute. Usually with the [Gruyere cheese](#), which is which comes from Switzerland, which has this delicious kind of nutty flavor, it's really, really good. umm.

**HOST: Nickie Jurado:** [00:10:03.17] What's the name of the cheese again?

**GUEST: Dr. Ariane Helou, PhD:** [00:10:04.46] Well, gruyere, if you speak French and gruyere, if you're grabbing it off the shelf, a Trader Joe's and it's it's really it's really delicious. Great melty cheese. Mm hmm. And it has a really nice flavor.

**GUEST: Dr. Ariane Helou, PhD:** [00:10:17.99] So [Gougères](#) basically like these sort of airy, light cheese puffs. And they in my experience, they are a total crowd pleaser. They're one of my very favorite things to make when I am hosting a party because you can just pull them out of the oven. You can prep the dough in advance, bake them at the last second and then serve them hot out of the oven and people just go crazy for them. They're so, so good.

**HOST: Nickie Jurado:** [00:10:42.41] They are showstoppers, aren't they? I love it. I love it. What's really interesting is at first when I was introduced to them - [pâte à choux](#) - the dough that they're made of, for me, was a was a sweet application. Right.

**HOST: Nickie Jurado:** [00:10:58.10] And my whole world of like easy first bites was blown away when I came across these at the restaurant. I mean, to think to add cheese to something that I would usually stuff with cream and sugar. Game changer. Game changer for me. Do you have a recipe that you love to make?

**GUEST: Dr. Ariane Helou, PhD:** [00:11:17.45] I do. I honestly can't remember where I got the recipe. It's it was in one of my parents' cookbooks and I learned to make it when I was in high school; actually, for a, I think for a French class project. We had to we had to some project where we had to like design a menu, I think as we were learning the names of different foods in French.

**GUEST: Dr. Ariane Helou, PhD:** [00:11:37.64] The thing about *pâte à choux*, which as you said, is often used for desserts. It's *the same base that you'd use for cream, cream puffs or profiteroles - profiteroles*. It's the same.

**HOST: Nickie Jurado:** [00:11:48.74] Did you catch that when folks say that again?

**GUEST: Dr. Ariane Helou, PhD:** [00:11:51.32] So cream puffs. Mm hmm. Also known as profiteroles. Mm hmm. Or profiteroles.

**HOST: Nickie Jurado:** [00:11:57.20] Yeah, I know profiteroles.

**GUEST: Dr. Ariane Helou, PhD:** [00:11:58.37] Right. Well, also for éclairs. Right. Right. It's just it's a fantastic base for both sweet and savory applications because the dough doesn't have any sugar in it. It's really just water, butter, flour, and eggs. Very simple. But it has so much water in it, which is really unusual for pastries. And you kind of cook the dough before you bake it in the oven, you cook it on the stovetop.

**GUEST: Dr. Ariane Helou, PhD:** [00:12:22.73] And when it has that much water, it means, first of all, that because the flour has been cooked, it's thick enough that you can pipe it out in shapes so you can make really fantastic, beautiful creations out of it. And it holds its shape before it goes in the oven. But then as it bakes, all of that water that's in the dough turns to steam, and it creates these beautiful layers, these big pockets of air. So even something that sounds very rich, like a cheese puffer, a cream puff sounds very rich. It feels very, very light and airy because of all of it, because of the way the dough is structured.

**HOST: Nickie Jurado:** [00:12:54.50] Right. And that's exactly what got me excited about them when I came across them at [the restaurant](#). They were light, fluffy, flavorful, interesting, and you can eat them in one bite, which made me so happy.

**GUEST: Dr. Ariane Helou, PhD:** [00:13:12.55] They're great as a sort of blank canvas because you can add other ingredients to flavor them. So you could add chopped herbs, you could add ham or salami. There's really a million different things you could do with it.

**HOST: Nickie Jurado:** [00:13:22.58] I used to see the chef whipped, whipped like whipped cheese with little pieces of *quanciale*. Oh, wow, that sounds amazing. Oh, it was amazing.

**GUEST: Dr. Ariane Helou, PhD:** [00:13:33.50] What's guan, *quanciale*?



**HOST: Nickie Jurado:** [00:13:34.90] So our listener. So [guanciale](#) are uh, the pig jowls that there was a number of ways to prepare them. But they they are usually processed. They're cured. Sort of like bacon in a way.

**GUEST: Dr. Ariane Helou, PhD:** [00:13:53.78] Right. So sort of like bacon. They're cured. But are they smoked like bacon is?

**HOST: Nickie Jurado:** [00:13:58.64] Yes. You know what? Let's put that in the show notes different recipes for guanciale. And I think that's a that's a whole different conversation. And and I want to give listeners resources that they can go back to.

**HOST: Nickie Jurado:** [00:14:12.71] So we've talked about gougères. We've talked we've talked about a amuse bouche. And now, oh, I'm so excited. We get to move on to a plate that you see on every menu, whether it's a five-star restaurant a Michelin-starred restaurant, or a local eatery. And that is **charcuterie**. And I I really want to start with saying in Jersey, that's like deli meat.

**GUEST: Dr. Ariane Helou, PhD:** [00:14:40.73] It is. Yeah. That's exactly what it is. It's the French word for for a deli meats basically. **Charcuterie if we want to be very correct or charcuterie is the big category of cured and preserved meat product.** This includes things like ham and salami. It includes every kind of sausage, fresh, smoked, cured. It includes things like pâté. And we think because the word is French, we think of it as being fancy. But **honestly, a hot dog is a form of charcuterie.**

**HOST: Nickie Jurado:** [00:15:10.04] Really?

**GUEST: Dr. Ariane Helou, PhD:** [00:15:10.81] Right. It's a sausage.

**HOST: Nickie Jurado:** [00:15:11.87] That's correct.

**GUEST: Dr. Ariane Helou, PhD:** [00:15:12.73] Right. Correct.

**HOST: Nickie Jurado:** [00:15:13.66] Yeah. I didn't think about it that way. I think it's fascinating that something that was previously a something in the domain of peasant food. You know, they



were using the curing technique where the cooking technique to extend the shelf life of their meat is now a luxury item, and sign me up. I know my favorite is [porchetta](#). What is your favorite?

**HOST: Nickie Jurado:** [00:15:37.00] I love porchetta.

**GUEST: Dr. Ariane Helou, PhD:** [00:15:39.76] Although it's interesting because I don't always think of that as being a charcuterie. It depends on, I think it depends on how it's prepared. Because you can get it as something that is sliced in the deli. But my first encounter with a [porchetta actually as a fresh pork roast](#), which is which is how it's often prepared in Tuscany, where it's a whole it's like a suckling pig that has been roasted and. Right. Where it's a cut of pork that has been rolled up with herbs and has been slow-roasted. And you can you can put it in a sandwich. So you. Right. Sign me up, as you said.

**HOST: Nickie Jurado:** [00:16:13.54] I think the Italian version that you see in restaurants is the cooked version. And what you're seeing in French applications is a roll of rolled loin that has been cured with the pink salts. Right. And the herbs and spices in the middle. So chef would prepare the loin. That has been deboned and seasoned. Then he rolls the loin and butcher ties it and cures it for a period, a short period of time. And then after the curing process, he roast it low and slow. That's my favorite version. That sounds delicious. It's amazing. Yeah. Amazing.

**GUEST: Dr. Ariane Helou, PhD:** [00:16:56.56] There's one of the things that's interesting is that these words can have a slightly different meaning depending on the context. Right. So the restaurant context versus the, you know, stall in a market in a city somewhere in Tuscany context. [The Italians have a word for this category of cured meats also, which is "salumi" means exactly the same thing is as charcuterie](#). And you see that on menus a lot, too, now. So if the if the restaurant has more of an Italian bent, they might call it salumi, more of a French bent, They might call it charcuterie. But it's the same category of things, basically.

**HOST: Nickie Jurado:** [00:17:31.84] I don't know about you, but this talk of charcuterie is making me so hungry. Actually, I picked up some charcuterie for us to celebrate after we're done with this episode. And I found I found [soppressata](#), I found prosciutto, and I found [mortadella](#).

**HOST: Nickie Jurado:** [00:17:49.51] Awesome. I love all of which. It's funny that we're talking about French charcuterie. They're all delicious. I mean, the other thing that's wonderful about



about the about charcuterie as a category is that you don't have to be limited to any particular geographical region. Right. Because these practices of making sausage and other kinds of, you know, smoked meats, cured meats. It's global. Right. Every region in the world has its own has its own set of traditions for creating those kinds of products. Often meat, but sometimes also fish. Right. So there's lots of different. You know, you can whatever whatever kind of cuisine you're interested in exploring, you can find charcuterie options that go with that.

**HOST: Nickie Jurado:** [00:18:35.65] I do like the technique that my chef used to use. His basic, the premise of his charcuterie board was build it around a star meat and most of the time it was pork and have that star meat be presented in different styles. So have it sliced, have it cooked, have it cured, have it roasted. It was all about creating a plate that had balance. So fundamentally, you want the cured meats, but you don't want all cured meat because that would be so salty. In my book, you start with [prosciutto](#). Right. Right.

**GUEST: Dr. Ariane Helou, PhD:** [00:19:14.86] You can never go wrong with prosciutto.

**HOST: Nickie Jurado:** [00:19:15.95] Uh, no. I think we should just go and have prosciutto and wine.

**GUEST: Dr. Ariane Helou, PhD:** [00:19:20.80] OK.

**HOST: Nickie Jurado:** [00:19:21.21] Yeah. OK. All right.

**HOST: Nickie Jurado:** [00:19:23.65] So he he he said you start with cured meats and then balance that out with [cotto](#). Yeah.

**GUEST: Dr. Ariane Helou, PhD:** [00:19:30.38] [Cotto means cooked in Italian](#).

**HOST: Nickie Jurado:** [00:19:32.38] Excellent. So cured. Cooked. And this is where the magic happens. He would balance the fat, the protein, the saltiness of the meats with a beautiful accoutrement such as olives and pickled vegetables, and jams that that weren't too sweet. And of course, crusty bread, because every every charcuterie board needs to be accompanied with crusty bread or bread should just go with everything.

**HOST: Nickie Jurado:** [00:20:05.05] And what you got was was a balance of flavor, a balance of texture, a balance of salty versus semi-sweet with the jams, and it's just such a lovely experience and you can tell a lot about a chef by what they put on a charcuterie board. I feel like, you know, places like our favorite restaurant around the corner, [République](#), they just knock it out of the ballpark because the quality of their meats are amazing. And then you go to a more local eatery and, you know, be a little bit more pedestrian. But you know what? That's OK, because it's all about having that balance of textures and flavors and saltines, and sweet.

**GUEST: Dr. Ariane Helou, PhD:** [00:20:48.56] Mm hmm. And again, that's something that, you know, if you are feeling adventurous and want to make your own pickles, make your own, make your own jams or chutney as you can always do that. And it's a way to put something homemade that's relatively easy to do onto a plate of store-bought things. But if you don't want to do that, those things are, again, things that you can that you can buy. So much of entertaining is about shopping as much as it is about the actual cooking. I often hear from friends who are like, how do you, how do you throw dinner parties you love to cook?

**GUEST: Dr. Ariane Helou, PhD:** [00:21:20.13] I don't really love to cook, but I love to have people over. And that's one of the ways in which you can make that happen. Right, is to find things that you can that don't really require a lot of cooking, just kind of putting things beautifully on plates.

**HOST: Nickie Jurado:** [00:21:32.10] And you would be surprised the quality of products that a chef has access to that they don't necessarily make, you know, in the kitchen, because it's a better guest experience to bring in really quality meats from a vendor that sources directly from Italy.

**GUEST: Dr. Ariane Helou, PhD:** [00:21:57.35] It's not just chefs who have that kind of access to quality ingredients. All of us do. I have as you have heard, I speak a little French. I grew out a little just a little. A little. I grew up speaking French because my family's from Lebanon, which is a largely French-speaking country.

**GUEST: Dr. Ariane Helou, PhD:** [00:22:15.15] And I have a lot of family in France. So it's very lucky to spend a lot of time in France. When I was growing up and because of that, I got to sample all of these wonderful things, which at the time were really not easily available in the United States. These kinds of cheeses, these kinds of [pâté](#), they were incredibly difficult to find. So it was very hard if you wanted to share some of these things with your friends. But now you can find these kinds of ingredients, the French cheeses, the pâtés, the cured meats that



come not just from France and from Italy and from Spain, but from all over the world. You can find them in almost any grocery store these days.

**HOST: Nickie Jurado:** [00:22:56.31] I agree. I feel that what we're seeing in the grocery store has is now on a completely different level. Whereas the international aisle had soy sauce and that was the extent of it. But because grocers are really listening to their shoppers and are tapping into the unique cultural choices and tastes of their shoppers in their neighborhood, you're starting to see what used to be the domain of the international isle just be in, you know, a meat or a cheese or a condiment, which in my book is just wonderful to see this evolution of the of the shopping experience. And I highly, highly encourage our listeners to go out there and venture and try something new, even if it's something that you saw on a menu that that was a French word and you want to learn more about that. And I think charcuterie is one of the greatest ways to to venture out.

**GUEST: Dr. Ariane Helou, PhD:** [00:24:05.82] Yeah. I mean, charcuterie, the way that it's most often presented on a menu is some kind of delicious salty pork. I mean, you know what's not to love, right?

**HOST: Nickie Jurado:** [00:24:16.35] Sign me up.

**GUEST: Dr. Ariane Helou, PhD:** [00:24:17.67] And if you don't eat pork, there might be some delicious salty duck, right? Yeah.

**HOST: Nickie Jurado:** [00:24:22.17] Oh, that's right. You can have duck prosciutto like the one we had at Kass. Is it Kass.

**GUEST: Dr. Ariane Helou, PhD:** [00:24:30.06] I think it's Kass.

**HOST: Nickie Jurado:** [00:24:31.05] It's Kass. Right. It was delicious. It was smoky and sweet with that beautiful fat layer along the edges. It was absolutely delicious. If you're in L.A., the two places we'd love to go to for a charcuterie is [République](#) and Kass. It's right around the corner from us.

**GUEST: Dr. Ariane Helou, PhD:** [00:24:51.42] Yeah. Oh, and if you want to have an amazing gougère, another place that's in the neighborhood where I went a few weeks ago and they had gougères on the menu was Otis and Penelope. Oh yeah. And they were fantastic. They were like the size of your fist and now magically cheesy and delicious.

**HOST: Nickie Jurado:** [00:25:09.27] That's the one thing about this category because I saw it across the country. In Chicago, in South Carolina, in Dallas, in Seattle, in New York, in New Jersey, all of these menus from these different neighborhoods had charcuterie on it, which is really delightful to see. So we've talked about charcuterie. And now I want to segue way to my favorite part of the menu and that's **the main course or entrée**. Is that correct? Entrée?

**GUEST: Dr. Ariane Helou, PhD:** [00:25:38.01] It is correct. Although this is another, I'm going to put on my French professor hat for a minute.

**HOST: Nickie Jurado:** [00:25:43.56] Oh, please do.

**GUEST: Dr. Ariane Helou, PhD:** [00:25:44.73] So **in the United States, when we see the word entrée and on a menu for us, it means the main dish**. Right. It's the sort of the center course of the meal. **In France, entrée means first course**. So, it's actually the thing you have before your main dish. It's kind of like an appetizer. Oh, interesting. No, not like an appetizer or more like a first course. You know, it might be it might be a salad or it might be a soup or it might be a delicious, decadent slice of **foie gras**.

**HOST: Nickie Jurado:** [00:26:11.78] Uh, ohh sign me up. I'm so I'm so glad you brought up foie gras, because, you know, it's one of those, it's one of those menu items, whether it's the prepared dish or the actual ingredient itself. And here in California. So, let's talk about [what foie gras is?](#)

**GUEST: Dr. Ariane Helou, PhD:** [00:26:33.18] So **the phrase foie gras or foie gras, if you're speaking English, literally means fat liver and it's the liver of a duck or a goose. The liver has become enlarged because the bird has had a lot to eat**. That's kind of the summary of it.

**HOST: Nickie Jurado:** [00:26:49.68] And here in California, foie gras is a polarizing and controversial ingredient. And I don't want to gloss over that because I think it's important to to acknowledge the different schools of thought with foie gras, because there is a camp that says it's you know, it's cruelty to animals the way that that the livers are grown and harvested. And there's another camp that says, well, you know, initially they gorged to get through the winter.



So it's just, you know, a modern version of evolution, I guess. But I'm not here to talk politics about food. There will be a whole different podcast. But the reality is that foie gras exists on so many menus.

**GUEST: Dr. Ariane Helou, PhD:** [00:27:35.01] It does. And it's worth noting it has been banned in California. It's polarizing kind of everywhere, not just here. But one of the things I know you said leave the question of of the broader political implications aside. And I I don't want to go too far with it, but I think it's worth noting kind of what's at the root of that argument.

**GUEST: Dr. Ariane Helou, PhD:** [00:27:56.94] So it's presented as a question of ethics and animal cruelty, which is something we should all be very considerate of and aware of. So the main argument is that the process of force feeding, which causes the birds livers to grow, which is called gavage. That's the technical term for it is very harmful and very cruel. And I'm not disputing that. The argument on the other side is that birds naturally eat a lot in the winter to build up energy for migration, et cetera. And so some people say, well, this is just technology helping what is already a natural process. And I think I don't think that that's a great argument, to be honest.

**GUEST: Dr. Ariane Helou, PhD:** [00:28:35.85] But the thing that concerns me about the foie gras argument, the efforts to ban foie gras, is that it is such a small industry. Right. If you want to think of it in ethical terms, purely on the basis of numbers, the numbers of animals who are affected by this, not to mention the number of human consumers. It doesn't come anywhere near the numbers in factory farming. Right. That's something that is also extremely cruel to animals. We're talking pigs, cows, chickens.

**GUEST: Dr. Ariane Helou, PhD:** [00:29:07.02] It's a massive industry. Millions and millions of living creatures who are subjected to these conditions. It's bad for the animals. It's bad for us who eat the products that come from them. And it's really, really terrible for the environment. But, foie gras is an easy target because it's a very small industry. It has these kinds of elitist associations. So, I think that people should be well informed to make their own choice about whether or not they want to consume this product. I think it's really important to know how it is. I think with anything we eat; we should know where our food comes.

**HOST: Nickie Jurado:** [00:29:44.10] Absolutely.

**GUEST: Dr. Ariane Helou, PhD:** [00:29:45.03] I think that's really essential, especially now when everything is globalized. You know, on the one hand, it's very exciting to have the whole culinary world at your fingertips. And on the other hand, it means that we have this burden of how much we have to think about where everything is coming from and how conscious we may want to be or may care to be about what we're putting in our bodies and what we're and what we're where we're putting our money. Right.

**HOST: Nickie Jurado:** [00:30:11.70] Speaking of where to put your money. This is something I used to see at [the restaurant](#) all the time when we would have foie gras on the menu. One of my favorite things to do was to um was to open the eyes of guests to the idea of pair of wine [pairing for foie gras](#). And the classic pairing is with a **Sauterne**. Yes. Which is one of my favorite, favorite wines on the planet.

**GUEST: Dr. Ariane Helou, PhD:** [00:30:39.45] Just so good. Do you want to tell us a little bit about what a Sauterne is? So, Sauterne, if you're a...[Say that again] Sauterne.

**HOST: Nickie Jurado:** [00:30:47.94] I would love to. Actually, one of my favorite resources that I consume daily - thank you social media - is [Wine Folly](#). And, the way that they describe wine is so user-friendly. If you're looking for a great resource to learn more about wine, especially in in little digestible bites, go to [Wine Folly](#) dot com. It's fantastic.

**HOST: Nickie Jurado:** [00:31:17.85] And this is their description of [Sauternes](#). So, "*Sauternes represent the sweeter side of Bordeaux and is made from the region's rare white grapes. Built on the thin skins of sémillon...*", right? [Sémillon] Sémillon, sémillon "*with a bit of bright acidity generously donated by sauvignon blanc, [Sauternes](#) make an exceptional dessert wine.*" And this is where I take a little exception to that.

**HOST: Nickie Jurado:** [00:31:43.47] It's a dessert wine that that pairs wonderfully in this, you know, with this savory application. And here's my recommendation. If you're at a restaurant and a server knows enough to recommend a Sauterne to go along with your foie gras, get the [Sauterne](#).

**HOST: Nickie Jurado:** [00:32:04.17] It's such a luxurious and delicious experience. And, you know, in and of itself, a Sauterne is delicious. It's it has wonderful apple and mature fruit undertones. But when paired with the foie gras, it just elevates the experience to to a level that



is worth getting the Sauterne or or an ice wine or a late harvest Riesling. That would be my recommendation.

**GUEST: Dr. Ariane Helou, PhD:** [00:32:36.87] Yeah, I think that's great. And I think it's I think it's great if I can take a tiny, tiny detour, talk about wine pairings. I think, you know, a term like [dessert wine](#) makes it sound like you can only have it one way. A term like sweet wine opens up the possibility of different kinds of pairings. And and I don't know about you, but I am all for doing unexpected wine pairings. I mean, people say, oh, white wine goes with fish. Now, I love a red wine. [Oh, with a [Beaujolais](#)], delicate fish. [Sign me up]. Exactly. So when you recommended to your guests at the restaurant that they have the Sauterne with the foie gras. Can I ask you a question?

**HOST: Nickie Jurado:** [00:33:14.70] Yes, of course.

**GUEST: Dr. Ariane Helou, PhD:** [00:33:15.33] Was it fresh foie gras or was it presented with a pâté?

**HOST: Nickie Jurado:** [00:33:19.33] That is a fantastic question. Most of the time it would be two different presentations. It would be a seared foie gras and it was accompanied with like a berry jam and presented with a toasted brioche toast point. Seriously, one of my favorite things to have. The other way that it was presented was as a [torchon](#). [Nice]. Do you want to describe what torchon is?

**GUEST: Dr. Ariane Helou, PhD:** [00:33:47.38] Sure, you can help me out with this, [we're geeking out], yeah [really geeking out] A torchon, it [refers to to the twisting mechanism](#), right, that you're used to. So what you do is [you basically wrap the liver in a cheesecloth very, very tightly and then you poach it](#). You steam it, you poach it, [um poach] you poach it. I think in a in a in a very light broth so that it cooks all the way through.

**GUEST: Dr. Ariane Helou, PhD:** [00:34:12.69] And so then it means that you can cut these nice thick even slices. Right. And it has a very, very smooth, creamy texture. It's it's almost like butter. [Yes.] And it's incredibly decadent. And if you get so you can get foie gras. You can, you know, if you if you live in a place where it's not banned, you can buy it in stores. You can most often the way you'll find it is in cans or in jars. And it will be from a torchon or it will be a [pâté](#)



or mousse or [terrines](#) kind of presentation, which means that it has been cooked and seasoned with other ingredients.

**GUEST: Dr. Ariane Helou, PhD:** [00:34:47.74] But having it fresh and seared is incredibly luxurious. It is gorgeous and delicious. There's there's nothing like it. So, if you're if you're feeling brave, I also recommend it and have the Sauterne with it. And that pairing with the brioche and some kind of fruit, that's really that's really classic.

**HOST: Nickie Jurado:** [00:35:05.59] I think what I want to do is put some resources on foie gras on the on the show notes. OK. Yeah. For listeners, I would love to do that.

**HOST: Nickie Jurado:** [00:35:14.05] Now we're going to move onto a dish that I'm not a fan of at all whatsoever, but it is omni present and it's really having its resurrection or it's starting to become the belle of the ball on some menus. And that's [escargot](#).

**GUEST: Dr. Ariane Helou, PhD:** [00:35:31.84] You're not a fan of escargot?

**HOST: Nickie Jurado:** [00:35:33.36] I'm not a fan.

**GUEST: Dr. Ariane Helou, PhD:** [00:35:34.42] Really?

**HOST: Nickie Jurado:** [00:35:34.93] I'm not a fan. The texture. I do. OK. I love the combination of garlic, butter, salt, herbs seasoning. I love that combination. Yeah, I can have that for breakfast, but I can I just can't get past the images. So why don't you describe her audience, escargot.

**GUEST: Dr. Ariane Helou, PhD:** [00:35:59.08] So [escargot is the French word for snails](#). Right. So these are literally snails that are cooked and eaten. The same little critters that you see crawling around your garden. They're eaten all over the world, though. We think of them as being French. But they have actually been eaten all around the Mediterranean since antiquity. Archaeologists find piles of snail shells really at settlements that are like tens of thousands of years old [interesting] because they are you know, they're wild. They're easy, fairly easy to gather. They're high in protein. So there, you know, they can be very nourishing if eaten in quantity. So. So, yeah. But but the texture can be really off putting to a lot of people.

**HOST: Nickie Jurado:** [00:36:43.42] It's chewy. And I I'm not doing the dish or the ingredient justice because it is wildly popular.



**GUEST: Dr. Ariane Helou, PhD:** [00:36:52.69] I think perhaps I haven't done a lot of research on this, but perhaps it's seen as an ingredient that's kind of sustainable. Oh, I see. Maybe that that might be one reason for it or just that people are coming around to to appreciate it and people maybe are just have become more adventurous eaters.

**HOST: Nickie Jurado:** [00:37:09.22] Do you still enjoy it?

**GUEST: Dr. Ariane Helou, PhD:** [00:37:10.66] I do, although I went through a phase of absolutely refusing to touch them for a really long time.

**HOST: Nickie Jurado:** [00:37:15.82] Why?

**GUEST: Dr. Ariane Helou, PhD:** [00:37:16.96] So the first time I had them. So as I mentioned, I have family in France, so I was lucky to travel there when I was really young. And the first time I had them, I was a really little kid. And I thought they were delicious because of course, it's garlic and parsley and butter. And then you dip your crusty bread in the butter that's floating around in the dish. Right. It's fantastic. What's not to love?

**GUEST: Dr. Ariane Helou, PhD:** [00:37:40.57] But I didn't really realize that they were snails. You know how when you're when you're very little, you eat foods, but you don't really realize where the foods come from. [Right.] You don't really realize. And there's that kind of awful moment I think that a lot, that a lot of children have where they like this chicken used to be a chicken like a walking around chicken. And it's very it can be very disturbing. So, I had that experience with the snails. I mean, they come in the shell.

**GUEST: Dr. Ariane Helou, PhD:** [00:38:06.07] The way they're served as the snail has been, has been cooked, has been cooked, put back in its shell and the garlic parsley butter has been scooped into the shells. It's covering the snail and they go under the broiler until the butter melts. So the snails cooked for that. It's fantastic. And this preparation, which is the classic preparation, it's called "[Escargots à la Bourguignonne](#)", which means it comes from the Burgundy region of France.

**HOST: Nickie Jurado:** [00:38:32.32] That's a setup. It sounds amazing.

**GUEST: Dr. Ariane Helou, PhD:** [00:38:34.84] Like so good. I mean, you can put the garlic, parsley butter on anything, right. But it is really good on the snails. And so, when I had this, I thought I didn't realize that the snails were actually snails. I thought the snail shells were just shells that had been cleaned out. And inside of it was a little bit of like chicken or beef or something [tastes like that chicken].

**GUEST: Dr. Ariane Helou, PhD:** [00:38:54.54] It kind of tastes like chicken, but like chewier. And, when you're, you know, five, six years old, you don't really make that connection. Until someone a friend of my parents was having dinner with us. So. Wow. Your kid is a very adventurous eater, especially for an American. How does she like snails so much? And that was when I sort of the it clicked that escargot were literally escargot. And after that, I wouldn't touch them for years and years.

**GUEST: Dr. Ariane Helou, PhD:** [00:39:23.10] And then when I was 15, I was visiting family in Lebanon and my aunt was cooking snails for the big Sunday lunch for everyone. And I didn't know that this was happening, but I loved to be in the kitchen. It was my favorite place to be. So, I just volunteered to help with anything. So, she said, follow me. We went into the garden shed where they had the big boiler pots. So, anything, you know, homemade French fries or falafel or anything else that needed to be deep fried would happen there. Things that had to be boiled in big pots would happen there.

**GUEST: Dr. Ariane Helou, PhD:** [00:39:53.01] So the giant pot of water and a sack of snails hanging off the wall. And she dumped the snails into the water and handed me a big wooden spoon and turned on the heat under the snails. And she said, as they start, as the water starts to get hot and start to crawl out of the pot and you can't let them escape. So, my job was to stand there. This is terrible after I went off on a thing about animal ethics a few minutes ago. My job was to stand there with the wooden spoon poking the snails back into the pot as they tried to escape. Talk about knowing where your food comes from. It was really intense.

**HOST: Nickie Jurado:** [00:40:33.68] How is your average? Did. Did you get all the snails back in the pot?

**GUEST: Dr. Ariane Helou, PhD:** [00:40:36.50] I did not miss a single snail. I was like, you know what? If I'm going to do this, I'm going to commit. So, I committed so hard that as we sat down to lunch, I was like, well, now I guess I have to eat them since I put all that work into them and I ate some and they were not bad. And since then, I have come back around to them. Now I love them. If I see them on a menu, I will absolutely order them. I really like them.



**HOST: Nickie Jurado:** [00:41:01.04] I just can't go there. I can't.

**GUEST: Dr. Ariane Helou, PhD:** [00:41:03.77] But the Lebanese way of serving snails is really interesting, too. So instead of doing as I said or they're just boiling in a big pot, when they were done, they just got dumped out on the table. And some newspapers the way you do with like a shrimp boil or something like that. And everyone kind of picked out their own. And instead of garlic butter, I mean, I made some garlic butter because why wouldn't you? But they served it with a sauce called [tarator](#), which is made of tahini and lemon juice. [That's delicious.] It's really good. And it's a it's kind of a staple. It's the same source that you put on a falafel sandwich. It's the same sauce you put on fried fish. It's really, really good. So that's what they that's would put...

**HOST: Nickie Jurado:** [00:41:38.18] Oh, interesting. Interesting. Well, maybe that's a little push that I needed to to try escargot. I wanted to move to my favorite technique. We're still in the entrée portion of the menu. But this is a technique that you'll see in starters. You'll see it in the entrée. You'll see it in tasting menus. And that technique is **confit**. Am I saying that properly?

**GUEST: Dr. Ariane Helou, PhD:** [00:42:07.19] Yeah, [confit](#). [Oh, confit]. Yeah. The "t" is actually silent.

**HOST: Nickie Jurado:** [00:42:11.40] Oh, I didn't know that.

**GUEST: Dr. Ariane Helou, PhD:** [00:42:12.76] French is so tricky that way.

**HOST: Nickie Jurado:** [00:42:15.08] It is tricky that way.

**GUEST: Dr. Ariane Helou, PhD:** [00:42:15.65] Like here's a bunch of consonants. Don't pronounce any of them.

**HOST: Nickie Jurado:** [00:42:18.86] So what exactly is *confit*? I came across the perfect [description for it from Serious Eats](#). And it says - confit derives from the French term confire. Right. [Confire]. Oh, confire. Yeah. Gosh, that sounds serious.

**HOST: Nickie Jurado:** [00:42:38.14] All right. It's close there. I'm getting there, I'm getting there. That simply means to preserve. Like **traditionally confit simply refers to any sort of, you know, preserved food, whether it's meat or fruit or vegetables. And this preservation takes place by slowly cooking food in a liquid.** You know, and that liquid is inhospitable to bacterial growth. I know people that are inhospitable. With fruits it's concentrated sugar syrup and with meats and vegetables, it's pure fat.

**HOST: Nickie Jurado:** [00:43:13.55] And once it's cooked, you pack it completely submerged in that liquid, creating a barrier. So, storage is just as important as the cooking method because it creates this environment where the connective tissue slowly breaks down and tenderizes. If you can do that to meat and you can do that to vegetables, and you can do that to fruit? You get the big gold medal in my book in terms of confit. Now, I understand that you're a big fan of it, too.

**GUEST: Dr. Ariane Helou, PhD:** [00:43:43.28] I am. I will eat a confit at any opportunity. And I have also made confit. [Really?] Yeah. I have made [duck confit](#). It's quite a process. I've only done it once. I sort of wanted to do it once to see if I could do it. If you ever made it before. Oh, yeah. Yeah, it's great. But it's it's a bit of a process.

**HOST: Nickie Jurado:** [00:44:01.61] It's a commitment.

**GUEST: Dr. Ariane Helou, PhD:** [00:44:02.36] It's a commitment. The day that I did it, actually a bunch of my when I lived in the Bay Area, I ran with a circle of very dedicated home cooks and one professional cook. And we all we would sometimes get together and kind of workshop new techniques. So, one day we had a **duck confit**. Workshop, workshop or party [that's serious] Yeah. It was great. We all brought. We each brought a duck or two. And we processed them and we made the things and everyone took home a few jars of confit and it was fantastic. It was really good.

**HOST: Nickie Jurado:** [00:44:40.21] So were you when were you first exposed to confit? Was this in your family history, like in the kitchen? Did you cook compete at home?

**GUEST: Dr. Ariane Helou, PhD:** [00:44:50.95] No, we never cooked it at home. I I did have it when I was pretty young. As I mentioned last time, I have a lot of family that lives in France, and I was lucky enough to spend some time there as I as a kid. So I. So, confit has been in my life since childhood for which I feel very fortunate, but we never made it at home. That's



something that I did on my own sort of when I was out and about with my own kitchen because I wanted to learn.

**GUEST: Dr. Ariane Helou, PhD:** [00:45:13.84] But there are two kinds of confit that are kind of in the family repertoire. So one is the [French style of confit](#), the duck or the goose. [So meat.] So meat, right. But there's another kind of confit, also meat, which is from the Lebanese traditions. My family is from Lebanon and there is a kind of lamb confit that they make there called an *awarma*. [Say that again], awarma. [I love that]. It's so good.

**GUEST: Dr. Ariane Helou, PhD:** [00:45:41.89] And it's almost impossible to make here. So, as you said, the confit is slow-cooked in fat when it's meat or vegetables. And [to make a proper awarma](#), you need lamb, fat. And the way that it's done is with a particular breed of sheep that is almost impossible to find in the U.S. but that is very, very common in the Middle East and in many parts of Asia and in parts of Africa as well. It's a breed of sheep that carries all of its fat in its tail. [Interesting]. Yeah. It's called [fat-tailed sheep](#). So the meat is very lean and it has a huge fat deposit in its tail.

**GUEST: Dr. Ariane Helou, PhD:** [00:46:19.54] So to make awarma, you take the you take cuts of meat from the lamb and you take all of the fat from the tail. You render it down; you slow cook the lamb. And so, you have basically a lamb confit. And it's always you know; you make it was sort of the bits and pieces after you have done with your butchering. And so, it tends to be small, it tends to be chopped very fine. And you can do all kinds of things with it. You can just reheat it in a frying pan and put it on top of hummus. [Sign me up]. It's amazing. You can put it in a sandwich if you want. I once had it at at my aunt's house. She. She split open a baguette and covered it with awarma and then put it inside a panini press. And then we just cut it in little bits. It's awesome.

Or my favorite way to do it, which is to have it for breakfast with eggs. [Oh, that's delicious] reheated in a pan, you crack some eggs on top of it. Mm hmm. You season it with all spice and black pepper and salt. [Interesting]. Yeah, it's really, really good. So. So that's it. So, confit is, as you said, it's just a technique. It can be applied in lots of different ways.

**HOST: Nickie Jurado:** [00:47:21.89] When I was exposed to it for the first time, I only knew it through the lens of duck confit as that classic dish. And then it was really like my understanding

of what confit is all about, really expanded when I started working with chef Seth Greenberg here at the Penthouse in Santa Monica. And the one thing that I didn't associate with confit was versatility. I was taught about this technique that you use on duck. And it was in working with Chef Seth that I saw that you can apply that concept to so many different ingredients. And this process of cooking it low and slow in fat, like it it blew my mind. I thought wait wait, you're going to put tomatoes, cover it completely in really good in really good fat. And that's going to turn into something that you would pay top dollar for. And that's exactly what happened.

**HOST: Nickie Jurado:** [00:48:31.16] That was my entryway into learning the versatility because he would [confit these little baby tomatoes](#) with garlic and thyme and a little bit of seasoning and low in slow, like the baby tomatoes were floating around in the oil, low and slow for hours. And I thought that's gonna be disgusting. That's going to be completely gross.

**GUEST: Dr. Ariane Helou, PhD:** [00:48:55.40] I think it sounds delicious.

**HOST: Nickie Jurado:** [00:48:57.35] Well, I learned my lesson. So, what happens in the process? Because the tomatoes are completely submerged. Is that they're not being blistered. Right. So, air is not getting in and drying out the tomatoes, it's in its own environment where the sugars in the tomatoes are being developed. And because they're not exposed to air, the acidity in the tomatoes are not being obliterated. So, you're taking what is you know, it's it's delicious to begin with. And you're like you're pumping up delicious by cooking it, you know, through this method.

**HOST: Nickie Jurado:** [00:49:39.08] And so the more I worked with this chef, Seth, I realized this is a concept that I can take into my home kitchen. And as soon as tomato season pops in, I am ready to roll. And it's really one of my favorite things to do on a weekly basis, because it's not something that you have to stand guard over. So, the key is to use delicious produce a neutral, high quality oil and high quality and high quality herbs and spices. And you don't you know, you just don't have to baby sit it. You pop it in the oven on a Sunday when you're doing your meal prep and the applications and what you can use these confit tomatoes. It's boundless. I'd put it on flatbreads. I put it on pastas. And hands down one of my favorite things to do is taste like smash it as a spread on a sandwich, like tomato confit, like a spread on a sub; a sub that is the *Jersey* in me coming out. Wow. Who was that?

**HOST: Nickie Jurado:** [00:50:48.80] But the spread of the tomato confit with fresh mozzarella and basil and call it a day. It is seriously one of my favorite sandwiches to eat during tomato season.



**GUEST: Dr. Ariane Helou, PhD:** [00:51:01.62] It's a conversation that might be worth returning to at some point as **why have all of these terms in French?**

**HOST: Nickie Jurado:** [00:51:07.58] You know, that's a really good point. These terms, they're not on the menu for frivolous reasons. They're **when a chef puts a French term on the menu. It's for very strategic reasons. Either they're referring to an ingredient, they're referring to a region, they're referring to a technique, they're referring to a dish.**

**HOST: Nickie Jurado:** [00:51:31.13] And what they're doing by adding these terms on the menu is giving you like this this blossom of information in just one word. And that blossom of information helps the menu come to life and give the diner an insight into how the chef thinks. Culinary terms are really having their day at the prom. The more global we're becoming as a community of diners, the more we're seeing authentic terms on menus. And I applaud that. I think it's exciting. I think that it that **it imparts respect to the origin of dishes.** There's enough of ingredients and of of techniques, and I think that it expands the conversation of food and how we talk about food, because the more we understand one another, the more we delve deeper into culture, the more we delve deeper into these terms, the more we are connected.

**HOST: Nickie Jurado:** [00:52:34.07] And, you know, I know I'm making, you know, a little fun of fussy French terms. And the French are a little fussy. They are a little fussy. But **the reality is that we're in this gorgeous time where how we talk about food is flourishing with so much dynamic language.** And sure, when you sit down at the table and you look at these terms on the menu, it can take you out of the ordering experience and it could be a little bit challenging. But the flip side is, isn't that a great opportunity to learn these terms and then take it home? You know, maybe, maybe this is an opportunity where you discover a new sauce or maybe this is an opportunity where you discover a new technique.

**HOST: Nickie Jurado:** [00:53:21.11] I think that it is a ticket to exploration. And if it can start with confit, then hallelujah, let it be so! Right. And I will now get off my soapbox.

**GUEST: Dr. Ariane Helou, PhD:** [00:53:31.89] I love that you had confit and hallelujah in the same sentence. I so appreciate that worldview.



**HOST: Nickie Jurado:** [00:53:39.65] And now I think I want to I want to turn the corner and talk about dessert. We are talking about *coulis*. Coulis, Doctor Helou.

**GUEST: Dr. Ariane Helou, PhD:** [00:53:48.29] Coulis is one of my favorite things to see on a dessert menu or actually on a dessert plate where I can actually eat it instead of just reading about it on the menu. Right.

**HOST: Nickie Jurado:** [00:53:58.40] So coulis is is not cooked, right?

**GUEST: Dr. Ariane Helou, PhD:** [00:54:01.84] Right. It's a sauce. It's usually a thick sauce. It's made from typically from fruits, although there are versions that are made from vegetables. And all you do is you puree the fruit and then you run it through through a very fine strainer and it's usually served cold. So in the U.S., it's almost exclusively seen on dessert menus.

**GUEST: Dr. Ariane Helou, PhD:** [00:54:20.66] In France, there are versions of savory coulis that mean slightly different things. [Such as?] Such as it can be made from a vegetable. There's also like a seafood bisque is sometimes referred to as a coulis, even though it is cooked. It's a totally different thing. But for our purposes, *coulis is a cold fruit sauce made from raw fresh fruit* when it's the best thing to do when it's in season and it's served with dessert. So maybe you see like a chocolate cake with a [raspberry coulis](#). That's a very classic combination. And it's one of those things that you can't go wrong with.

**GUEST: Dr. Ariane Helou, PhD:** [00:54:56.36] And a coulis is one of those things that's also very easy to make it home, right? I do this all the time. If I have good raspberries that are in season, I throw them in the food processor and then I strain them. And I don't even have like a like a Temu, like a professional French chef kitchen strainer. You know, one of those extravagant cone-shaped deals. Right. I just put them through like my strainer from IKEA. I mean, I do mean a mesh strainer as opposed to a colander.

**HOST: Nickie Jurado:** [00:55:23.72] But that brings up a very good point. I always say to my students, you don't need to spend tons of money on like restaurant-level equipment because a lot of the equipment that you have in your kitchen can double as what you're finding in a restaurant.

**GUEST: Dr. Ariane Helou, PhD:** [00:55:40.46] Right. And to be honest, there's a lot you can do without equipment. I'm a really big fan of meals, especially, you know, if you're traveling or if you're staying at someone's house or if you've just moved and you don't have your your

kitchen set up yet. There is so much that you can do with one pot, one good knife. [Yes]. A wooden spoon. [Yes]. And that's kind of all you need, and you can do a lot with very, very little.

**HOST: Nickie Jurado:** [00:56:04.01] That's actually one of the shows I'm going to be doing pretty soon. I'm going to do a boot camp on gear.

**GUEST: Dr. Ariane Helou, PhD:** [00:56:08.45] Oh, love it.

**HOST: Nickie Jurado:** [00:56:09.08] Right. And I'm going to talk about the essential gear that you need in your kitchen. But that that's that's for another that's her another show. You know, the first time I saw coulis, I thought that, wow, this is a radical departure from what was previously done in French pastry. You had heavier sauces like crème anglaise and you had um syrups. You had caramels.

**GUEST: Dr. Ariane Helou, PhD:** [00:56:34.70] Um, yeah. What's it, do you want to say something about what a *crème anglaise* is? Crème anglaise, or Crème anglaise in case anyone.

**HOST: Nickie Jurado:** [00:56:40.58] So [crème anglaise](#) is a custard style um dessert sauce. It's actually not that difficult to make. It's um the magic in making crème anglaise is tempering the eggs. So basically, tempering the eggs just means that you're introducing heat into the eggs with warm dairy. So so the warm cream so that the eggs don't curdle. Imagine making a thin custard. It's basically the same fundamental ingredients. It's just a different process.

**HOST: Nickie Jurado:** [00:57:20.14] It's used to complement desserts that have fruit. It's a [very classic French sauce](#) and I'll put that in the show notes. I have a really good ratio and recipe that I got from cooking school, so I will share the magic behind the scenes recipe for crème anglaise with you. But yeah, it's it's a grand departure in the pastry portion of the dessert portion of the menu to to move from a crème anglaise or a caramel or a syrup and then move on to coulis. And that happened with *nouvelle cuisine*. Right?

**GUEST: Dr. Ariane Helou, PhD:** [00:58:01.03] Exactly, yeah, it did happen with [nouvelle cuisine](#), which means new cooking, which was kind of a wave that emerged in the 60s and 70s, which really put at the center of French cooking fresh ingredients, seasonal vegetables, kind of more minimalist preparation. So, the kinds of sources that you're describing, the syrups, the caramels, those are all things that are very labor intensive, that are very expensive, that require a lot of work, a lot of preparation and are very, very rich.



**GUEST: Dr. Ariane Helou, PhD:** [00:58:35.65] So **nouvelle cuisine is a little lighter**, a little simpler. It was influenced in some ways by some French chefs who in the 60s and 70s were traveling to Japan and discovering a new kind of culinary vocabulary; a new way of treating the ingredient. Which was a little more focused on the ingredient as well as the preparation, the idea being to find the best thing and to treat it in a way that really showcased its essence. As opposed to what had been the traditional style of French cooking for the last several hundred years, which was a lot of sauces, a lot of very complex preparations, which could sometimes obscure the flavor of an ingredient, especially something like a seasonal fresh vegetable or a fresh fruit.

**GUEST: Dr. Ariane Helou, PhD:** [00:59:21.16] So the idea of a coulis, which is a raw sauce, that was something that was kind of unheard of in at least in sort of high-end restaurant culture.

**HOST: Nickie Jurado:** [00:59:30.97] And, nouvelle cuisine was championed by?

**GUEST: Dr. Ariane Helou, PhD:** [00:59:33.64] In France or in [No, in France, ha ha ha] [Paul Bocuse](#) was probably the best-known. [Mm hmm, yeah yes]. He was really a major figure in French cooking. He he died just last year. So, yeah, is kind of a we lost one of the titans of the food worlds. It was actually twenty eighteen was a big year for food, food world losses was. [Yeah, yeah], but he was one of the major figures and he's someone my you know, my mother has several of his cookbooks. So, I feel in a way that I learned to cook from [Paul Bocuse](#) because those were some of the books that I grew up learning from.

**HOST: Nickie Jurado:** [01:00:07.78] He has he was he was quite a character, just a titan of the industry. I'll put some information in and links to resources in the show notes about him. And. Well, that brings us to the close of our menu.

**HOST: Nickie Jurado:** [01:00:24.52] I have to say, I have really enjoyed this. We we've come to the end of the menu and I just want to say thank you. I've enjoyed this a lot. I've learned a lot. And I went to culinary school and worked in the business for, you know, fifteen years. But this has been such a pleasure. And I am so grateful to have you as my very first guest!

**HOST: Nickie Jurado:** [01:00:44.62] But I'm not going to let you go so quickly. I ask all of my guests three questions. Rapid Fire. Ready? OK. So what are you drinking? What is making

you happy? And what food gift do you always give to a friend or guest? So, let's start with what you're what are you drinking?

**GUEST: Dr. Ariane Helou, PhD:** [01:01:06.31] What am I drinking? It kind of depends on the day, but it's summertime. So, one of my very favorite summer drinks is an [Aperol Spritz](#).

**HOST: Nickie Jurado:** [01:01:17.35] Yumbolina!

**GUEST: Dr. Ariane Helou, PhD:** [01:01:18.31] Yeah. This was a drink that I didn't know existed until I went and spent a summer studying in Verona when I was in grad school several years ago. And it's just it's delicious. It's what I want to go. Yeah, it. So it's prosecco, which is a sparkling Italian wine from, and it comes from the Veneto, which is the region that I was staying in. And it is usually flavored with either Aperol or Campari, which are both kinds of bitters. And I prefer the one with Aperol.

**GUEST: Dr. Ariane Helou, PhD:** [01:01:48.67] And it's this kind of neon orange color. It it looks kind of intense in the bottle, but it has this nice kind of herbaceous flavor. It's not quite as strong and bitter as Campari. And I just enjoyed so many sunny afternoons on the piazza sipping a glass of prosecco, glass, or a glass of Aperol spritz in the company of good friends enjoying the sunshine. It's a beautiful summer drink.

**HOST: Nickie Jurado:** [01:02:19.77] So now on to what food gift do you always give your friends?

**GUEST: Dr. Ariane Helou, PhD:** [01:02:24.18] So my favorite gift for friends who are, say, having a housewarming or moving into a new place or, you know, young people who are maybe moving out on their own into a new apartment for the first time. One of my favorite things is a cookbook, which is [Mark Bittman's "How to Cook Everything"](#). I think it's a really great, really accessible guide for someone who is kind of new to cooking. The recipes are really clear, really succinct, easy to follow. And it has a huge amount of variety.

**HOST: Nickie Jurado:** [01:02:52.59] And you're seeing it, right? Right. It's one of my favorite books [reminded me of it]. Yes. It's such an approachable book. And then so finally, what's making you happy in the food world?

**GUEST: Dr. Ariane Helou, PhD:** [01:03:04.23] The fact that L.A. is back on the Michelin map!

**HOST: Nickie Jurado:** [01:03:07.14] Yeah, I had a yes.

**GUEST: Dr. Ariane Helou, PhD:** [01:03:10.65] They sort of didn't know what to do with us for a while because the L.A. food scene is so idiosyncratic. [True] And but is also has been incredibly influential. And I think it's really great that that form of recognition is returning. Right. It's not so much about the stars and the awards, although the stars are very nice for the restaurants who are getting stars. But it's more about kind of cracking the code of the L.A. food scene, putting it on the map and making it trying to make it legible and accessible to visitors from other parts of the country and other parts of the world. And I think that's really great.

**HOST: Nickie Jurado:** [01:03:48.87] I could not agree with you more.

**HOST: Nickie Jurado:** [01:03:50.43] And so that's the end of episode one of Kitchen Scene Investigator. Thank you, loves out there for listening. For more information about Kitchen Scene Investigator, please visit our Web site at [Kitchen Scene Investigator dot com](http://Kitchen Scene Investigator dot com). You will find information about today's show and show notes on the site. And again, please subscribe to Kitchen Scene Investigator through the podcast on platforms that you listen to. And I will see you next time. Bye loves.



**\*\*NOTE: All links in this transcript are not sponsored.  
They are Nickie's editorial choices.**