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# French cuisine's UNESCO bid likely to flop

AFP  
Monday, July 7, 2008

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PARIS -- France's bid, backed by famous chefs, to have its cuisine added to UNESCO's list of world cultural treasures is likely to flop, a representative from the UN body said Saturday.

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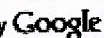
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can make the list of intangible heritage -- and gastronomy is not among them.


"There is no category at UNESCO for gastronomy," said Cherif Khaznadar, president of the UNESCO assembly of states that have signed the convention to safeguard intangible cultural heritage.

Khaznadar said only the elements specifically identified in the convention

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"I am afraid that the presentation of a dossier on gastronomy will not get far," said Khaznadar during a round table discussion at the first "Gastronomy by the Seine" festival held this weekend on Paris yachts.

UNESCO started its list of "intangible" cultural treasures such as dance, carnival or other rituals in 2003.

In 2005, a UNESCO jury including several French members turned down a request by Mexico to have its culinary tradition recognized.

However, the head of the group campaigning to gain cultural heritage status for French food said it should fit UNESCO criteria because it is "a major element of French culture."

President Nicolas Sarkozy said in February that France would lobby for its cuisine to be added to UNESCO's list of cultural treasures, calling it "the best gastronomy in the world."

The French bid will be presented to the UN educational, scientific and cultural body next year, with a verdict due in in 2010.

For Michelin-starred chef Gerard Cagna, UNESCO's recognition would "allow us to keep alive a fundamental part of our culture."

Many in French food circles are still stinging from a blow delivered in 2003, when the New York Times ruled that Spain had overtaken its Gallic neighbor as the epicenter of the gourmet world.

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