



Nicknames in Cilaos

I've always lived in small towns, and some things don't change **regardless** of culture, like the **tendency** to **gossip** that seems to be so much more **prevalent** in small towns. There is a psychologist who suggests that gossip is actually one of the reasons human language developed. If that is the case, thank small towns for preserving language in its purest form. I'm not a huge fan of gossip in general, I like to meet a person before knowing all about them.

However, I enjoy listening to my Cilaos family gossip for one reason, and one reason only: the **nicknames**. I don't know if this is something that **happens** all over Reunion or just in Cilaos, but people have the craziest nicknames for each other. When the whole **extended family** gets together someone will be **prattling on** in loud high speed creole about the brother of the cousin of the wife of someone called "Small Bread", and I am mostly **zoning out** until I **realize**, wait, there is a person called "Small Bread"? Why "Bread"? And this isn't the only food related nickname. There are many more, and they all seem to be **bakery** related. And no one can explain where these type of nicknames come from.

There are also nicknames based on physical characteristics. There is of course **lil'**, before the actual name. This exists in the US as well; we've got 'Lil Wayne, and 'Lil Kim and even 'Lil **Bow Wow** (although I don't think his name is actually Bow Wow). But the American "lil" is mostly used for rappers as a **stage name**. In Cilaos, it means the person is actually small. I've also heard of such characters as "Thin **iron**," "Long distance" and "Mr. **Quirky**." Some nicknames are so specific to someone's physical appearance that you can **figure out** whose nickname it is just from walking around **town**. I've asked what the real names of these people are, and in many cases, no one knows.

To my knowledge, I haven't got a Cilaosian nickname yet. For the moment, I am mostly **referred to as** "the American that married the little brother of a certain **fireman**." But, if I'm going to get a food nickname, I will accept Pizza, because it is the best. If I am going to get a physical characteristic nickname, I will accept something along the lines of "Super Attractive Person".





Vocabulary

regardless - malgré
tendency - tendance
to gossip - faire des commérage
prevalent - très répandu
nickname - surnom

to happen - se passer
extended family - la famille élargie
to prattle on - bavarder
to zone out - planer
to realise - se rendre compte

bakery - boulangerie
'Lil - contraction du mot "little," comme le créole "ti"
bow wow - woah woah
stage name - nom de scène
iron - fer

quirky - excentrique
to figure out - comprendre
town - ville
referred to - appelé
fireman - pompier

