
2023-24 Field Notes

Field Notes from Abroad: Person to Person

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A Diverse World of Dining

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Wine Studies, France
October 30, 2023

A Diverse World of Dining

As a member of the International Vintage Master's program, a double degree offered by Linfield in partnership with L'Ecole Supérieure d'Agricultures in Angers, I have the chance to study in more than three different countries in a cohort of students representing six nationalities. I began my time overseas in Angers, where I got to meet several of my classmates who are from there, including Séverin. I got to have some great conversations with him before and during our practical winery internships in Portugal, where we were partnered up for 2.5 weeks. I have made friends with a lot of international students during my time on the McMinnville campus, so it has been fascinating to be on the other side of that in someone else's host country. I learned a lot about some cultural aspects of France, as well as the perception of the U.S. from a non-American.

We talked about food a lot, naturally, as two college-aged guys would be expected to. I find the French culture around cuisine extremely interesting, especially the dining etiquette. I learned that for dinner parties that are formal or semi-formal, it is often considered rude to arrive early, as in before the scheduled time, whereas in the States I haven't personally experienced that. The French in general take food more seriously than Americans, as I have both heard and come to know by living in Europe. For instance, it is looked down upon to not be properly seated when you are eating, which is something I observed several years ago in Italy. It is also very true in France; you will rarely see someone walking down the street while eating a sandwich, because you are not paying full respect to the meal. Saying "Cheers!" (Santé in French and Saude in Portuguese; both saluting to good health) is also something that is taken much more seriously, as

you must be making eye contact with every person you clink glasses with as you do so. This is one of the most fun cultural differences I have experienced, one that I wish we had in the U.S. - even though they say it is bad luck if you don't do it correctly.

Another great part of getting to live in multiple countries has been that Severin and I got to talk with our winemakers during our harvest internship about how some of our norms compare to the people of Portugal. For example, many restaurants in smaller urban areas will have a special menu each day where they only serve one thing. It's always a large portion of traditional Portuguese food for relatively cheap, and it's something I was not used to at all but found quite exciting. Additionally, our winemakers always seemed worried that we weren't eating enough for certain meals, which I could understand given the intense volume of work we had, but that still was something I was not expecting. They were sad when I didn't eat anything for breakfast, assuming that I wouldn't have enough energy to make it through the day. I am normally not a huge breakfast person on days when I have a long shift at work, especially since I would rather get those extra minutes of sleep or rest than get up and eat something. But again, I saw their side to it and tried my best to assure them that I would make it until lunchtime with just a shot of espresso. Going off of this, my mindset as I have been living overseas thus far has just been learning to live with change. My best piece of advice for students planning on studying abroad is to continue to be yourself. It's really hard to fit in with a different culture when you are only there for a limited amount of time, so don't feel obligated to do so. What I have learned is that you will still stand out as a tourist (especially as an American) in one way or another. You can make amazing intercultural connections while acting like you would back home.

Date of Interview: September 2023 | Interviewee: Séverin de Chaignon, Master's Student