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QUEEN'S HOUSE
LEICESTER PLACE, LEICESTER SQUARE,
LONDON. W.C.2.

GERRARD 6597 & GERRARD 7548

INTERNATIONAL GASTRONOMIC LUNCHEON

Mr. Henry Sherek will preside over 50 well known gourmets including the Duke of Bedford, Maurice Elvey, Lord Evans, Nubar Gulbenkian, Gilbert Harding, Lord Mancroft, Robert Morley, Guy Prince, André Simon and Terry-Thomas etc. The Luncheon will be given at the Café Royal on 24th March to mark the beginning of London's 1960 Tourist Season and the publication of Egon Ronay's new book on London restaurants, to which Nubar Gulbenkian wrote the foreword.

The hosts will be Charles Forte and Egon Ronay.
Robert Morley will speak at the Luncheon.

The menu will show that London can equal other culinary Capitals, and will consist of six courses and a Sorbet each prepared by London Maître Chefs of different restaurants and nationalities: Chinese, English, French, Hungarian, Italian and Russian. (Chef Hwang, Mr. Sidney Gibson, Monsieur Queux, Madame Floris, Signor Camillo and Monsieur Niki.)

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The purpose of to-day's International Gastronomic Luncheon is to show the world that tourists will not be limited in the London season ahead to the hackneyed fare of steak and kidney pudding or roast beef. The claim is ambitious: it is hoped that this Luncheon will prove that London is the world centre of gastronomy. With all the exquisite pastas in Rome, delicate sauces in Paris, and luscious pastries in Zurich, London's variety - in food and wine - is unsurpassed.

The idea of this Luncheon comes from Egon Ronay, whose book (Egon Ronay Recommends) on 190 eating places in and around London is being launched on this occasion. It is independent and critical, so it is not sponsored by or connected with any tourist or catering organisation. Being a lifelong restaurateur as well as a gastronomic writer, he devised the menu, selected the wines and chose six of the most interesting chefs of restaurants in his book. The challenge of his idea was readily taken up by Charles Forte, always interested in a sporting proposition and, of course, in tourism. (Mr. Forte is co-host to-day in his capacity as the proprietor of the Café Royal. He is also the chairman of the London Publicity Committee.)

The joint hosts have entrusted the delicate task of accommodating for the day six outstanding chefs of different nationalities to Monsieur Dupont, chef of the Café Royal. It is for the first time that six London maître chefs give up their sovereignty and attempt a culinary paradox - to melt their kitchen dictatorships into what might be termed as cooking by democratic committee.

2a *Cooking notes.*
The Chefs taking part to-day are (in order of their courses):

3 MONSIEUR NIKI, chef-proprietor of Chez Luba restaurant in Chelsea (Draycott Avenue). His is by far the most significant of the three existing Russian restaurants in London. Himself a Pole, he spent years as a political prisoner in Auschwitz, before coming to and settling in England in 1946. In his cosy slightly Victorian restaurant, he receives guests and takes orders clad in full chef's white, attracting with his personality as well as with his - personal - cooking, many representatives of stage and screen.

4 CHEF HWANG of the Restaurant Asiatique, Irving Street, is unanimously recognised by London's eastern community as the greatest living Chinese chef. He came to London 22 years ago and took charge of the Chinese Embassy kitchens for 9 years; he was chef to Wellington Koo. His wife does the cooking at home and his favourite dish is home-made noodles. In spite of his long stay in London, his English is still hard to understand.

5 SIGNOR CAMILLO is chef of Lo Spiedo (Jermyn Street). Prior to coming to England seven years ago, he was chef of many world famous hotels in Venice and especially Rome. He is married and his wife does the cooking at home. Naturally, their favourites are pastas.

2 MONSIEUR R.H. QUEUX has been in charge of the Coq d'Or kitchens for the last 23 years. His family comes from Chateau de Thierry. He is three times a grandfather, lives in Wembley where he takes great pride in his garden. At home where his wife does the cooking, he prefers very plain food to sauces.

1 MR. SIDNEY GIBSON has been chef of the George & Vulture for 14 years and is very proud of being a cockney, born and bred in Poplar. He looks very young for his 50 years. Even his cooking career was started near the Monument (with the old firm of W. Hill & Son) though since - after a spell on the Continent - he has had long years with many a well known London restaurant, from the Savoy to Madame Tussaud's (the latter in the thirties). He was a RAF mess staff sergeant, lives at Catford, is married with 4 children. At home his wife does the cooking, though he personally prefers eggs and bacon, and bread and cheese.

MADAME MARIA FLORIS has become part of London, where she established herself (with her husband, a chocolate manufacturer) before the war. It was then that Madame Floris first popularised to-day's sweet course, and confesses to having made a mistake in calling it by its Austrian name - Strudel, though it is more a speciality of her native Hungary. She has made many birthday cakes for Sir Winston Churchill.

MR. JOHN LONGDEN is the youngest (30) banqueting manager in town, certainly of an establishment of such high standing. He is an Oxford B.A., and really a journalist manqué, having turned his attentions to catering and starting from the bottom of the ladder after the war. He was concerned with Mike Todd's fabulous Battersea party. 14 Banqueting Suites, serving a quarter of a million meals a year, and often 300 waiters daily, are part of the intricate organisation that such banqueting rooms represent.

M E N U

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 Blinis with caviar is, in all its glory, served with 3 layers and somewhat larger than to-day's portion. In this classical form it would have adversely influenced the guests' capacity.

Shark's fin soup is one of the outstanding delicacies of Chinese cuisine and is basically of chicken (sometimes pork) stock reduced over 8-10 hours. Dried shark's fin are used, even in China, after soaking them for 24 hours. The fins are of the shape of a small fan and have a peculiar, rich flavour, not that of fish. The egg white in the soup is used partly for thickening, partly to make it lighter.

Scampis in aspic with 3 sauces were of course made of fresh scampis (difficult to obtain at this time of year). The delicacy of this dish is augmented by Chef Camillo's artistry in decoration, eye appeal always adding to culinary merits. The 3 sauces, with which this dish (popular in and around Venice) is usually served are: mayonnaise, sauce verte, sauce of oil, lemon and parsley.

Fillet of beef prepared in to-day's manner is one of the great classics of French cuisine. The mixing of its flavours of foie gras, fresh truffles and sauce Périgourdine is made more interesting by the artistry demanded of the chef for, though it is cooked in brioche pastry, it has to stay slightly underdone.

The sucking pig is claimed by some other nations as their speciality. But Robert Graves, the author, maintained that it was first mentioned in an English dictionary in 1556 as "Porci delici"; though he also says that the Roman Aspicus mentions it in the 1st century, giving no less than 17 recipes for its preparation. To-day it will be cooked in the English fashion, with stuffing and apple sauce. The carving will then - for the sake of ensuring that portions are not overwhelming - be done in the French manner, i.e. not cutting full segments, but only of each side of the backbone.

The sweet course (Strudel), it will be argued by many, is thought to be Austrian. This is quite incorrect. It is originally a Hungarian dish, proved by the fact that it is only Hungarian flour that has the chemical prerequisites for this. The dish should (and is to-day) classically be served hot.

W I N E S

Pol Roger is Sir Winston Churchill's favourite Champagne.

The Moselle accompanying the Scampi dish should make a rather refreshing change from the great, dry, drink with the preceding course.

1957 should be the correct youthful vintage, as freshness is a great advantage in Moselle and Rhine wines, unless they are made of late-gathered grapes.

Claret lovers maintain that 1949 is in most cases at its height now. It is arguable that with the sauce it accompanies, a Burgundy would have been preferable; however, it was decided to serve Burgundy with the sucking pig as the build-up in wines, important in the course of a banquet, could not otherwise have been achieved.

The 25 year old Burgundy speaks for itself.

The Rhine wine served with the sweet is made of late-gathered grapes and is a more refreshing and fruitier flavour than the Sauternes often served with dessert.

The Brandy is at least 83 years old and has been in the bottle for 58 years. It is believed to have been stored for many years, standing up, important in not giving a slightly corked impression to brandies. The Café Royal cellars have only had this single magnum of it left; there cannot be many more in existence anywhere.

24th March 1960

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GERRARD 6597
& Gerrard 7548

QH

G.T. Cummins Esq.,
Editor & General Manager,
Pathé News,
133/135 Oxford Street, W.1.

14th March 1960

Dear Tommy,

May I briefly confirm our telephone conversation to-day. An International Gastronomic Luncheon will take place at the Café Royal on 24th March (Thursday). Hosts are the Chairman of the London Publicity Committee of the British Travel & Holidays Association, Mr. Charles Forte, and myself. The occasion is to launch the 1960 London tourist season and my new book on London's restaurants. The lunch, which is to show the world that London can match other culinary Capitals, will be given for 50 famed gastronomes amongst whom, acceptances have been received from Henry Sherek (in the Chair), Nubar Gulbenkian, André Simon, Guy Prince, Terry-Thomas, Robert Morley, Gilbert Harding, Lord Mancroft, Lord Evans etc.*

The menu will consist of six courses, each to be prepared by a different well known London chef of a restaurant mentioned in my book. Each chef to be of a different nationality so the dishes will be: English (roast sucking pig), French, Chinese, Russian, Italian, Hungarian, each course with a different wine.

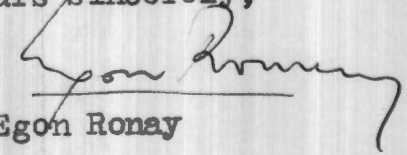
There will also be a meeting probably on 16th March, of the six chefs clad in white, to finalise the menu and other details. (I shall let you know about this meeting definitely on the morning of the day in question).

I am very pleased that you seemed interested on the telephone and if there is anything at all I can do to facilitate matters, please let me know.

With kind regards,

Yours sincerely,

*
(P.S. Robert Morley will speak.)


Egon Ronay