

Louis Saulnier

**Le Répertoire
de La Cuisine**

The World Famous Directory
of the Culinary Art



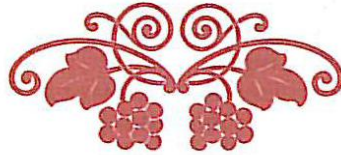
Some Comments On Its Use
by

Jacques Pépin

and

George Lang

How To Use Le Répertoire de La Cuisine



Jacques Pépin

Most chefs think of *Le Répertoire de La Cuisine* as the bible of the professional kitchen. *Répertoire*, from the Latin, *repertorium*, means inventory, table, or list where the subjects are arranged in a definite order, making them easy to find. This is what *Le Répertoire de La Cuisine* does for everyone who uses it.

The beauty of this little book is that it concretizes and clarifies the bulk of French cooking; i.e., classic French cooking. Even though it is not detailed as far as technique, cooking times, and ingredients, it covers the whole and enormous spectrum that confronts the would-be chef. All of the facts are compiled in this book, which has the pragmatic advantage of the pamphlet: a lapidary context, with elliptical, sharp, and concise recipes; and an incredibly small size, making it easy to handle, carry, and pass along from one person to another. Divided into short segments to help with reading, it can be started, left, and started again at any time without affecting the comprehension of the reader.

The professional chef will use the *Répertoire* mostly as an *aide mémoire* (reminder) to find out necessary ingredients for a garnish, as well as to get the correct spellings for different proper nouns and names of dishes. This book can certainly be used to a fuller extent by nonprofessionals. They will find invaluable directions for the makings of basic preparations. The breakdown and segmenting of a complete meal into sauces, soups, hors d'oeuvres, eggs, fish, and so forth, clarifies the confusion that often faces the cook when a menu is to be composed. The small offals entrées and light entrées (small

chop, breast of chicken, and the like) are served in second or third position in a very elaborate meal, and are differentiated from the entrées (large piece of meat such as a whole ham, whole rib roast, large bird, and so on) which are served usually in fourth or fifth position in an elaborate menu, just before the salad. However, nowadays, it is extremely rare that a menu will be composed with a light entrée as well as with a regular entrée.

Ideas about simplification, often believed to be the appendage of the Nouvelle Cuisine, are put forward by Louis Saulnier, who recommends well-balanced, short menus with the avoidance of pompous words. The sequence of dishes should go from the substantial to the delicate, which is a normal progression, a progression that works in reverse for wines. Mr. Saulnier warns the reader against repeating the same sauces, vegetables, etc., and recommends short menus composed of very fresh products, used only when they are in season. The menu, he adds, should always be signed by the chef responsible for its composition. In fact, *Le Répertoire de La Cuisine*, written by a chef, translated by a chef, is a eulogy for chefs, and this is the reason it is so widely used in the professional kitchen.



The introduction to the *Répertoire* defines the scope of the book and is dedicated to Auguste Escoffier, the master of Modern Cookery. The index, well thought out, makes the dishes easy to find. It is constructed and organized logically, starting with the fonds, which are to the chef what algebra is to the mathematician. Then, it goes to the sauces, direct offsprings of the fonds, to the soups, eggs, fish, and so on. The small dictionary of French culinary terms that follows the index is precise and useful. The emphasis of the book is clearly on an identification of names, a clarification of dishes, and a systematization of techniques and garnishes to help the cook.

Le Répertoire brings the attention of the reader to the question of names of dishes, garnishes, etc., which it says, "deserves the closest attention, though it seems full of pitfalls." It is true that names are important to establish some kind of order and to give scope and organization to French cooking. Unfortunately, however, dishes

served in restaurants are often given names without the proper garnish being applied.

There are thousands of garnishes, and this little book is handy in finding out at a glance what they are. Some garnishes are familiar to people. For example, anything *lyonnaise* style will have onion in it. Anything *crécéy* will have carrots in it. Anything *DuBarry* (the courtesan of Louis XV) will have cauliflower in it. Argenteuil, a small town north of Paris which is well known for the cultivation of asparagus, gives its name to asparagus garnish.

Doria, a garnish with cucumber, is looked at throughout the book. In the section devoted to soups (*potages*), *Doria* is "chicken consommé garnished with printanier and cucumber, large macaroni filled with tomatoed chicken forcement, poached and cut into short lengths. . . ." The *printanier* refers to little vegetables in season. You also have macaroni. One may alter or change the garnishes slightly, but one must use cucumber as part of the garnish. The whiting (Merlan) *Doria* is filleted, seasoned, and fried in butter, and garnished with cucumber cooked in butter. The *Doria* fillet of sole is cooked in butter and garnished with shaped cucumber. The chicken sautéed *Doria* is sautéed, swilled with lemon juice and half glaze, combined with shaped cucumber and cooked in butter. There are no poached eggs or ham *Doria* in the book, but it is permissible to make poached egg or roast ham *Doria* as long as you have a garnish composed of cucumber to go with it.

Many garnishes are esoteric and quite difficult to prepare. The *financière* has quenelles, cockscombs, chicken kidneys, slices of truffles, mushroom heads, and stoned olives. Who can find cockscombs and chicken kidneys nowadays? The same is true with *Tivoli*, a garnish made with small faggots of asparagus heads, grilled mushrooms filled with salpicon of cockscombs and kidneys cohered with Supreme sauce; and so is *Toulousaine*, which is quenelles of chicken, collops of sweetbread, cockscombs and kidneys, mushroom heads cohered with Supreme sauce and slices of truffles.

However, some garnishes are simple. *Florentine* is always and only with spinach. *DuBarry* is an easy garnish—cauliflower moulded into balls with a napkin, coated with Mornay sauce, glazed with Chateau potatoes—interesting, inexpensive, and elegant. *Nemrod* is always chestnut puree. The garnish, in addition, requires rissoles of marrow, croquette potatoes, small bouchées garnished with cranberries, grilled mushrooms, and so on. Most of the time, *Nemrod* garnishes will have the puree of chestnuts, but not the rissoles of marrow and other garnishes in it.

There are some complicated, unique sauces with lots of truffles (hard to come by these days), but there are also beautiful finds. For example, the sauce Gloucester, which is a cold mayonnaise with sour cream, finished with Escoffier sauce and chopped fennel, is quite simple, unusual, and delicious.

There isn't much emphasis on the desserts in the *Répertoire*; it is limited to "*entremets de cuisine*," which are the desserts done by the chef, as opposed to the desserts done by a pastry shop, such as iced cakes and the like. The *entremets de cuisine* include creams, caramel custard, soufflés, crêpes, fruits, pies, and so on.

The book, following the progression of a meal, finishes with "*Savouries*." *Savouries* are very peppery, small hot canapés, or garnished toasts, served at the end of a meal to wake up the guest's palate and incite him to drink. This practice has been abandoned for the better, and they are never served nowadays.

Among the innumerable books on cookery, a few are directed to the experts and the greatest number to the nonprofessional. As a source of reference, *Le Répertoire de La Cuisine* is precious to both. For serious students of cookery, it's a precious, handy guide that is extremely complete, reliable, and easy to understand.



Jacques Pépin's early interest in the culinary world was not accidental, since he was born in 1935 in the very heart of France's gastronomic capital, Bourg-en-Bresse, near Lyon, France. It was during his early years that he received his first exposure to the delights, as well as the disappointments, of one who chooses the "art of cooking" as a profession, inasmuch as his parents were proprietors of the Lyon restaurant, Le Pélican.

Pépin apprenticed to the head chef of the Grand Hotel de l'Europe in Bourg-en-Bresse, graduated to Aix-les-Bains, worked at the splendid Meurice, then at the Plaza Athénée as chef-de-partie under Lucien Diat. Always a student, all holidays and days off were spent working in other restaurants. From 1956 to 1958, and while in the Navy, Pépin became the personal chef to three French presidents: Gaillard, Pflimlin, and DeGaulle.

When he came to the United States in the fall of 1959, he secured a position at the famed Le Pavillon in New York, then moved to the Howard Johnson Company where he stayed ten years as Director of Research and New Development. Later, with a group of investors, he developed the concept of La Potagerie, a highly fashionable and successful soup place on Fifth Avenue.

Today, Jacques Pépin does consulting work for restaurants, teaches, and travels extensively throughout the country giving lectures and demonstrations. He appears regularly on television and radio, has written articles for several newspapers, including the *New York Times Sunday Magazine*, and writes a monthly column in *House Beautiful*, stressing culinary techniques. A consultant for the Time-Life Food of the World series, *Classic French Cooking*, co-author of *The Other Half of the Egg*, and *The Great Cooks' Cookbook*, he is the author of *Jacques Pépin: A French Chef Cooks at Home* (Simon & Schuster, 1975). He has just completed writing *La Technique*, an illustrated manual of cooking techniques to be published in 1976 by Quadrangle.

Mr. Pépin holds a B.A. in philosophy and French literature and an M.A. in 18th-century French literature, both from Columbia University. His other interests include painting, sculpturing, skiing, and carpentry.