



Three Questions to an American

After ten years in Reunion, I realized that I could mentally prepare myself, for a certain series of questions, whenever I would meet a person from Reunion. It's sort of like preparing for that job interview question, "What are your **strengths and weaknesses?**" After two or three tries, I had the answers down pat in French. Here are my top three questions people from Reunion ask a native New Yorker.

1) Is living in Reunion too much of a shock for an American, especially coming from New York City?

Not as much as you'd think. People imagine New York City, all flashing lights and **blaring** police sirens. Well, ok, it is all that. But New York City is also, little **nooks and crannies**, of **pocket neighborhoods**; with the local supermarket, **butcher's, bakery**, bar, and post office. So, I'm not shocked by life in a small town, on a beautiful, tropical island. And that is what living abroad is about anyway, experiencing a new way of living.

2) Is Creole too difficult for you to understand?

A lot of Creoles don't understand that their language is actually more like English than French. Don't believe me, ask my husband's grandmother, who was a school teacher for many, many years in Saint Denis! So Creole is **easier** for me sometimes than French. No trying to remember masculine and feminine nouns or their articles. "Mi aime a ou?" I love you too!

So no, Creole isn't that difficult to understand. What's difficult, is trying to keep the Creole **out of** my French. I have no filter for this. I actually once, answered "bah" to a French school teacher. **Yikes!**

3) Is Creole food too spicy for you?

My answer to this question, often disappoints people. In New York City, we've got every type of ethnic food you can think of. There is even The Reunion Surf Bar. My favorite types of food, Mexican and Indian. So, **scorching chillies**, exotic spices, and **beans**, all on top of a steaming **bed of rice**, is not too bold. Thanks to **China Town**; I'd already tasted **chayote, bitter melon**, and **ridge gourd**, before coming to Reunion. Even litchis and **longan fruit** can be found, in the Korean market five minutes from my parents'.

That being said, I have grown to love the **typical dishes** here. My father-in-law says that I eat more chillies than he does. I am no longer surprised to see rice, being **ingested**, twice a day. At first, I served myself carries on a bed of lettuce. I now consider that to be sacrilege and **load up** my plate with rice too, just like a local.





Vocabulary

strengths and weaknesses – pointes fortes et faibles

blaring – hurlante

nooks and crannies - coins et recoins

pocket neighborhoods – petit quartiers

butcher's - boucherie

bakery - pâtisserie

easier – plus facile

out of – en dehors

yikes ! - mince alors !

scorching chillies – piments si forts qu'ils brûlent

beans - haricots

bed of rice – un lit de riz

China Town – quartier chinois

chayote - chouchou

bitter melon - margoze

ridge gourd - pipangaille

longan - longani

typical dishes - plats typiques

ingested - ingéré

to load up - charger