



Q&A WITH Anne-Sophie Pic

GROUNDBREAKING FRENCH CHEF AND RESTAURATEUR

France's first female three-Michelin-starred chef in 50 years riffs about culinary lineage, fighting her way to the top and why the cuisine, not the chef, should be the star.

In a country dominated by testosterone-charged alpha chefs, Anne-Sophie Pic is France's only three-star Michelin chef, the first French female to receive three stars in more than 50 years, but the fourth generation of top Pic chefs from Valence in southeastern France. Her father and grandfather were also three-star chefs at the same restaurant in Valence where Anne-Sophie learned how to cook. Now, Anne-Sophie has opened a second restaurant, *Anne-Sophie Pic au Beau-Rivage Palace* inside the famous hotel in Lausanne, Switzerland. Here, she presides over a dedicated staff of 25, serving her famous specialties in her eponymous restaurant overlooking Evain-les-Bains across Lake Lemman. Pic has designed both the food and the space in a contemporary warm and cozy yet elegant style. Each table's simple Baccarat vase holds tea roses, a Baccarat oil lamp and Limoges plates.

Wine Enthusiast: How did cooking become so important to four generations of Pics?

Anne-Sophie Pic: My great grandfather often went hunting with his friends and he brought the game home to his wife, my great grandmother, Sophie, to cook. Sophie became passionate about cooking and opened a bistro. She taught her son, my grandfather Andre, how to cook, and he took over her restaurant and became famous for crayfish gratin. In 1934, he was one of only five Michelin three-star French chefs. Next, my father, Jacques, took over and was famous for his sea bass with caviar. In 1973, Jacques earned his three Michelin stars. My brother Alain, who hoped to become the next chef/owner, studied under my father. I was 10 years younger and not interested in cuisine.

WE: Why not?

AP: My room was right over the kitchen, so I needed to breathe new air. I wanted to experience something different, so I went to business school first in Paris, and then in New York. My first job was an internship in Tokyo in the marketing department of Moët Chandon. I was fascinated by champagne and learned it from beginning to the end. Then, I went to Paris and did marketing for Yves St. Laurent. I wanted to experience the world of luxury products, but saw that what I was interested in was *savoir faire*. I needed these experiences to acknowledge that I was more interested in creating with my hands. Creation was



TASTE IS STILL THE MOST IMPORTANT THING FOR ME. I LOVE TO PLAY WITH TEXTURES. I DON'T WANT TOO MANY INGREDIENTS IN THE PLATE. I WANT THE CUSTOMER TO TASTE EACH INGREDIENT.

WE: Where do you see yourself in 10 years?

AP: Cooking is my passion. I hope that in 10 years I will be strong enough to be still in this job. I have a husband and a son.

WE: And your son? Will he be the next Pic to take over and earn three stars?

AP: Who knows? He is only three.

—MARGIE GOLDSMITH

very important and more compatible with my personality, so in 1992 I decided to return to Valence and learn how to cook from my father; but three months later, he died unexpectedly. I was 23-years-old and not appreciated in the kitchen. Alain was jealous and the chefs who had worked with my father refused to help me because I was a girl. It was difficult; I was the only female in the kitchen. One day I criticized one of the chefs working under me and he said, "You can't say anything to me because I knew you when you were a baby in diapers."

WE: Who taught you how to cook?

AP: I am self-taught. I learned by making, by doing it; it makes a difference. I am completely open-minded. I was also enriched by my experience in Japan—it opened my mind, I have a different way of thinking. My father was always talking about food, and he always tasted, so I grew up tasting food. He formed my palate, and taste is still the most important thing for me. I love to play with textures. I don't want too many ingredients

in the plate. I want the customer to taste each ingredient.

WE: Is the menu at *Anne-Sophie Pic au Beau-Rivage Palace* the same as at *Restaurant Pic* in Valence?

AP: Thirty percent of the menu in Lausanne is new and the rest is the same as in Valence. I want the cuisine to be the star, not me. I want to produce special new dishes; it's very important for me to use products of the region in Lausanne. I use fresh fish from Lake Lemman, local organic eggs, Simmental Beef and vegetables from local food producers.

WE: What is the main different between the two restaurants?

AP: In Valence, we are a family-run business. At Beau-Rivage, we're in a big beautiful palace and we are adapting to the place. We have our own culture but will also take part in their culture. We have a new clientele asking for things different than in Valence, and we have to adapt ourselves. I have to trust in my team for the service and the cuisine.





OVER **375** WINES **RATED 90+** IN THIS ISSUE

WINE ENTHUSIAST

MAGAZINE

OCTOBER 2010

THE **CHEF & SOMMELIER'S**

GUIDE TO

WINE & FOOD PAIRINGS ▶

100 POINTS!

GET A TASTE OF SPAIN'S ROCKIN' RIBERAS

WHAT MAKES

Gin

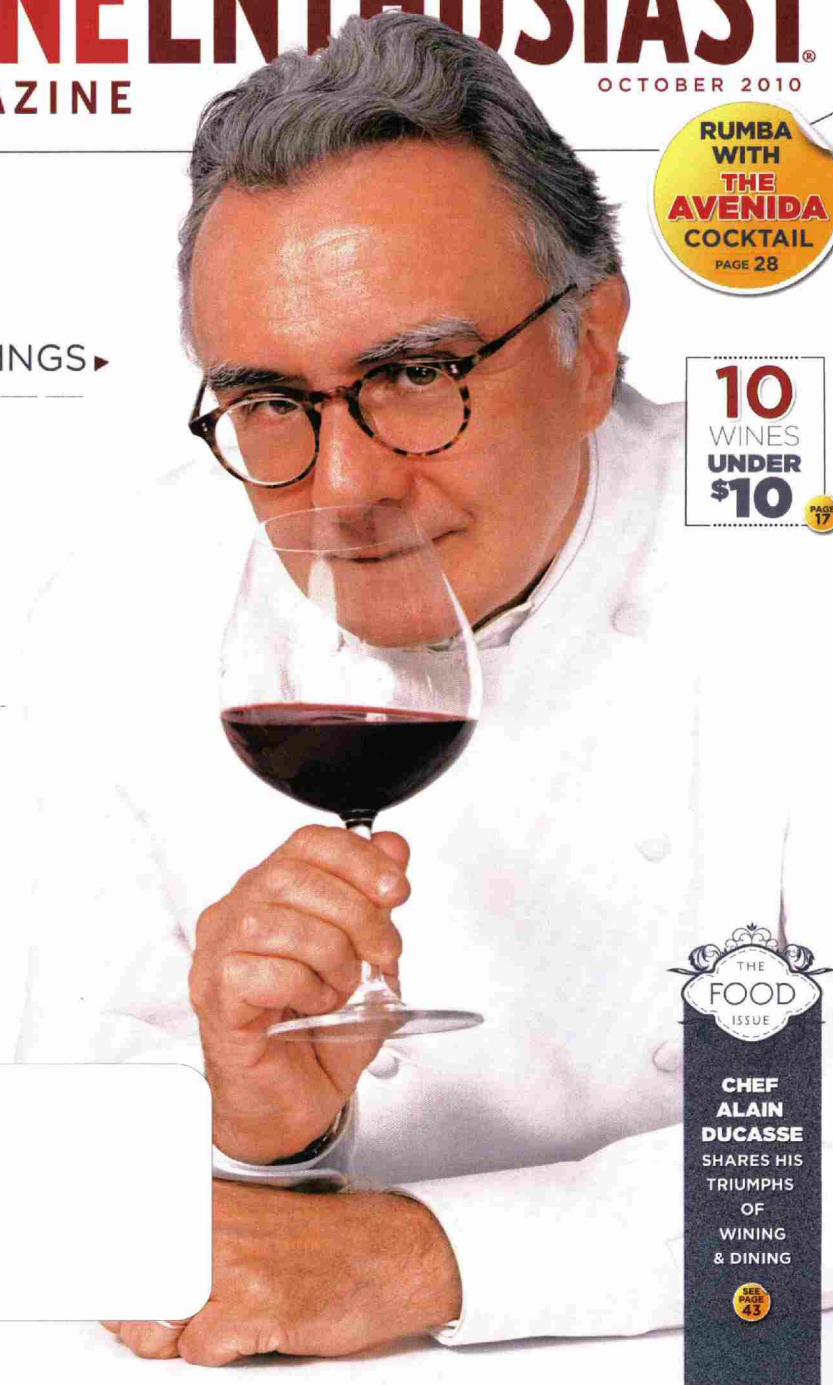
FROM PLYMOUTH SO SPECIAL?

SEE PAGE 62

GRENACHE GOES GLOBAL

RUMBA WITH THE AVENIDA COCKTAIL
PAGE 28

10 WINES UNDER \$10
PAGE 17



THE **FOOD** ISSUE
CHEF ALAIN DUCASSE SHARES HIS TRIUMPHS OF WINING & DINING
SEE PAGE 43

WineMag.com