



GALLIC GASTRONOMY

Francophile restaurateur Adam Byatt on his passion for the timeless crafts and processes of French cuisine

Words MADELEINE HOWELL

Adam Byatt is a true craftsman and rather a traditionalist when it comes to cuisine. Having trained at the prestigious Royal Academy of Culinary Arts, his cooking is based on a firm foundation of classic French gastronomy in line with what he describes as the ‘natural evolution’ of food.

‘French cuisine is about craft, process and the stages of cookery. It isn’t traditionally about lightness and balance, but fast forward to 2016 and food has to be lighter,’ he explains. ‘Diners expect a nod to seasonality, thankfully, and rather than silver service, the food has to sit on the plate as a finished dish.’ This philosophy is perfectly demonstrated during our cover shoot at Trinity, Byatt’s stylish restaurant in Clapham Old Town, during which he creates a stunning, delicious rabbit pithivier, a twist on a classic with the addition of prunes.

‘Which other country has brought anything quite so nice as choux or puff pastry into the world?’ he smiles. Warming to his theme, Byatt’s passion for what he does is plain to see. Despite all the fads and trends, and the impact of minimalistic, Nordic influences on the London food scene, he views French gastronomy as timeless. ‘You can take all your pickled, fermented kimchi s*** and forget it,’ he states. ‘Éclairs, profiteroles and gougères are made for pleasure.’

That’s not to say ingredients aren’t important. ‘We stick to impeccable ingredients that are in season. We don’t go foraging for weeds,’ he laughs. Autumnal produce at Trinity will include chestnuts, pumpkins, truffles, pigeon and hare. Byatt shops locally at M. Moen & Sons butchers, Moxon’s fishmongers, MacFarlane’s deli on



Trinity’s wine cellar is stocked with over 450 bins collected in France



Abbeville Road, and at The Hive honey shop on Northcote Road. He also heads off to France’s famous Rungis market every year for inspiration, and his summer holiday this year was to the cobbled town of Beaune in Burgundy, which is surrounded by the Côte d’Or vineyards.

In France, he recommends the two Michelin star restaurant Nicholas le Bec, and here at home, there are three chefs that particularly inspire him. ‘There are three true masters of French cookery in this country: Pierre Koffman, Raymond Blanc and the Roux family. Growing up at their height, I looked up to them as rock stars.’

As well as pastry, Byatt is a lover of French wine and cheese, which is reflected by Trinity’s well-stocked wine cellar of over 450 bins collected from caves in Burgundy, Bordeaux and Gascony, Byatt’s favourite regions. ‘The food is closest to my heart. I like cassoulet, Toulouse sausages, duck confit, tarte tatin, and all the classics.’

Cheese-wise, he opts for either super-soft or hard varieties. ‘I specifically like comté, which needs age,’ he explains. ‘Ours is aged for at least 32 months. I also like Beaufort from the Alpine regions. As it gets cold, the cows come down the mountains, eat all the flowers and drink the Alpine water, which you can really taste. I love graine paille, which is a double fat cow cheese, really soft and creamy, and époisses de Bourgogne. I also like reblochon, which has a layered, farmyard flavour.’ Bonne santé!

4 The Polygon SW4 0JG; 020 7622 1199;
trinityrestaurant.co.uk