

The Brida Journal-Lesson

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The journal for learners of English, by learners of English

The Aperitif

To whet your appetite before a meal.

The word Aperitif comes from the French word for an alcoholic drink that stimulates the appetite. It is a Latin-based word, “aperire” which means to open, and it was originally a medical treatment based on a doctrine called “humourism”.

Humourism said that the body is composed of four basic substances (humours) and that if you are sick, it is because you have too much or too little of one of these substances. To get well again meant you had to restore the balance within your body. For example, if you had no appetite, then you needed to be stimulated with something bitter, to encourage the flow of bile and help the digestion.

The medicines used for this cure were liquors. These were flavoured with strong tasting herbs and spices. Over time, the bitterness was reduced and made tastier by adding more alcohol. Even people who were in great health discovered and then decided that drinking such medicine was a good idea to stimulate the appetite.

The strong herbal taste of the drinks was deliberate. You were not getting drunk; you were getting better. And so, a tradition was established around the world.

The Aperitif established itself as something to “whet your appetite”. To “whet” means to sharpen tools on a “whetstone”. To “whet your appetite” means to sharpen your appetite. It was first used in a play written by Thomas Shadwell, in 1688, “*The Squire of Alsatia*”

“Let’s whet; bring some wine. Come on; I love a Whett”.

Vocabulary

1	To whet	
2	The word comes from	
3	a Latin-based word	
4	which means	
5	the body is composed of	
6	Four basic substances	
7	To get well again	
8	to restore the balance	
9	if you had no appetite	
10	with something bitter	
11	the flow of bile	
12	help the digestion	
13	The medicines used	
14	cure	
15	These were flavoured with	
16	Strong tasting herbs	
17	Over time	
18	bitterness was reduced	
19	Made tastier	
20	by adding more alcohol	
21	people who were in great health	
22	drinking was a good idea	
23	The strong taste was deliberate	

24	You were not getting drunk	
25	a tradition was established	
26	To “whet” means to sharpen tools	
27	whetstone	
28	It was first used in	
29	A play	
30	written by	

Writing

1. The Aperitif was invented by the Ancient Romans.
2. What did people believe about the composition of the body?
3. How was being sick interpreted and what was the cure?
4. In which form was the cure administered?
5. Which excellent idea emerged from this cure?
6. How did the cure taste and why was this so?
7. What was the result of this development?
8. What is the role of an aperitif now?
9. How were / are certain tools sharpened?
10. Who was Thomas Shadwell?

1. Explain to a person who is not familiar with the French Apéro, what it is. What happens at an Apéro, what is served, when is Apéro usually? What are some of the hidden rules about going to and having an Apéro at somebody's house?
2. You are hosting an Apéro for several people.
How do you organise it? What will you serve? What do you expect people to do?
Write a shopping list. You will need it for the next exercises.

Speaking

1. Pronunciation Exercise
2. You have invited some friends for an Apéro. You need some ingredients. Phone your husband / wife / partner to stop off at a supermarket and buy what you need. Say:
 - a. Say a greeting and use a term of endearment (love, darling)
 - b. Explain what is happening.
 - c. Read the shopping list.
 - d. Say to ring back if necessary.
 - e. Say goodbye.
3. You have received a phone call from your wife / husband / partner. You have some questions. Say:
 - a. Say a greeting and use a term of endearment.
 - b. Explain the “problem”.
 - c. Offer a possible solution.
 - d. Ask to ring back.
 - e. Say goodbye.

WhatsApp

1. You have just moved to Brida from another country. You want to organise an Apéro event to invite some neighbours. You need some advice from an old friend who has lived in France. Write:
 - a. Greet the friend as friends greet each other.
 - b. Ask how the friend is.
 - c. Explain the situation.
 - d. Ask for some advice of your choice.
 - e. Explain when you need the advice by.
 - f. Say goodbye.

2. You have received the above WhatsApp from your friend who has just moved to Brida. Answer the WhatsApp. Write:
 - a. Greet the friend as friends greet each other.
 - b. Answer the questions as per your experience.
 - c. Offer some words of encouragement.
 - d. Say you want to know what happened.
 - e. Say goodbye.

3. Your Apéro event is over. You write a WhatsApp to your friend to say how it went. Write:
 - a. Greet the friend as friends greet each other.
 - b. Write how the event was. (Use your own experiences to describe this.)
 - c. Write about any funny, embarrassing moments.
 - d. Say thank you for the advice.
 - e. Invite the friend for an Apéro.
 - f. Say goodbye.