The Semantic Development of Nineteenth-Century French Cookery Terms in English: Tendencies of Borrowings Relating to Dishes, Desserts and Confectionary

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Abstract

French has long served English as the donor language par excellence in the field of cookery. A considerable number of culinary terms have been adopted into English down the ages (e.g. Chirol, 1973). Since cuisine is a field where France excels, the strong influx of borrowings from this area is by no means surprising. In the nineteenth century, too, French has been the source of a significant proportion of words and meanings which reflect the refinement of French gastronomy.

The focus of this paper is on the culinary vocabulary borrowed from French in the nineteenth century. According to the Oxford English Dictionary (henceforth OED) the term gastronomy itself, the art of preparing fine food, is a nineteenth-century borrowing which was adapted from the French gastronomie. The present study provides an analysis of the sense developments of the various borrowings from their earliest recorded uses in English to the present day in comparison with their equivalents in French. It will be interesting to see whether a) a particular meaning a borrowing assumes after its adoption is taken over from French (due to the continuing impact of French on English) or b) whether it represents an independent semantic change within English. Such a detailed investigation of the semantics of the culinary words of French provenance is missing in existing studies.

Keywords

language contact – lexicology – French influence on English – French culinary vocabulary (in English) – semantic change
Introduction

1.1 Previous Studies of the French Influence on the English Lexicon

A considerable number of investigations concentrate on the impact of French on the English vocabulary. A number of scholars survey the chronological distribution of French borrowings\(^1\) down the ages, such as Jespersen (1905), Baugh (1935), Koszul (1936), Mossé (1943), Pennanen (1971), Hillebrand (1976), Coleman (1995), Culpeper and Clapham, (1996), and others. There are also some studies which classify borrowings from French according to semantic criteria: the various lexical items are assigned to different subject fields, i.e. to various areas and spheres of life, such as military, arts, fashion and cuisine. The studies by Mackenzie (1939) and Chirol (1973) should be mentioned here. Mackenzie's monograph is an early study of the French influence on the English language throughout its history. Mackenzie consults earliest editions of English translations of a multitude of French texts (e.g. La Bruyère's *Les Caractères*, J. J. Rousseau's *Premier Discours*) and the *OED* to find French borrowings and their first attested uses in English. He identifies important fields from which French words and phrases are taken over into English, as for instance nineteenth-century French literature (what he refers to as "La Littérature française du xixe siècle"), society and fashion ("La société et la mode") and gastronomy ("La gastronomie"). Unfortunately there is no recent update of his survey. Chirol's work *Les "mots français" et le mythe de la France en anglais contemporain* is a fairly extensive analysis of French borrowings in contemporary English. Yet, since it dates from 1973, the study does not reflect recent developments of the English lexicon. Chirol's book includes 2500 Gallicisms most of which are recorded in Bliss's *Dictionary of Foreign Words and Phrases* (1966). She identifies three essential semantic fields enriched by French during the last few centuries: "Un Art de vivre", including the areas of cuisine, games, fashion, entertainment and travelling, "Un Savoir-faire", encompassing borrowings from literature and art, and "Un Savoir-vivre", comprising fields such as social behaviour and amorous relations. A number of brief surveys (e.g. the essays by Gibson (1973), Otman (1989), Swallow (1991) and Chira (2000)) outline a handful of recent acquisitions from French, among them several items which belong to the field of cooking like *coq au vin* and *courgette* (cf. Swallow 1991). Most of the previous studies, however, lack a systematic and detailed analysis of the semantic integration of the borrowings which entered English during the past few centuries.

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1 For a definition of the term *borrowing*, see the ‘terminology’ chapter of this paper.
Only very few analyses focus on French culinary terms. An exception is Bator’s (2011) survey, which concentrates on the semantic field of food. Bator explores quite an early period in the history of English: she looks at French culinary vocabulary in 14th century English. Her results are based on a careful perusal of *Curye on Inglysch* (*English culinary manuscripts of the 14th century*), which was edited in 1985 by Hieatt and Butler. Bator’s essay is illuminating in many ways. Yet it does not explore the sense developments of the fourteenth-century culinary terms in detail either.

Schultz’s (2012) study, providing the first comprehensive appraisal of the semantic reception of 20th century borrowings from French, may serve as a frame of reference for future research into the influence of foreign languages on English. New media such as online dictionaries and corpus material allowed this type of investigation. The methodology developed by Schultz (2012) to research the various borrowings also constitutes a form of model for the present analysis of the 19th century French culinary terms.

### 1.2 The Oxford English Dictionary Online as a Source of French Borrowings

The *OED Online* offers the data for the present investigation. The *OED* is presently under revision. The electronic *OED*, consisting of the Second Edition launched in 1989 (henceforth *OED2*), the *OED Additions Series*, a series of supplementary volumes released in 1993 and 1997, and a considerable number of revised and new entries which will produce the planned 3rd Edition, or *OED3* is searchable online at <http://www.oed.com>. The text of the electronic form of the *OED* is being updated every three months with the preliminary results of the *OED3* revision.2

As already mentioned, the corpus data on which the present paper is based was collected from the *OED*. The sample of borrowings contained a considerable proportion of borrowings from Standard French as well as some borrowings from different varieties of French (e.g. from Canadian French) and from French Creole. In addition, the sample comprised words with a complex etymological description in the *OED*, i.e. borrowings which were partly influenced by French and partly by another language.

The *OED* also identifies possible acquisitions from French. That is, words and senses which may perhaps be adopted from French. The revised version of the *OED* distinguishes between lexical items that are *possibly*, *probably* or

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perhaps taken over from French. All the various types of borrowings included in the OED were taken into account in this study. The words under review were categorized as assumed from French as the immediate donor language. Hence, quenelle, for instance, specifying a variety of ball or roll including meat or fish, was classified as a borrowing of French *quenelle*, notwithstanding the fact that the word ultimately goes back to German *Knödel*.

As the nineteenth century is very rich in cookery terms (in all, more than 300 lexical items have been identified as nineteenth-century French borrowings from gastronomy in the *OED Online*), I shall confine myself to the semantic analysis of the words denoting dishes, desserts and confectionary. Food items such as *Comice*, the name of a French variety of pear, products as for instance *Neufchâtel*, a type of French cheese, beverages and other borrowings somehow related to gastronomy will be excluded since describing them as well would go far beyond the scope of this study. (These types of word will be dealt with in separate papers.)

### 1.3 Aims and Methodology of the Present Study

More than a mere count of the French culinary terms adopted into English in the nineteenth century, this paper will provide a detailed investigation and descriptions of the sense developments of the various borrowings. To compare the semantics of a borrowing included in the OED with that of its French source, French dictionaries such as the *Trésor de la langue française* (henceforth TLF), the 48 volumes of *Datations et documents lexicographiques* (DDL), a database which encompasses additional documentary evidence supplementing the TLF, and the Robert *Dictionnaire alphabétique et analogique* (henceforth referred to as the *Grand Robert*) were consulted.

It is important to identify the type of change in meaning a borrowing undergoes after its earliest attested use. To classify sense developments, the types of semantic change generally accepted as the basic standard categories (i.e. metaphor, metonymy, broadening, narrowing, amelioration and pejoration) will serve as a frame of reference.4

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3 For details on the revision of the etymologies in the OED see Durkin, Philip. 1999. *Root and Branch: Revising the etymological component of the OED*. *Transactions of the Philological Society* 97: 1–49.

1.3.1 Identifying Recent Semantic Developments of Unrevised OED Entries

An essential objective of this study is to identify recent semantic changes not only of the culinary terms included in OED3 but also of the OED2 entries which have not yet been revised. This objective is achieved with the help of a careful perusal of corpora of present-day English. The documentary evidence listed in OED2 does not reflect uses of English borrowings in recent times as it was released in 1989. To identify changes in meaning of unrevised OED items in current English, sufficient linguistic evidence is available in corpora such as the British National Corpus or LexisNexis. The BNC, constituting a snapshot of present-day British English made at the close of the twentieth century, is a collection of 100 million words documenting the written and spoken language from various sources. It contains, for instance, extracts from journals, periodicals, newspapers, fiction, academic books, letters, university essays, as well as transcriptions of spoken material, such as radio shows. At LexisNexis, English newspaper corpora which reflect the use of borrowings in the last few decades (i.e. in the last 20–30 years), including editions of several different newspapers such as The Times (London), The Daily Telegraph (London) or The New York Times are searchable online. As will become evident, a detailed investigation of the linguistic evidence listed in these corpora helps to detect gaps in the OED2 documentation of the semantic development of a borrowing. An analysis of corpora such as LexisNexis reveals that the unrevised OED2 entry haute cuisine, for example, shows a meaning in the last few decades which has not been made explicit in the OED yet. Haute cuisine was assumed from French in the 1920s, referring to high standard cooking. According to Schultz (2012: 501ff), the phrase has developed a figurative use in present-day English: “by metaphor, haute cuisine may relate to ‘the pick of something’, ‘something of high quality’, ‘something that is in accordance with high standards’: This is corroborated by the linguistic evidence in corpora of recent usage, as the following article included in LexisNexis illustrates, where haute cuisine relates to the high-quality art of theatre:

- The Times (London), October 22, 2005; headline: “Still making it up as they go along”:
  Actors rely on a script and stand-up comics rely on gags. But improvisers rely on each other and the audience. We are the chicken nuggets of showbiz, wafting a bad smell around fillet steak of stand-up and the haute cuisine of theatre. (LexisNexis)

\[5\] Cf. Schultz, Twentieth-century Borrowings from French to English, 501.
In another article listed in *LexisNexis*, *haute cuisine* is used to designate the high-standard jokes in a radio programme:

- *The Times* (London), January 13, 2004; headline: “Chris Campling enjoys getting his teeth into a new satirical show with lots of bite”:
  
  Blimey. There I was, laughing in all the right places at all the usual comedic treats, and I hadn’t realised how safe my tastes had become. Yes, I chuckled at Punt and Dennis’s wry observations on the week’s news, but this was comedy with its teeth out. OK, The News Quiz and Dead Ringers offered lovingly prepared jocular haute cuisine, but where was the raw meat of satire? (*LexisNexis*)

It looks as if this change in meaning of *haute cuisine* constitutes an independent sense development within English. French dictionaries and corpora do not record any similar uses for the corresponding French term.

As will be seen, the different nineteenth-century culinary terms under consideration also show several recent semantic developments which have not been documented in the unrevised edition of the *OED2* yet. Some of them represent semantic shifts within English, while others are paralleled in French.

### 1.4 Terminology used in this Investigation

Before we move on to the investigation of the changes in meaning of the various culinary terms under review, some terminological explanation is important. Let us begin with the definition of *word* and *meaning*.

a) **Word**

There are different definitions of the term *word* in linguistic research. Sweet, for instance, assumes a syntactic point of view and describes the word as “an ultimate, or indecomposable sentence” (1875: 474). A syntactic and semantic treatment is provided by Sapir, who defines it as “one of the smallest, completely satisfying bits of isolated “meaning”, into which the sentence resolves itself” (2007: 37). The French linguist Meillet takes semantic, phonological and grammatical criteria into account and advances the following formula:

Un mot est défini par l’association d’un sens donné à un ensemble de sons susceptible d’un emploi grammatical donné.

*Meillet, 1975: 30*

6 More examples of figurative uses of *haute cuisine* are provided by Schultz (2012: 294ff).
Various notions of the term *word* correspond to Meillet’s formula, encompassing the one included in Arnold’s book *The English Word*:

The term word denotes the basic unit of a given language resulting from the association of a particular meaning with a particular group of sounds capable of a particular grammatical employment. A word therefore is simultaneously a semantic, grammatical and phonological unit. (Arnold, 1973: 9)

The definition provided by Arnold underlies the use of *word* in the present paper.

b) **Meaning**

*Meaning* serves as the common term for the sense or signification of a word, i.e. the idea or concept it represents. Some words show only one specific meaning, as for instance the borrowing *vol-au-vent*. It was adopted from French into English in 1828 in the sense of “[a] kind of raised pie, formed of a light puff paste filled with meat, fish, or the like” (*OED2*). Other borrowings are polysemous, such as *chartreuse*, which is attested in several different meanings in English which can be clearly distinguished. It may refer to “[a]n ornamental dish of meat or vegetables cooked in a mould”, “[f]ruits enclosed in blanc-mange or jelly” (*OED2*), or a variety of liqueur produced in the monastery *La Grande-Chartreuse*. The word can also be used to designate a colour shade (i.e. “pale apple-green” (*OED2*)) or a type of cat. In some cases, however, it is difficult to identify the various meanings of a word. Similar to the aforementioned example of *haute cuisine*, there are borrowings among the nineteenth-century culinary terms which have developed metaphorical uses in English. In some cases, it is slightly problematic to ascertain the degree to which a figurative usage which occurs in a recent corpus constitutes an idiosyncratic or a transient one. It should be noted that the focus of the present paper will be on those uses of borrowings which are attested in dictionaries like the *OED* or which occur comparatively frequently in corpora such as the *BNC* and *LexisNexis*. Isolated examples of changes in meaning will not be considered since they might represent only temporary usages of borrowings which will not become established in English.

Let us now look at the definitions of the different types of semantic change.

1.4.1 **Categories of Semantic Change**

Six types of semantic change (broadening, narrowing, metonymy, metaphor, amelioration and pejoration) are usually considered as the most important by scholars (e.g. Bréal (1897), Stern (1931), Ullmann (1967)). They constitute widely accepted standard categories to classify sense developments and thus
will be used as a frame of reference in this study in order to identify the various types of semantic change of the words presented in this paper.

a) **Broadening**
Broadening (also called expansion, extension, generalization or schematization in the literature on semantic change)\(^7\) refers to the process in which a lexical item widens its meaning. It can also denote the result of this development. The culinary term *rognon* represents an example of semantic broadening. It entered English in 1828 with reference to a dish made of kidney, a *specialité* of French cuisine. *Rognon* came to expand its semantic scope in English, serving, just like the French equivalent, as a term in mountaineering for a “small bare rock” (*OED*\(^3\)). The first recorded use of this meaning dates from 1853:

1853 J. D. Forbes *Norway & Glaciers* 333 We .. continued to traverse the snowy basin .. until we passed close to the small bare rock (called by the mountaineers *rognon*). (*OED*\(^3\))

The French equivalent, literally meaning ‘kidney’, is attested in both meanings in the donor language. It thus looks as if both senses of the borrowing were taken over from French.

The reader of this paper may observe that the term *semantic extension* is also used to denote ‘broadening’ in the present study.

b) **Narrowing**
Narrowing (also called restriction or spezialization in scholarly work) denotes the process in which the semantic scope of a word becomes more restricted. It can also refer to the result of this process. The noun *poêlée*, for instance, was subjected to a semantic narrowing when it was borrowed into English, where it is used to denote a type of stock or broth with bacon or ham, herbs and vegetables. The French original has a wider semantic extent: it can relate to any content of a pan in French.

c) **Metonymy**
In metonymy, a lexical item which denotes an object, an entity, etc. is related to another item designating a property, a feature, “or something to which it is

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\(^7\) For details on the different categories of semantic change and the various terms to describe sense developments, see Geeraerts (2010: 26–27), Traugott (2006: 124ff), or Traugott and Dasher (2005: 24ff).
conceptually contiguous.” (cf. Schultz 2012: 39) Tian, for instance, which was borrowed from (regional) French in the 1950s, describes a type of cooking-pot common in Provence. By metonymy, tian came to refer to the dish prepared in this pot, as it is documented by the 1993 OED Additions Series:

1955 E. DAVID Bk. Mediterranean Food 160 The tian owes its name to the vast and heavy terrine of the earthenware of Vallauris, where it is sent to cook on a wood fire in the baker’s oven. Ibid., Tian is one of those ready-made dishes which is eaten cold on picnics.

Both meanings of tian were derived from French.

d) Metaphor
Schultz (2012: 38) states that “[i]n metaphor, a word is transferred to a different, quite often more abstract area or field which is, to some extent, similar or analogous to that which it literally denotes in order to make an implicit comparison.” The borrowing gratin may serve as an example. It came from French into English at the beginning of the nineteenth century (i.e. in 1806), denoting a dish with a crust on its surface, or the manner of cooking which yields such a dish. In a metaphorical sense (attested since 1934 in OED2), gratin is used to designate “[t]he ‘upper crust’ of society” (OED2):

1967 S. Pakenham Sixty Miles from England xiv. 185 Madeleine Lemaire had one of the most famous Paris salons, where all but the very highest gratin of the French nobility congregated. (OED2)

The French source gratin is attested earlier as a synonym of crème de la crème in the TLF:

Au fig. et fam. Élité de la société, d’une société mondaine, qui se distingue par ses titres, ses richesses, son esprit ou son élégance. Synon. élite, crème (fam.), dessus du panier (fam.). Dandy qui était la fleur du gratin

Proust, Sodome, 1922, p. 952. [...]

It thus may well be that the metaphorical sense of the borrowing in English was taken over from French. It should be noted that figurative meaning or use equally refers to metaphorical meaning or use in this paper.

Amelioration and pejoration are the terms for two additional essential categories of semantic change:
e) **Amelioration**
Amelioration (occasionally also referred to as *melioration*) denotes the acquisition of a more favorable meaning or more favorable connotations. One may argue that the development of a metaphorical use of *gratin* which was outlined above at the same time represents a semantic amelioration of the word.

f) **Pejoration**
Pejoration refers to the assumption of a more negative meaning or less positive implications. The borrowing *rosbif* may serve as an example. It was originally an English borrowing in French, which was adapted from the culinary term *roast(-)beef* (see *TLF*). The word was re-adopted into English in 1822, where it now shows ironical and sometimes negative connotations: *rosbif* can serve as a depreciate term for an English person.\(^8\) The semantic development of *rosbif* is paralleled in French.

The different types of semantic change may sometimes be overlapping. As has become evident, the semantic development of *gratin*, for instance, constitutes both an assumption of a metaphorical meaning and a semantic amelioration of the word. It seems important to note that further categories can be found in some studies, whereas other works suggest a combination of some of the afore-mentioned types of semantic change.

1.4.2 **Classification of Loan Influences**
The terminology used in this study departs from Carstensen’s (1968) typology of lexical borrowing since it reflects the most essential categories of loan influences and can be applied to different loan processes and language contact scenarios. I shall concentrate on the categories which are relevant for the classification of the cuisine terms analysed in this paper. The following terms will be employed:

a) **Borrowing**
*Borrowing* functions as the conventional term for a word or a meaning taken over from another language. It can also be used to designate the process by which a language adopts new linguistic material (i.e. a word or a meaning) from a foreign language.

b) **Direct Loan**
A considerable number of culinary terms the *OED* records for the nineteenth or twentieth century are direct loans. The term refers to the assumption of a

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\(^8\) For a comprehensive analysis of the semantic development of *rosbif*, see the ‘dish’ chapter of this paper.
foreign word with no or only slight assimilation of its pronunciation and spelling form. *Mousse*, for example, pronounced /muːs/ in present-day English (see the pronunciations provided in the *OED* or the Longman *Dictionary of Contemporary English*, 2012), represents a direct loan. It corresponds to French *mousse* /mus/. Obviously, the spelling of *mousse* was not changed during its introduction into English, and the pronunciation of the word resembles that of its French source.

c) **Adaptation**

Adaptation refers to the naturalization a foreign word undergoes to fit into the system of the language adopting it. *Saveloy*, which is first attested in 1837 in the *OED*, can be adduced as an example. It was adapted from French *cervelas*, a kind of sausage. As is apparent, an orthographic integration at the same time constitutes a phonological assimilation of a borrowing to the linguistic system of the receiving language.

d) **Pseudo-Loan**

The term pseudo-loan is used to designate the coining of a word in the borrowing language from linguistic material of the foreign language. The word formed in this way looks like a word in the foreign language but it is not actually recorded in it. One may argue that *fricandel*/*fricandelle*, ‘a meat ball’, is a pseudo-loan. According to *OED2* it was formed within English, on the model of French *fricandeau*. The word does not exist in French.

e) **Back Borrowing**

In some cases a word or meaning which has been adopted from one language into another re-enters the original borrowing language. A number of German scholars like Steinbach (1984: 49–50) refer to this type of loan influence as *Rückentlehnung* (back borrowing). It is not part of Carstensen’s typology (1968). In this study, the term back borrowing will be used. *Bifteck*, may serve as an example. The word ultimately goes back *beef-steak*, which was according to the *TLF* borrowed from English into French as early as 1735. The adapted form *bifteck* was subsequently re-adopted into English.9

We will now come to the semantics of the acquisitions from French which denote dishes. I will concentrate on those borrowings which are subjected to a semantic change after their introduction into English.

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9 Cf. *OED2*. 
The Semantic Analysis of French-derived Dishes

French enriched English in the form of new words relating to dishes in the nineteenth century. The group of borrowings contains 76 lexical items which were adopted from French from the very beginning until the close of the nineteenth century. The majority of them may be classified as direct loans. In the order of their documentation they are:

(1) **Nouns**

- gratin (1806);
- poulette (1813);
- sauté (1813);
- soufflé (1813);
- consommé (1815);
- rosbif (1822);
- mayonnaise (1823);
- palourde (1823);
- poêlée (now obsolete) (1824);
- timbale (1824);
- brandade (1825);
- relevé (1825);
- quenelle (1827);
- escalope (1828);
- rognon (1828);
- velouté (1830);
- langouste (1832);
- beignet (1835);
- ratatouille (1835);
- saveloy (1837);
- spécialité (1839);
- entrecôte (1841);
- filet (1841);
- jardinière (1841);
- bou-din (1845);
- nouille (1845);
- ballotine (1846);
- jus (1847);
- choucroute (1849);
- écrevisse (1854);
- beurre-noir (1855);
- bouillabaisse (1855);
- rillettes (1858);
- bifteck\(^{10}\) (1861);
- moule (1867);
- fricandel|fricandelle\(^{11}\) (1872);
- jambalaya\(^{12}\) (1872);
- chiffonade (1877);
- chipolata (1877);
- crêpinette (1877);
- tournedos (1877);
- crevette (1878);
- fondue (1878);
- estouffade (1889);
- paupiette (1889);
- canapé (1890);
- chaud-froid (1892)

(1.1) **Borrowings Reflecting Proper Nouns**

- Périgueux (1824);
- Hollandaise (1841);
- julienne (1841);
- espagnole (1845);
- macédoine (attested as a cuisine term in 1846 in *OED*);
- Milanaise (1855);
- Marengo (1861);
- Parmentier (1875);
- Béarnaise (1877);
- Chateaubriand (1877);
- duxelles (1877);
- mirepoix (1877);
- navarin (1877)

*Pilaf* (1814), a dish which consists of rice, meat and other ingredients, reflects Turkish *pilav*. The word might have been partly borrowed via French *pilaf* and Italian *pilaf* (see *OED*). From *OED* we learn that *rubaboo* (1821) apparently reflects Canadian French *rababou* even though the French word is first recorded slightly later than the English borrowing, i.e. in circa 1845.

\(^{10}\) For a detailed description of the word *bifteck*, see the ‘terminology’ chapter of this paper.

\(^{11}\) For an analysis of *fricandel|fricandelle*, see the ‘terminology’ chapter of this study.

\(^{12}\) *Jambalaya* is a borrowing from Louisiana French. It ultimately goes back to Provençal *jambalaia*. Cf. *OED*.
2.1 Semantic Narrowing

A comparison between the semantics of the French borrowings and the corresponding sources in the donor language suggests that some lexical items have narrowed their semantic scope during the borrowing process. I shall begin with the semantic analysis of jardinière, poulette and supreme. English borrowed jardinière in the particular meaning of ‘a garnish made of vegetables’ and ‘a flower pot or stand’, while disregarding its French references to ‘a variety of embroidery’ and ‘a type of car’. In English, poulette refers to a kind of sauce which includes cream, butter and egg yolks. This is a specialized sense of the French word poulette ‘young hen’ in à la poulette, designating a manner of making a dish with such a sauce. There are in addition the borrowings suprême, a variety of white sauce or chicken dish served in this sauce, and velouté, a type of soft, creamy sauce. They reflect the specific culinary uses of the French words suprême (attested both as an adjective and as a noun in French in the sense of ‘supreme’) and velouté (literally ‘velvety’) in sauce suprême, suprême de volaille and sauce veloutée.

Furthermore, several borrowings reflecting proper nouns underwent a semantic narrowing during the borrowing process. Milanaise and espagnole may be adduced as examples. In English, these terms relate to dishes prepared in the styles of the corresponding regions or countries after which they are named. Milanaise occurs in the phrase à la Milanaise or as a postmodifier in English in relation to a dish typical of Milan, including Parmesan, saffron, butter and occasionally breadcrumbs:

1869 S. A. Frost Frost’s Laws & By-laws Amer. Soc. 66 Entrées. .. Timbale of macaroni à la Milanaise. (OED3)
From the same book come these two menus for September luncheons: Salad of Tunny Fish and Celery, Risotto Milanaise, Fruit. (OED3)

Espagnole (in full espagnole sauce) refers to a brown sauce characteristic of Spain. The French equivalents do not exclusively occur in cooking contexts. Milanaise(e) can serve as an adjective and as a noun in French, generally meaning ‘of Milan’, ‘designating or relating to Milan, its regions and its inhabitants’. This is equally valid for espagnol(e), meaning ‘Spanish’, ‘Spanish person’ in French. Similar cases are the borrowings Hollandeise and Béarnaise, which show particular culinary meanings in English, while their French sources are not confined to cookery.

2.2 Semantic Broadening

Rognon, rosbif, mayonnaise, relevé, filet, macédoine, crevette and canapé are examples of borrowings which show sense extensions after their first attested uses in English. Rosbif, for instance, first attested in 1822, might be classified as a back borrowing. The English noun roast(-)beef was adopted into French in the seventeenth century (see TLF), and it subsequently re-entered the original donor language in the assimilated form rosbif. The word is now mainly used humorously in non-English contexts as a term for beef (and sometimes other meat) prepared in the English way, as in:

1998 N. Lawson How to Eat (1999) 163 The Italians do a wonderful pasta sauce which is really just the meat juices left in the roasting pan after their particularly flavoursome way of cooking rosbif. (OED3)

In general, the French source rosbif/rosteef seems to lack these ironical implications. It usually functions as a “neutral” term for roast-beef. This is corroborated by the following TLF example:

La femme de ménage a posé au milieu de la table un petit carré de bœuf rôti, et un plat de pommes de terre (...). – Le rosbif sera tout juste saisi, dit Sampeyre

Romains, Hommes bonne Vol., 1932, p. 105

Some years after its first recorded use, the borrowing rosbif assumed a further meaning in English. It has been attested since 1826 as a derogatory term for an English person among speakers of French, e.g.

14 For a description of the sense development of rognon, see the ‘terminology’ chapter of this study.
1826 F. Reynolds *Life & Times* II. v. 179 From sheer envy, they hooted, hissed, hustled, and called me ‘rosbif’ and ‘goddam’. *(OED3)*

1955 R. Farn tr. P. Daninos *Major Thompson lives in France* xiii. 165 My vis-à-vis pulling up just short of me, assailed me point blank: ‘Completely cracked, you old idiot? Think you’re still among the rosbifs?’ *(OED3)*

This use of *rosbif* is the same in French and in English, as is illustrated by the linguistic evidence included in the *TLF*, e.g.

*Le Suédois [à Londres] s’entifla dans un taxi (…) Sacrés Rosbifs! On pourrait presque se tenir debout dans ces guimbardes*  
**Le Breton, Rififi, 1953, p. 124**

It seems very likely that the derogatory meaning of *rosbif* was taken over from French into English. One might argue that the assumption of this sense at the same time constitutes a semantic pejoration of the word. Like *rosbif*, *mayonnaise* represents quite an early nineteenth-century borrowing. It was adopted from French in the 1820s as a designation of a dish of fish, etc. covered with a creamy sauce. In 1845, it was first applied to the sauce itself:

1845 E. Acton *Mod. Cookery* iv. 135 The unboiled eggs .. enter into the composition of the Mayonnaise. *(OED3)*

The two culinary meanings go back to French. In the 1920s *mayonnaise* adopted a third sense, designating “Contract Bridge” *(OED3)*:

1926 *Work-Whitehead Auction Bridge Bull.* Jan. 101/2 Mayonnaise adds this feature to the game: When the four players pass and the deal is, therefore, not played, the hands of the four players, sorted but unshuffled, are placed on top of each other, and are then dealt unshuffled in two batches of five and one of three to each player. *(OED3)*

*OED3* contains hardly any linguistic evidence of this meaning of *mayonnaise*. The latest usage example dates from 1927. The French source does not serve as a card-playing term according to French general-purpose dictionaries. Hence, it looks as if this semantic development of *mayonnaise* is not related to French. There is also *relevé*, literally ‘raised up’, which originally denoted a dish served as a substitute for one which had been removed. We learn from *OED3* that this meaning has chiefly become historical in present-day English. At the beginning of the twentieth century, the meaning of *relevé* changed. Since 1914,
the item has been recorded in dancing contexts, denoting a particular movement in ballet:

1914 T. Kinney & M. W. Kinney Dance iv. 69 A relevé consists of a .. rise to the ball or point of the supporting foot, while the active foot is raised to the height .. of the knee of the supporting leg. (OED3)

In 1930, relevé adopted a specific meaning from ecology. It came to refer to

[a] detailed description of the floristic or phytosociological characteristics of a small area within a stand of vegetation, considered as a sample; (also) an area used as the basis for such a description, or the vegetation found there. (OED3)

All three senses of relevé were apparently derived from French. Yet the use of relevé as an adjective in the sense of ‘spicy’ or ‘savoury’ (see TLF) was not borrowed into English, where it is only recorded as a noun. We also find the borrowing filet among the OED entries. Filet was adopted from French in the first half of the nineteenth century as a term for a fillet in cookery contexts, and it assumed a second sense in the 1880s. From OED2 it becomes clear that the word may refer to a type of lace with square holes:

1881 C. C. Harrison Woman’s Handiwork i. 82 Drawn-work, with darned filet and cut-work. (OED2)

These meanings represent specific uses of the polysemous French word filet, which literally means ‘thread’. In addition, there is macédoine, which shows a culinary use 26 years after its first recorded use in English. It primordially related to a medley of several different items, and was subsequently used as a term for a mix of small pieces of fruit or vegetables. Both senses seem to go back to French. There is also crevette, a type of shrimp or prawn typically cooked in its shell. The item came to denote “[a] deep shade of pink” (OED2). These are the precise senses of the French word. One of the latest acquisitions from French cuisine which diverges from its original meaning is canapé, “[a] piece of bread or toast, etc., on which small savouries are served” (OED2). Two years after its adoption (i.e. in 1892), the item was used to relate to a type of sofa. The two senses seem to be of French origin.

As has become obvious, the great majority of the semantic extensions described above might be due to the continuing impact of French on English. Most of the borrowings in this group expand their semantic scope by adopting additional meanings of the corresponding French terms. This also holds for a number of culinary terms which show metaphorical uses after their introduction into English:
2.2.1 Metaphorical uses

The cuisine terms *gratin*, *soufflé*, *bouillabaisse* and *plat du jour* are examples of borrowings which have developed metaphorical uses in English. As will be seen, French dictionaries and corpora document similar semantic developments for the corresponding French words. *Soufflé*, for instance, adopted into English in 1813 in the meaning of “[a] light dish, either sweet or savoury, made by mixing materials with white of egg beaten up to a froth, and heating the mixture in an oven until it puffs up” (*OED2*), developed a metaphorical meaning in English which has been documented in *OED2* since the 1880s, as in:

1891 G. Meredith *One of our Conquerors* I. v. 123 Our soufflé of sentiment will be seen subsiding under a breath.

The linguistic evidence available in corpora of recent usage reveals that *soufflé* mainly occurs in its culinary sense in present-day English. It has been occasionally used figuratively in recent years. In *The Daily Telegraph* from November 2011, for instance, *soufflé* refers to the political upstart Alex Salmond:

*The Daily Telegraph* (London), November 9, 2011; “The Union is too far gone to be saved by Cameron or Miliband; Looser ties between Scotland and the rest of the UK now seem all but inevitable"

The Conservatives did something remarkable last week. They chose as their leader in Scotland a young lesbian who has held elected office for barely six months. This was a brave choice in a nation whose social views are nowhere near as liberal as its Left-wing politics would suggest, let alone for a party still identified in the popular imagination as the backward-thinking home of pearls and perms. […] Maybe […] there is hope for Ruth Davidson, and whoever Labour elects to run its Scottish show this month. If they can find a Scottish argument for the Union, even if it is a Union in an adjusted form, then perhaps they can expose the delightful but dangerous political soufflé that is Mr Salmond. But they can’t rely on Mr Cameron or Mr Miliband or superannuated Labour heavies from Westminster. It’s too late for that, I fear.*

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15 For the sense development of *gratin*, see the terminology chapter of this paper.
16 Cf. *LexisNexis*. Note that in corpora such as *LexisNexis* or the *BNC*, the layout of a text (i.e. the use of italicization or diacritics, etc.), in contrast to the material included in the *OED*, frequently does not correspond to the original source. It may well be that the accents of French words are not included properly when the original texts are changed into corpus format. Cf. email from Hoffmann, S. (Customer Support and Training Consultant, *LexisNexis*), dated 18th May 2009, and from the *BNC* Customer Service, dated 18th February 2008.
In the following *LexisNexis* example, the borrowing is used to designate a light, entertaining film:

- *Metro (UK)*, December 8, 2011; “Salt of Life (12)"

  When 60-year-old retired gentleman Gianni is scolded by his alpha male lawyer friend for not having an affair 'like every other senior Italian male', you know you're in territory that would not fly in England. Even in Rome, Gianni’s frustrated attempts to enjoy extra-marital relations with younger women could easily curdle into distasteful lechery but hangdog writer/director/star Gianni Di Gregorio keeps his comic soufflé light and fluffy.

The French original *soufflé*, which functions both as a noun and as an adjective in French, also shows figurative uses in dictionaries such as the *TLF*. Yet the use in English differs slightly from the relevant use in French. By metaphor, the French word *soufflé* may relate to something which is exaggerated, such as an excessive price or an exorbitant sum of money. In this meaning *soufflé* seems to occur as an adjective in French, as in:

*Tu connais mieux que moi la valeur des pétroles en ce moment. Je crois que je n’ai pas de conseils à te donner (…) – Oui, bien sûr, je les connais… Mais Jardot me dit qu’en ce moment les cours sont soufflés…* (N. SARRAUTE, *Le Planétarium*, 1959, p. 278 ds ROB. 1985). (*TLF*)

It may also refer to a literary work characterized by an emphatic style, or to something which is overrated or overestimated. *TLF* examples are *discours/style soufflé, éloquence soufflée* and *succès soufflé*. The use in French may have influenced, to some extent at least, the corresponding meaning in English.

*Bouillabaisse*, a type of fish soup, came from French into English in 1855. Since the twentieth century a metaphorical use of the item has been documented in *OED2*, as in:

1966 M. Quant *Quant by Quant* 35 It was agreed that if we could find the right premises for a boutique .. we would open a shop. It was to be a *bouillabaisse* of clothes and accessories .. sweaters, scarves, shifts, hats, jewellery, and peculiar odds and ends.

From French general-purpose dictionaries we learn that the French source term is identical in meaning. In the *Grand Robert*, for instance, the figurative sense of *bouillabaisse* is defined as “mélange hétéroclite”. The phrase *plat du jour*, literally 'dish of the day', relating to a dish offered by a restaurant on a
specific day, has equally developed a metaphorical sense in English. This is illustrated in OED3, e.g.

1979 Guardian 26 Feb. 10/6 The Poetry Society seems to have achieved some success.. The main plat du jour was the announcement of the winner of its new £1,000 prize.

The French original underwent a comparable sense development which may have influenced the corresponding use in English.

2.2.2 Semantic Broadening due to Recipe Variations

The semantic broadening of culinary terms may also result from variations of the “classic” French recipe. The OED identifies five terms for dishes as nineteenth-century borrowings from French whose original preparations begin to vary over time: ratatouille, timbale, chaud-froid, julienne and fondue. Of the borrowings in this group, ratatouille, timbale and chaud-froid undergo semantic changes which can also be found in French. Ratatouille first appeared in 1835 in English as a term for a kind of stew, typically including various vegetables and meat. By extension, it can also relate, just as its French source can, to a mixture or brew of several different things. The earliest OED3 example of this meaning dates from 1844:

1844 J. D. Smith tr. E. Sue Myst. Of Paris I. iv. 162 They make with all this a ratatouille of the devil; for you can smell, in passing on the staircase, an odour of sulphur, and charcoal, and melted tin.

According to OED3 ratatouille in the sense of ‘stew made of vegetables and meat’ has become rare in present-day English. It thus looks as if ratatouilles are only occasionally prepared in this manner. A check of the OED3 evidence suggests that the original French dish has been replaced by a culinary variant which originated in the South of France: a ratatouille now usually refers to “[a] Provençal dish consisting of tomatoes, garlic, and onions, cooked in oil with a mixture of Mediterranean vegetables, typically courgettes, peppers, and aubergines” (OED3). This change in meaning seems to have occurred in the twentieth century according to OED3.

A timbale is a dish composed of fish, meat, etc. prepared in a mould or the like to produce a form which resembles the head of a drum. The word was borrowed from French timbale in the 1820s, which can also denote a type of percussion instrument. From English corpora it becomes evident that the conventional ingredients of the dish may sometimes be replaced by sweet fillings.
Recent LexisNexis examples show that *timbales* can be filled with various other food items, such as fruit, ice-cream or chocolate:

- *Star Tribune* (Minneapolis, MN), October 10, 1997; “Harvesting cuisine of Italy; Local restaurants offer regional specialties”
  
  Desserts include an apple timbale, a specialty of the fruit-growing region around Trento. [...]  
- *The Daily News of Los Angeles*, February 15, 1998; “PARTY LINES; HAVING A BLAST WITH BLASS”
  
  The last-minute instructions are coming only moments before the annual Colleagues Valentine’s Day luncheon at the Regent Beverly Wilshire Hotel in Beverly Hills, and Blass, the Indiana-born designer who’s famous for glamorous, ladylike styles, wants everything to be perfect. [...] The sit-down lunch for 800 included chicken breasts in tarragon sauce and cappuccino ice-cream timbales served on floral china at red-covered tables with huge red rose topiary trees by Stanley Kersten.  
- *Evening Chronicle* (Newcastle, UK), July 16, 2011; “Painting A Picture Perfect Weekend”
  
  [...] We both had the same dessert. We couldn’t resist the dark chocolate timbale, pistachio sponge and white vanilla sorbet.

The DDL includes some examples of *timbale* with a sweet filling. The French word seems to be attested in this use since the early nineteenth century already:


It is possible that the French version of *timbale* was imitated in English cookery. In addition, there is *chaud-froid*, literally ‘hot-cold’, taken over from French towards the close of the nineteenth century. The English borrowing is, unlike the French word, only recorded as a culinary term in the language, denoting a dish which consists of cooked fish, meat, etc. served in a cold sauce or aspic. *Chaud-froid* has a broader sense spectrum in French, where it is also applicable to varying temperatures, for instance, or, in extended use, to contrasting colour hues. In recent English, *chaud-froid* is sometimes also used with reference to a dessert composed of warm and cold ingredients. The passage taken from *The New York Times* from 1983, for example, reveals a French setting. A *chaud-froid* is served in a restaurant in Tremolat in the Perigord region, France:

[...] Moving east of Bordeaux, we lingered in the Perigord region, whose cuisine becomes richer and heartier - a grande bouffe of foie gras and confit (potted goose), truffles and crepes, fine local wines and a variety of liqueurs made of fruits and nuts. At Tremolat, on the Dordogne River, Le Vieux is known for its old stone inn but not so known for its superb restaurant, which seven centuries ago sheltered the horses of weary travelers. We began with tiny wine-poached ecrevisses (lobsters the size of one's thumb) resting on a thatch of shredded legumes and fresh grilled goose liver that melted in the mouth, and ended with one of the world’s great desserts, chaud-froid poires Carmelisee - thin slices of pear with a papering of crisp caramel and a deep brown grainy carmel ice cream.

The following extract deals with a French bistro in Toronto, where a chaud-froid dessert is offered:

Toronto Life, September 2001; “Rainmakers Can Toronto’s glam restaurants live up to the hype?”

[...] I won’t go on about the classic bistro dishes Bouillet is cooking this fall - you owe it to your palate to discover them for yourself – except to mention the marvellous pressed terrine of chicken, so firm and flavourful, with a heart of finely chopped mushrooms. [...] And just for the record, Bouillet’s immortal individual tart tatin is also available, vying for attention with another superb dessert, a chaud-froid of caramelized baked apple with chocolate ice cream and two sauces, one of chocolate, the other a thin pistachio cream that should have been part of Toronto’s Olympic bid.

It seems likely that the variant of chaud-froid which turns the savoury dish into a dessert has its origins in France. Neither French general-purpose dictionaries nor OED2 records chaud-froid as a designation of this type of dessert. This may be due to the fact that the semantic change of the item represents quite a recent development.

In contrast to ratatouille, timbale and chaud-froid, the semantic changes which result from the recipe modifications of the borrowings julienne and fon-due do not exist in French. Julienne, a vegetable soup or vegetables cut into thin strips, shows a semantic broadening in recent times. In the later decades of the twentieth and at the beginning of the twenty-first century, julienne refers to various other food items aside from vegetables which resemble the shape of matchsticks. LexisNexis examples are:
The Washington Post, November 25, 1988; “Garbage Pail Lobster Tale”

Capitol Hill’s La Brasserie has long been the savior of diners who want fine food but require low-fat, low-cholesterol diets. Chef Gaby Auboin has for years been ready to provide no-fat salad dressing and to steam vegetables and fish to dieters’ orders.

Now he has gone further, offering a 600-calorie menu based on the Diet Center’s guidelines to diners who order it 24 hours in advance. The fixed-price dinner, $20 a person, starts with consommé of chicken with vegetable essence, and goes on to breast of chicken stuffed with zucchini, steamed over the vapors of veal bones and served on tomato coulis with fresh oregano. Steamed yellow pumpkin stuffed with spinach accompanied by, and dessert is a fresh fruit plate with caramelized orange sections, fresh raspberries, strawberries and julienne of mint.

The Village Voice, March 24, 1998; “Counter Culture”

Curiously, the sign outside Dai Jia Lou promises only Sichuan food. But the restaurant’s take on this familiar cuisine is entirely refreshing. Szechwan lamb ($16.95), for example, is an abundant julienne of meat matched with baby corn in a dark gingery sauce. [...]

The Daily Telegraph (Sydney, Australia), June 14, 2004; “Sydney Confidential”

[...] Making sure everything was running smoothly, Jonesy and Leah called Sarah on-air and found that aunty Sarah was in fact well in control of the situation and was in the process of preparing bananas julienne for young Scarlett.

Mint, September 11, 2011; “Spicy veggies”

To make the tomato-onion gravy paste, take finely chopped onions and tomatoes in a 1:2 ratio and fry till the onions are brown. Add tomatoes and saute well. Blend in a mixer to get a smooth puree. In a wok, heat the oil till it is smoking hot. Turn down the heat to medium and temper with seeds, coriander seeds and pepper. When these whole spices release aroma, add the vegetables and the remaining spices in the order they are listed. Give a minute or two between each addition and keep stirring. Finish with the roasted cumin powder and take off the fire. Garnish with chopped green coriander and ginger julienne[s] [...]

The sources consulted do not record any similarities for the corresponding French word. It thus seems likely that the change in meaning of julienne is a native development in English. The sense extension has not been documented in the OED yet. Fondue, a French dish consisting of melted cheese, eggs and other ingredients, has equally inspired more adventurous, occasionally typically
“British” ventures. The following passage from an American newspaper included in *LexisNexis*, for instance, describes an Irish restaurant in Dublin, where a *Guinness fondue* is on the menu:

- *New Times Broward-Palm Beach* (Florida), January 4, 2007; “Dublin calling”  
  Happily at Dubliner [...] their new Irish place in Palm Beach Gardens, Rodney Mayo and Scott Frielich (who also own Dada in Delray Beach) offer less visceral fare – no kidneys here! They’ve taken the concept of “pub” and given it sparkle tweaking it for an audience of boomers and X-ers – there’s valet parking and photos of edgy intellectuals on the walls: Oscar Wilde Samuel Beckett, George Bernard Shaw. You’ll find polished-up Irish standards - smoked poached salmon Guinness fondue, beef and lamb stew, corned beef and cabbage.

In recent times, a *fondue* may also include sweet ingredients, such as fruit and chocolate. Examples in *LexisNexis* are:

- *The Sunday Telegraph* (Sydney, Australia), June 2, 2002; “Jumping beans”  
  […] Jacqueline Twemlow, of Lilyfield, asked for this recipe. Paula Peach, of Bexley, wins a $2 lottery ticket for her choc-mint fondue.
- *The Scotsman*, January 30, 2010; “Weekend Life”  
  Loco for cocoa? Then get along to Harvey Nichols’ new Chocolate Lounge. Choose from sugary delights such as a white chocolate and strawberry fondue [...], with seasonal fruits, marshmallows, mini pastries and brownie cubes to dunk.

The sweet variant of *fondue* has not been described in *OED2* yet. This also holds for French general-purpose dictionaries, which do not offer any evidence of sweet *fondues* either.

We now come to the semantic analysis of the nineteenth-century French borrowings in the field of desserts and confectionary:

### 3 The Semantic Analysis of French-derived Desserts and Confectionary

39 terms for desserts and confectionary were adopted from French during the nineteenth century. The earliest acquisition dates from 1806, and the latest borrowing was adopted into the language as late as 1899:
Nouns

*baba* (1813); *brioche* (1826); *nougat* (1827); *crème* (1845); *gâteau* (1845); *meringué* (now obsolete) (1845); *babka*\(^{17}\) (1846); *bouchées* (1846); *flan* (1846); *vanille* (first attested as a confectionary term in 1846 in *OED*); *amandin(e)* (1848); *dragée* (1853); *cosaque* (1858); *éclair* (1861); *croquembouche* (1874); *fondant* (1877); *parfait* (1884); *mousse* (first recorded as a culinary term in 1885 in *OED*); *bombe* (1892); *coupe* (1895); *millefeuille* (1895); *croissant* (1899)

According to *OED* it remains unclear to what extent the noun *marron* (1877), a type of nut, which is quite often eaten as a sweetmeat, has been influenced by French.

*Bonbonnière* (1818) and *drageoir* (1861), both of which refer to sweetmeat boxes, were also taken over from French into English. Their French sources are identical in meaning.

(1.1) Borrowings Reflecting Proper Nouns

*chartreuse* (1806); *plombière* (1818); *madeleine* (1829); *pithivier* (1834); *bavaroise* (1846); *savarin* (1877); *Nice* (1895)

(2) Noun Phrases

*pièce montée* (1820); *crème caramel* (first attested in 1846 in *OED*); *baba au rhum* (1868); *marron glacé* (1871); *petit four* (1875); *crème brûlée* (first attested in 1886 in *OED*); *langue de chat* (1897)

3.1 Semantic Narrowing

Of the lexical items in the above list, *crème*, *bombe*, *croissant*, *cosaque* and *coupe* were borrowed from French in a specific sense. Particular meanings of *crème*, *bombe* and *croissant* were taken over into English, meanings derived from the specific culinary uses of the corresponding French words. The borrowing *crème* refers to custard or cream, *bombe* specifies a confection variety in the shape of a ball or cup, and *croissant* is used to designate a sweet roll with a curved form. The French originals show more general meanings. *Crème* means ‘cream’ in French, and the French terms *bombe* and *croissant* resemble the semantics of the English words ‘bomb’ and ‘crescent’. Similarly, *vanille* was subjected to a semantic narrowing. The term was taken over from French in about 1845 for the spice of vanilla, mostly used as a perfume or scent. The first *OED* example of *vanille* reflects a figurative use:

\(^{17}\) *Babka*, a variety of cake or sweet bread, shows quite a complex etymological description in *OED*: the word was partly derived from the French *babka* and the Polish etymon *babka*. Cf. *OED*.  

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Shortly after its adoption, the borrowing is used elliptically for *vanille ice*, as the 1856 *OED* quotation shows:

1856 E. B. Browning *Aurora Leigh* vii. 316 Each lovely lady .. holds her dear fan while she feeds her smile On meditative spoonfuls of *vanille*.

The French original has a more general meaning. *Vanille* refers to ‘vanilla’ in French. In addition, *cosaque*, which is used to designate “a cracker bon-bon” (*OED*) in English, represents a specific application of the French *Cosaque* ‘Cossack’. There is also the English borrowing *coupe*, which specifies a small bowl or glass, or a dessert made of ice-cream and fruit, served in such a bowl or glass. The French source shows a more extended semantic function. Its general meaning is ‘goblet’. By metonymy, *coupe* can also refer to any content of such a goblet in French.

### 3.2 Semantic Broadening

A number of borrowings referring to confectionary and desserts have developed further senses in English. Some of these semantic changes seem to be influenced by French, whereas others appear to represent native developments in English. I shall begin with the changes in meaning which are paralleled in French. *Dragée*, for example, a French variety of sweet-meat or comfit, has developed a transferred sense over time. In the 1958 *OED* quotation, for instance, the word is used attributively to specify a colour shade:

1958 *Observer* 14 Sept. 11/3 Make-up in delicate *dragée* tones.

The French source has an equivalent meaning which might have been taken over into English. In the *TLF* the corresponding French sense is described as follows:

- *P. anal. et p. métaph. Teint de *dragée*. L’étonnement ... se peignit sur le visage de *dragée* de Catherine*


A further example is *mousse*, which has been recorded since 1863 in English in relation to the bubbles on the surface of a wine, champagne or the like, and, some years later (i.e. since 1885), with reference to a sweet or savory dish with
a light and fluffy consistency, typically made from egg and cream, to which a purée or other ingredients are added. Over time, the word came to denote “[a] brown emulsion of sea water and oil produced by the weathering of oil spills, which is resistant to dispersal” (*OED3*), or “a stiff brown foam caused by the growth of bacterial colonies on sewage effluent” (*OED3*). In this meaning, it often occurs in the phrase *chocolate mousse*. The earliest attested use of this sense in *OED3* dates from the 1960s:

1968 S. A. Berridge *et al.* in *Jrnl. Inst. Petroleum* 54 334/1 ‘Chocolate mousse’. This term, which appears to have originated from the *Torrey Canyon* incident, is herein defined as [water-in-oil] emulsions of from 50 to 80 per cent water content, which have a solid or semi-solid grease-like consistency, maintain a rigid configuration that can only be changed by an applied force, and are not reverted to oil-in-water emulsions by agitation in sea water.

In present-day English, the borrowing may also refer to any of several different cosmetic products which resemble the texture of a *mousse*. This meaning is first recorded in the later decades of the twentieth century in *OED3*, e.g.

1971 *Daily Tel.* 16 June 13/6 Ambre Solaire .. had a choice of cream, oil, lotion or mousse to suit every kind of skin.

1999 *Zest* 73/2 (*caption*) For this sleek bob, apply some mousse to damp hair to give it more ‘guts’ and control..

The various meanings the borrowing assumes after its adoption into English constitute specific uses of the French word *mousse* ‘moss’, ‘foam’.

Sometimes a borrowing shows changes in meaning some of which are influenced by French while others are not, as in the case of *chartreuse*, which first appeared in English in 1806 as the name of an item of confectionary made of fruits, jelly, or blancmange. According to French general-purpose dictionaries, the French source lacks this sense. As a culinary term, the borrowing can also denote, like its equivalent in French, a dish which consists of vegetables or poultry. A close review of the linguistic evidence in *OED2* reveals that *chartreuse* assumed a number of further meanings in English. In 1838, the item is first recorded as a term for a variety of cat:

1838 *Penny Cycl.* X. 223 Among the most noted are .. the Chartreux, which is bluish, and the Angora cat. (*OED2*)
The French word *chartreuse* is not attested in this meaning in the sources consulted. In the second half of the nineteenth century, the English borrowing assumed a further sense which could be of French origin: it came to denote a liqueur prepared in the French monastery *La Grande Chartreuse* near Grenoble, France:

1866 G. A. Sala *Trip to Barbary* xx. 379 The absinthe and the chartreuse .. should all come from France. (*OED2*)

Since the later decades of the nineteenth century, *chartreuse* has occurred as a colour designation in English, as in:

1884 *Western Daily Press* 26 Dec. 7/5 With white all pale shades are employed, such as heliotrope, citron, chartreuse. (*OED2*)

The corresponding use of the French original with respect to a shade of colour seems to be attested slightly later than in English (i.e. in 1909):

1909 - «[...] les capes en satin Liberty noir, doublées de ‘paillette’ tilleul, parme, crevette, *chartreuse*, drapées de façon à former une sorte de grande manche flottante [...]» *La Mode illustrée*, 14 nov., 527b [...] (*DDL*)

It is therefore not clear whether the use in French has influenced the relevant use in English.

3.2.1 Metaphorical uses

Some borrowings among the *OED* entries widen their semantic extent by assuming metaphorical uses in English, such as *pièce montée* and *nougat*. In French cookery, *pièce montée* denotes “a large, ornate cake or pastry dish designed to be the centrepiece of a table” (*OED3*), or “any dish forming the centrepiece of a meal” (*OED3*). The meaning of the borrowing developed further in English. By metaphor, *pièce montée* has been used to designate “an ostentatious or impressive display” (*OED3*):

1828 C. I. Johnstone *Diversions of Hollycot* vi. 138 ‘She is quite a piece-montée herself,’ said George, laughing. ‘Such an affected conceited girl, so dressed and over-dressed.’ (*OED3*)

French dictionaries and database sources such as the *TLF* and *DDL* only record the French phrase *pièce montée* as a term for a patisserie item. *Nougat*, a type
of confection, also shows a metaphorical use after its introduction into English in 1827. The earliest OED3 quotation which reflects a figurative sense dates from the end of the twentieth century:

1999 L. Lifshin Before it’s Light 29 Being twenty-four and Never screwed but in my Soft nougat thighs.

Consulted sources such as the Grand Robert attest metaphorical uses for the French equivalent in a number of phrases which vary from the relevant sense in English. The French expression c’est du nougat, for example, might be paraphrased as ‘that’s very good’, ‘that’s very easy and agreeable’. In jambes en nougat, the French nougat is used with reference to tired, weak legs (see Grand Robert). Maybe the use in French has influenced, in some degree at least, the corresponding sense in English.

3.2.2 Semantic Broadening due to Recipe Variations

The list of terms for desserts and confectionary also encompasses borrowings which undergo semantic broadenings since the preparation of the corresponding recipes becomes more manifold over time. As will be seen, the original recipes of a number of French desserts and confectionary items have been modified, just as was the case with savoury, classic French dishes. The majority of sense extensions in this group of borrowings represent independent semantic developments within English.

The borrowings gâteau and bouchées show recipe variations which are paralleled in French. Gâteau, for example, which was adopted from French in 1845, originally denoted a pudding or a cake. It now mostly refers to a kind of decorated tart which contains cream and fruit. The borrowing has developed an extended use in English, relating to a savory dish, i.e. a tart filled with several different ingredients such as meat or fish. This semantic change becomes apparent towards the end of the nineteenth and at the beginning of the twentieth century, as is shown in OED2:

1883 Cassell’s Family Mag. Sept. 602/2 Any dish that has a baked cake for its foundation, if served in its original shape, may be called a gâteau.


1932 Edinburgh Bk. Plain Cookery Recipes 51 Gâteau of Fish.

An extended use of the French word gâteau is included in TLF, in which the definition reads as follows:
Préparation culinaire salée rappelant par sa composition, sa consistance ou sa forme un gâteau [...]. Gâteau de foies de volaille, de pommes de terre. Ce qu’il y a d’excellent dans la cuisine anglaise, ce sont les gâteaux de viande, les pies aux rognons et au steak, aux champignons, aux huîtres cuites, au poulet, surmontés de croûtes délicieuses

MORAND, LONDRES, 1933, P. 238

As is apparent, the culinary use in French very much resembles that of the borrowing in English. It thus seems likely that the sense extension of the borrowing in English was influenced by French. From oed2 it becomes clear that bouchées can relate to small items of confectionary in English, as the following example shows:

1928 E. Blunden Undertones of War iii. 27 Their front windows .. exhibited .. chocolate bouchées in silver paper.

LexisNexis includes some recent examples in which bouchée(s) refers, just like its equivalent in French, to any food item which fills the mouth, e.g.

- Richmond Times Dispatch (Virginia), December 30, 2004; “CELEBRATE MEXICAN-STYLE”

HENRY CLAY HELLO – The Henry Clay Inn, 114 N. Railroad Ave., Ashland, has welcomed new chef F.J. Sabatini. [...] The restaurant is open for dinner 5:30-9 p.m. Friday-Saturday and brunch 10:30 a.m.-2:30 p.m. Sunday. The regular weekend dinner menu includes shrimp, scallop and salmon bouchee; thyme pork au poivre; filet mignon and crab cakes.

- Daily Mirror, Sri Lanka, December 28, 2010; “STARTING A NEW YEAR WELL”

It’s New Year’s Eve. Are you going out dancing to see the New Year in? Or are you going to church, temple, mosque or kovil? [...] so you want to lose weight? Don’t think of the number of kilos you aim to lose, just concentrate on doing something today towards your overall goal of losing weight. Start by lessening or leaving out the sugar in your morning cup of coffee. Then do you indulge in chocolate eclairs or pastries like chicken bouchees or pies? Say a prayer to the God you believe in and ask for the willpower to say “No” to pastries. Simply avoid going to the Patisserie at all.

As in the case of gâteau, the meaning of bouchée(s) seems to be assumed from French.
The sense extensions of the borrowings *parfait*, *pithivier*, *millefeuille*, *Bavaroise* and *éclair* might be classified as independent developments within English. *Parfait* denotes, just like the equivalent French term, a dessert usually made with cream and fruit purée or syrup. In the twentieth century, the borrowing came to relate to “a dessert consisting of layers of ice cream, meringue, fruit, etc., served in a tall glass” (*OED3*) in North American English. This is illustrated by the following *OED3* example:

1978 *Monitor (McAllen, Texas)* 25 June 1 e, Mayan Parfait is a smooth, rich mix of vanilla ice cream layered between a banana-nut frozen confection.

In contrast to the English borrowing, the French source is not confined to cooking contexts but shows a number of additional meanings which were not adopted into English. In French cookery, *pithivier*\(^{18}\) refers to a tart which consists of puff pastry with an almond filling. *Pithivier* was subjected to a semantic broadening some time after its adoption into English, denoting “any sweet or savoury tart with a puff pastry base” (*OED3*). A perusal of the linguistic evidence in the *OED* reveals that this meaning does not seem to be recorded in English before the 1980s:

1983 *Nation’s Restaurant News (Nexis)* 17 1 Such nonseafood Banchet creations as pithivier of partridge with peach sauce and noisettes of venison.

1987 *Chicago Tribune (Nexis)* 2 Oct. C3 Appetizers include a cheese pithivier (puff pastry around mild cheese) and a roquefort mousse.

*Pithivier* belongs to the group of borrowings which show sense extensions towards the end of the twentieth century. A parallel semantic development is not found in French. A similar case is *millefeuille*, which was borrowed from French in 1895 as a name of a type of confection made of puff pastry and filled with cream, jam, etc. A check of the *OED3* evidence suggests that the filling of this item begins to be diversified in the later decades of the twentieth century. In recent years, there appears to be a tendency to prepare savoury *millefeuilles*:

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\(^{18}\) According to *OED3* the cake reflects the name of *Pithivier*, a city in France, where it seems to have originated. It seems likely that the form *pithivier* is due to a misinterpretation of the French name of the city as a plural noun. *Pithivier* is apparently recorded later in French than in English, i.e. in 1924.
1990 *Country Homes* Oct. 143/3, I opted for a mille-feuille of crab with sorrel. (*OED3*)

Like *pithivier*, *millefeuille* is hence no longer made according to the original French recipe. It seems noteworthy that the various fillings may change the confections *gâteau, bouchée(s), pithivier* and *millefeuille* into savoury dishes. The latter is also used metaphorically in English, as in the 1967 *OED3* quotation:

> 1967 *Listener* 21 Dec. 802/2 When strangers meet, and nature calls, our society splits into a *mille-feuille* of social strata: each one of us clinging to our own euphemism.

French general-purpose dictionaries do not attest a similar change in meaning for the French term *millefeuille*.

It may be that towards the close of the twentieth century and in the early twenty-first century cooking in English-speaking countries has become more independent. As has been seen, several classic French recipes have been modified, yielding more unusual and exotic variants. *Bavaroise*, first attested in 1846 in English, and *éclair*, borrowed from French in 1861, may serve as further examples of this trend. A *Bavaroise* is a cold, sweet dessert consisting of whipped cream and gelatine. In present-day English, unlike its equivalent in French, it occasionally refers to a savoury dish prepared in this way. Some illustrative examples of this use are available in *LexisNexis*:

- *The Vancouver Sun* (British Columbia), November 23, 1991; “When in doubt, pour champagne: Like pearls and basic black, blue blazer and grey flannels, it’s just the right thing.”

  [...] Anyway, no danger of tinned fruit at the Hotel Vancouver these days - the first-ever Champagne Festival continues until Nov. 30 with a joint-venture “Champagne menu with a West Coast flavor” [...]. Best of all is the table d’hote which, for $ 68 per person gets you cold lobster bavaroise; [...]

- *Sarasota Herald-Tribune* (Florida), October 3, 2004; “Scenes from an Italian restaurant”

  As with everything at Divino, Bozzolo makes his pasta in house. [...] He likes to offer dishes that are somewhat unusual, like his antipasto [...] which includes red pepper and spinach souffle, tomato bavaroise, croquettes of ricotta and emanthaler, and mushroom and artichoke bruschetta.
Port Douglas Mossman Gazette (Australia), May 13, 2004; “Canapes with cocktails”

Mystery and glamour will transform the Port Douglas Sugar Wharf tomorrow night when masked guests dressed in their finery enjoy Sunset Cocktails in Masquerade to launch Carnivale 2004. [...] Salsa Bar and Grill: Truffled smoked salmon crepe filled with asparagus and horse radish bavaroise [...] 

Éclair specifies a small, oblong confection with a cream filling. It corresponds to French éclair, literally ‘lightning’. In English corpora, we find a number of recipe modifications of éclair. Examples in LexisNexis are:

San Antonio Express-News, December 23, 2005; “Celebrating with style”

[...] The menu for New Year’s Eve features lobster éclair; pavé of Iranian caviar; braised bacon, Perigord black truffle glaze; [...] 

Bangor Daily News, February 11, 2008; “WCCC students host polar dip taste test”

Culinary arts students from Washington County Community College on Friday had breakfast treats prepared for dippers and nondippers alike during the eighth annual Polar Bear Dip, sponsored by WCCC. The taste test was part of a classroom exercise as students prepared for the Maine Dairy Council’s culinary competition to be held at the Blaine House in Augusta later this year. The students’ recipes will stand side by side with recipes prepared by other students from community colleges across the state. In years past, WCCC students have walked away with the top prize. [...] Coming in second was the pumpkin French toast breakfast; third place, the phyllo pocket; and fourth place, the chipped beef éclair. 

The Evening Standard (London), February 8, 2010; “Join the éclair”

They were the stuff of high teas and children’s parties but I never anticipated eclairs being cool. Yet after the trend for handmade macaroons and cup cakes, 2010 is arguably the year of the éclair. The craze started in New York, where you can order eclairs in every flavour from Nutella to pistachio at Financier Patisserie in Grand Central Station. Meanwhile, inspired by the Oscar-nominated Julie & Julia, home chefs are digging out recipes for savoury eclairs.

As is apparent, éclairs may be filled with savoury ingredients these days. In France, however, the classic French recipe seems to be maintained: French sources lack examples of savoury éclairs. The changes in meaning of bavaroise and éclair are not given in the unrevised edition of OED2.
It should be noted that the majority of terms for desserts and confectionary are still in full use in present-day English. An exception is *meringué*, an item of patisserie made of fruit and meringue, which has become obsolete. *Meringués* appear to be no longer consumed today.

4 Conclusion

The extensive documentary evidence in English and French databases and dictionaries such as the *OED* and the *TLF* made possible this type of analysis, which had not been carried out in previous studies. As has been shown in this paper, quite a few of the nineteenth-century cookery terms from French were subjected to a sense development after their first recorded use. Some of them may represent internal semantic changes within English, others were influenced by French. It seems noteworthy that a number of sense developments of the culinary terms presented in this study have not yet been included in the *OED*: several borrowings reflect a new meaning in corpora of recent usage such as *LexisNexis* and the *BNC* which is not made explicit in the unrevised edition of the *OED2*.

Various types of semantic change could be found among the words under review (i.e. broadening, narrowing, amelioration, pejoration and metaphor). One of the most interesting tendencies might be the modification of classic French recipes in recent decades which brings about a change in meaning of the corresponding items, turning savoury dishes into desserts and confectionary or vice versa. It appears interesting to note that the 20th century French culinary terms analysed by Schultz (2012) underwent a similar sense development: a close look at the linguistic evidence revealed that a number of dishes were no longer prepared according to the original French recipe in recent times. An example is *tarte Tatin*, which was taken over into English in the 1950s as the designation of a tart typically made of puff pastry and caramelized apples. In the past few decades, in contrast to the equivalent French term, it may also denote a tart filled with savoury ingredients like onions, cheese and tomatoes.19 Schultz (2012: 275) points out that

> It looks as if towards the end of the twentieth century and in the beginning of the twenty-first century cooking in England has become more independent. The classic French dishes have done their duty in inspiring more adventurous or exotic ventures.

It would be interesting to see whether this trend also holds for culinary items adopted from other foreign languages. In order to investigate this, however, large-scale studies should be undertaken, which would have to go far beyond the scope of the present paper.

References


Durkin, Philip. 1999. Root and Branch: Revising the etymological component of the oed. Transactions of the Philological Society 97: 1–49.


The Semantic Development of Nineteenth-Century French


**Online Resources**

British National Corpus <http://www.natcorp.ox.ac.uk/>.