



Flavour first Chef Stéphane Gaborieau says the taste should confirm the look
SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

Cuisine that touches a chord

:: SRAVASTI DATTA

You would have expected Michelin Star chef Stéphane Gaborieau to be intimidating, going by the trend of in-your-face, no-nonsense celebrity chefs. But when we met him at the Ritz-Carlton, a day ahead of the five-course dinner, which he created in association with All Things Nice and Chef Bruno Cerdan, Chef Stéphane was warm, cordial, and jovial. When asked if he is strict in the kitchen, pat came his reply: “To cook you have to love people,” thus setting the tone for the interview. He says he connects with his staff. “If you respect people then they will work well with you and that will be a good experience.”

He stressed repeatedly that in these times, when

global fusion is the norm, he ensures he does not compromise on tradition. Stéphane began his career at the Michelin-starred Dodin Bouffant in Paris. He went on to become chef de partie at various prestigious restaurants with well-known names such as M Menagier (Le Moulin du Maine Brun), George Paccard, Roger Pierre (Hotel du Palais), M Villier (Restau-

Michelin Star chef Stéphane Gaborieau displayed his fine culinary skills at a five-course dinner

rant La Palm d’Or, Hotel Martinez, Cannes), Francis Chaveau (L’Amandier) and the Majestic.

In 2004, he won ‘Best Chef of France’ (Meilleur Ouvrier de France). He then started the Michelin Star restaurant Le Pergolèse in Paris. He reminisces about the time when he decided to start his own restaurant. “It was a Sunday afternoon. I was having lunch in Lyon, with my mentor Pierre Osin, and he told me there is a restaurant in Paris, would you be interested in buying it? I had two goals: one was to start my own restaurant and the other was to get the Best Chef recognition. I went to Paris and bought the restaurant. Within a year of starting it, I got my first Michelin star in 2004.”

He discovered his love for cooking when he was just 11. “Both my parents are doctors. It was my grandmother who instilled a passion for cooking in me. We would stay on a farm and source all the produce from there and cook.”

Working in Dodin Bouffant was a turning point in Stéphane’s career.

First course

Wild mushroom croquette, cream of artichoke with walnut oil, artichoke chips

Second course

Charlotte of candied vegetables, emulsion of basil leaves with pine nuts

Third course

Sea bass in black olive crust, citrus fennel compote, star anise fish fumet or
Fresh pasta cannelloni, julienne of root vegetables with saffron, espelette pepper coulis

Fourth course

Chicken ballotine stuffed with tarragon lobster, truffle potato press, reduced jus
or
Vegetable broth risotto, zucchini mousse with pesto

Fifth course

Bavarian dome of exotic fruits, curry flavoured coulis

street in Lyon, where my restaurant is. I love to go to museums and meet artists. My apartment is full of art work, one of my favourite artists is Vincent Van Gogh.”

He, in fact, describes the cuisine at Le Pergolèse as ‘art décor’. “The food has lots of flavour, good presentation, not too modern. The restaurant is known for its sardines preparation and fruit soufflés.”

But in these MasterChef days, what is more important – taste or presentation? “In Lyon, a famous French singer who is blind told me he loves my food because he can recognise it. He could not see the food, but loved the flavours, consistency and could identify every single flavour.”

My focus is on the taste, though presentation is important, but flavour is foremost. The taste should confirm the look. I also believe that any food that looks good will taste good too.”

The chef adds he prefers using products sourced from the farmer rather than synthetic food. “In Europe we do not have spices. French cuisine is always mild in taste, we add herbs like tarragon, dill and sometimes coriander, but there are no spices. So the taste of the chicken is important, what it is fed, how it is bred. We focus on the ripeness of tomatoes. We don’t over flavour it with spices. Every region has its own gastronomy. The south-west is known for a type of bean stew, the Alsace region for sauerkraut. Lyon is known for their pork and chicken. They put more cream in their food. The wine is also excellent.”



“The chef there was very good. Dodin Bouffant would be the restaurant where Stéphane resembles a western classical composer with his shock of white hair, aquiline nose, dark black brows and a charming smile. On further probing, he says, he is inspired by art and music and excitedly shows photos of his house that is filled with art work. “I named my restaurant after the Italian composer Giovanni Battista Pergolesi. He used to stay in the same