



Bruno Loubet

Long regarded as one of the most exciting and innovative chefs on the London culinary scene, Bruno Loubet was known for giving vegetables equal billing on the menu at his hugely popular Grain Store restaurant. Motivated in large part by ethics – as well as his Bordeaux upbringing where meat was rarely eaten – the chef promotes a sustainable approach to menu planning that has minimal impact on the environment. He has now retired from the world of cheffing.



Social Media

Twitter: @Bruno_Loubet

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Bruno Loubet grew up in Bordeaux in a large family – the chef was one of seven children – and developed an early love of food. He knew he wanted to be a chef from the age of ten and this was in part due to his family's hands-on approach to the food they ate. While the family often kept poultry, they would only eat meat once or twice a week and his parents' use of seasonal vegetables to keep their meals varied and nutritious proved an inspiration to the chef throughout his career. His father kept an allotment for their fruit and vegetables that the children would help him harvest – he has vivid memories of handfuls of ceps, radishes and vine tomatoes – and as a young boy he would even help to force-feed the family ducks for foie gras.

Beginning catering college at the age of fourteen at the Lycée Hotelier de Talence in Bourdeaux, Bruno Loubet gained practical experience working at a local restaurant, the Grill de Dallau, at weekends. The restaurant served traditional regional dishes with a no-nonsense approach to food preparation that the young chef admired. After a spell working at the Hyatt Regal in Brussels and undertaking his then-still-compulsory French national service, Bruno moved to Britain in 1982.

In London Bruno began working at La Tante Claire under Pierre Koffmann, a fellow expat from the south west of France, before accepting a head chef position at Gastronomer One. He impressed critics during his time at the Fulham-based restaurant, and in 1985 he was crowned the Good Food Guide's Young Chef of the Year.

Following several years working in Oxfordshire at both Raymond Blanc's Le Manoir Aux Quat'Saisons and Le Petit Blanc Bruno returned to London, becoming the executive chef at the Four Seasons' Inn on the Park. He stayed here for three years – earning his first Michelin star in the process – before opening up his own Soho-based Bistrot Bruno in 1992.

Bruno's approach is to bring together three or four elements in perfect balance, highlighting the flavours of each and presenting them in a technically astounding fashion. This was clear at Bistrot Bruno Loubet – there are few of the bistro's glowing reviews that fail to mention his signature Lièvre royale – but particularly so at the Grain Store, the restaurant Bruno Loubet opened in 2013 after years

of planning.



Roquefort and cranberry endives

by Bruno Loubet



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Festive quails

by Bruno Loubet



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While not a vegetarian restaurant, the Grain Store aimed to invert menu norms and allow the vegetables to take precedence over meat and fish. The menu contained a lot more vegetarian (not to mention vegan) options than one might expect to find in many London restaurants of the same standard, but even in the meat dishes – flageolet and broad bean casserole with rabbit sausage, kimchi-buttered endive with sea trout – meat and fish happily played second fiddle to exquisitely prepared vegetables and grains.

In part inspired by his childhood – with meat only really on the menus on the weekend, the Loubet family learnt to be clever with their vegetables, something the chef views in retrospect as 'a privilege' – Grain Store also reflected Bruno's move towards ethical, sustainable eating. Beef in particular was a no-go on the menu given the destructive nature of the bovine industry (it takes approximately 10kg of

grain to produce 1kg beef) and the research into the impact of the food industry the chef undertook before opening Grain Store inspired his wife to cut meat and dairy from her diet completely.

Rather than exploit the capital's appetite for his original approach to ingredients the Grain Store's menu offered real value for money – as the chef told the Guardian, the restaurant 'isn't about steaming some vegetables, throwing on a little extra-virgin olive oil and charging 20 quid' – and the Michelin Guide awarded the venue Bib Gourmand status. Fresh, ethical and above all original, the menu was a testament to Bruno's personal ethos, as well as his skill.

In August 2017, Bruno closed his Grain Store restaurant and retired from professional cooking, moving to Australia to live on a farm. His cooking is greatly missed in the capital.

French classics re-imagined

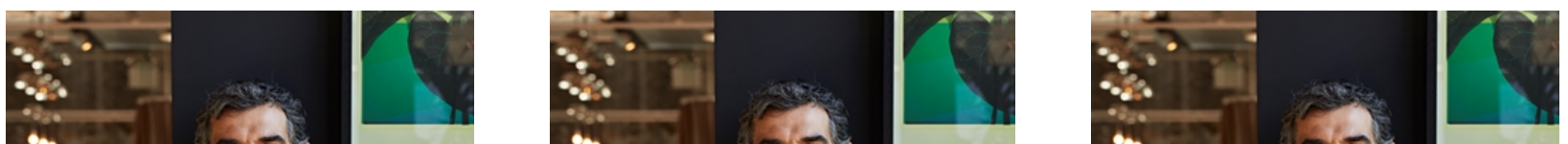


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