

George August Escoffier Essay



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

George August Escoffier, later known simply as Auguste Escoffier, was born on October 28, 1846, in the small village of Villeneuve-Loubet, near Nice, in the Provence region of France. Among the key figures in his life was his father, who worked primarily as a blacksmith, yet also cultivated tobacco plants. His grandmother, an enthusiastic cook, was perhaps more responsible than anyone for instilling in young August an appreciation for cooking. Young Escoffier attended the local school until age 12, upon which time his father thought it necessary that his son learn a trade.

His father took him to Nice, where he would work as an apprentice in his uncle's restaurant, Le Restaurant Francais. When Escoffier was 19, a patron of his uncle's restaurant recognized his skills and offered him a sous chef position at Le Petit Moulin Rouge, one of the finest restaurants in Paris. After three years, he rose to the level of head chef. Escoffier remained in Paris until 1870, when he was called for army duty in the Franco-Prussian War.

Appointed Chef de Cuisine, he began to study the techniques for canning meats, vegetables and sauces. After the war he returned to Le Petit Moulin Rouge, where he remained Head Chef until 1878 (James, 2006). In 1880, Escoffier married Delphine Daffis, the daughter of a publisher. They would spend their summers in Lucerne, Switzerland, where Escoffier was hired by Cesar Ritz to manage the kitchens at the Hotel National. Escoffier and his wife would spend their winters in Monte Carlo, where he served as Director of Cuisine at the Grand Hotel.

From 1890 to 1898 Escoffier served as Head of Restaurant Services at London's first modern luxury hotel, The Savoy, and Cesar Ritz took the

position of General Manager. Escoffier worked at the Ritz Hotel in Paris, then opened the Carlton Hotel in London, where he remained for 20 years. It was here that Escoffier created some of his most famous dishes, like Peche Melba, Chaud-Froid Jeannette, and Tournedos Rossini (Simon, 2001). In 1903 Cesar Ritz fell ill with a nervous breakdown, ending his partnership with Escoffier.

It was during this period when Escoffier began publishing his culinary works. He began with *Le Guide Culinaire* in 1903, comprised of over 5, 000 recipes and garnish preparations. He also wrote *Le Livre Des Menus* (“ The Book of Menus”), and *Ma Cuisine* (“ My Cuisine”) in 1934. In 1920, at the age of 73, Escoffier moved back to Monte Carlo with his wife. His intention was to retire. However, he continued to work, collaborating and consulting on several projects, including another casino in Upper Monte Carlo.

He died in 1935, at the age of 89, only days after the death of his wife. Escoffier’s most noted career achievements are revolutionizing and modernizing the menu, the codification of of cooking techniques and the organization of the professional kitchen (Simon, 2001). I discovered Escoffier when I open Bouchon Bistro Lyonnais, in 1998. I was approached by my private chef, Thierry Aubert, with a copy of *Saveur Magazine*, with an article entitled “ The Bouchons of Lyon. We traveled to Lyon together, collecting menus from many of the bouchons in Old Lyon.

During that trip I purchased several cook books, one of which was *Le Guide Culinaire*. It was in that book that we found most of the recipes for Bouchon’s first menu. I have always been drawn to traditional French cuisine, and this

book has been my Bible for years. It was in this book that I learned about cross-utilization of ingredients and sauces. I continue to consult this book for recipes, as well as a study tool (Kaufmann, 2001).