

**arte**  
DISTRIBUTION

**iMAGISSIME**

# THE BIRTH OF MODERN GASTRONOMY

A 90' docu-drama written and directed by Olivier Julien







# Logline

At the dawn of the 20th century, a provincial chef with an exceptional destiny would revolutionize French cuisine, making it the global reference in culinary art. Auguste Escoffier was the legendary head chef of the first luxury hotels and shaped the canon of modern gastronomy. His spirit continues to inspire the greatest chefs around the world today.





# STRUCTURE

Built around all things culinary, the film will give pride of place to dishes and preparations, produce and cooking methods, simmering and steaming, compositions and appellations.

It will be structured around three themes:

- A biographical exploration of Escoffier's career and personality, handled through dramatic reconstructions, sometimes incorporating archives.
- Historical events and context, which form the backdrop and set the mood: Paris, Monte Carlo, London, New York, each city seen at its height; the Second Empire and the Belle Epoque; the rise of the French Riviera; the peak of the Victorian period; and the dawn of the Roaring Twenties. They will all be shown through archives, reconstruction scenes, and contributions from historians such as Pascal Ory.
- Escoffier's legacy, examined through the prism of the enduring nature of his innovations in the temples of gastronomy today. This will be handled through documentary filming in top hotels, gastronomic restaurants, and renowned schools around the world, plus interviews with chefs, food critics, and teachers.



## TREATMENT

### THE DREAM OF “HAUTE CUISINE”

We will pay special attention to culinary shots, working with a food stylist to recreate the presentation of Escoffier’s legendary dishes with historical precision, with an actor playing the great man (or possibly a real chef) to capture all the culinary gestures in the dramatizations.

To illustrate work in the kitchen, in both dramatized and documentary segments, we will use close-ups of hand movements and faces, produce, methods of preparation and cooking, utensils, and steaming pans, but we will also seek a choreographic dimension in the work of the team to capture the precision of their coordinated movements.

From time to time throughout the film, a fabulous menu will be read in voice-over by an actor.

The tasting scenes will be all about indulgence, epicureanism, and sensuality.

## THE CENTRAL CHARACTER

There is very little material depicting Auguste Escoffier; even photographs are rare.

Fictionalized elements will therefore be essential to bring the character to life. We will not, however, try to make this especially precise: Escoffier is a silhouette, a presence like Chaplin, captured through specific kitchen techniques (hence the culinary double) and expressions (a sparkle in the eye, a frown, the hint of a smile). He will be a reserved, restrained man, who became famous through his accomplishments rather than force of personality.

We will use two actors to play him at different stages of his life (aged 20, then 40). He is a mainly mute character. We will employ an “inner voice” technique to read extracts from his memoirs and publications, or to allow him to voice his thoughts.





## ARCHIVES

These will be mainly photographic up until 1900, and will undergo a 3D animation treatment in post-production. We may well introduce the silhouettes of certain characters into some of them, or use them as a backdrop for some of the dramatized scenes.

In some instances, we will switch to alternative visual sources such as paintings, posters or engravings, representing the styles of each period and the countries concerned.

From 1900 on, we will undertake intensive research into filmed archives in France, Britain, and the United States; Preliminary inquiries have already thrown up some promising sources.

These will help illustrate:

- Historical contexts and background events
- The mood of each age
- The emblematic places in Escoffier's career
- The characters who are leading historical figures and Escoffier's clientele in luxury hotels

They will be overlaid with sound.



# RECONSTITUTIONS

## (DRAMATIZED SCENES)

These can be broken down into three groups:

- Scenes to establish Escoffier at the various stages of his career through simple activities, often alone. Auguste, in his kitchen uniform or everyday clothes, reflecting on his art, experimenting, traveling, writing, making plans, sketching, preparing, moving around behind the scenes, in the service corridors, elevators, walks through the lobby and empty restaurants, and sometimes meeting one or more secondary characters.
- Restaurant scenes/life in the luxury hotel world. These will involve some very complex sets, with many extras. They will complement or replace archive footage. Their role is to reconstruct the setting in which Escoffier's cuisine was developed and appreciated, the showcase which gives a luxury product its image and its international influence. They will also depict the aristocracy, top business leaders, and artists for whom this exclusive cuisine was destined. A world of spectacle, parties and dinners, where luxury is carefully orchestrated, and where all those involved conscientiously play their part in apparent insouciance. Women play a key role, be they princesses, cantatrices, actresses, or socialites. They were the driving force, the center of attention, surrounded by rich or high-born men. They were simultaneously adulated and permanently judged and evaluated, and Escoffier and his cuisine were their allies.

- Scenes of life in kitchens, either shot in real locations or in the studio, echoing the behind-the-scenes shots described above. This is where most of Escoffier's innovations will be recreated, and where the development of his art will be shown. More than simply educational, they will reveal the journey that Escoffier made, the challenges he faced, and how he overcame them. They will be closely linked to documentary scenes shot in kitchens today.

They will have a special treatment: Neither Hollywood-style dramatizations, nor fake archives, they will occupy a middle ground. This will allow them to be edited together with archive footage, while remaining distinct from it, yet without leading to any rupture. Their esthetic could well be that of black-and-white archive, subtly colorized, timeless, yet belonging to the past. Pastel shades and luster, soft focus, single-take shots and slow-motion elements will capture the dream-like universe of the grand hotels and dinners of Master Escoffier, more monochrome and contrasted when behind the scenes in the kitchen; faster paced, sometimes even verging on the comic in some situations. Their color grading may evolve as the film progresses, accompanying the chronology to underline the passage through various periods.



## DOCUMENTARY SEQUENCES

These will be set in the kitchens of major international hotels, gastronomic restaurants, and hotel schools. We will avoid the conventions of a reportage in a culinary program, instead adopting a more documentary, almost ethnological approach: Patient, up close to the characters, their gestures and the materials, attentive to special situations, always realistic.

Certain specifically instructive scenes will, on the contrary, be fully staged and make no pretense about it. These will be “theatrical” demonstrations, such as recreating the service of a meal without the customer, or the mechanics of the preparation of a complex dish, like a timed exam.

If they still exist, we will use the same locations where Escoffier once worked. Otherwise, we will find an equivalent location.

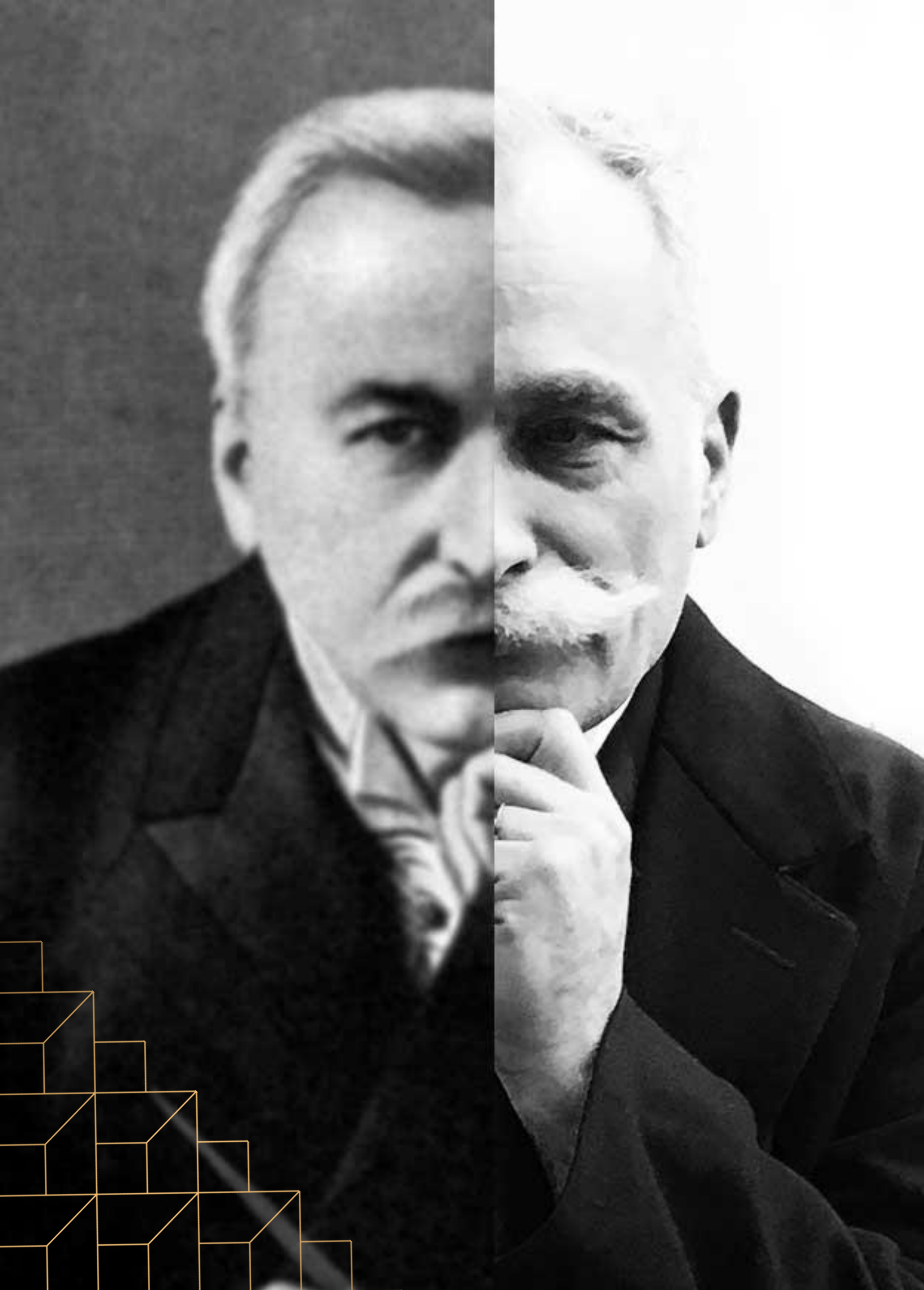
## CONTRIBUTORS

Besides Pascal Ory, a cultural historian, who will be used throughout to enhance the narration, wherever possible they will be filmed in the same locations as the documentary filming. They can thereby be filmed in action, establishing them before they address a particular theme. For example, we will use current chefs at the Savoy and the Ritz or the directors of the renowned hotels and schools where the shoots will take place, rather than drafting in a few big names just for a few sound bites.

## MUSIC

This will be a blend of music from the period (Offenbach, Strauss, etc.) and original compositions. The voice-overs will play an essential role: Besides the narration, we will hear Escoffier’s inner voice as he reads extracts from his writings, and another more dramatic, indulgent voice that will underline the creativity of culinary dreams of Escoffier, providing a rich evocation of the different menus throughout the film. The archives and dramatizations will have sound applied and be post-synchronized.





# Synopsis

Switching between documentary segments and dramatized scenes, playing on the past and the present, the film will unpack the career of Auguste Escoffier and his incredible legacy over eight episodes.

## ACT I

### BEHIND THE DREAM, THE HELL OF THE KITCHEN

It's 1865. Escoffier was just 19 and had just been hired by the Petit Moulin Rouge, a popular Parisian restaurant. Thierry Marx, head chef of the Mandarin Oriental, talks us through what the job would have entailed. He describes the harsh working conditions for chefs: 12-14 hour days, the heat and emanations from the stoves, the kitchen smells, the pressure, the outbursts. Alcoholism was commonplace. Escoffier suffered all-the-more due to his diminutive stature, which exposed him to more heat from the ovens and earned him a hard time from his co-workers. But he was above all distressed by agitation and disorder in the kitchen. He neither drank nor smoked, to preserve his palate. He was a keen observer and learned quickly. From season to season, he climbed the kitchen hierarchy. Fast-forward to 2018, we follow the stages of apprenticeship and examine the various posts in a top cooking school, the Westminster Kingsway College in London, founded 100 years ago with Escoffier's help.



## ACT II

### BIRTH OF A CHEF

Escoffier rapidly imposed a radical change on this working environment. In the young chef's kitchens, calm and composure were now required. Decades later, Thierry Marx and his brigade at the Mandarin Oriental, Michel Roth at Lasserre or at the Ritz, the Japanese brigade at the Okura in Tokyo all perpetuate Escoffier's heritage. The hygiene and calm that Escoffier introduced to kitchens back then have become the norm in all high-class establishments.

## ACT III

### RITZ AND LUXURY HOTELS: THE BACKDROP FOR NEW CULINARY PROPOSITION

1882. On the terrace of the Casino in Monte Carlo, looking out to sea at the end of the afternoon, Auguste Escoffier met the man who would change his life and allow him to fulfill his gastronomic ambitions: César Ritz, director of the Grand Hôtel in Monte Carlo. It was the start of a great friendship that would never be broken. And of a collaboration that would leave its stamp on history: Ritz embodied the hotel world, Escoffier gastronomy, and their combined talents would see the fulfilment of a dream for absolute luxury in their palatial hotels and restaurants. For six years, Ritz, Escoffier, and their team would alternate between winters in Monte Carlo and summers in Lucerne, Switzerland, serving the same clientele, who now followed them. They included a certain Richard D'Oyly Carte, a successful British impresario and entrepreneur, who set them a new challenge: To conquer London.



## ACT IV

### THE SAVOY: THE CONQUEST OF LONDON/MODERN TIMES

Archives introduce us to London at the turn of the century. In 1890, the British Empire was at its peak, the industrial revolution in full swing. Richard D'Oyly Carte had built the Savoy Hotel, the first luxury hotel in the capital, a place of superlatives. Yet he was struggling to attract a clientele. For Ritz, this was a fresh challenge, and he soon turned the establishment into a success. But for Escoffier, the cultural challenge of initiating the British into French gastronomy was matched by a huge technical challenge. He would have to take on unprecedented customer numbers: The dining room had around 500 covers, and the pace of life in London was frenetic. Head chefs will recount the history of some of the legendary dishes created by Auguste Escoffier, such as Peach Melba, a worldwide success, dedicated to the Australian coloratura soprano Nelly Melba, and Nymphes à l'Aurore, a dish of frogs' legs served to the Prince of Wales and 600 guests. The Ritz/Escoffier duo in London was a smash.

## ACT V

### THE RITZ IN PARIS: THE ESCOFFIER SYSTEM

Archives evoke the construction of the Paris Ritz. The runaway success of the Savoy had a snowball effect: César founded the Ritz Development Company and started construction of the Ritz Hotel in Paris. Escoffier designed the kitchens, producing the plans and technical drawings, measuring the room with assistants and pacing out the movements the staff would make. The pace was as frenetic as in London. But this time, Escoffier had his system well under control and had the resources he required. We film at the heart of the Ritz kitchens today, in the company of Nicolas Sale and Michel Roth. Escoffier's cuisine is an integral part of the Ritz's brand image. For Escoffier, the success was immediate. The effectiveness and reproducibility of the "Escoffier system" was now firmly established. He placed the Ritz kitchens in the hands of his protégé Gimon, and headed back to England with César Ritz, where the pair would launch the Carlton.



## ACT VI

### THE CARLTON I, THE CONSECRATION OF A MASTER

In 1899, Auguste Escoffier took over the kitchens of the Carlton. As soon as it opened, the Carlton instantly acquired a reputation as the best hotel in London, seizing the crown from the Savoy. For Escoffier, now 53, this was the ultimate consecration. Acclaimed by the profession, the clientele, and by food critics, he was now Master Escoffier, the uncontested supreme practitioner of the modern culinary art. Yves Camdeborde will outline the importance Escoffier gave to produce and raw materials. The archives will transport us to Les Halles, the Paris market. The quantities consumed at the Carlton meant Escoffier was the leading importer of luxury French produce in England. In London, he worked actively to spread the influence of France its output. He even encouraged the development of new products. Having observed the British taste for green asparagus rather than white, he managed to persuade growers in Lauris, southern France, to diversify their production. This met with such success that they could multiply the price of their asparagus by 10.

## ACT VII

### CARLTON 2, CONQUERING THE WORLD

1905 saw the creation of the new Ritz in London and the development of the Ritz Carlton Company, which propelled Escoffier into the conquest of a whole new world: The Hamburg Amerika Line launched the Amerika, its first luxury liner designed for trans-Atlantic crossings. The Ritz Carlton and Master Escoffier were entrusted with the management of the ship's gastronomic restaurant. One year later, Escoffier made his first crossing to the States. New York in those days was vying with London for the title of world's greatest city and as a symbol of modernity. For Escoffier, it was a huge territory to conquer. Pascal Ory compares this conquest of the New World to a mission of conversion: Escoffier was a true apostle. Thierry Marx notes that most "disciples of Escoffier" are to be found outside France, in the United States. Escoffier's influence was considerable. We return to a dramatization. Escoffier and Gringoire are writing invitations with a menu and recipes which they place in large envelopes. In 1910, Escoffier launched a new magazine, Le Carnet d'Epicure, and founded the League of Gourmets: His aim was to "demonstrate the excellence of French cuisine worldwide". To this end, the League organized "Epicurean Dinners" in various countries around the world, all taking place on the same day with the same menu. These dinners took place every two months, bringing together an ever-growing number of guests. On 14 June 1914, more than 140 restaurateurs from cities including London, Paris, New York, Pittsburgh, Mumbai, Lahore, Shanghai, and Buenos Aires took part in the final Epicurean Dinner.





## CODA : THE LEGEND

Archive footage will illustrate the final years of Escoffier. On 28 July, the First World War broke out. Escoffier was 68. He kept the kitchens of the Carlton going throughout the war. On 24 October 1918, César Ritz died. In 1920, aged 74, Escoffier officially hung up his apron, but for another 10 years, he continued to promote French cuisine, frequently invited as guest of honor at international professional gatherings. This period saw him cement his image as the founding father of gastronomy known to chefs worldwide, the bright-eyed, mustachioed benevolent ghost that they sometimes feel over their shoulder. We see a portrait of Escoffier. His features fade, to leave just his gaze. On 12 February 1935, Auguste Escoffier died in Monte Carlo with his wife by his side. He was 89.



# Expected contributors

THE CHIEFS

## Thierry Marx

Head chef of the Mandarin Oriental, Paris  
Spiritual heir to Auguste Escoffier. He will tell us  
about Escoffier's legacy in contemporary gastronomy.







## Yves Camdeborde

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Head chef of the Comptoir du Relais, Paris  
He will talk about the importance of produce and *terroir* in Escoffier's cuisine

## Michel Roth

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Former head chef of the Ritz, Paris  
He will reveal some of the secrets and techniques in Escoffier's art.



THE CHIEFS





## Fabrice Lasnou

Head chef of the Savoy, London  
He will describe some of the legendary  
dishes created at the luxury hotel.



## Nicolas Sale

Head chef of the Ritz, Paris  
He will tell us about the iconic cuisine at  
the Parisian hotel.

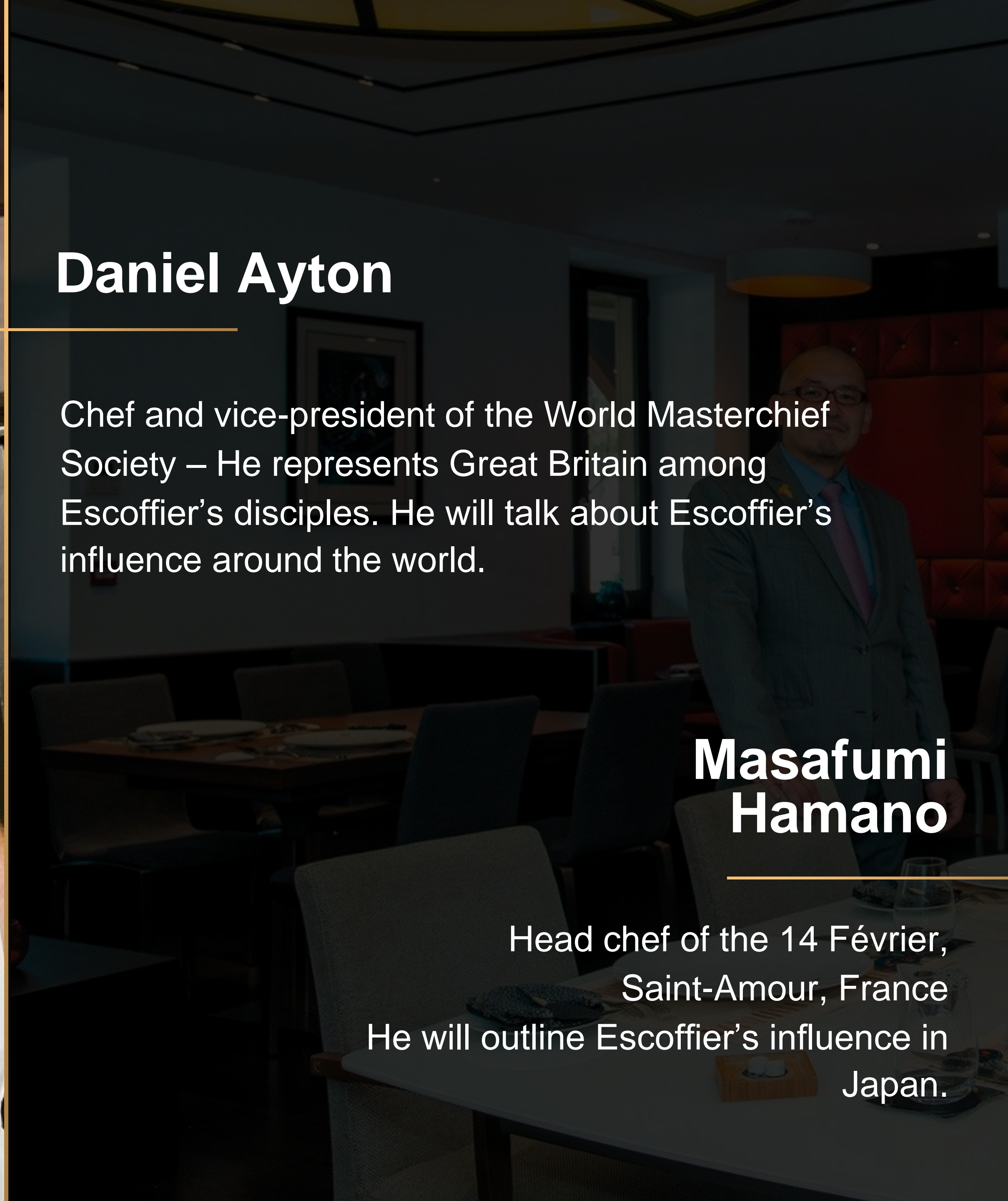




## Daniel Ayton

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Chef and vice-president of the World Masterchief Society – He represents Great Britain among Escoffier's disciples. He will talk about Escoffier's influence around the world.



## Masafumi Hamano

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Head chef of the 14 Février,  
Saint-Amour, France  
He will outline Escoffier's influence in  
Japan.





# HISTORIANS AND FOOD CRITICS



**Pascal Ory**

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French historian, specialist in cultural history, specially that of gastronomy.



**Annie Gray**

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British historian, specialist in the history of gastronomy.



**Camille Labro**

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Journalist, author, and director of documentaries on gastronomy.





# WESTMINSTER KINGSWAY LONDON

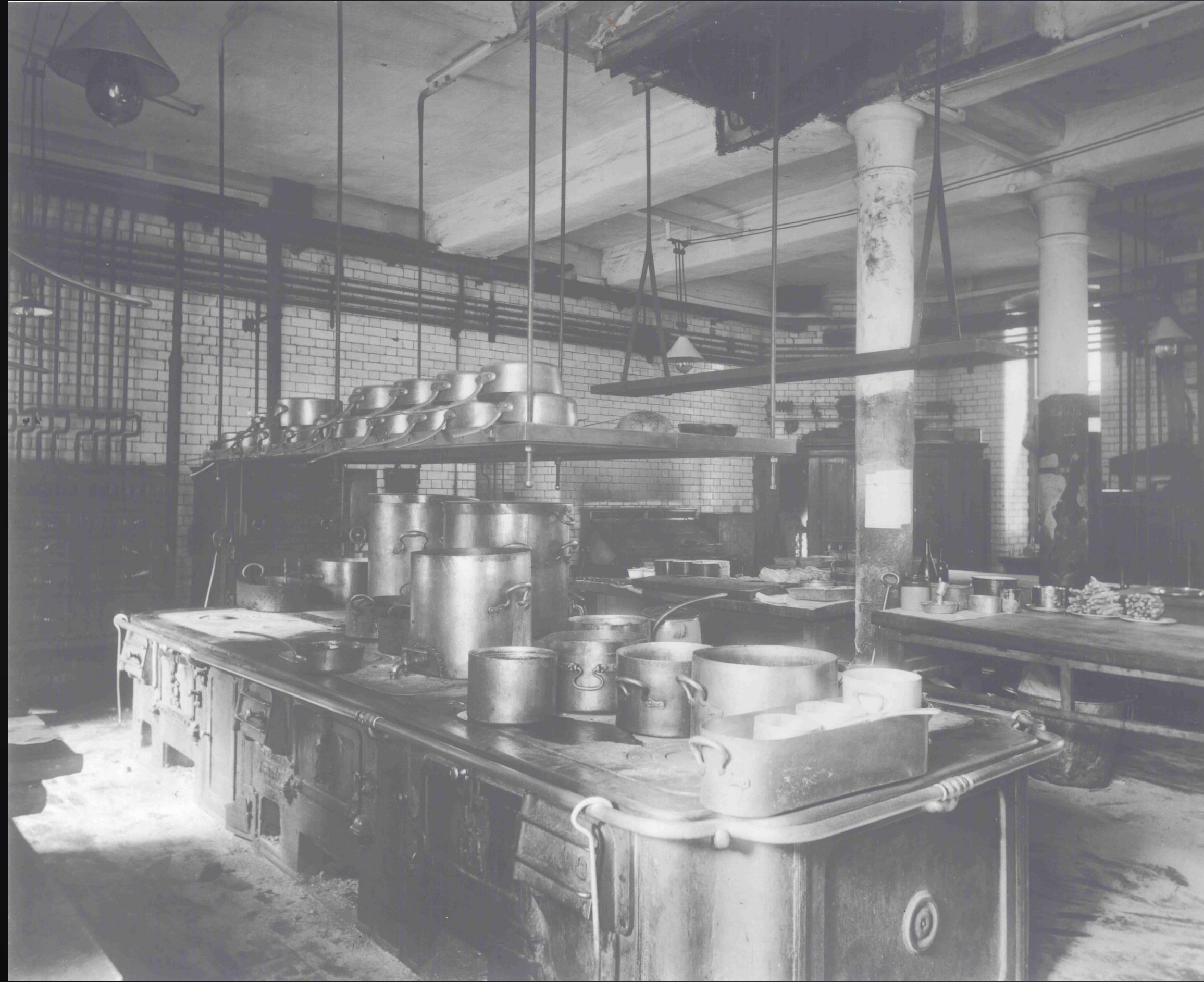
## Terry Tinton

Director of studies at the Westminster Kingsway London, one of the most prestigious hotel and restaurant schools in Europe.





# Archival images





WINE\$.

Dry Sherry.  
+++  
Riesling.  
+++  
Pauillac,  
1878.  
+++  
White Clubs,  
1884.  
+++  
De Bossare.  
1880.  
+++  
Château Léobille  
Lascases,  
1877.  
+++  
Port,  
Fine Crusted Medium  
Dry.

Menu.

Hors-d'Œuvres.

Petite Marmite à la Hoche-pot.  
Vélouté d'Écrevisses.  
Saumon — Sauce Mousseline.  
Terrine de Canard aux Petits Pois.  
Filet de Bœuf à la Provençale.  
Pommes fondantes.  
Quenelles de Brochet à la Lyonnaise.  
Volaille Périgourdine.  
Salade Niçoise.  
Artichauts à la Poulette.  
Pouding Noisette.  
Bombe Alhambra.  
Gâteau à l'Orange.

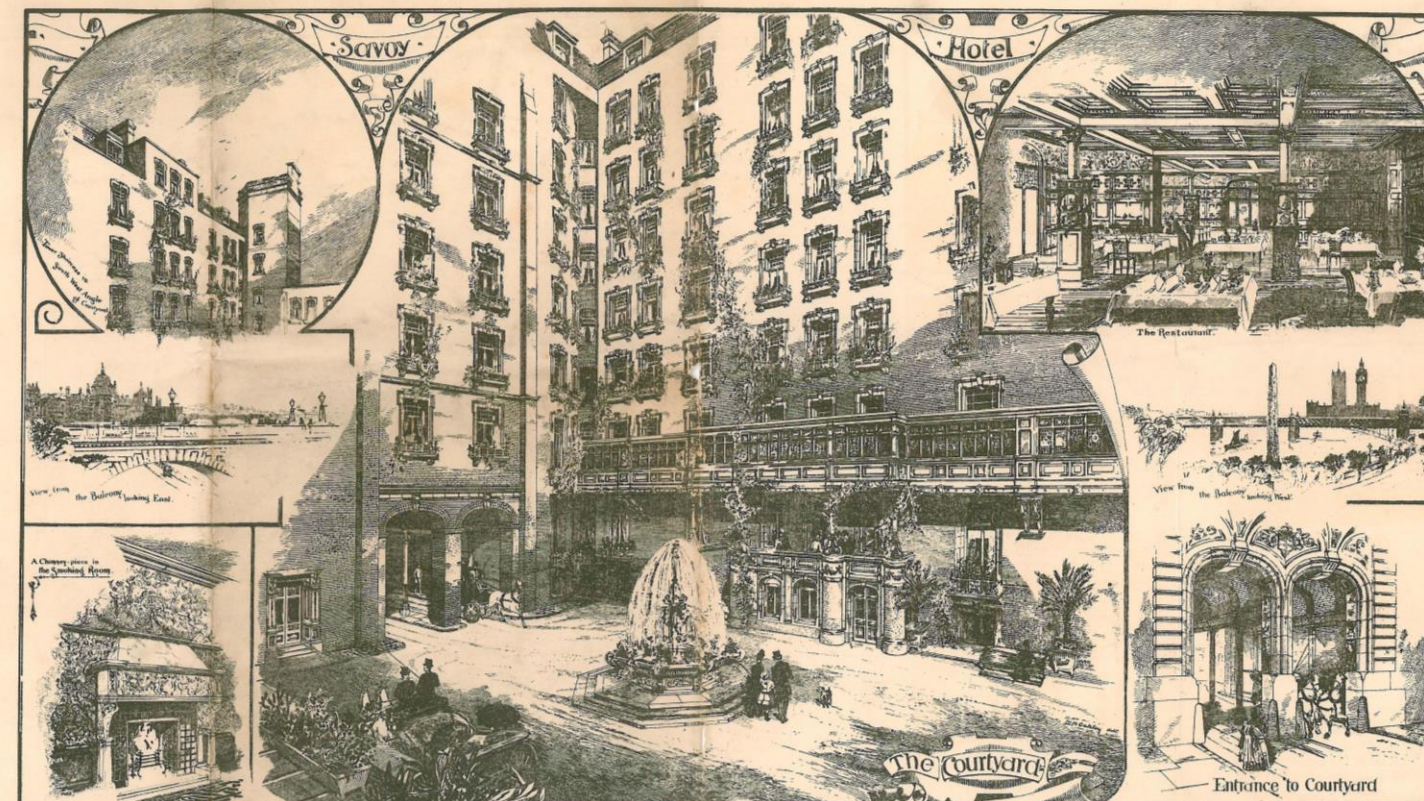
FRUITS.

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Dessert.

Music.

1. March . . . "Carmen" . . . Biset  
2. Overture . . . "Le Brasseur de Preston" . . . Adam  
3. Valse . . . "Mondnacht auf dem Alster" . . . Petras  
4. Violin Solo . . . "Swedish Dances" . . . Max Bruch  
5. Czardas . . . "Hungarian" . . . Michiels  
6. Selection . . . "Haddon Hall" . . . Sullivan  
7. Entr'acte . . . "Gruss an Warschau" . . . Bilse  
8. Habane . . . "Ninon" . . . Michiels  
9. Valse . . . "Märchen aus dem Orient" . . . Strauss  
10. Mélodie . . . . . Grieg  
11. Selection . . . "Mignon" . . . A. Thomas  
12. Galop . . . "Vulcain" . . . Wittmann



SAVOY HOTEL.







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