

LE GRAND LIVRE DE CUISINE D'ALAIN DUCASSE ALAIN DUCASSE'S CULINARY ENCYCLOPEDIA

*« The restaurant universe is changing fast. What was missing was a basic cookbook synthesising the current advances being made in our profession. ' **Le Grand Livre de Cuisine** ' emerged from strong interaction with my closest collaborators"»*

ALAIN DUCASSE

A Chef heading three prestige restaurants :

« Le Louis XV-Alain Ducasse » in Monaco, « Alain Ducasse au Plaza Athénée » in Paris and « Alain Ducasse at the Essex House » in New York, Alain Ducasse has developed a culinary know-how over a quarter of a century that he is now sharing with you in this demanding work. This reference book, prefaced by Jean-François Revel of the French Academy, is intended for all lovers of good cooking.

Alain Ducasse, **the team leader**, a teacher and trainer, called on five chefs who are among his closest collaborators in writing this book: Jean-François, Franck, Didier, Patrick and Benoît. Those five men probably have the closest understanding of his cuisine and share his love for flavour and French gastronomy.

Together, but each in his own way, they have contributed their styles and personal experience in collecting these 700 recipes presented in the form of technical datasheets and illustrated by more than 1 000 photographs.

Great cooking is based first of all on the authenticity of the **products**, their quality and their freshness, and therefore this book is organised on that basis: more than 90 products, from asparagus to poultry. Since cooking is not just an invention grafted onto Nature but is also **technique**, he embraces the 10 main cooking techniques, from the most traditional (braised, open-fire cooking...) to the latest (plancha, low temperature...).

This book can be studied in **several courses**, on various levels. There is an initial very detailed index of recipes, together with a second more general index for seeking out all of the components. So you can get into the work by way of the product, the sauce, the bases, or via the recipe itself.

This is an inexhaustible learning tool: lobster, for instance, appears in 40 different recipes with details concerning possible ways of cooking each product.

The recipes appear on a double page and are illustrated by a picture of the completed dish on a white plate, with no tricks, for better readability.

In view of the continuous changes in cooking – discovery of new products, new combinations, new ways of working and assembling ingredients – it is vital for Alain Ducasse to preserve the basis and the technique in the interest of ever more progress.

PRACTICAL INFORMATION

« *Le Grand Livre de Cuisine d'Alain Ducasse* », by Alain Ducasse, Jean-François Piège, Didier Elena, Franck Cerutti, Patrick Ogheard and Benoît Witz.

Photography by Didier Loire

Preface by Jean-François Revel

Les Editions d'Alain Ducasse

1,000 full-color photographs and 100 black-and-white illustrations

1,080 pages, 9 1/4 x 12"

Hardcover with jacket

2-84844-000-7

97884844000-TK

US\$250.00 CAN\$375.00

Territory: North America, U.K., Australia, and New Zealand

First published in French in November 2001 by les Editions d'Alain Ducasse

Available upon request : CD ROM with examples of pages and photographs.

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ALAIN DUCASSE'S CULINARY ENCYCLOPEDIA
PREFACED BY JEAN-FRANCOIS REVEL, OF THE FRENCH ACADEMY

It seems to me that these few lines in the form of a preface to a book by one of our greatest cooking artists should serve only to remind the reader of a certain number of elementary but fundamental historical notions.

Any cooking, in any country and in any tradition, has two sources. On the one hand there is the people's cooking, the farmers' and fishermen's cooking. And on the other hand there is court cooking, a cuisine for the rich, the lordly and the opulent.

What no doubt accounts for the originality of French cuisine is the appearance, as of the 17th century, of inventive cuisine. That period, on a date that one can set in 1651 with the publication of La Varenne's « Cuisinier français » an innovative cooking emerged, due to creators. It is much more than court cooking, since it does not limit itself to piling up costly and tasty dishes; it recreates them in previously unknown combinations, and most often adds lightness to scarcity.

This initiates the long succession of visionaries from La Varenne to Ducasse, and including Carême and Fernand Point.

Sébastien Mercier wrote the following in 1786 in his « Tableau de Paris » : "In the last century, people served up considerable masses of meat, and they were served in pyramids. Small dishes, ten times more expensive than big ones, were still unknown. We have been eating delicately only for half a century now. Who could count all of the dishes of the new cuisine? It's an absolutely new idiom". Hence there was indeed a "new cuisine" as of the 18th century, and users of that expression, already found in Voltaire, knew perfectly well what they were talking about and what their readers would understand by that term.

This means that the dialogue between tradition and invention is not new, but what has emerged in the last few years and what developed during the second half of the 20th century is the problem of the authenticity and savour of the products of the soil and of animal husbandry. Agriculture and intensive stock farming have led to a worsening of the basic taste of products, as everybody knows. These days, it is Nature that has become a luxury product. Vegetables that have really grown in the ground and matured in the sun have become as hard to find as exotic fruits in the past, offered only on millionaires' tables.

Thus the great creators' gastronomic art was led to re-establish the prehistoric links with truth coming out of the mouth of Nature. That is almost the only place that one now finds these exceptional miracles consisting of vegetables from the earth and meats from animals fed on grass, which constituted the base and the substance of our peasant ancestors' suppers.

The same applies to seafood or products from our streams. Everything that is not the result of breeding (with the exception of oysters, of course) has become a supreme curiosity. In our ancestors' time, Nature abounded and art was rare. Art is still rare, but Nature has also joined that category. Until further notice, both of them constitute an exception. And it is the marriage of those two exceptions that has given rise to the gastronomic language of our time's great creators, including the genius Alain Ducasse, to whom I pay homage here.

Let us hope that in the near future, the narrow base of products due to Nature alone will finally expand a bit, so that an ordinary person can try – even though modestly and awkwardly, and in simplifying them – a few of the sumptuous recipes they are going to find in this work.

For three centuries now, the inventors who have made French Cuisine a permanent revolution have been contented to publish books of recipes that mere amateurs have been delighted to read but have seldom been able to apply scrupulously because of their erudite nature. Still, I think they contribute a lot, even to people who have neither the means nor the talent needed to execute them. When we imitate the masters, we do not reach their perfection, needless to say, but we often escape from the routine of our own banality. You are going to find this French art, which has never been so much alive, in the following pages. May your dream, inspired by Alain Ducasse, henceforth guide your hand, however fallible it may be!

Jean-François Revel of the French Academy