



THE *English Library*

WHAT'S ON IN JUNE

EVENTS

2nd-4th June Rendezvous aux Jardins - open gardens weekend in Villefranche and further afield. More info available at the Tourist Office. Also see Margaret's gardening article in this issue page 4.

Friday 9th June Fish and Chips, Gare de Villefranche. As usual, pre-order with Cod en Bleu using their on-line ordering page at <http://www.cod-en-bleu.com/OrderOnline.aspx> then reserve your table in Le Caesariée bar.

Le Growing Groupe gardening club meets on the first Monday of each month. The next meeting will be on Monday 5th June at Helen McLoughlin's garden. For further details Email colandsuereeve@gmail.com or phone Anne Dyson on 05 65 81 47 67 or 0683678781.

15th April - 26th August (samedis de 17H00 à 19H00) Cave de Villefranche, La Glèbe. Atelier d'Oenopartage

Medieval Najac - 3 - 5 June. see web page villefranche.com for details.

VISIT

Des Animaux dans la ville. This visit was due to take place earlier on in the year but was cancelled. Now you have another chance to have a guided tour (in French) of the carvings of animals on civic and religious buildings around Villefranche. Meet on the pedestrian bridge at 10.30 am on Saturday 24 June. Info from 05 65 45 74 63 / 06 14 48 48 55 or the tourist office. €4 per adult.

CHOIRS AND MUSIC

Sunday 3rd June, 21h, les Doigts de l'Homme, a group of 3 guitarists and contrabassoonist perform at AJAR, Villefranche. 13-20€. For more info <http://jazzajar.jimdo.com/>

Sunday 11th June, 17h, Le Choeur de Parisot perform Purcell's 'Dido and Aeneas' at the Église de Parisot. All proceeds to go to Tout le Monde contre le Cancer.

Sunday 18th June, 15h Salle des Fêtes de Monteils. 60 singers and 12 musicians perform music from Leonard Bernstein's 'West Side Story'.

VIDE GRENIERS/BROCANTES

11th June Foire aux Puces, Place de Claunac, Salles-Courbatié organised by L'Association des Parents d'Élèves

LIBRARY FACEBOOK PAGE

If you are a Facebook user please join our English Library Villefranche Rouergue page. You will find it is a useful page for getting updates on what's happening in Villefranche and for in-between events and info. Click on this link to go straight to the page and ask to join www.facebook.com/groups/1374046415990276/ Everyone welcome!

FESTILITT

20, 21, 22 October - Festilitt Literary Festival in Parisot -see page 9 for the latest exciting news re authors and information about the Safari Supper on Saturday 10th June.

MUSIC IN JUNE

There are several musical events on during June - 3 & 4 Villefranche in conjunction with the Jardins Ouverts events. 17 June music in PI Notre Dame and 20 June Fete de la Musique in Najac. See tourist office webpages for more details.

For many more events visit www.tourisme-aveyron.com or www.villefranche.com

A NOTE FROM OUR PRESIDENT

Foiled again!

A few weeks ago my husband sent a letter to the Cabinet Office in London to complain that, although we are still paying taxes in U.K and in France, as we have been here for more than 15 years we were not eligible to vote in either the referendum or the last General Election.

This is the reply which came a few days before Theresa May made her snap decision.....

Our Ref: TO2017/01

Mr Donald Naismith CBE, Chevalier des Palmes Academiques

donald.naismith@wanadoo.fr

Dear Mr Naismith

Thank you for your email of 3 April regarding the right to vote of overseas British citizens.

The Government has plans to remove this restriction on overseas voting rights. This was set out in the Government's manifesto for this parliament in May 2015. The removal of these restrictions will allow British citizens previously resident in the UK but not previously registered to vote the ability to register as an overseas elector. This will be delivered by means of a Government Bill once policy details have been finalised and a suitable slot in the legislative timetable identified.

The Government is making steady progress on both of these points and subject to the necessary Parliamentary approval, this will be fully in place for the next scheduled UK Parliamentary elections.

Yours sincerely

Nathan Lappin

Constitution Group | Cabinet Office

.....ah well maybe the time after next - are you all enjoying the run up as much as I am?

JN

A burglar breaks into a house. He starts shining his light around looking for valuables. Some nice things catch his eye and as he reaches for them, he hears, "Jesus is watching you."

Startled, the burglar looks for the speaker. Seeing no one, he keeps putting things in his bag, again, he hears, "Jesus is watching you." This time, he sees a parrot.

"Who are you?" the burglar asks.

"Moses," the bird replied.

"Who the heck would name a bird Moses?" the man laughed.

"I dunno," Moses answered, "I guess the same kind of people that would name a Rottweiler Jesus."

RECIPES

Broad Beans

The world seems divided into those who love broad beans and those who hate them - I love them! I think the problem starts from being cajoled into eating them when they are past their best and having to eat them together with their sometimes tough skin. Young broad beans are wonderful but if they are only a few days older its best to remove both the outer pod and the inner skin before serving. I know it's time consuming but the texture and flavour are so much better, and it really only takes a bit longer to slip them out of their skins. Now for some recipes.

If you have never eaten them raw try the young beans dipped in salt, not too much, or a mixture of sea salt and ground cumin. These tasty morsels make a good 'nibble' to serve with pre dinner drinks.

Avocado, quinoa and broad bean salad.

If you haven't used quinoa (pronounced kinwa) before, try it. This superfood is readily available in supermarkets and bio shops.

Serves 6

200g quinoa

500g broad beans, shelled, you can use fresh or frozen beans for this recipe

2 lemons

2 avocado

2 garlic cloves, crushed

200g radish, halved lengthwise

Small quantity basil leaves - use small leaves or tear large leaves into small pieces

1tsp ground cumin

75ml olive oil

Pinch of chilli flakes

Salt and freshly ground black pepper

Cook the quinoa as directed on the packet. Leave to cool and dry.

Cook the broad beans in plenty of salted, boiling water for 2 minutes. Drain, then refresh in cold water and leave to dry. Now press each bean gently to remove the skins. Throw the skins on the compost heap.

Remove the skin and white pith from the lemons and then cutting carefully between each segment of lemon release these from the thick membrane. Squeeze the juice from these left overs.

Now peel and stone the avocados and slice thinly. Toss gently in the lemon juice. Add all the other ingredients once the quinoa is dry. Toss gently, try not to break up the avocados. Taste and adjust the seasoning.

Garnish with more basil. Serve with some good French bread.

Enjoy.

Hot yoghurt and broad bean soup

(This recipe comes from Ottolenghi's wonderful cook book Plenty - an absolute feast of a book)

Serves 4

6 tbs olive oil

1 medium onion quartered

4 celery sticks quartered

1 large carrot, peeled and cut into 2cm chunks

5 thyme sprigs

2 bay leaves

30g parsley

500g shelled broad beans

50g long grain rice

400g Greek yoghurt

2 garlic cloves crushed

1 large egg

3 tbs chopped dill

3 tbs chopped chervil

Grated zest and juice of 1

lemon

Salt and white pepper



Start by making a vegetable stock. Pour 2 tbs olive oil in a saucepan, sweat the onion, celery and carrot without browning them for about 5 minutes. Now add thyme, parsley and bay, cover with 1.2 litres of water, bring to the boil then cover and simmer for 30 minutes.

Simmer the broad beans in plenty of salted water for 1 minute then drain and refresh with cold water.

continued on next page

RECIPES CONT.

Now remove the skins, discard these.

When the stock is ready sieve then discard the veg and herbs. Add the rice to the stock and simmer for 20 mins. Now add half the beans and liquidize stock, rice and beans until the mixture is very smooth. Whisk the yoghurt, garlic and egg in a large heatproof bowl. Add a ladle full of hot soup and whisk together. Continue adding the soup until you have used about half of it - do this very slowly or you may split the mixture.

Now add the rest of the soup and put it all in a saucepan. Place on a medium heat and warm it up slowly, on no account allow it to boil.

Taste and adjust seasoning.

Ladle soup into bowls, add the remaining beans. Garnish with the dill, chervil and lemon zest. Drizzle the olive oil over. You can add some lemon juice if you like.

This is a superb soup, a bit of a trouble to make but worth the effort.

AD

GARDENING

Fine weather at last, the hard work is done so time to put your feet up. Gardeners never really do that, but a little relaxation is called for before we start harvesting the produce from the garden. June is a good time to visit other gardens, starting with this weekend. The 2nd, 3rd and 4th June is the Rendez vous aux jardins. Villefranche has a programme of events, but if you want to go further afield try the web site www.rdvj-occitanie.fr. Also try www.opengardens.eu. Our garden, near La Bastide L'Eveque, is now open every Sunday afternoon throughout June and July. Marion's garden is always worth a visit, as is Les Jardins de Quercy, between Verfeil sur seye and Varen.

I love being in the garden in the evening, so it is always worth while taking your secateurs for some dead heading. Careful dead heading of lupins, delphiniums and cornflowers will keep them going for weeks, but finally it is best to be bold and cut the entire flowering stem to base. Water well and you will have a second flush of flowers. Campanulas look tatty after flowering, so best just to remove all the material that has flowered. I quite like a bit of dead heading, but some plants just do not die gracefully and look positively ugly until their heads are removed. Thinking of roses, don't forget to give them a second feed and, if it is dry, a good water.

For more serious gardening, lift and divide iris after flowering. Only keep the good fat rhizomes, trim the leaves and some of the longer roots. Don't plant too deeply as the rhizomes need to be baked by the sun. Water well and continue to water until they are established.

Shrubs which have just finished flowering, like Philadelphus, Deutzia, Viburnum (except the grafted ones) and Weigela, can also be pruned. Always try to remove a few of the older stems right down to the base as this encourages new replacement growth.

If you have box in the garden think about removing it now as you are almost certain to have the box tree caterpillar (*cydalima perspectalis*). The alternative is to invest in a serious sprayer as you are going to have to do several treatments with either a contact insecticide or bacillus thuringiensis. These treatments will deal with the problem, but it is not going to go away. Look for products aimed at the *pyrale du buis*. A biological contact spray will deal with the eggs and caterpillars, but any which are missed will live another day. Bacillus thuringiensis is a better treatment for the caterpillar stage as it attacks any caterpillar which eats the leaves. Both sprays are better used in the evening when other insect have stopped flying. There are alternatives to box, but none will be as tough.

MG



BAKER DAYS

I've always fancied baking my own bread the traditional way. Shortly before we moved to France, I gave it a whirl, using a recipe from a River Cottage Handbook. The result was one stage removed from ferro-concrete.

Then we moved here and the priority became mixing sand and cement rather than flour and yeast. Besides, the Handbook lay buried in a carton for over three years.



With life on a more even keel, my spark was re-ignited when I espied RAGT's excellent range of flours and baking products. I bought a kilo of wholemeal flour, some dried yeast called levure and donned my apron. For this inaugural flight, I was aided by my co-pilot, a truly inspired cook. Our batch of rolls was very acceptable, with a fine crust and a decent texture, if a mite heavy. Since then, I have baked a batch or so a week, improving both my skills and the breads. Now I have a touch for the consistency and feel of the dough and learned about French flour types, from the light T45 to the heavier T110 and beyond.

You need to make best friends with your oven. Our fan-assisted one is a real stormer and I run it at 20-30C lower than the recipe temperatures. A small loaf takes 10-20 minutes, a large 40-50 and baguettes 25-30. Brioche is a delicate flower to cook, demanding frequent checks. There is a fine line between a crust that is a delightful carapace and a burnt offering.

One vital tool is a Kitchen Aid, which makes a first dough mix in about five minutes. The only other equipment I have added is a digital scale, two dough cutters/scrapers and a baguette tray. This tray resembles four lengths of guttering joined together and fits a standard oven.

To make a batch, you need to block out between two and four hours from opening the flour bag to placing the loaves on the cooling rack.

Why is making bread so satisfying? Is it taking out your stresses giving the dough a good workout? That heady aroma of yeast? Or is it a primeval urge to create one of Man's oldest foods?

I've whetted your appetite for some delicious home-made bread? Go on, roll up your sleeves!

NW

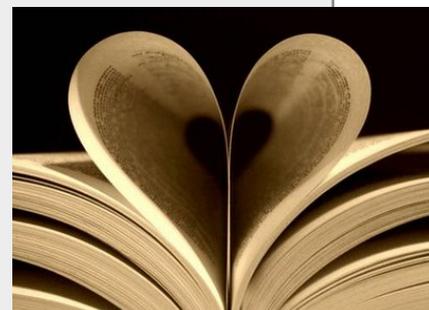
The deadline for the July newsletter is 22nd June. Please send items to the editor Pat Dickinson at annpatd@gmail.com

BOOK REVIEWS

What makes a good book? It isn't necessarily a best seller. If you are a Kindle owner you will know what I mean. It seems that, until recently, every time you logged on, up came "Girl on a train" which I had no desire to read no matter what people said about it. The sample was dreary beyond belief.

The search for something enjoyable to read is fraught with difficulty. 1000 people enjoy a book that you might hate. You could argue that 1000 people can't be wrong, but who are they and do they share your taste? Reading the reviews is useful and I tend to start with the lowest rating and work up, whether I am using Amazon or Kindle.

This is where newspaper reviews win out. The writers tend to give an in-depth critique and as they are often published authors themselves they have good insights and are usually more to be trusted than the invisible Kindle reviewers.



I suspect we all search for an author whose work we love so that we can settle back and mine the rich seam of familiar appreciation. However even this is not reliable: Lee Child, Joanna Harris, Kate Atkinson, to name a few, have all written some stinkers. Editors and publishers are partly to blame for this. One can hear them saying, "Chocolat" was such a success, why not write another just like it?" So Harris did – twice, with diminishing credibility. I tend to avoid series (eg Sword and Sceptre Book 1) as it looks suspiciously like an attempt at money spinning with the author re-working the themes without really finishing anything. After all the final book in the "Game of Thrones" series has yet to be published and that's been going for years. Authors do run out of ideas: it's hard work being endlessly inventive. So you have to admire authors with staying power and imagination.

Writers are often advised to write about what they know and this can work well for a while until the reader begins to get a sense of déjà vu. How many times can you re-work your childhood unless you had one that was fascinating or charming (Gerald Durrell, Dirk Bogarde). Many writers really only have that one story in them but sometimes it is a masterpiece (Harper Lee).

In choosing a novel I have a couple of elements I try hard to avoid. One is clichéd descriptions. If houses are "smothered" in vines, people are "padding into the bedroom" or "threading through the streets" I tend to reject the book immediately as it contains lazy writing. The converse of this is the overworked metaphor or simile and "H is for Hawk" is full of those. In an attempt to avoid the well-travelled path of cliché the writer stretches things too far leaving the reader confused. This is overwriting. Of course what was once fresh can become tomorrow's cliché as others copy. Buildings smothered in creepers may have been fresh in Peter Mayle's time. Not any more.

My second deep hate is books that are all about modern angst in relationships and which have no discernible plot. To quote a Kate Atkinson character "Do we really want to listen to the prolixity of petty marital disputes over the washing up?" and "Nor do we want commonplace tales of Hausfrau Angst...."

Do I want to read such stuff? No I do not. I want to be entertained, amused, diverted, intrigued, told a story, introduced to characters I might like and find real. I want to escape into another world, not hear about the same hum drummetry that exists in mine.

So let us know what you like and why. I have already reviewed many of the books I have enjoyed so now it is your turn. We want to compile a list of favourite books and we need your contribution in time for August issue. Tell us the title and why you liked a particular book (it doesn't need to be a full review) . If no one responds then we know that this column passes you by unread. But that's another story. Responses to annpatd@gmail.com

EM

MYSTERY SHOPPER

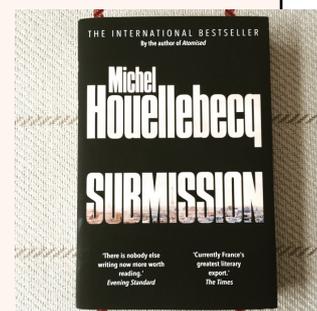
Well whew, Macron did it! I passed through his new Prime Minister Eduard Philippe's mayoral fiefdom, Le Havre, on Sunday en route to Portsmouth. Brittany Ferries are running a new economy service but honestly we weren't slumming it: all the good ship Étretat lacks is waiter-service dining and some deck space and all this for considerably less than the usual tariff. Brittany have been quietly profiting from the problems on the short-haul routes to Dover – it's probably only the booze cruise brigade that are keeping those going given the competition from the tunnel.

A rather sad little vignette at Le Havre was the lady who engaged us in conversation in the waiting line. With embarrassing rapidity she got onto the subject of her and her husband's life near Lorient in Brittany. They moved there 10 years ago due to the mobility of his IT job and said they've been regretting every minute. Neither has learned French and the locals are apparently hostile and unwelcoming. I'm aware that behind the bucolic image, that part of France is a land of industrialised farming and not inconsiderable poverty but she was convinced that the landscape is virtually bereft of wildlife and the villages, as she said, "have the atmosphere of death about them". They were off for a week to visit friends in Kent (a county that to be fair has its own problems of unemployment and deprivation) presumably to bring them up to date with their unhappy lives, whether their poor hosts like it or not. A return to the UK would be based on their ability to sell in France and for that, she said, there is a fixed price per square metre no matter how pretty the property is. She's convinced they're doomed.

I'm pretty resistant to sob-stories but some of what she said started to ring bells. I was talking to a more than usually clued-up immobilier recently who put a price of 1200€ per square metre on sales in our area. Considering that it cost 1000€ per square metre (not counting the purchase price) to restore a property using local artisans in the early years of the new millennium, this illustrates the extent of house price stagnation in our part of rural France.

While all this sounds a bit depressing, the plus side is that La France Profonde seems to be a safe-haven from the madness enveloping western civilisation. If you haven't read Michel Houellebecq's startling novel 'Submission', you should. It's a scary what-if that postulates a charismatic Muslim defeating Marine Le Pen to win the 2022 French presidential with the help of a depleted Parti Socialiste. The latter cedes key powers and in particular the education brief and while the resulting events in no way cast a slur on Islam they do suggest what could happen if politics becomes even more partisan and divided.

I'm going to sign off before I start on Mr Trump!



Mystery Shopper

LIBRARY FACEBOOK PAGE

If you are a Facebook user please join our English Library Villefranche Rouergue page for in-between events and info www.facebook.com/groups/1374046415990276/

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SERVICES

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Machine and Hand Sewing. Clothing alterations, curtains etc. Prices from €10. T. Lesley: 05 65 63 8108 or ltruchet@hotmail.com

Iyengar Yoga. Tuesday afternoons 2.30 - 4.00pm and Thursday mornings 10.15am to 11.45am, Villefranche de Rouergue. Qualified Yoga teacher. First lesson free. Contact Penny Mackey on 05 65 81 74 58 or email: penny.mackey@orange.fr

The Writing Desk can swiftly turn your ideas into sharp, punchy script. As an author and experienced freelance journalist I have spent many years creating features for business and lifestyle magazines. For great words and a fast service, contact Nigel on: T:05 65 65 81 53 nigelwild@hotmail.co.uk

Do you keep trying the same thing, with the same result? Are you continually chipping away at your confidence? If you want something different you have to do something different. Whether it's health, business or relationships, discover how to overcome obstacles. Base: Villefranche de Rouergue. Mail: jane.ahern@outlook.com

NovasolHoliday Rentals. We can find tenants for your home, visit your property, provide insurance etc. Tel Rose Dodd - 0565 641270

Learn French in a friendly, fun atmosphere at So'Happy School in Villefranche. All levels/all ages. Qualified, motivated teacher with excellent OFSTED reports and 15 years experience. Small groups:18 Euros/1h30 lessons; individual lessons: 22 euros/hour. Contact Sophie on 07963050236 or sohappy-school@gmail.com

Art Lessons - Basic drawing, Perspective, Acrylics, Oil and Watercolour. €20 for 2 hours. T. 0565648515

Domestic services - based near La Fouillade we, an English couple, offer a range of domestic services including garden maintenance, cleaning and gîte change overs. If we can help, contact us via email at kevinandcherylpower@gmail.com or phone us on 0784599553.

SERVICES continued

English - French translations of documents and interpreting during meetings. Help with French administration and/or with official French letters. Also one to one French lessons or French conversation, contact Jacynth Crozier, Tel. 06 30 31 13 00 contact@crozier-traductions.com <http://www.crozier-traductions.com>

Home from Home welcomes your dogs to board with us & our Golden Retrievers in our home (not kennels). British experienced owners and breeders offering TLC to your pet when you cannot be there. Between Villefranche de R. and Figeac, phone us on 06 27 72 01 07 or email at ambersclan.goldenretrievers@orange.fr. Or see www.ambersclan.vom

Stained glass. Book an afternoon workshop near Belcastel & make yourself a stained glass sun-catcher. Sessions from 1.30 - 5.00pm including tea/coffee & cake €15 euros per person. Also items for sale. Contact libbydowle@gmail.com or T. 05 65 80 47 19 or 0604441425

Monplaisir Cookery Classes. Beginners or Advanced come and have fun learning new skills? Tel: 0565 65 8618

ITEMS FOR SALE

Manure For Sale
Contact Bridget Blunsdon 05 65 65 78 60

Contemporary Sculptural Mirrors. Go to www.fortunedesigns.co.uk for details. Free delivery and fitting within 20km of Villefranche de Rouergue. Ideal for a special gift. T: 05 65 45 48 14 or email f.design@outlook.fr

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Carpenter/joiner, 40 years experience, city and guilds qualified. Many aspects of building work carried out at reasonable rates. Contact Phil Needham on 0565635878 or jhpn@hotmail.co.uk

All sorts of DIY projects and odd jobs including metalwork, pergolas, welding, electricity, plumbing etc Also - Stained Glass Windows, Sun Catchers etc. T: Harvey on 05 65 63 81 08 Email: ltruchet@hotmail.com

Nicolas Powell - Maçon du Bati Ancien
Marin 12260 Sainte Croix T. 0620551040

Does your house, holiday home or gîte need finishing? All kinds of interior and exterior work undertaken e.g. skirting boards, wood trims, tiling, painting, decorating etc. Contact:Tim Fortune on 05 65 45 48 14 or mail f.design@outlook.fr

FESTILITT**THE PARISOT LITERARY FESTIVAL****20th, 21st and 22nd October 2017**

This year's Festilitt will feature one of our best loved authors, Tracey Chevalier. She has published eight novels to date including *The Last Runaway*, *Remarkable Creatures*, *The Virgin Blue* and her international bestseller *Girl with a Pearl Earring* which won the Barnes and Noble Discover Award. Her latest novel *New Boy* has already received rave reviews and she will no doubt have a few words to say about it, but it is her book *At the Edge of the Orchard* that was published last year that she will be discussing more fully at the Parisot Literary Festival in October.

Chevalier was editing a collection of short stories on trees as part of her work as ambassador for the Woodland Trust when she became interested in the American nurseryman John Chapman, better known as the legendary Johnny Appleseed. Mixing well researched fact with fiction she has created a fascinating story set in the middle years of the 19th century, about a pioneering family and their desperate struggles to survive, let alone grow 50 apple trees to enable them to lay claim to their plot of land in the hostile, mosquito infested swamps of Ohio. Alcoholic wife Sadie wants to grow the sour 'spitters' for turning into cider or the more potent applejack, while her husband James insists they raise 'eaters' the sweet pineapple fruits that remind him of his home in Connecticut. Watched by their horrified children, their increasingly violent battles with their environment and each other finally culminate in disaster for the whole family.

Having very little choice youngest son Robert leaves his siblings and sets out West and eventually meets William Lobb, a real life British plant collector who introduces him to seed collecting. Together they transported the first Sequoia and Giant Redwood saplings that now grace the parklands of Tredegar House in Wales. Without giving any more of the plot away, the story twists and turns to its satisfying ending, making this one of the best page turner novels I've read in a long time.

FESTILITT SAFARI SUPPER!

On Saturday 10th June, the Parisot Literary Festival will again host the hugely popular Safari Supper. This fun and sociable event mixes food, the company of book lovers and the hospitality of Parisotians all in one evening. Eat a different course at a different host's house and mingle with different fellow guests while enjoying a 3-course meal with wine included, all for €20 per person. Space is limited so reservations are essential. Please email info@festilitt.com to book your place.

Sign up to our mailing list by emailing info@festilitt.com or visit our website at <http://www.festilitt.com> - you will then receive our regular email with news on authors who are also appearing alongside Tracy Chevalier, as well as information about other events happening over the weekend. Visit Festilitt's Facebook page and follow us on Twitter @Festilitt for alerts about the latest updates.

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