

LIP LESSON

French women don't even need to kiss someone to look like they've been kissing someone. That's how good they are at smooching—and at applying lipstick. To create the cool, imperfect look (dubbed “French kiss” by makeup artist Tom Pecheux), tap a creamy bullet all around the edges and concentrate a heavier layer in the center to add fullness. Super haute.

French blogger Jeanne Damas



THE FRENCH CONNECTION

Just what's the difference between those sexy, shaggy-banged, full-lipped French girls and everyone else? Look, read, and learn.

By Liana Schaffner

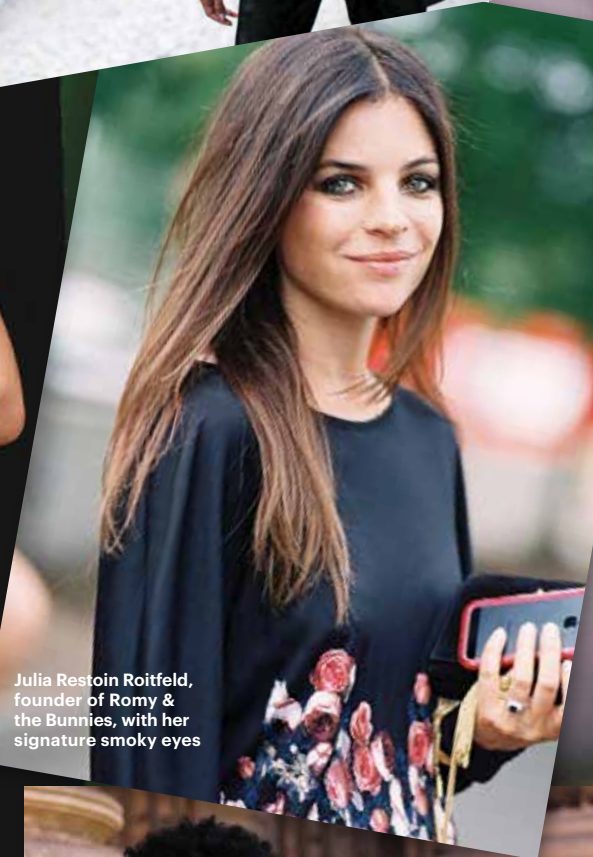
American women don't wear trench coats on sunny days, quote Voltaire, or view butter as a food group.

But we can't deny our abiding obsession with French beauty. The off-hand elegance and pouty sex appeal of icons such as Brigitte Bardot and Catherine Deneuve are only the beginning. A new wave of Gallic ingenues and trendsetters have parted with classic concepts of French beauty in favor of a softer, looser, cooler, and even more indefinable aesthetic. The hair is full but not quite voluminous; lips are classically red and informally smudged; moody eye makeup stops short of smoky. The look is nuanced, homegrown, and as hard to get as a bottle of Château-Grillet.

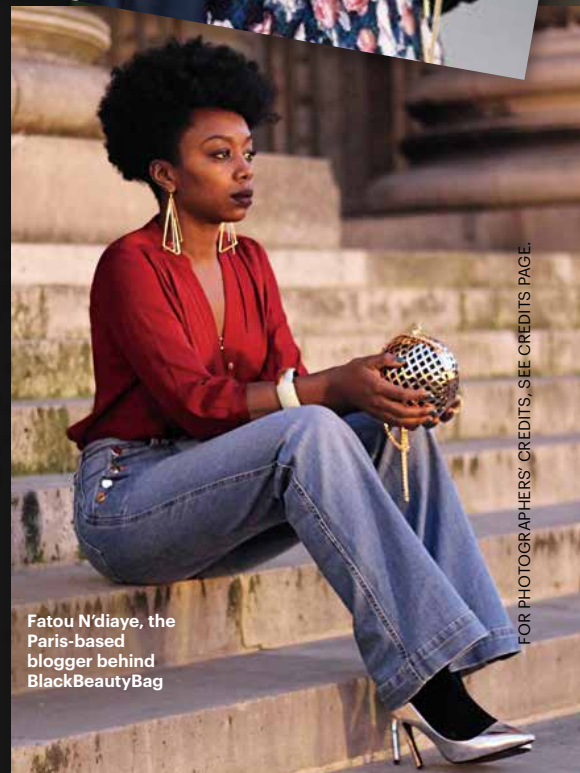
That's why we've decided to stop admiring from afar and do what Americans do best: get up in people's business. We asked French actresses, designers, bloggers, makeup artists, and hairstylists to break down the intricacies of their beauty routines, reveal their favorite products, and spill their best secrets. Follow their advice and take a little of the "I don't know" out of that certain je ne sais quoi.



Model Anais Mali
during Paris
fashion week



Julia Restoin Roitfeld,
founder of Romy &
the Bunnies, with her
signature smoky eyes



Fatou N'diaye, the
Paris-based
blogger behind
BlackBeautyBag

French-American model
Camille Rowe



LE SMOKING

The French smoky-eye look isn't all that smoky. But it is very French. "We like effortless, accidental beauty," says makeup artist Violette. "Too much dark, heavy makeup looks forced." In fact, all you need to capture this moody look is a creamy black eye pencil (try Dior Diorshow Khôl in Smoky Black) and a sheer balm (Violette likes Smith's Rosebud Salve). First, draw the liner along your upper lid, squishing the tip between your lashes to fill in any gaps. Then dab the salve on your fingertip and smudge away, rubbing back and forth and up to the crease. "This covers your lids in transparent blackness," says Violette.

Clémence Poésy, actress and face of Chloé Love Story perfume

HAIR SAVOIR FAIRE

When a woman heads to a bar for a blowout instead of a glass of Burgundy, rest assured, she is not French.

1 Press your coffee—not your hair. “French women don’t use straightening irons,” says Paris hairstylist David Mallett. “Their ideal look is full and bouncy—never flat.”

2 You can never own too much L’Oréal Paris Elnett Hairspray. “I have some at home, in my car, and at the office,” says model and L’Oréal Paris spokeswoman Inès de la Fressange. A quick blast at the roots adds volume.

3 Ease up on the shampoo. “French women wash their hair three times a week, *max*,” says Paris colorist Christophe Robin.

4 Consider a splash of white vinegar. “It adds shine and keeps color intact,” says colorist Sophie Georgiou of Sharon Dorrar Color at Sally Hershberger in New York City. Dilute three drops in cold water and apply after you’ve conditioned. “It’s our best and oldest trick,” she says.

5 Texturizing spray is key. “I spritz it on after my hair air-dries, and that’s the extent of my styling routine,” says actress Clémence Poésy. “It adds body and roughness.” Poésy loves Bumble and Bumble Dryspun Finish.

6 Balayage is your *bon ami*. “French women love hand-painted highlights,” says Georgiou. “The effect is subtle, not like the stripy, choreographed look of foil.”

Model—and sister of Laetitia Casta—Marie-Ange Casta



HARRY CROWDER

Caroline de Maigret,
model and coauthor
of *How to Be Parisian
Wherever You Are*



Model, actress, and
singer Lou Doillon



THE BANG THEORY

If you want chic bangs, don't think of them as bangs. "They're a tool of seduction," says Robin (without a trace of irony). "It's extremely sexy when a woman pushes back her bangs. You see her eyes for a minute, and then it's gone. It's exciting." Here's how to get, style, and maintain them:

1 Keep them long. "The most flattering length grazes the eyes," says Mallett. Ask your stylist to dry-cut your bangs so you can see exactly where they'll fall.

2 Keep them light. "French women despise thick, blunt bangs," says Mallett. "They just sit there." To give your bangs a swingy, flirty quality, cut them in a soft arc and leave the ends feathery.

3 Keep them lifted. "My clients style their bangs with a Velcro roller," says Robin. Roll it under (not up) while your hair is dry, do your makeup, and remove it five minutes later, combing through with your fingers. "It adds volume at the roots," he says.

OBJECTS OF DESIRE

Inside every French medicine cabinet, you'll find a mix of high- and low-end products.



1. La Roche-Posay Hydraphase Intense. "I don't use aggressive anti-aging treatments," says perfumer Camille Goutal. "This moisturizer softens with hyaluronic acid."

2. Guerlain Terracotta Bronzer. "Every French woman has it in her handbag," says makeup artist Maud Laceppe. The tawny powder quietly warms skin but never overwhelms it.

3. Rodin Olio Lusso Face Oil. "A few drops makes skin soft and glow-y," says Laceppe.

4. Bioderma Créaline H2O Solution Micellaire. It dissolves makeup and doesn't require rinsing.

5. Nuxe Huile Prodigieuse. "We use this oil on our hair, in our bath, on our body, and under makeup," says Goutal.

6. Clarins Double Serum. "I use this daily," says Claire Courtin-Clarins. "Combined with cream, it provides the perfect amount of hydration."

7. Collosol Milk. "It's a cleanser for baby bottoms, but it's good for any type of sensitive skin," says Poésy. "You can use it to wash, tone, and hydrate."

8. Dior Crème Abricot for Nails. "I apply it every night before I go to bed," says de la Fressange.



THE ART OF PERFUME

"French women love fragrance because of its honesty," says Poésy. "It sends a very obvious message about who you are and how you want to be perceived." A few favorites:

Guerlain Mitsouko. "My children would complain if I ever changed it, because it's 'Mummy's smell.'"
—Inès de la Fressange

Santa Maria Novella. "They have a musky tobacco scent that reminds me of Corsica. It's very strong."
—Garance Doré

Annick Goutal Néroli. "I don't know why, but as I get older, I prefer more-discreet scents. This is one of our lightest fragrances."
—Camille Goutal

Thierry Mugler Alien. "I've been hooked from the moment I smelled it about six years ago. The jasmine and cashmeran notes are addictive."
—Claire Courtin-Clarins (Groupe Clarins owns Thierry Mugler.)

Inès de la Fressange, model, designer, and the brand ambassador for Roger Vivier