

Ordering produce at a French market stall

French A1 (beginner) · Lesson

Quick answer: At a French market you name the amount, then de, then the food, with no article: un kilo de tomates, une douzaine d'œufs. Ask the price with Combien ça coûte ? and listen for euros and cents. For "some" without an amount, use du, de la, de l' or des.

Level: French A1 (CEFR beginner) · **Standards:** CEFR A1, Spoken interaction

How do you ask for a quantity at a French market?

Market sellers weigh, count and bag. You name the amount first, then de, then the product. The product takes no article after de.

Rule: quantity + de + noun

un kilo **de** carottes — a kilo of carrots

une douzaine **d'**œufs — a dozen eggs (de shortens to d' before a vowel)

French	Meaning	Example
un kilo de	a kilogram of	un kilo de poires
une livre de	500 grams of	une livre de cerises
une douzaine de	a dozen	une douzaine d'huîtres
une botte de	a bunch of	une botte de radis
une barquette de	a small tray of	une barquette de fraises
un peu de	a little	un peu d'ail

L'étal de Fatou - Lyon

les tomates	3,20 € le kilo
les fraises	4,50 € la barquette
les œufs	3,60 € la douzaine
les radis	1,40 € la botte

A typical stall board: the price comes with its unit.

What does "some" look like with food?

When you do not give an amount, French uses the partitive: du fromage, de la confiture, de l'ail, des champignons. After a quantity word, all of these collapse to plain de.

At Fatou's stall

- Bonjour, monsieur. Vous désirez ? — Hello, sir. What would you like?
- Je voudrais un kilo de tomates, s'il vous plaît. — I would like a kilo of tomatoes, please.
- Et avec ça ? — Anything else?
- Une douzaine d'œufs. Combien ça coûte ? — A dozen eggs. How much is that?
- Ça fait 6,80 €. — That comes to 6.80 euros.

How do you ask the price and count the money?

Use Combien ça coûte ?, C'est combien ? or Ça fait combien ?. For one item, ask Combien coûte la barquette ?; for several, Combien coûtent les cerises ?. Read 3,20 € as trois euros vingt: the comma is spoken as "euros" and the cents follow.

un kilo 1 000 g	une livre 500 g	une douzaine 12 pièces	une demi-douzaine 6 pièces
---------------------------	---------------------------	----------------------------------	--------------------------------------

Four amounts you will hear at almost every stall.

Watch out

English says "a kilo of tomatoes" and French keeps the same shape, but learners often add an article: un kilo des tomates is wrong. Say un kilo de tomates.

Market habits

Many French towns hold an open-air market on fixed mornings. Sellers often greet you with Vous désirez ? and finish with Et avec ça ?. A shopping basket, un cabas, is a common sight.

Zoé's tip

Start with Bonjour, order with Je voudrais, and end with C'est tout, merci. Three steps, and every seller smiles.

Key points to remember

- Quantity word + de + noun: no le, la or les after de.
- De becomes d' before a vowel sound: une douzaine d'œufs.
- Some = du (masculine), de la (feminine), de l' (vowel), des (plural).
- Prices use a decimal comma: 3,20 € is trois euros vingt.
- Polite request: Je voudrais ... , s'il vous plaît.

Ordering Produce at a French Market Stall: frequently asked questions

How do you say "a kilo of apples" in French?

Say un kilo de pommes. The word de links the amount to the food and no article follows it.

When does de become d'?

Before a vowel sound or a mute h. For example une douzaine d'œufs and un peu d'ail.

How do you ask how much something costs?

Use Combien ça coûte ? or C'est combien ?. For a named item, Combien coûte la barquette ? also works.

What is une livre in French?

At a market it means 500 grams, half a kilo. It is not the English pound of 454 grams.

How do you read 3,20 € aloud?

Say trois euros vingt. French writes a decimal comma and speaks the cents right after euros.