

# *Fine Dining Explorer*

## **Paul Bocuse**



*World's 50 Best*  
43<sup>th</sup> 2006



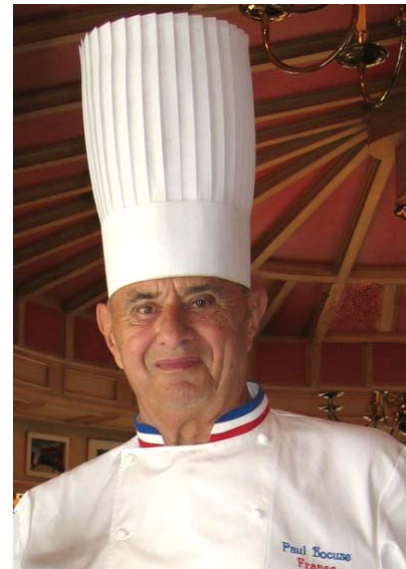
If you are bored of all the innovative modern gastronomy of current generation, why not go back to the 70s and experience the traditional nouvelle cuisine? Now in his eighties, Paul Bocuse, the father of French gastronomy, is still able to offer you the chance to experience flawlessly executed historic dishes, such as his world famous “truffle soup” created specially for a presidential dinner in 1975.

### **About the Chef**

Paul Bocuse, born in 1926, is widely credited with being the father of French gastronomy. He has made countless contributions to French cuisine in every possible way. Being one of the most important chefs associated with the nouvelle cuisine, which stresses the importance of fresh and high quality ingredients, he has received numerous awards throughout his career. He also had many students, many of whom have become famous chefs themselves. He has travelled extensively for several decades, promoting French cuisine, starting restaurants and culinary institutions. The Bocuse d’Or has been regarded as the most prestigious award for chefs in the world.

The most famous dish of Bocuse, the truffle soup, was created in 1975 for a presidential dinner at the Elysée Palace in Paris. You can still enjoy this world’s famous dish in his restaurant today.

Now in his 80s, instead of commanding the kitchen, the main duty for Bocuse is spending time in the dining room to greet guests and to sign their menus. His signature dishes have been produced by other chefs in his restaurant without any room for variation.



### **About the Restaurant**

Situated on the outskirts of Lyon, a colourfully painted flagship houses Paul Bocuse Restaurant. The upscale dining room is decorated in late 19th century style, mainly consisting of gold and red colours.

Many people would describe Bocuse as outdated because this restaurant has been serving the same menu for over twenty years. Yes, that might be true, but his historic dishes are spectacular and cannot be found in any other restaurants! What is wrong with old-styled dishes if they are always delivered with perfection and consistency?



### About Our Meal

You can already feel the pride of the chef from the oversized red and gold menu with a cover photo of him showing off his medal. The back cover also describes his lifetime achievements in several languages. While we were studying his menu, a glass of aperitif was served to us: *Henriot Brut 1996 Vintage* – a lovely fresh fruit aroma. We then both decided to order the Grande Tradition Classical Menu. Described accurately by its name, the meal was huge, traditional and classical!

The amuse-bouche was a warm green pea soup with a floating scope of cream blended with thin strips of truffle, accompanied by a cheese puff. It was quite a generous portion as an amuse-bouche. A nice warm beginning to our meal on that cold and rainy day!



*Green pea soup / fresh cream with truffle*



*Pan fried foie gras / pear and date reduction*

Our first course was a pan fried foie gras topped with few diced pear and garnished by a light crisp leaning on its edge. The foie was perfectly cooked with a distinct yellowish colour inside. The rich foie was well complimented by sweetness of the deep fruity reduction. The sauce was intense but not overly strong; the foie was buttery but not too greasy. This dish was well executed with a great depth of taste. To pair with the foie, the sommelier has selected a glass of *2000 Leon Beyer Gewurztraminer Comtes d'Eguisheim* – light honey sweetness with a lychee aroma.

## Fine Dining Explorer

Then, the legendary dish of Paul Bocuse, which has been long-awaited for, finally came – **Black Truffle Soup V.G.E.** Created in 1975, it was served for French President Valéry Giscard d'Estaing in Elysée Palace of Paris. Crowned with a pastry dome to retain the truffle flavour, this historical soup was served in a customized soup bowl with the printed name and year of this creation, decorated by a tri-coloured band of blue, white and red symbolizing the French flag. After poking the dome, hot fragrance was steaming out as it was almost about to explode. We quickly took a deep breath, not wasting any bit of the escaping pungent vapour. The pastry was then soaked into the soup absorbing its full flavour. This glorious broth was light by itself, but fully enhanced by the aroma of truffle and diced foie gras, duck meat and carrot. This was definitely our most memorable soup ever. It was an honour that we had an opportunity to taste this historical dish.



While our minds were still in 1975 enjoying the long aftertaste of the intense broth, our third course arrived – a *fillet of sole* resting on a small portion of tagliatelle and blanketed with a thin layer of lightly toasted cheese sauce. The creamy cheesy sauce was just mild enough not to overshadow the light flavour of the fish. What a superb dish once again, but sinfully rich! We were actually rather full after this course, but we still haven't had the main course yet!

Before the main course, thank god that they served a light sorbet, with red fruit, wine and black current. It was almost a necessity to consume this refreshing and digestive ice before carrying on.

As the server approached us with the main course, we both quickly realised that there was no way we could finish it. It was a whole **Bresse chicken** cooked in a pig's bladder, stuffed with truffle, served with morel mushrooms, vegetables and rice. Located in the southern Burgundy, Bresse is a famous town in the gastronomic circle for its chicken. The whole chicken was brought in front of us for a "how to de-bone a chicken" lesson. When they first cracked the "balloon", even drunken diners would be fully awakened by the intense truffle aroma. We could already feel the sensation of the chicken juice in our mouth. It wasn't a small bird at all and it was meant to be shared between two people as part of a tasting menu! People back in the 70s could really eat so much? The sauce was very creamy and heavy. We were very disappointed that the chicken was quite bland and more salt was probably needed. The rice was not that great either; it felt under-cooked, soft outside but hard inside. Maybe it was just that we were too full to appreciate this course! This course was paired with a glass of red: *2002 Beaune Marconnets* – a strong blackcurrant-scented wine.



## Fine Dining Explorer



We could not finish our main course and did not have room for a cheese course. We were provided with an *orange pancake* as substitution.



Then a trolley full of desserts arrived in front of our table. All desserts were very traditional, rich and tasty. We tried a few of them and our favourite was a chocolate cake, made with bitter chocolate and flavoured with alcohol.

Finally, a light dessert was offered to wrap up this heavy meal – *floating island*, composed of egg white, pistachio, almond, caramel and sugar. Of course, we could not forget the two-tier petits-fours which marked the end to this classical meal!

We had experienced more than a hundred tasting menus and this one, without a doubt, was the richest and biggest in portion. There was way too much food! On one hand, we didn't really mind, the more the better; on the other hand, it was a shame to see so much delicious food being wasted... We really wished that we each had two stomachs.

## *Fine Dining Explorer*

### **About the Service**

Paul Bocuse and his wife did appear in the restaurant that day. Mr. Bocuse could not walk comfortably anymore, but he still visited every table and had pictures with many diners. When I watched him walk around the dining room, his every step made me nervous -- I was so afraid that he would fall down! I really admired him for his dedication and friendliness.

Other than Paul Bocuse's touching visit, the rest of the service was clearly not up to par. They basically need more staff. Some courses came out of the kitchen but had to be put aside for a few minutes before a server brought them to the table. For a couple of times, the servers brought our dishes to our table, and then realised that we had no cutlery yet!

### **Practical Information**

Paul Bocuse  
40 Quai de la Plage  
69660 Collonges au Mont d'Or (4km north of Lyon)  
France  
tel: +33 04 72 42 90 90  
[www.bocuse.com](http://www.bocuse.com)

Open daily for lunch and dinner.

Classical Menu: €30

Bourgeois Menu: €65

Grande Tradition Classical Menu: €115

À la carte menu: About €40 appetizer and €50 main course

### **Useful Tips**

- Tax and gratuity are included in the menu price in France.
- Take a break during the meal to visit their small gift shop. You can even purchase a *mini truffle soup* to decorate your home kitchen.
- Do let the server know if you are celebrating a special occasion. The doorman will suddenly become a musician.

