

**Withstanding the Heat:**

**Could Leadership Coaching be the Missing Ingredient for the French Culinary Elite?**

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“One cannot think well, love well, sleep well, if one has not dined well.”

**Virginia Woolf, A Room of One's Own**

## Abstract

The culinary industry has undergone radical change in the past 20 years. Chefs attract a level of media attention that has elevated them from the back kitchen to the global stage. Has this fundamentally changed the way they live and work? Clearly the pressures of celebrity have transformed what has always been one of the most demanding professions, combining passion and creativity with extremely difficult working conditions. This study asks how chefs are coping with the changes. As the industry becomes more like the business world and the chef becomes a brand, could leadership coaching (as used by many corporate executives) be a possible solution? If not, what is it about the industry that makes it impervious to the standards of the business world? I put these questions to Michelin-starred chefs in France, home of the culinary arts and the birthplace of the definitive guide to culinary excellence, the Michelin *Guide Rouge*.

**Keywords:** Culinary Industry, Leadership Coaching, Occupational Stress, Creativity, Change Management, Personal Development

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## Chapter 1. Introduction

It is difficult to talk about haute cuisine without mentioning Auguste Escoffier (1846-1935), essentially the first 'star' of modern cooking. Acknowledged during his lifetime as the greatest chef in the world, his clients included Edward VII and Kaiser Wilhelm II, earning him the title "chef of kings, king of chefs" (James, 2002, p.235). Credited with introducing the brigade system based on his own military experience, he eliminated the chaos in the hotel and restaurant industry. Escoffier not only raised the bar but set the standard for generations to come by publishing in 1903 *Le Guide Culinaire*, which remains the reference for culinary techniques, organization and French gastronomy.

Escoffier established the chef as the sole culinary master, with a management role uniquely focused on the organization of the kitchen and the production of top-quality cuisine. However, in 1897, an event occurred that was perhaps a warning of what could happen when a chef steps outside that role. The Savoy Hotel group shocked the industry in dismissing Cesar Ritz, the greatest hotelier of that time, and the aforementioned Escoffier (Taylor, 1996). The negotiation of their remuneration at the hotel had been handled by Ritz, securing for himself a salary five times higher than the celebrated chef, although Escoffier was the star attraction. At the trial it was revealed that both men were stealing from their employer, but for very different reasons: Escoffier unable to live on his salary had become corrupt and began skimming from the business, while Ritz considered his salary insufficient and moonlighting his way of redressing the balance. After losing the court case, both had to reimburse a significant amount, but Ritz bounced back as a successful hotelier, while Escoffier died a poor man, having never fully restored his good name. Clearly his skill in the kitchen was beyond reproach, as suggested by the Prince of Wales threatening to boycott the hotel upon learning of his dismissal. What is equally certain is that stepping outside his zone of competence cost him both his job and his reputation. It can be assumed that he did not feel comfortable negotiating his own salary and was clearly not as skillful as Ritz at networking a new career for himself. He was the first celebrity chef, but also the first chef to fail so publicly for making what were essentially bad management decisions – a warning, perhaps, of what can happen when a chef's ambitions reach beyond the kitchen.

It is equally difficult to talk about Escoffier and haute cuisine without reference to France, birthplace of the phenomenon (Beaugé, 2012). The country boasts the largest number of triple Michelin-starred establishments worldwide, each chef promoting their region's diversity and exceptional produce. Most of the best chefs come from provincial France and have a profound respect for the *terroir* (Appendix F), testifying to the values of their upbringing and its influence on both themselves and their cuisine. Indeed the French revolution heralded the inception of the modern restaurant; master cooks suddenly having no nobles to cook for decided to open eateries for the public.

More recently there has been another revolution in the culinary industry in the form of molecular cuisine and progressive cuisine – or more generally “modernist cuisine” – pushing the boundaries of the restaurant experience, the meaning of cooking, and even what it means to be a chef (Pilar Opazo, 2012). At the forefront of these innovations are a number of foreign chefs, notably Ferran Adria (Appendix G) of El Bulli near Barcelona – already the subject of a major documentary. Adria shocked the world when he closed his restaurant in 2011, only to reopen it the following year as a culinary foundation, laboratory and art museum. With France not being in the limelight for once, it would be interesting to know how French chefs are adjusting to this break with tradition.

Indeed Escoffier would have difficulty recognizing the role of the chef today, which has been extended to the development of both the individual and his craft to a business and a brand. Whether these roles are compatible, or how much the business interest removes from chefs' creative talent remains unclear, but history suggests that it should be cause for concern. The media circus surrounding the modern chef has brought them celebrity status. They are no longer content to write just cookbooks but also about their life stories and exploits, as evidenced by New York chef Antony Bourdain's (Appendix G) *Kitchen Confidential* (2001) making BusinessWeek's best-seller list. His description of the high-pressure work environment clearly chimed with business readers (Morse, 2002).

Given the emphasis on personality, it is not enough to be an excellent cook; chefs need communication skills that are not necessarily taught at cooking school. Today's chefs embody a number of personas – the pin-up, the artisan, culinary maverick, and self-made man (Johnston et al, 2014). So how do chefs remain focused on their primary task (Hirschhorn, 1999) and what are the risks to themselves and the business?

Before the celebrity chef, other stars dominated the culinary industry – those awarded by the celebrated Michelin Red Guide (Appendix F). Compiled by the famous tyre manufacturer, the Red Guide has set standards for excellence since 1926 by awarding 1, 2 or 3 stars, and remains the definitive rating system in the industry. There is much secrecy around Michelin's criteria, creating ambiguity about how stars are won and lost. Loss of a star can be disastrous for profits, reputation, and even self-worth, as the tragic suicide of Bernard Loiseau (Eburne, 2010; Appendix G) after losing a star would suggest. The uncertainty adds to the pressure in an industry already known for high occupational stress. Marco Pierre White (Appendix G), the youngest chef in the world to attain three stars, decided to hand them back, claiming they hindered his creativity and raised an ethical problem about charging top prices without being physically present in the kitchen (Fame and Fortune, 2010). Michelin stars bring increased business, certainly, but do they influence the direction chefs take, and how does the pressure of managing that success impact the time they devote to their craft?

The world in which many renowned chefs learned their craft bears very little resemblance to the contemporary environment where mobile technology allows a diner to critique a meal in real time before even ordering the bill. With a level of media interest in chefs formerly reserved for rock stars, the development of the chef as a brand becomes the cornerstone of their identity, designed and made in advertising agencies. Yet brand management and the need to capitalize on their success mean more time away from the kitchen. Alain Ducasse (Appendix G), the best French example of the modern chef, describes himself as the “Artistic Director” of his company (Piquard, 2014, p.136), managing projects as diverse as preparing meals for astronauts, while admitting that some of his chefs cook better than him as he is rarely in the kitchen.

So what happens when ‘the artist’ no longer has time to create, spending more time in the boardroom than in the kitchen, and when chefs speak the language of business rather than expressing themselves through food? In this modern role they wear two hats: that of artist and business executive, the latter operating outside their traditional zone of competency, far removed from the source of their creativity. Moreover those who are part of a restaurant dynasty have the added pressure to maintain or surpass the creative genius of their fathers. There are few parallels of this in the art world, yet in haute cuisine it is a very real expectation. How do they deal with the need to succeed in the shadow of their illustrious forebears?

My aim is to investigate how closely the industry is monitoring itself and what structures are in place to help new chefs cope with the enormous pressures, and how older chefs adapt to massive changes in market demand. While the corporate sector has made significant progress in responding to the impact of change, stress and the isolation of leadership on managers by using coaching as a source of support, the question here is whether a similar approach could be adapted to the culinary industry, and under what conditions.

To assess the level of awareness and potential barriers, bias or reticence to leadership coaching, I took a 'grassroots' approach, asking members of France's culinary elite about their experience of the phenomena, notably the pressure from outside. External competition has never been higher, and with France's cultural identity so tightly linked to gastronomy it cannot afford to lose its top seeding. Although Escoffier's downfall occurred more than 100 years ago, the lesson to be learned is still pertinent today: that big mistakes are made when pressure and money are at stake – as the fate of the 'father of haute cuisine' confirms.

## **Chapter 2. Literature Review**

The literature on the theme of coaching as a possible support to the culinary industry is sparse. There is, however, much evidence of the stressful conditions of the kitchen environment, their effects on motivation, and the social problems to emerge from them. The pressure of celebrity status and changes in role are dealt with in some detail, with questions about conflict between creating and managing in business, as well as commentary on culinary leadership.

### **Occupational Stress and the Kitchen Environment**

Much of the literature focuses on the working conditions during the chef's apprenticeship – the long working hours, and abuse, bullying and violence that are omnipresent (Bloisi & Hoel, 2008; Murray-Gibbons & Gibbons, 2007; Rowley & Purcell, 2001; Johns & Menzel, 1999; Pratten, 2003; Fine, 2008; Ram, 2015). This seems to be a norm of kitchen culture, perhaps due to the transient nature of the work and the high-pressure environment (Bloisi & Hoel, 2007), which combines physically challenging, psychologically wearing work, in a culture where aggressive behavior is the norm (Meloury & Signal, 2014).

Research suggests that bullying impacts negatively on job satisfaction, together with the perception that the way creative people behave causes burnout and many young chefs to leave the industry (Mathisen et al, 2008). The physical and mental demands of the work are thought to explain high levels of staff turnover (Kang et al, 2010; Robinson et al, 2010, 2014). Others suggest that improvements are not made as turnover is to be expected and that the short time staff remain can be still seen as a solid return on investment (Rowley & Purcell, 2001). More controversially, it has been claimed that bullying has a bonding effect which is vital to the successful functioning of a kitchen, and even challenge whether the term 'bullying' is appropriate in this context. (Alexander et al, 2012).

The idea of overcoming harsh conditions as a rite of passage is not new, and is comparable with the initiation rites developed in organizational socialization (Schein, 2003) where a new member must accept the behavioral norms and patterns of the group as the intrinsic price of membership. The ability to withstand the pressure is perceived as a strength and creates

a feeling of superiority, which in turn bestows the right to engage in an aggressive manner to those considered weaker (Murray-Gibbons & Gibbons, 2007).

Parallels can be drawn with the military, and indeed the origins of kitchen organization hail from the Napoleonic era. Even today, kitchen teams are referred to as “brigades”, with a structure and precision akin to a military operation (Balazs, 2002; Fine, 2008). This originated from travelling armies needing to be fed, with cooks selected from the ranks. Research suggests that regimental and hierarchical structures which emphasize uniformity, order and rules, create an environment favorable to bullying and violence (Alexander et al, 2012). Indeed an oppressive military-style environment might explain why the workforce is plagued by health problems, drug abuse and alcoholism (Midgely, 2005).

There can be no doubt that a high level of personal commitment is needed. Ironically, monetary rewards are rarely cited as a key motivator by top chefs (Balazs, 2002). While evidence of violence and difficult working conditions abound, their impact is more difficult to assess. In fact, many top chefs regard them as a necessity for a successful career (Bourdian, 2001). Job retention figures suggest that if people are leaving it is because they are unhappy, but there may be a myriad of other reasons (Young & Corsun, 2009). In the absence of accurate data it is difficult to draw conclusions other than the environment is not particularly healthy and that further research is needed (Johns & Menzel, 1999).

### **Changes in Profile - The Celebrity Chef and the New Role of Women**

The increased media interest in gastronomy has created the modern-day phenomenon of the celebrity chef. Part of their global appeal can be attributed to the notion that their success seems to be attainable regardless of class, gender or race. (Johnston et al, 2014). Another part is the perception that people identify with their culinary idols thanks to their shared lifestyles or cultural heritage. Bonding through the connection drawn with our own lives (Stringfellow et al, 2013), even if inaccurate, has a positive effect. A potential downside comes from the authoritarian chef identity described previously, with the risk of perpetuating a culture of aggression (Lee, 2014).

Originating in the UK and the US, celebrity chefs (regardless of nationality) are defined by common characteristics, resulting in the ‘globalization’ of the role. The challenge is to

manage their brand at home and abroad as well as the long-term impact on the business once the chef is no longer focused solely on deploying their culinary skills (Jones, 2009; Henderson, 2011). Alain Ducasse, for example, is in huge demand as a restaurant consultant – admired equally for his business prowess as his culinary skills (Balazs, 2001), again raising questions about chefs trading on their brand identity rather than their actual involvement (Lee, 2014).

Another area of research is the emerging influence of women in the industry. Contrary to public perceptions, getting to the top is not a question of meritocracy. There is no female equivalent of the title 'Chef' (Harris & Guiffre, 2010, 2015; Pratten, 2003). Much of the literature characterizes the industry as male-dominated, with a reputation for sexism and for long working hours incompatible with women's personal lives (Pratten, 2003). Indeed chef Gordon Ramsey (Appendix G) is reported to have avoided hiring women because their biological cycle made them less available for work (Midgley, 2005). Research suggests that women working in male-dominated occupations face gender bias and stereotyping that they are not emotionally equipped to handle the pressures of the aggressive environment (Harris & Guiffre, 2010). However, chef H el ene Darroze (Appendix G) argues that while at the competency level all chefs are equal, female chefs are more driven to achieve results. She notes an essential difference in female chefs: communicating more and having greater sensitivity to their staff's emotions than their male counterparts.

Interestingly, while the perception that celebrity is attainable holds for male chefs, many of whom come from modest backgrounds, with little formal education, female counterparts such as Anne-Sophie Pic (Appendix G) and H el ene Darroze come from white, middle-class families and were born into the industry. This may possibly explain their resilience to the pressure of wanting to be accepted (Druckman, 2010). Female chefs from more modest backgrounds or ethnic groups appear not to have the same safe space in which to develop.

### **Michelin - The Agony and the Ecstasy**

The impact of the Michelin "Guide Rouge" and its positioning in the industry is covered in depth in the research, confirming the Michelin star as historically the most respected benchmark for ranking restaurants worldwide, not only preserving neutrality but respecting varying culinary philosophies (Johnson et al, 2005; Durand et al, 2007; Rao et al, 2003).

Given the huge diversity, products and services are not easily comparable, hence the *Guide Michelin*'s enduring focus on quality has made it the bible it is considered today. (Karpik, 2000)

The Michelin Guide, however, gives no clear instructions on attaining stars, advising chefs to follow their creative instinct, and leaving it open to interpretation (Surlemont et al, 2005; Edelheim et al, 2011). This ambiguity creates confusion for diners who may not have the experience to judge haute cuisine, and can widen the gulf between them and the chef (Stierand & Sandt, 2007).

Many chefs now concentrate their business strategies on gaining stars and research suggests that the culinary industry more than any other innovation process, over-focuses on design and creation to the detriment of the business (Ottenbacher & Harrington, 2007, 2008). While the emotional sacrifice to gain stars can bring massive success, it is not always rewarded in financial terms, as the investment required to obtain three stars is considerable (Pratten, 2003). H el ene Darroze described losing her Michelin star as being both painful and dramatic, and worried about the effect it would have on her team. (Financial Times, 2015). Gordon Ramsey described winning his third star as the first time in his life he had achieved something (Pratten, 2003).

The question of whether the chef is an artist (Druckman, 2010) or craftsman (Bourdain, 2001) often arises, although both imply creativity and sensitivity. As such, the impact of the Michelin ranking on a chef's psychological well-being should not be underestimated. Further research could help determine to what extent this type of pressure exists in other artistic industries and the effects thereof (Surlemont et al, 2005).

### **Artist or Businessman? Inspirational Leader or Creative Tyrant?**

The literature about leadership and the culinary industry is limited to a few articles focused on the chef's capacity to manage both functions: creator and business executive. Balazs (2001, 2002) describes how chefs are involved in all aspects of the business from strategy to implementation, while remaining the creative force behind the business. She considers them unique in being able to manage the dual role of businessman and creator. Using the leadership models of Kets de Vries (1999), she describes how they play both a charismatic

and architectural role in the organization, with an unrelenting pressure to innovate, to take large, but calculated risks, to develop their staff, and having an inner need to excel. In the creativity vs. profit-making debate, the question is whether the chef can be called an artist. The concept is not new (Chivers, 1971; Peterson & Birg, 1988; Fine, 1992), but clearly today's chefs have additional organizational and commercial imperatives to qualify as a "commercial artist" (Peterson & Birg, 1988, p.67) or "quasi-artist" (Fine, 1996, p.102), if not an artist in the traditional sense.

Research has found that chefs consistently place creativity before conditions of work, demonstrating a clear link between the freedom to create and job satisfaction (Robinson & Barron 2007; Robinson & Beesley, 2010; Robinson et al, 2014). Innovators such as Ferran Adria insist on pushing creative boundaries over financial gain, arguing that the customer doesn't know what he wants and it is the artist's role to create it (Coget et al, 2014). In an ideal scenario, creativity and generating profit can be combined; in reality management competencies are often neglected, albeit essential to maintaining a successful career (Zopiatis, 2010).

In the creative industries it is not unusual to find examples of "the lone genius" (Coget et al, 2014, p.106), where the cult of the leader is everything, buying into the myth motivates those around him/her to achieve the unattainable (Coget et al, 2014), and the cult of personality is tolerated in the name of innovation and profit. In *The Leader on the Couch* (2011) Kets de Vries discusses the problem of companies that tolerate narcissistic leaders. Kleiner (2010) warns that deeply embedded narcissism is not something that disappears, the self-centered nature of high achievers being both a creative and destructive force. The isolation of the lone genius generates internal pressures such as fear of their power and even their success waning (Dearlove, 2003).

Whether the environment/the role create this type of individual (Long & Chapman, 2009) or if their personality is to blame is unclear, as research has focused more on the impact of this type of leader in the corporate sector than the restaurant business. One study on tyrannical chefs pinpoints the paradox of a tough environment managing to continually produce a top-quality product (Zetie et al, 1994). Many apprentices who have trained under tyrannical chefs accept their behavior as the price of learning. If, as Schein (2002) argues, all learning is painful, this may explain why such leaders exist. For Long (2010), there are only two types of authority: good or bad, and no such thing as power; only abuse of power. The term "toxic

triangle” (Padilla et al, 2007, p.179), has been coined to describe the convergence of bad leaders, weak followers and an enabling work environment. For Kets de Vries (2013), these seductive operational bullies, whose only goal is to win at all costs and have control over others, render their staff more vulnerable and dependent by such behavior.

### **Entrepreneur, Employee or Family Business – “Different Strokes...”**

For most chefs today, the establishment they run is either at the service of a large investment group, entrepreneurial, or part of a family business, each with its own complexity. Marco Pierre White describes himself as an ‘entrepreneurial businessman’ rather than a chef, equating the change in role with a change in management style, the new role calling for more reflection compared with the immediacy of the kitchen environment (Management Today, 2005). Balazs (2002) details the varying skills necessary to manage the entrepreneurial challenge of a Michelin-starred establishment.

A family business is more complex. Families are typically for caring, while business is about money, hence careful planning and managing is essential for the well-being of the family unit and success of the business (Carlock, 2010). Various solutions have been proposed such as the circumplex model (Olsen, 2000) which encompasses the dimensions of cohesion, flexibility and communication within the family, and parallel planning to handle succession (Carlock & Ward, 2010; Carlock, 2010). In Paul Lacoste’s film “Step up to the Plate” (2010) triple-star chef Michel Bras hands his restaurant over to his son. The transfer is delicate, and ‘fair process’ (Van der Heyden et al, 2005) is essential to a smooth transition. While research is lacking on family businesses in the culinary industry, the emotional and psychological aspects clearly point to a potential need for support.

## **A Brave New World - Uncharted Territory**

Information around my research question – whether the culinary elite in France could benefit from leadership coaching – is limited, although evidence abounds that the environment in which chefs operate is both stressful and complex. The celebrity chef has existed in the UK and USA for some time. While the phenomenon is relatively new in France, it is rapidly gaining ground although Anglo Saxons seem more comfortable with it.

In parallel, the pressure to maintain quality has never been higher. There is no country in the world where the culinary arts are held in such high regard (Ferguson, 2006). More recently there has been an increase in the number of Michelin-starred restaurants in London, which is now hailed as an amazing dining location (Morse, 2002). In 2010 Tokyo overtook Paris as the city with the most triple starred restaurants (The Caterer, 2009), a title that it has since retained. Have the French become complacent, and how does the pressure of this new competition impact them?

Much of the literature speaks to the talents and entrepreneurial capacity of the great chefs, less is said about how they manage the transition and what support they receive. To remain at the top takes dedication and, increasingly, business management skills (Pratten, 2003). The challenge facing the industry is how to replace the existing institutional logic and traditional role identities with new ones (Rao et al, 2003). In countries as resistant to change such as France, how does this play out in an industry so deeply rooted in the culture? Clearly the transformation and globalization of France's culinary industry is underway; less clear is how to deal with that when chefs are increasingly removed from their means of expression (the kitchen) and have to adapt to the shift in roles.

### **Chapter 3. Methodology**

The research objective is to define whether the culinary industry, particularly Michelin-starred chefs in France, could use leadership coaching to cope with the pressures of a rapidly changing industry. The literature review confirmed that occupational stress exists, but how chefs themselves are adapting to the new situation is not well documented, with the exception of the most successful and the lessons to be learned from their management and organizational styles.

As such I realized that I needed to speak to chefs themselves to understand the phenomenon. In Taylor's work on human agency and language (1985), he explains that a competent human not only has an understanding (or potential misunderstanding) of the self, but is partly constructed around that understanding. To gain an understanding of the individuals in question, I needed to analyze them through the telling and interpretation of their own lived experience (Creswell, 2013).

The research was essentially qualitative in nature, the goal being to see how individuals make sense of their world and their experience of events they have lived through. The methodology best suited to this process, Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA), focuses on the meaning individuals give to their life experience through detailed analysis of their personal stories, from which themes are detected and interpreted. IPA draws from the disciplines of hermeneutics, phenomenology and idiography (Pietkiewicz & Smith, 2014). Phenomenology (Husserl, 2012) focuses on how episodes or events appear to the individual – the meaning given rather than the event itself or the objective facts (Smith & Osborn, 2008). Hermeneutics, as described in Heidegger's work *Being and Time* (1962), involves understanding the state of mind of the person, the words used to translate meaning, and a dynamic process in which the researcher is an active component in how successfully the participant's experience is translated. IPA has been described as a dual interpretation or double hermeneutic process (Smith & Osborne, 2008) as the participant tries to make sense of their world and the researcher in turn attempts to give it meaning and understanding from the participant's perspective.

Shaw's work on the use of IPA in health psychology (2001) explains that, unlike other methodologies, the values and beliefs of the researcher are vital in making sense of the

participant's experience. The method is both descriptive (as it needs the experience to be told with the participant's perspective and language) and interpretative (as it recognizes that there is never any uninterpreted phenomenon) (Pietkiewicz & Smith, 2014). Given the emphasis on interpretation (as opposed to the researcher simply describing the experience and understanding it) the participation of both researcher and participant is inclusive (Clarke, 2009). Idiography is used to analyze each case and its experience, forming an individual picture in a unique context rather than a global one (Smith et al, 1995). Individual stories form a group that then can be analyzed, drawing conclusions and developing themes that emerge into headings for analysis. IPA is therefore normally used with a small sample to allow time to gain descriptive and detailed accounts of each participant's experience, if possible in their own environment, with an emphasis on the quality and richness of the information, allowing a deeper understanding of the participant's experience to unfold (Smith & Osborn, 2008).

The IPA method involves a defined group for whom the research problem has relevance and personal significance (Pietkiewicz & Smith, 2014) – in this instance Michelin-starred chefs, chosen because they are a select group and the nature of their work. The most common approach is the semi-structured interview. I aimed to interview from 6 to 8 professionals, each awarded at least 1 Michelin star during their career. Meeting them in their work environment, where possible, allowed me to experience first-hand the atmosphere and conditions of the workplace. As this group can be defined as similar according to those variables, I applied IPA to both their differences and similarities.

There was also the possibility, while reviewing the interviews, that new “grounded theories” distinct from the research question could evolve (Charmaz, 2014) – with no antecedents in the literature.

Comparisons have been drawn between IPA and ethnographic studies where small communities are focused upon to create detailed descriptions and commentaries of their culture (Pietkiewicz & Smith, 2014). Only by talking to my target group in semi-structured interviews with open questioning could I create the space for them to share their experience. During the process I used myself as an instrument to interpret the data and understand the complexity of their professional lives.

## **Chapter 4. Contextual Data & Analysis**

I began by deciding who I would interview and with what criteria. France is regarded as the culinary center of the world, with 27 triple Michelin star establishments, an unbeaten record. The French are still the dominant force in restaurants and cooking schools around the world (Trubek, 2000), hence the decision to base my research on the question of leadership coaching to the culinary industry in the country that is the source of its inspiration and (because of the weight of this tradition) potentially needs it most.

As the literature review had confirmed the Michelin Guide as the most reliable in terms of judging quality, I looked for chefs with 1 to 3 Michelin stars, hoping to interview them using the IPA criteria. I cross-referenced my list with the profiles on the website of the renowned culinary community Terroir de Chefs (Appendix F) and extended it to include chefs who had worked in a triple-starred establishment for a significant period (many go on to open their own restaurants and seek Michelin accreditation). I decided not to focus uniquely on 3 star establishments given the time constraints of triple-starred chefs (and the risk that interviews might not be confirmed), plus my conviction that any starred chef must be an expert in the field.

As I am based in Paris and most Michelin-starred restaurants are in the capital, I decided to include only triple-starred establishments in the provinces. With limited time and resources to travel to interview chefs, I felt they should be at the top end of the spectrum. In selecting regional chefs, I admired their decision to be based in remote locations, relying solely on their talent to attract customers, and was convinced this courageous stance would add to the study. If it were not possible to get to the remote destination (many were nowhere near rail transport) I would interview them by telephone, but where possible I would meet them in their environment. This would add the “in-world” and Heideggerian (1962) focus so important to the IPA method, and enhanced understanding from being immersed in their environment. I also felt that face-to-face interviews would allow me to interpret their body language, facial expressions and emotional responses. 55 chefs made the final list, selected using the above criteria.

I sent a letter (Appendix A) explaining the context of my research, requesting an interview with them as the experts in the industry and therefore the only people who could provide the

answers. The letter was in French. I did not assume that all of the chefs in question could speak English, though many have international operations. In France the level of English is generally not high, and as the length of study for the culinary profession is not as long as other disciplines, English is not a priority. I was subsequently informed by the admissions manager at Ecole Gregoire Ferrandi, France's leading culinary school, that this has changed, but as my target group finished their training for the most part over 20 years ago, French was appropriate. I attached a second officially stamped document from INSEAD (Appendix B - English version provided), also in French, stating the nature of my thesis and the area of study at the school, hoping that in an industry where accreditation and branding matter, the seal of such a prestigious institution might help get a positive response.

I decided not to send any pre-interview material such as a questionnaire as I was concerned that too much documentation might meet with a negative response, and also that being unprepared (bar the explanation in my letter) might yield more interesting exchanges. I developed the questions for the semi-structured interview as per IPA guidelines and had them reviewed by my peer study group and my thesis supervisor.

I began to receive responses shortly after, those declining thanking me for my interest in their field and citing time as a constraint. Of the seven chefs who responded positively, the sample group was quite diverse, counting four triple-starred chefs, including one female chef, and the remainder having experience in triple-star establishments. Their ages ranged between 36 and 64. Unfortunately the female chef was unable to find the time to be interviewed after several attempts at rescheduling with her personal assistant.

As the IPA methodology works with small sample groups, the group fitted the criteria. It was also interesting in terms of its similarities and differences, and represented the full spectrum of chef types – employee, entrepreneur/owner, and family business (often spanning several generations).

The semi-structured interview (Appendix C) comprised 10 to 12 questions, beginning with open-ended questions about their family situation and what inspired their vocation. This served two purposes. Firstly, it allowed the participant to relax and talk about their passion and career progression. Secondly, I wanted to identify any correlation between birth order and the entrepreneurial urge to run a Michelin-starred establishment, so as to explore potential similarities in their upbringing and values. The remaining questions dealt with the

changes in the industry and how these had affected the chef, their awareness of leadership coaching, and if indeed they had already sought this type of support and in what format.

The interviews ranged from 45 minutes to an hour and often exceeded the agreed time. I planned to meet several chefs in the provinces, in regions as far as the Aubrac, Champagne and the north of France.

I began by interviewing a single-starred chef as a trial run, after which I amended the questioning so as not to ask about leadership coaching too early in the conversation as it stunted the flow. I amended some questions further into the process (Appendix D) so that the conversation turned to their own management style, as I realized that it was important to get a grasp of their self-perception, and to look inwards as well as commenting on the culinary industry.

Upon arrival, I noted my inner feelings and my impressions of the atmosphere of the restaurant, how the staff behaved and whether it seemed harmonious. I noted the chef's attitude to his staff and his interactions with them - whether his behavior differed due to my presence (if I could read this in the staff). I tried to imagine what it was like to work there and if it matched my expectations. I paid attention to my own feelings in the presence of the chef. When the interview was conducted by phone, I noted my impressions of the reception I received.

All interviews were recorded, after which I listened to the tape and wrote notes. After this I transcribed the interview, which was time consuming as it was conducted in French and had to be translated into English, paying attention to the nuances to find the corresponding expression. Some nuances brought new insight during transcription, which I also noted. I reserved a day to write about each interview, listening again to the interview in full and scanning the transcript for anything I might have missed. I then set about writing up the main points. I then collated recurring themes and areas for any potential new theory which came out of the data, as per the IPA method.

## **Chapter 5. Interviewing the Experts**

Interviews were held between July and November of 2015. All the chefs at some stage of the interview used either a name or metaphor to describe their identity, entirely unprompted by me. I was not certain if this reflected who they are, or how they wanted to be perceived, but it seemed important to them. As the IPA method considers perception as valid as reality, I hit on the idea of incorporating it into the title of their interview. Some of the chefs imposed a time limit, none actually enforced it, and all the interviews ran over the scheduled time.

### **Interview Chef 1 – “A Wolf”**

Although he had never been coached personally, Chef 1 believed leadership is a skill you are born with and something he had always had in him. Taking the lead came naturally to him – he cited the example of captaining the football team while growing up. He also cited working with Alain Ducasse, where he had managed 350 people across six restaurants. He comes from a very modest background and grew up on a housing estate. He loves his family, which instilled in him a strong work ethic, but finds they have little in common. He was marked by several episodes of people speaking down to his mother, who was a cleaning lady, and decided it would never happen to him. He claimed to have always known what he wanted to do, following a revelation in a dentist’s waiting room at the age of 10, when he saw Alain Ducasse on the cover of a magazine. He can still cite the recipe. He promised himself that one day he would work with Ducasse; 10 years later he was his employee. The values of his parents and love of his region are important facets of his identity.

In my research I had read that his conversion from football to cooking had been the result of an injury, but he assured me that it was an accommodation he made to please his parents. His intention had always been to become a chef. He described the apprenticeship period as difficult, full of humiliation and sadistic chefs, although he didn't bear a grudge. As he put it, they took a “lamb” and transformed him into a “wolf”. When asked if he practiced a similar management style, he assured me that he preferred to promote harmony, but the kitchen environment is still difficult – that’s just part of the game.

He had no experience of chefs using coaches but thought that coaching was not accessible to everyone. Top chefs like Ducasse may not need them as they have a talent for picking strong support networks at each level of the business to get the advice they need. All the successful chefs had financial managers or business associates, and he thought that these fulfilled the coaching function. Although coaching might be important in the future, to succeed, a coach would need experience of the industry and knowledge of its unique features.

Many chefs, he felt, could benefit from leadership coaching to overcome their difficulties in communicating or delegating, which often left a sense of isolation. He observed that many of them are “autistic” – they don’t express themselves well and seem quite awkward, although their sensitivity is apparent in what they create. This is one area in which a coach could perhaps help chefs find their voice. He felt that an open-minded chef would understand the benefits of coaching, but the majority were egocentric and narrow-minded.

A chef, he commented, is master of his kitchen, but once he steps outside of that, things are less easy, hence they need a support network, e.g. lawyers and accountants. Recently he had hired an agent to handle foreign clients and opportunities, as he did not feel confident dealing on his own with business people who might take advantage of him.

### **Interview Chef 2 - “A Loner”**

Chef 2 came to the culinary world later than the other chefs, having first studied business management, which he intended to follow with a double degree from Cornell Essec in hotel management. Due to a late application, he attended the Ecole Gregoire Ferrandi, where he had to sit the CAP (basic professional qualification), so his entry into the culinary world was more a question of circumstance than a vocation. Food, however, was ‘in his blood’ as he grew up in the countryside and his father was a butcher. Many of his values and lessons dated from that period.

For him, being successful meant being able to find a balance between his professional and personal life. The main qualities required for the profession are humility and respect for the produce and producers. Curiosity is essential; he tries to be open-minded and allow himself to be influenced without being duped. He recognized that the industry had changed: while

the interest in chefs is not new, the level of intensity certainly is. The chef today has become a brand, surrounded by advisors and strategists, with the brand becoming all consuming. He told me he was not obsessed with gaining Michelin stars, but to practice his profession the way he wanted, not give in to external pressures.

He had himself worked with a coach for two reasons. Firstly, he wanted to open a second restaurant. Although trained to manage an SME, he has a solitary nature, he was not able to train 30 staff single-handed, so he called upon a coach. Initially it was for the company, but he realized that he had to start with himself. He found it helped him understand himself better and open up, despite his solitary nature. He also learned to differentiate between his professional and personal life and to set boundaries between them.

He was aware of two young chefs currently using coaching to handle the heavy pressure of their work, but insisted he did not undertake coaching for that reason; it started as a business strategy and became a personal 'journey', but he admitted there could be different reasons for calling upon a coach. His own management style had to change with him playing multiple roles to his staff – be it boss, friend, father and advisor. He tried to motivate them by teaching them and fostering a learning environment.

He had not experienced the brutal management style described by other chefs, but as he came to the profession older, he was perhaps less affected. He felt that a good atmosphere was important as the work by nature is unpredictable, and that respect and consideration for others were crucial.

The coach he chose was not from the culinary industry, which didn't initially seem essential. Over time, however, he found that with industry-specific decisions the coach did not understand the environment, and he confused his unwillingness to listen as ambivalence. He interpreted it as a sign that the coaching had run its course once he could predict what the coach would advise. When asked if resistance to coaching might arise from the risk of appearing weak, he said it was not something to be ashamed of. He suggested that resistance might derive from the psychological aspect of coaching, making people uncomfortable with giving the impression that they were ill.

He reiterated that before asking others to be coached, you must be prepared to undergo it yourself. He was considering taking a coach again as he had reached a new crossroads

with some team members and needed to take major decisions. He believed that the top chefs had coaches, although, unlike him, those with big egos would not accept to be coached. Some people, he observed, have difficulty seeing themselves as others see them.

Customers are more demanding than before, he noted, and the public's interest in cooking has risen with the intensified media attention. In the past the cook was hidden in the kitchen but now the public want to see him. In his restaurant, the kitchen is open plan so there is no barrier between him and the customer.

### **Interview Chef 3 – “A Caveman”**

From the outset, Chef 3 appeared to have a negative perception of coaching and was adamant that it was not for him. We did not discuss the concept further as he was certain he didn't need it. He considered that in a world where people increasingly get away with anything, cooking remains unique in its honesty: the diner's judgement is instant - the food is either good or bad. He regards cooking not as a truth but *the* truth.

He found his vocation as a child, watching his mother cook, and the feeling of privilege to eat her wonderful food. The values he learned from his parents remain with him today.

While admitting that the profession has changed, the rules remain the same: you need a solid training and to be prepared to work without limit. He joked that if he hired a coach it would be purely for exercise. He stated that the reason he sustains a level of energy and passion is that he made the right career choice. The most terrible thing he can imagine, at the end day, is the feeling of not having done something worthwhile.

Asked about the chef becoming more like a businessman, he argued you can be the best manager in the world, but if the food is bad there will be no customers. He compensates for his lack of business competence with an iron will to do his best. He has no publicist soliciting the press to write articles about him; all he needs is an accountant to calculate how he is doing (but with no right to intervene in his affairs). He is accountable to no one. If asked to cut costs, he would refuse: there is a price to be paid for excellence.

While he appreciates that dynamic chefs like Ducasse help France shine on the global stage, it's not for him – he'd rather be in the restaurant with his guests. He feels that you cannot be both chef and businessman and stay efficient. He belongs to 'the crazy few' who are capable of working all hours of the day for over 40 years, unable to stop because it is part of him. He mentioned often that others perceive him as "old school". He had no need for a coach: coaches cannot invent recipes or receive guests, which is all that matters. He is too independent for anyone to tell him how to do things – he would go crazy if they tried. He prides himself on being a "caveman". In his opinion, when chefs use coaches they no longer belong to themselves. What marks his establishment at every level is that it bears his stamp as "the boss"; to lose that would mean losing everything. A chef must remain a cook before anything else, and a healthy balance sheet and full restaurants are his reward.

Asked about pressure, he said that passion, not pressure, is what drives him. People driven by excellence cannot do things by halves (referring to the dual roles of cook and businessman). The only support he needs are people with strong technical skills such as a solid second-in-command and a good pastry chef. He doesn't need a strategist because *he is* the strategist. And the strategy is quite simple: excellence, twice a day, for lunch and dinner.

He likened his restaurant and management to a rugby club, with himself as captain, trainer and president. He compared the kitchen with a rugby team having pre-match nerves; once the whistle blows it is time to play. He has some fundamental rules – which he agreed are not for everyone. Some members of his staff who couldn't handle it had still been successful elsewhere. When questioned about the pressure of Michelin stars he said that his strength is that he doesn't change his standards, so if he lost one he would not change anything. He regards himself as a "21st century innkeeper".

#### **Interview Chef 4 – "A Region"**

Chef 4 described his childhood as a magical playground, divided between his father's restaurant, his grandparent's farm, and long walks in his beloved region with his family. Choosing his profession was simply an extension of the time he could spend in that playground.

For him, the qualities essential to succeed in the profession are perseverance, curiosity, and a great capacity for self-reflection. He admits the work is extremely difficult, not for the faint-hearted, but doesn't feel that it is "work" in the classic sense. He often works 17 hour days, but would rather spend his life doing something he is passionate about than spend less time on something of no interest. Referring to his peers in the profession as "marchands de bonheur" (happiness merchants), it is a privilege and a responsibility that he does not take lightly.

He concurred that the profession had changed with the intensified media interest, but has always distanced himself from this. He systematically refuses to appear in reality television shows or anything deemed superficial: these shows give an unrealistic representation of an environment dominated by fear and stress. Ironically, guests visiting his kitchen are often surprised by the quiet, calm atmosphere. The restaurant is located in the middle of nowhere, yet for seven months of the year is fully booked, so he feels they must be doing something right.

The celebrity chef (and business around it) has always existed, he said, but the intensified interest is new. There is some pressure to expand, but he is not affected by it, although he agreed to open a restaurant on the island in Japan after visiting the location and finding similarities with his region, hence no contradiction with his sense of identity.

Harmony at work is important to him. For the last 15 years, a work association has organized cultural and sporting activities for the staff each weekend, promoting team cohesion which shows in their work. He is aware of the mistreatment of staff in some triple- starred establishments and is opposed to it. His staff are given three days off per week to recuperate.

He had no experience of a chef using coaching services, although some hire business associates to help manage their brand and expand operations. Anyone coaching the culinary industry would have to understand the chef's state of mind and working world. Establishing that type of bond would take time as chefs have a particularly independent temperament. When asked if coaching could be perceived as a sign of weakness, he couldn't comment as he personally never felt the need to use one (as everything is working well). They manage problems as a family and have a different way of working – not doing business for business' sake. He was aware that other chefs do more business, and perhaps

needing coaching, which he wouldn't find inappropriate. His goal is not to make a fortune as he has other priorities – time for family, friends, children and, importantly, himself.

On the subject of working in a family business, he saw positives and negatives. The handover from his father was duly planned and managed as appropriate. Asked about any creative tension between them, he called it an intimate personal process, citing his own sensitivity (different from his father's), but they are united by their passion for their region, even if their signature style is slightly different.

When asked about handing over to a fourth generation, he confided that he himself had felt no pressure to become the third generation, and therefore did not want to pressure his children to carry the torch. They talk openly about it, the subject is not taboo, and the door is open. He wants them to follow their hearts.

### **Interview Chef 5 – “A Locomotive”**

Chef 5 grew up within his establishment, so his vocation was always clear and he has always been passionate about the profession. He doesn't see it as work, more of “a way of life”, with the passion making him forget the hard part. He joked that when getting up in the morning he is not going to work but going home. He is not only the son of a restaurateur but also a child of Michelin, and has a copy of every guide since it was first published.

He believes the qualities required are passion, rigor and being close to his staff. He used the word “locomotive” to describe himself, drawing everyone along behind him. His management style is disciplined but fair, communication is essential. His ability to analyze and understand his staff's problems derives from a basis of mutual respect.

When asked about the difficult working environment, he said that was in “the old days” - and tantamount to mistreatment. It used to be a lethal cocktail of pressure, discipline and fatigue, but he decided 15 years ago to do things differently. For each of the two daily services he uses a separate team, reasoning that pressure and discipline can be positive elements and productive when you eliminate the fatigue. He uses a similar model in the hotel, reducing the number of rooms by half and quadrupling his staff.

On work/life balance, he said it is all mixed together in a “way of life”. He doesn't consider it work, his work is his life and vice versa. As a family business it is a source of motivation and confidence. His support network has three strands: 1. For strategic decisions about the direction of the business, he talks with his family, 2. For financial advice, his accountant, 3. The professional team are included in the decision-making process as they are an integral part of the business and as passionate as himself. He motivates them by explaining the significance of his plans and their part in the future, so improving improves their situation. He doesn't involve them in team events as they deserve a rest.

He admitted the industry had changed with all the media attention, which he initially found positive as lot of young people became interested in the profession. However, he felt there was an over emphasis on the artistic element, and thought people should understand the level of commitment needed. He felt the profession was misrepresented on TV; it lacked the passion and patience needed to be a chef – it's actually quite difficult.

With the advent of the internet, restaurant reviewing is less objective. While the established guides are still the most reliable source, both can be a source of self-improvement. On the pressure of retaining his Michelin stars and the ambiguity of how they are awarded, he said this is part of the magic – of the 26 triple-starred restaurants in France no two are alike. You have to fight every year to regain the Michelin stars, but there was a positive side – the challenge to be continuously creative yet preserve your identity and signature of excellence.

He was not aware of any chefs using coaches. If he were to use one, the coach would have to understand the industry and his passion for the profession. He would view the coach as he would a supplier, tradesman or co-worker – someone who is part of his team and gives him the means to improve. They could be like a “future best friend”. As he would give a lot of himself, he would expect the same in return. He could not work with someone arrogant or snobbish, preferring someone he could share his passion with. He did not believe having a coach would be a sign of weakness; many of his weaknesses are also his strengths, which he has no problem revealing to someone else.

## **Interview Chef 6 – “A Scout”**

Chef 6's vocation was not 'discovered' as he was born into the industry. He realized from an early age that it was a difficult, thankless profession, all-consuming and leaving little room for anything else. He first considered becoming a monk or a mountain guide. Much of what he knows about management he claims to have learned as a scout, where he was taught numerous values essential to managing people. He believes that man management and leadership are learned through experience, which is something he feels cannot be taught in business school, contrary to the claim that they do just that.

He thinks of himself as a leader with strengths and weaknesses. He sees his role in bringing people with different talents together so they can learn from each other. He used the analogy of sport, comparing the complementary role of goalkeeper and striker – results are not achievable without their respective but equal skills. While he has nothing in common with chefs who mistreat their staff, he did have experience of them and the way they 'divide and rule' – blaming them for discouraging many fine young chefs from pursuing their vocation.

Although television portrays it as a wonderful profession, the reality is different, he said. He finds that ironic as, until recently, it was not regarded as a good career, with many drawbacks associated, whereas today the chef is a celebrity. For him, success is being able to accept himself, to do what he does, where he is, and not to have to go elsewhere and become someone else. His achievement is to be able to work with people he trusts and has chosen to lead. Lucid about the industry, he knows exactly what he wants and does not want from this profession. His restaurant is where he is free to express himself. Indeed he hopes it is not just a restaurant, but a creative space that inspires and rejuvenates the people who eat there.

The qualities necessary to succeed are both a solid training and the will to work hard, being open minded, having no prejudice or preconceived ideas, and loving others and what you do. He avoids all that is consumerism or calculated and prefers sincerity and coherence in his dealings with people. He sees himself as a good chef and a workaholic, eternally dissatisfied, with new projects always on the go. He says what he does and does what he says, and is not concerned with appearances. His restlessness and constant energy can be

difficult for those around him, but these are also his strengths. Fairness is an integral part of his management style and the world he wants to live in.

He admitted the profession has changed a lot, and the role of the chef is becoming more complex. The virtual nature of the world has created a disconnect. People don't live in the moment, preferring to capture the moment digitally. The internet is a platform where everyone has become a judge and exchanges virtual realities. He wants his restaurant to reconnect people, through the fantastic times they spend there. His goal, he says, is to “re-delight” guests, to create unforgettable moments. And if he succeeds, the imprint lasts longer than Instagram.

He was sure that certain chefs were already using coaches to develop themselves (or at least business advisors), pointing to one whose transformation had been exceptional – someone in the background must be assisting. The challenge for a coach would be to have the humility and intelligence to listen and to understand – even without necessarily being from the culinary industry. Those he works with or takes advice from don't all share his background – this way he gets a sincere, realistic, unbiased view.

One needs to be open minded to make progress, but he doubted that everyone in the industry is like that. Often people give the impression they know everything, have no weaknesses or need for improvement, and that's unhelpful. The only condition that matters to him is that a coach be sincere and trustworthy. After all, he would be sharing the key to his success, which he has spent a long time building and is extremely important to him.

## **Chapter 6. Findings and Discussion**

Once the interviews had taken place, I began to look for commonalities and emerging themes under the IPA criteria developed in the methodology. The first one to emerge from the transcripts was the influence of the location, region and communities where the chefs grew up and the values learned during this period. They talked of the simplicity of their upbringing and how lucky they were to have had the time to develop in their parents' care. These early values appeared to shape their world view. The stability of their family is a factor in coping with challenges they faced later in their profession.

Many described their first encounters with food and the impact it had, as if this contact was a revelation or the beginning of something new. One described going to his friends' homes to eat and realizing how superior his mother's cooking was, and how privileged he was to have that every day. He recalled her magical transformation of simple, humble products into delicious pastries. Another recounted reading the recipe that had first fired his imagination, and could recite it from memory 30 years later.

For those born into the restaurant business this often happened earlier, but the kitchen was their playground, and the glue that bound their family together. While the accounts happened at different stages and for different reasons, they all seemed to have a moment where they knew this is what they would do for the rest of their lives. One chef who witnessed the thankless nature of the work had tried to distance himself, but was disappointed by his 'other' experience and eventually came back to cooking. One described his training as "the base" - not just the basic knowledge of cooking but the values necessary for life. Another could not disassociate food from family: being a chef was less of a profession, more of a way of life.

In these descriptions there was a sense of something sacred that made me think of a priest finding his vocation: something that was always there but needed awakening. Even where the chef wanted to distance himself, he ultimately accepted his destiny – and the source and sense of his life. They often compared themselves with sports people, which could also be seen as a form of vocation – difficult to attain, demanding effort, but essentially a gift from God.

The challenging conditions of apprenticeships and the kitchen environment (noted in the literature review) was confirmed during discussions. All of the chefs had experienced mistreatment either personally or as an observer. This seemed to have impacted how they subsequently managed their own kitchens, with the emphasis on harmony; either directly as in team-building exercises to improve group cohesion, or indirectly such as reorganizing their kitchens to eliminate stress and fatigue in that environment. Although aware of kitchens where this persists, some accepted this as inevitable and difficult to stamp out. While no chef saw it as a positive element in their education, there were conflicting impressions of its value. One insisted that it toughened him up, others felt they did not need to experience it to become a man.

The qualities cited to succeed in their industry included open mindedness, curiosity, self-questioning, rigor and perseverance. None talked about ambition, which I found interesting as the industry is so competitive and the pressure to succeed so great. None of them appeared to feel in competition with each other and talked openly about the merits of the competitor's style and abilities. It is possible that as they knew I was speaking to their peers that they avoided criticizing, but I did not feel this to be the case. In fact, only when prompted did they even ask who else I had interviewed. Again, I did not see this as a lack of interest – but rather that they were confident in their own ability and did not feel threatened. I felt that anything their competitors were doing only helped to further the common cause of gastronomy and was therefore a positive development.

Their interest in Michelin stars varied, but any mention of the related pressure was met with the remark that of the 26 triple-starred establishments, no two are the same. More interesting, however, was the emphasis on generosity in the form of giving pleasure to others and giving back to their profession. Every chef without exception used the French word "transmission", meaning passing on or handing down. Integrity was mentioned often, and they did not underestimate the independence and freedom that their profession had given them to create and express themselves. I sensed in them gratitude, awareness of how fortunate they are, and the responsibility to give back and pass on what they have learned. There was a definite impression that the profession is something sacred, bigger than themselves, and they express their gratitude by handing down the craft to the next generation.

In all the conversations, despite their incredible achievements, each chef saw his own personal impact as secondary, or fleeting compared to their noble art, which they saw as eternal, something that has to be preserved. Of all the common themes this was universal. I could see that it was something which preoccupied them, not particularly in relation to their own family continuing the tradition but rather that the public would understand and always hold it in the same high regard. They spoke of it with a sense of privilege rather than responsibility. Given France's history and gastronomic influence, I wondered if it was more keenly felt here than elsewhere.

The sense of preserving and handing down the culture of haute cuisine is perhaps one reason why the chefs did not have such a positive view of the media interest, in particular television reality shows which portray an abusive environment rather than the commitment needed, giving a false impression. While the shows originally had some positive impact in generating a new interest in cooking, which resulted in many young people joining the profession, it had become saturated. Most of them had refused to participate in this type of activity, finding it superficial, consumer-driven and misleading. I had the impression that, given their notion of the profession as something sacred, these shows represented a form of profanity.

In relation to external support, only one of the chefs interviewed had already used coaching, while a number of them admitted to seeing positive elements and an opportunity for personal development. Many of them were certain that some of their contemporaries were being coached, and saw it as a probable cause of their rapid transformation or ascension. They also suspected that some celebrity chefs had some form of coaching as they were more businessmen than cooks. They all acknowledged the need for support, as the profession becomes more complex and success is difficult to handle alone, but many envisaged this support coming from business associates and financial strategists.

For them, their strength is in the kitchen, and it was difficult to see how a coach could help them improve in that area. Most had the conviction that their success was measured by reservations in their restaurants – if they are full they must be doing everything right.

I often felt there was confusion about what leadership coaching was. In most cases, I was told it was unimaginable to have someone else telling them how to do things. The notion of a coach as an “intruder” came up regularly, as did the observation that chefs did not take

kindly to being told what to do. One went further, saying that if he allowed the influence of a coach he would no longer belong to himself. The impression of intrusiveness was very strong; how could an outsider help them with no real understanding of the profession? While not all expressed this, the underlying theme was that anyone who wanted to coach the industry needed to understand the mind of a chef, to have walked the same path. Those for whom industry experience was less essential were the ones who came to the profession late, having ventured into other areas before returning, or who had experience of coaching and thus understood the benefits.

Asked in what conditions a chef might consider coaching, trust appeared to be important. They had all worked hard to build up their business, often with immense personal sacrifice, hence revealing how they had succeeded left them exposed to their competitors. They all felt that there was something unique about what they offered, and wanted to preserve that uniqueness, hence the fear of confiding in a coach at the risk of it becoming public knowledge.

A second question was about how they would position the coach. Clearly they saw the coach not as someone above them or advising them but rather a member of their team, similar to trusted suppliers or, in one case, “probably my future best friend”. As sensitive individuals who had given a lot of themselves to attain their current status, even though they all expressed favorable opinions on coaching, “collateral damage” was a real concern. Many described their current support network as a mix of trusted advisors at every level, depending on the decision that needed to be made. Family are consulted about decisions on the strategic direction of their establishment, decisions about its identity are made with the people closest to them. Financial decisions are taken in consultation with their accountant. Decisions about menus and culinary advances are taken in collaboration with their team, with the chef ultimately having a veto. Everything is centered around the chef, who delegates the task to the appropriate person, as in the kitchen.

All of the chefs interviewed put creativity ahead of financial gain, and many confessed to having no real interest in getting rich. Their motivation came from something deeper linked to their upbringing, traditions, and the consistent improvement of the profession. None of them doubted that they had made the right career choice. They believe that the only real barometer of success is their customers. Ironically, they feel the customer does not know everything, hence the need to be responsible and ethical as they are trusted figures. There

was a mention of some chefs having oversized egos and being unable to see themselves as others see them.

While the personalities in the sample were very different, they had three key common motivators: passion, the desire to move others deeply (in an emotional sense), and a preoccupation with evolving tradition so as to pass on their craft in better shape to the next generation.

If we compare a chef to a corporate CEO, we could say that both are driven by passion, as senior executives are often motivated by their passion to achieve results. However, the idea of moving people or evolving traditions would not hold equal importance for an executive as inevitably they tend to be logical thinkers, governed by reason rather than emotion. Many of the chefs admitted to not being driven by numbers, whereas the average CEO's existence depends on it.

A second area of difference I noted was that none of the chefs had the slightest doubt about their skill, talent or merit in attaining the position they have reached. Neither did their teams doubt their legitimacy, and considered it a privilege to work with them and to have the opportunity to learn from them. This is not always the case in the corporate sector, where there is greater ambiguity about the merits of the CEO and his leadership abilities (Kets de Vries, 2005), often contested by subordinates and peers. These essential differences between chefs and business people point to the uniqueness of the culinary industry and mindset of top chefs, suggesting a different or customized approach (than conventional coaching) could be needed.

## **Chapter 7. Limitations and Future Research**

One major limitation of the study derives from the fact that chefs are busy people, and to get uninterrupted time with them is difficult. So though I would have liked to follow up for clarity on certain points, this was simply not realistic. This added to the pressure during the interview to gain all the information needed, and impacted the content and my interpretive skills.

The celebrity chefs (those appearing on television) all declined my invitation without exception (through their press officers). However, given the impact of the media and reality television on the profession (which were criticized by the sample group), it would have been useful to gain insight from someone within “the media machine”. As always, a broader sample might have produced additional learning, although the group met the required IPA criteria. In addition it would be important to note that not all celebrity chefs have the Michelin accreditation necessary for my sample group.

While through the questionnaire I searched to find links between birth order and entrepreneurship there was nothing substantial to indicate a connection.

As I did not manage to gain an interview with the triple-starred female chef, despite much communication, the study, as a result, does not have those different gender observations. This not having taken place limits the research to a male perspective of the industry pressure and attitudes to coaching.

Future research could focus on notions such as “transmission” and speak to chefs of other nationalities to establish if this phenomenon is unique to French chefs. My feeling is that due to France’s supremacy in the world of gastronomy, the pressure to ensure that it continues is very strong and more keenly felt in France than elsewhere, but there was no evidence to support this.

## **Chapter 8. Conclusion**

This study has examined whether leadership coaching, as widely used by corporate executives, could offer a solution to coping with the new pressures of the culinary industry. After looking at the literature on the working environment and the many changes that have impacted the profession, my main concern was the conflict between craft vs. brand as the chef artisan moves away from core competencies towards greater involvement in an unfamiliar business or corporate role.

Through speaking with experts in this field, my research sought to establish what kind of structures are in place to help chefs cope with this pressure, if there was something unique about the industry that made it impervious to classical coaching methods, and whether certain conditions or criteria would need to be fulfilled before they could be applied.

As confirmed in the literature review, the phenomenon of culinary celebrity is relatively new, particularly in France, and therefore the need for support is perhaps less perceived than elsewhere or it is just simply too early to judge its impact. In this age of exposure and social media it could be also explained that chefs readily accept this as the price of success, in the same way they consider their difficult apprenticeship as the necessary sacrifice for mastering their art.

This apprenticeship and the deeply held values that are inculcated from an early age could mean that they are conditioned to be less likely to crack under pressure or simply that the relentless pace of meal production does not allow for the time to think whether they need help in a psychological sense. The presence of culinary role models as mentioned during my research could provide a strong focus to cope with the difficulties of the profession. The story of one of the chefs interviewed seeing Alain Ducasse on a magazine cover, driving him to be finally working with him 10 years later, appears to support this.

The topic of leadership coaching as a support for occupational stress appeared to form 3 different schools of thought from those interviewed. The first group were those that had either tried coaching or were aware of its existence, viewing it as beneficial or at least open to the concept, albeit under a certain set of conditions. The second group had already a support network in place, usually through their family unit and felt that to be sufficient. The

third group saw no personal need for it and were a little hostile to the idea - viewing it as potentially more harmful than good.

There was a unanimous feeling that each chef deserved to be their respective position and this confidence in their ability was supported by their personal achievements. I am not certain that this certainty is mirrored in the corporate CEO model who can obtain the leader role through other means, such as political manoeuvring. It is perhaps this ambiguity in the corporate sector that drives the need for leadership coaching. The other notable difference is the proximity of the chef to his staff, allowing him to affirm his role on a daily basis. This of course will change if the chef spends less time in the kitchen and his role evolves to that similar of the CEO. If this happens it could be fair to envisage similar problems arising.

Through my reading and interviews I came to understand that for the top performers in the industry, being a chef is a vocation rather than a profession. It was often described as a way of life. It is clear that with the changes to the industry and chefs taking on a more managerial or corporate role, it is moving closer to becoming a mainstream profession. This would suggest that chefs will be more amenable to executive or leadership coaching in the future.

However, given the vocational element, their status will always be more akin to domains such as the military, sport and the arts, parallels which were cited both in the research and our discussions. As such, the culinary industry will always be a niche coaching sector, requiring full immersion techniques for coaches to achieve credibility and sustainable results. Trust appears to be an important factor when dealing with chefs and this can only be built by a coach who understands their world – meaning the mental and physical sacrifices made to become who they are, their deep-seated need for freedom to express themselves, and the passion that drives them to surpass themselves on a daily basis simply for the gastronomic pleasure of their guests.

## **Appendices**

## Appendix A - Sample Letter to Chef

Objet : INSEAD Fontainebleau - Demande d'interview

Monsieur,

Je m'appelle Derek O'Connor et je suis actuellement étudiant dans « l'Executive Master in Consulting and Coaching for Change » à l'INSEAD Fontainebleau. Ce programme regroupe les hauts cadres venant du monde du Consulting, Coaching et des Ressources Humaines.

Dans le cadre de cette formation et en vue de l'obtention du diplôme, il me faut rédiger une thèse avec un sujet de mon choix. L'objectif, en l'espèce, étant de mettre en application les enseignements dispensés tout au long du programme. J'ai décidé de choisir un sujet sur l'art culinaire. Pour mener à bien ce travail, j'envisage de m'entretenir avec des Grands Chefs de cuisine, afin d'obtenir leur vision sur l'univers de la « Grande Cuisine Française ».

Ce choix ne s'est pas fait au hasard. En effet, je suis un passionné d'art culinaire. Depuis ces dernières années, j'observe que ce secteur est en plein mouvement. Je note entre autre que les Grands Chefs ont désormais deux casquettes : celle d'artiste et celle d'homme/femme d'affaires. Je me pose donc la question de savoir si à l'instar de ces derniers, certains Grands Chefs, eux aussi, feraient appel à des « Executive Coach » pour les conseiller ? C'est cette problématique que je souhaiterais aborder et analyser.

C'est la raison pour laquelle je me permets de venir vers vous pour solliciter votre collaboration. J'ai suivi avec grand intérêt et admiration votre parcours et votre brillante progression. Pour moi, vous faites partie de ces grands experts avec lesquels je serais ravi de m'entretenir. Votre expérience, votre vision, vos espérances ... me permettront de passer d'une analyse faite d'impressions à une étude réaliste et surtout, de montrer les défis (actuels) auxquels sont confrontés les Grands Chefs. Je sais que votre temps est précieux, mais je crois que le thème est pertinent et contemporain et que cela vaut le coup de s'y attarder.

Je vous remercie d'avance de l'intérêt que vous porterez à ma demande d'interview et de l'aide que vous pourrez m'apporter dans cette étape de ma démarche.

Je garde grand espoir de vous lire ou vous entendre. Vous pourrez me joindre, soit par email à [derek.oconnor@insead.edu](mailto:derek.oconnor@insead.edu) ou par téléphone au 06 63 77 90 65.

Je vous prie d'agréer, Madame, mes salutations distinguées.

Derek O'Connor

Pièce Jointe : Lettre officielle de l'INSEAD

## Appendix B - Letter from INSEAD (English Version)

Fontainebleau, 07 July 2015

To whom it may concern

We hereby certify that Mr. Derek O'Connor is writing a Master's Thesis for the Executive Master Degree in Consulting and Coaching for Change at INSEAD with campuses in Fontainebleau, Singapore and Abu Dhabi.

This programme is part of the INSEAD Specialized Degree Department and run by Prof. Roger Lehmann and Prof. Erik van de Loo.

This 18-month modular programme enables participants to delve into the heart of the basic drivers of human behaviour as well as to identify and manage the hidden dynamics of teams and organisations. It offers a qualification in the developing field of intra- and inter-personal development, and integrates clinical and organizational psychology. The Executive Master will prepare participants to assume significant roles in leading organisations, individual and organisational development and change management, thereby creating more effective organisations. The programme is composed of eight modules, a 50-hour practicum (supervised consulting and / or coaching practice) and a Master thesis.

This thesis will contribute to add value to the discipline of Organizational Change practices and its existing body of research.

As part of a qualitative research interview phase, Mr. Derek O'Connor would like to carry out interviews within your organization. We are grateful for any help you can give him in holding these interviews.

This thesis, like all academic papers, will become a public document. The author of the thesis will ensure that his thesis does not reveal any sensitive information. If necessary, names and locations will be disguised.

Please do not hesitate to contact us should you have any additional questions. Thank you for making this research possible.

Kind regards,

Silke BEQUET

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## **Appendix C - Semi-Structured Interview Questions (Version 1)**

Could you briefly describe your background, family context, parents' profession and how you found your vocation?

In your opinion what are the qualities essential to succeeding in your industry?

Do you understand what the function of an executive coach is?

Do you think the industry has changed and how? Describe the change?

Is there a new style of management? Do you use Team Building? Is there importance emphasized on a harmonious working atmosphere?

Would/Do chefs use executive coaches? Have you already had some experience of seeing this? What were your impressions?

Are there any special conditions that would be required? (Industry knowledge) What would a coach need to provide to make an impact?

Why would there be resistance from chefs in using a coach? Where would the obstacles come from?

Why would people not look for help? Is control or the appearance of losing it a factor, perceived as a weakness?

Do you see the role of executive coaches supporting you as a positive evolution or a necessary evil?

Have to you have any final advice/Comments?

## **Appendix D - Semi-Structured Interview Questions (Revised)**

Could you briefly describe your background, family context, parents' profession and how you found your vocation?

In your opinion what are the qualities essential to succeeding in your industry?

What kind of leader are you? How would you describe your management style?

How do you manage your work/life balance?

Does working with your family create an added strain or pressure? How do you manage this?

Do you consult with others before making decisions?

Do you understand the function of an executive coach?

Do you think the industry has changed and how? Describe the change?

Is there a new style of management? Do you use Team Building? Is there importance emphasized on a harmonious working atmosphere?

Would/Do chefs use executive coaches? Have you already had some experience of seeing this? What were your impressions?

Are there any special conditions that would be required? (Industry knowledge) What would a coach need to provide to make impact?

Why would there be resistance from chefs in using a coach? Where would the obstacles come from?

Why would people not look for help? Is control or the appearance of losing it a factor, perceived as a weakness?

## **Appendix E – Chefs' Biographies**

### **William Ledeuil**

William Ledeuil was born in 1964 in Bourges, France. Before opening his own restaurant he spent 12 years with the triple Michelin starred chef, Guy Savoy in several of his Parisian establishments. Following this he took some time for reflection travelling in South East Asia and Japan. Much of his culinary influence is drawn from this experience which he has integrated into classical French cuisine. In 2001 he opened his first restaurant winning finally in 2008 the much sought after first Michelin star followed in 2009 by the opening of a second in the same street. He was awarded Chef of the Year in 2006 and Cook of the Year in 2010 by Gault et Millau and has published two books.

### **Guy Savoy**

Guy Savoy was born in 1953 in Nevers, France. He began his career as a cook alongside his mother who ran a successful restaurant in their home town. At 15 he began his apprenticeship with master chocolate maker, Louis Marchand, followed by working with the famous Troisgros brothers, Le Lion D'Or in Geneva, The Oasis in Napoule and in 1977 he replaced famed chef Bernard Loiseau at Claude Verger's restaurant La Barrière de Clichy. In 1980 he opened his first restaurant and one year later won his first Michelin star. In 1987 he moved to a new location and won his second star in the same year and gained the prestigious third star in 2002. Owner of several successful Parisian restaurants he also opened a new restaurant at Caesars Palace, Las Vegas which has since been awarded 2 Michelin stars but recently closed his venture in Doha, Qatar due to lack of custom. Considered to be one of the finest chefs that France has produced he is also a published author of several culinary works.

### **Sebastian Bras**

Sebastian Bras was born in 1971 in Laguiole, France. He and his wife run the only triple starred establishment in the Midi-Pyrénées region of France. He began his culinary studies at the prestigious l'Institut Bocuse in Lyon and went on to have work experience in the kitchens of the Bernachon family, Michel Guérard and Pierre Gagnaire. In 1995 he rejoined the family business working under his father whom he had cooked with all during his

childhood, being the third generation of this french cooking dynasty founded by his grandparents. In 1999 their restaurant obtained the coveted third Michelin star and in 2002 they opened a second restaurant on the island of Hokkaido in Japan which in turn also has been triple star accredited. The family have recently opened a fast food restaurant in Toulouse and a cafe in a Museum in Rodez, France. Since 2009 his father officially retired from the business leaving him in full control, this handover was the subject of a film documentary released in 2012.

### **Arnaud Lallement**

Arnaud Lallement was born in 1974 in Châlons-sur-Vesle, France. He graduated from the Ecole Hôtelière de Strasbourg at 18 and after some experience alongside famed chefs, Roger Vergé, Michel Guérard and Alain Chapel he rejoined his father in 1997 at their successful family hotel and restaurant. In 2001 they earned their first Michelin star together but did not share the success for long as his father died a few months later at the age of 51. In 2005 he completely renovated the establishment and in the same year earned his second star. In 2009 the restaurant was awarded establishment of the year by Gault et Millau. In 2013 their hotel was awarded 5 stars and in the same year Gault et Millau elected him as Chef of the Year for 2014. In 2014 his establishment was awarded the triple Michelin star accreditation and later the same year he was elected Chef of the Year by the magazine "Chef".

### **David Rathgeber**

David Rathgeber was born in 1972 in Clermont-Ferrand, France. Before opening his own restaurant he worked with notable Chefs, Philippe Groult, Guy Legay, Gérard Vié and Alain Ducasse. With the latter he worked and managed over a period of 14 years in locations such as Paris, Monaco, New York and Tokyo and with whom he won his first Michelin star in 2006. In 2008 the culinary magazine "Chef" named him their most promising young Chef of the Year. In the same year he struck out on his own taking over a renowned restaurant in the 14th district of Paris previously the haunt of French President Francois Mitterrand and his entourage. He participated in the publication of the "Grand livre d'Alain Ducasse" and wrote the book "Cocottes bistrot " in collaboration with the cookware producer le Creuset® and a cookbook for babies called "Babycook".

## **Alexandre Gauthier**

Alexandre Gauthier was born in 1979 in Boulogne-sur-Mer, France. After attending the Ecole hôtelière du Touquet he worked in fine dining establishments such as Lassare in Paris, La Residence de la Pinède in Saint Tropez and the Auberge des Cimes in Saint-Bonnet-Le-Froid. In 2003 he rejoined his father at the helm of La Grenouillère, the family restaurant and hotel created in 1979 which has just lost its Michelin star rating. In 2008 they regained the Michelin star and in the following year he was voted Young Chef of Tomorrow by Express Magazine. Many awards followed; including in 2010 entering the top 100 list of Restaurant Magazine, in 2012 the special prize from Fooding Magazine and One to Watch of Restaurant magazine, culminating in 2014 and 2015 voted Chef of the Year and obtaining the coveted 5 chef hats by Gault Millau. He has also published his own cookbook and expanded his business to 2 other restaurants in Montreuil-sur-Mer where ordinary people can sample his cooking at everyday prices.

**For the avoidance of doubt the Author would confirm that the information, views and commentaries included above have been sourced, and largely transcribed verbatim, and as such are not the work of the Author.**

## **Appendix F - Miscellaneous Culinary References**

### **Terroir**

"Terroir" is the French term to sum up a set of excellent conditions such as the quality of soil, and weather which contribute to outstanding produce. It is used often in reference to wine making but has expanded to food produce.

### **Michelin Red Guide**

In 1900 with fewer than 3000 automobiles on the roads in France, André and Edouard Michelin decided to offer motorists "a small guide to improve mobility", to facilitate their travels. It would, of course, encourage the development of the automobile industry in France, and increase the demand for Michelin tires and other products.

The first blue covered book of the "MICHELIN" guide was published by the Michelin brothers in August of 1900. The first edition, with 35,000 copies, was given free to motorists. It listed the petrol stations across France, contained information on garages for the different "marques", where to get your Citroen or Peugeot repaired, where to find supplies and parts, and also where to find toilets, meals and accommodation along the way.

In 1904 the Guide went international, with the publication of the Michelin Guide Belgium. The Britain Guide started in 1911. The Bureau of Itineraries was created in 1908. This bureau provided motorists with free travel plans. The number of itinerary requests built to 19,000 in 1921 and to 155,000 in 1925.

In 1920 the Michelin Guide went commercial when André Michelin discovered Guides being used to prop up a workbench in a tire merchant's shop. Deciding that "Man only truly respects what he pays for!" a price was put on the Guide: 7 francs, and advertising was taken out of the Guide. Also the dining part had become so popular, Michelin established a team of anonymous inspectors, and began listing restaurants according to specific classification guidelines.

The star system was born in 1926, with the creation of the dining star. In 1931 the system was expanded with the addition of the second and third stars. By 1936, the definition of the

stars was established (one star: 'a very good restaurant in its own category'; two stars: 'excellent cooking, worth a detour'; and three stars: 'exceptional cuisine, worth a special trip') and they haven't change since then.

In 1931 the blue cover was change to the now-familiar red. The Red Guide is available for other European countries since 2006 available for New York. During the second world war the Red Guide took on a new importance as it became necessary for the Allied Forces who feared that their progression would be delayed in French cities where all signage had been taken down or destroyed. After painstaking research and with the go-ahead of the Michelin Paris management, it was decided that the 1939 edition of the Guide — the last on record — would be reprinted. The complete edition, with its hundreds of detailed, up-to-date city maps, was printed in Washington, DC, and distributed amongst the officers.

The only difference from the 1939 French edition was the mention on the cover stating 'For official use only'. So it was that on D-Day the troops which would liberate Bayeux, Cherbourg, Caen, St. Lo and France itself landed with the Michelin Guide in hand. Most of these D-Day landing guides have been lost or destroyed in the bombings, others were taken back to the USA by soldiers returning home; there are very few known originals left in Europe. They differ from the initial 1939 edition in that the cover is less rigid, the color is a lighter, pinkish red, the tyre insert is lacking and there are some comments in English on the cover.

In addition, after the liberation of Paris Michelin printed over two million maps of the north and east of France, Belgium and Germany, which the Allied Forces used to facilitate the armies' progression. In 1945 the France Michelin Guide was on the shelves in spring. The required paper had been stockpiled, allowing for sales to begin as early as 16 May with a small notice printed on the cover stating, 'This edition, prepared during the war, cannot be as complete and precise as our pre-war publications. Nevertheless, it should be useful'. (information from ViaMichelin and [beyond.fr](http://beyond.fr) website).

### **Terroir de Chefs**

Terroir des Chefs is an online portal chronicling French chefs, produce and recipes.

[www.terroirdechefs.com](http://www.terroirdechefs.com)

**For the avoidance of doubt the Author would confirm that the information, views and commentaries included above have been sourced, and largely transcribed verbatim, and as such are not the work of the Author.**

## **Appendix G - Miscellaneous Culinary Personalities**

### **Ferran Adria**

Ferran Adria was born in 1962 in Barcelona, Spain. Beginning his career at a French restaurant where he learned the classic culinary techniques, he was introduced to El Practico, the Spanish equivalent of Escoffier's Le Guide Culinaire. Following some time working in Ibiza he returned to Barcelona to start at the celebrated Finisterre restaurant finishing as assistant chef. He left for military service with the Spanish Navy becoming a member of the captain general's kitchen and here gained charge of a kitchen for the first time.

El Bulli was relatively unknown when Adria arrived there, located remotely in the small town of Roses on the coast of Catalonia, approximately two hours from Barcelona. It was a traditional French restaurant and upon joining the manager Juli Soler recommended Adria travel to find fresh ideas to use at El Bulli. He worked at some of France's top restaurants acquiring a comprehensive collection of techniques from many of the great culinary masters.

In the late 1980s, Adria began performing cooking experiments changing forever El Bulli's place in culinary history. His application of science to culinary practices and cooking phenomena gave birth to the molecular gastronomy movement. El Bulli closed annually for six months allowing him to travel for inspiration and experiment new ideas in his culinary laboratory, El Taller in Barcelona city. He infamously closed El Bulli in 2011 looking to dream up a new concept and planned to reopen it in 2014 as a creativity centre. More recently El Bulli has opened a foundation and has plans to open a museum of food science on the previous site. At its peak the restaurant held 3 Michelin stars and received first place in the Restaurant Top 50 a record 5 times

### **Antony Bourdain**

Anthony Bourdain was born in New York, America in 1956. He attended the Culinary Institute of America in New York and following graduation became a chef at various New York establishments before becoming the executive chef at Les Halles. Although Bourdain is no longer formally employed as a chef, he maintains a relationship with the restaurant.

He first came to the public's attention with his exposé of New York restaurants, *Don't Eat Before Reading*, first published in the *New Yorker* (1999) and expanded to his behind-the-scenes look at the not so glamorous world of restaurants with the hugely successful bestseller, *Kitchen Confidential* (2001). The success of *Kitchen Confidential* led to a Food Network television series, "A Cooks Tour" where .Bourdain travels around more than a dozen countries in a search for the perfect meal.

He went on to hosting the Travel Channel's culinary and cultural adventure programs *Anthony Bourdain: No Reservations* and *The Layover*. In 2013, he joined CNN to host *Anthony Bourdain: Parts Unknown*. He is the author of several books including crime thrillers and non-fiction work.

### **Bernard Loiseau**

Bernard Loiseau was born in 1951 in Chamalières, France. He apprenticed at the famous *Maison Troisgros* between 1968 and 1971. In 1972 he began to work for Claude Verger at *La Barrière de Clichy*, and was soon hailed as a prodigy by the *Gault Millau* guide. When Verger bought the formerly prestigious *La Côte d'Or* of Saulieu in 1975, he installed Loiseau as chef standing aside to allow him to develop a highly personal style of cuisine. Loiseau bought *La Côte d'Or* from Verger in 1982, and the *Michelin Guide* bestowed a 3-star rating in 1991. He established *Bernard Loiseau SA* in 1998, becoming the first star restaurateur to have his business incorporated and traded. Even at the time of his death, he was the only French chef traded on the stock exchange. He published numerous books, established a line of frozen foods, and opened three eateries in Paris, in addition to running *La Côte d'Or* and its adjoining boutique shop. The French government decorated him with the *Chevalier (Knight) de la Légion d'honneur* in 1994, and several times thereafter.

His popularity waned in the 1980s with many new food trends arriving in France and began to lose business, falling into debt and suffering from severe clinical depression. He committed suicide in 2003 following *Gault Millau* recently downgrading his restaurant, with rumours that the *Michelin Guide* was planning to remove one of his restaurants 3 stars. He had previously confided in another chef that had he lost a star he would probably kill himself leaving *Michelin* to receive perhaps undeserved blame considering his depression and financial

situation. La Côte d'Or regained the triple-star award through the new executive chef Patrick Bertron and is currently managed by his widow.

### **Marco Pierre White**

Marco Pierre White was born in Leeds, England in 1961. He is a chef, celebrity, restaurateur and television personality. He is noted for his contributions to contemporary British cuisine and at the age of 33 was, the youngest chef and first British chef ever to have been awarded three Michelin stars.

Leaving school without any qualifications at 16, he went to London and began his training with Albert and Michel Roux at Le Gavroche continuing his training under Pierre Koffman and Raymond Blanc and working alongside other now famous chefs such as Heston Blumenthal, Nico Ladenis and Mario Batali. In 1987, White opened Harvey's in London winning his first Michelin star and his second in 1988. He later become chef-patron of The Restaurant Marco Pierre White where he won the third Michelin star. During these years White trained many now famous chefs with the most notable being Gordon Ramsay. In 1999 he very publicly decided to retire from the kitchen and hand back his Michelin stars claiming that he was being judged by people with less knowledge than himself and claiming to feeling like an impostor as he was never present in his kitchens. He continues to have several restaurants and business interests and has become a television celebrity in the many reality cooking shows in the United Kingdom. White is a published author of cookbooks and recently wrote his own very successful autobiography.

### **Alain Ducasse**

Alain Ducasse was born in Orthez, France in 1956. He is probably Frances best known restaurateur running a number of establishments in both France and abroad. Beginning his apprenticeship at 16 in the Bordeaux School of Hotel Management he had many apprenticeships under famous french chefs. In 1977, Ducasse began work as an assistant to chef Roger Vergé and it was here that he learned his signature Provençal cooking.

Ducasse's first position as chef came in 1980 managing the kitchens at L'amandier in Mougins. One year later, he became head chef at La Terrasse in the Hôtel Juana in Juan-les-Pins and in 1984, he was awarded two Michelin stars. At the same time he was the sole

survivor of a plane crash in the French alps that changed his life forever. In 1986, he took over at the Hôtel de Paris in Monte Carlo, with management including the hotel's Le Louis XV. In 1988, Ducasse expanded beyond the restaurant industry and opened La Bastide de Moustiers, a twelve-bedroom country inn in Provence and began attaining financial interests in other Provence hotels. On 12 August 1996, the Alain Ducasse restaurant opened in Le Parc – Sofitel Demeure Hôtels in the 16th arrondissement of Paris. Michelin awarded the restaurant three stars only eight months after opening.

Ducasse opened in 2000 the Alain Ducasse restaurant in New York receiving 3 Michelin stars in December 2005, in their first guide for New York City. He became the first chef to own restaurants carrying three Michelin Stars in three cities. He is a published author, runs a cooking school and has become an influential entrepreneur both at home and abroad, he remains only one of two chefs to hold 21 Michelin stars throughout his career. He has also a successful television career and in 2013 was awarded the Lifetime Achievement on The World's 50 Best Restaurants List.

## **Gordon Ramsey**

Gordon Ramsey was born in 1966 in Johnstone, Scotland. He originally aspired to be a professional footballer joining Scottish Premiership side Glasgow Rangers at 15 until a knee injury ended his career. Following this he went to Hotel Management school and post graduation apprenticed with Marco Pierre White at Harveys in London. Two years later, he joined Albert Roux at Le Gavroche, working also for three years in France with renowned chefs Jöel Robuchon and Guy Savoy.

Upon his return Ramsey took over at the restaurant Aubergine in London and within three years had earned two Michelin stars. He opened his first restaurant, Gordon Ramsay in 1998 where he quickly attained three Michelin stars becoming the first Scottish chef to achieve this. Following this success his empire expanded rapidly opening several other critically acclaimed restaurants in the United Kingdom eventually branching out to Dubai, Tokyo New York city, Montreal, Florida and Los Angeles.

All of Ramsay's business interests (restaurants, media, consultancy) are held in Gordon Ramsay Holdings Limited with a partnership in the United States with private equity firm Blackstone Group. Along with his restaurant empire he has had a successful television

career becoming a household name in the UK and USA. He was appointed Officer of the Order of the British Empire (OBE) by Queen Elizabeth II in the 2006 honours list for services to the hospitality industry. He is also a published author of several best selling cookbooks and an autobiography.

### **Hélène Darroze**

Hélène Darroze was born in 1967 in Mont-de-Marsan, France. She is a fourth generation chef, the previous three having run a family restaurant in Villeneuve-de-Marsan, France. Before becoming a professional chef, she took a degree in business. Post graduation in 1990 she began working for Alain Ducasse in the office of the Le Louis XV restaurant in Monaco. It was there that Ducasse persuaded her to make the transition to the kitchen having no other previous experience other than her family restaurant. After 3 years with Ducasse she returned to her family's restaurant maintaining its existing Michelin star. The restaurant closed in 1999 due to financial difficulties and Darroze opened her own Restaurant Hélène Darroze in Paris winning a first Michelin star in 2001, and a second in 2003 but losing the second star in 2010.

In 2008, she became the new chef at the Connaught in London and awarded a Michelin star in 2009 with the second following in 2011. In 2012, she was admitted into the French Legion of Honour as a Chevalier (Knight) by then President Nicolas Sarkozy. She is one of the few female chefs to have held two Michelin stars at one time or another in each of her two restaurants, she is a published author and a judge on Top Chef in France.

### **Anne-Sophie Pic**

Anne-Sophie Pic was born in 1969 in Valence, France. She comes from 3 generations of famous French chefs with her grandfather earning the first triple star rating for their restaurant in 1934. Having decided not to follow in the family line she trained in management working in Japan and the United States interning for companies such as Cartier and Moët & Chandon but her passion for cuisine found her returning to the family business. In 1992 she began training under her father, also triple-star rated but he died 3 months later and she began managing the business. The further loss of the triple ranking in 1995 led her to return to the kitchen and in 2007 she regained the 3 stars, the fourth time in the world that a female chef won such an award. She opened another restaurant in

Switzerland winning 2 stars. In 2011 she won the Veuve Cliquot Worlds Best Female Chef award. In 2012 she opened her Parisian restaurant since awarded a first Michelin star.

**For the avoidance of doubt the Author would confirm that the information, views and commentaries included above have been sourced, and largely transcribed verbatim, and as such are not the work of the Author.**

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