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# Give a Dog a Bad Name:

## British cooking and its place on the culinary leader board

### Charles Campion



*Charles Campion is a food critic, writer and broadcaster. He has written in The Times, The Independent and other leading newspapers and magazines. His books include Eat Up! about the excellent home cooks of Britain. His radio and TV work includes regular appearances in MasterChef. Charles is a patron of Oxford Gastronomica, at Oxford Brookes University.*

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Ask any American, particularly those who have not yet visited Europe, and they will tell you that French food is magnificent while British food is ghastly. Visitors from the other side of the Atlantic long to be as glam as Gene Kelly or Leslie Caron, and they long to be that American in Paris – or better still a rose-tinted version of that city where the weather is always perfect and the food is always ambrosial.

Somewhere along the time line between the Battle of Agincourt and the present day, British cooking has ended up pigeon-holed as a culinary also-ran to the French and there's a widely held, if erroneous, view that the food in Britain is very poor indeed. This assessment may have been valid for a few impoverished decades after the Second World War but when it comes to cooks and cooking, things change quickly and today's reality is very different.