

Elegance and sincerity: The cuisine of the Beau-Rivage Palace by Anne-Sophie Pic

While the Maison Pic celebrates 120 years of existence and of good cooking, and three generations have been honoured with the Michelin guide's coveted three stars, Anne-Sophie Pic, the latest of this cooking dynasty, has decided for the first time to practice her art outside the restaurant. This creative and delicious escapade is the fruit of a meeting with an establishment that is just as elegant, quality-conscious and renowned – the Beau-Rivage Palace in Lausanne – but also a chance to try a new exercise in style.

New adventures

What will Anne-Sophie Pic do in front of Switzerland's sumptuous mountain peaks? Her own cooking, of course, but with a subtle shift in style that will allow her to rethink, doubt and create something new. An exercise in style, in the true sense of the term. The result? A menu and two prix fixes that combine the elegant simplicity which is her trademark and the incandescent gold of luxury. A fruitful encounter, history, quality, the desire to go further together.

This menu and two prix fixes will speak of her family, love, nature, the freshness of a berry picked along a country lane, the strength of mushrooms in the woods, the memory of aromas in the family kitchen but also the imagining of perfect pairings, for simple and true pleasure. A menu made up of five starters, four fish and seafood dishes and five roasted meats, not too long and frequently renewed to always experience a fresh adventure at this new table. Two prix fixes, "Emotions," conceived as an escapade into the chef's imagination, and "Pic Collection," the family classics that speak of the transmission of taste and shared values.

Respect for transmission

Everything starts with a few family dishes that Anne-Sophie reworks with affection to give them a contemporary look.

Thus, the gratin of crayfish tails, composed by André Pic, the grandfather, in 1929, in the style of his mother Sophie. Or the line-caught sea bass with caviar, an audacious mix of smoothness and iodized strength perfected by Jacques, the father, in 1971; and his Mallemort asparagus and Aquitaine caviar from 1975, revisited here by delicately smoking a warm asparagus with Aquitaine caviar, accompanied by a very pure and lightly smoked coulis.

Anne-Sophie has also inserted a few of her classic dishes to express the handing down of tradition: tartare of Dublin Bay prawns from small boats with green peas and caramelised sweet onions from the Cévennes, agastache bouillon, inspired by this romantic plant whose purple or pink spikes hover between the tastes of anise, mint and liquorice, and whose foliage gives off a scent similar to mint.

The accent of a soft acidity

Acidity tempts Anne-Sophie Pic a little more each season, though she likes to temper its astringence in favour of freshness. Strips of blue lobster with berries, frothy cream of celery and green peppercorns, pressed jus, is eloquent because it belongs to the sweet/salty category but without the sugar... and highlighted by the infused pepper in symbiosis with the celery, accompanied by a fairly strong lobster jus to balance the red fruits which necessarily include wild strawberries for their freshness and spring-like acidity. Another variation on the same theme is hen's egg, green peas and horseradish, soft-boiled egg, green pea cream, horseradish emulsion, red onion pickles. Here she has created a balance of flavours with the egg, horseradish and red onion – sweetness without sugar, the stridence of the horseradish and the taste of sweet fruit – but also a play of textures and colours – white mousse and pink jelly on a green velouté – and the acidity and delicacy of the tones and pairings. This dish also tells of an important facet in the chef's personality, the pairings of soft textures that are revealed once the fork has dared to break the visual harmony. For dessert, the rhubarb and peanut, creamy and runny with roasted peanut, rhubarb jam and sorbet, play audaciously with several different textures: a mini-tart of roasted peanut, rhubarb compote, peanut cream, rhubarb sorbet, and... once you dig in your spoon, a runny peanut centre emerges! All the chef's mischievousness is apparent here, in a kind of diversion that never takes away from the essence of the product.

The tonic accent of coffee

For the past few seasons, Anne-Sophie Pic has been seduced by more smoky, roasted and burnt tastes, which turn up in certain dishes. For the Beau-Rivage Palace, she shows her fondness for coffee, whose bitterness she matches majestically with turbot in her slowly steamed Breton turbot, textures of Nancy turnips with Arabica, white/cream of asparagus, tartness of Menton lemon. Turbot at the peak of its season, cooked very slowly in a gentle steam, plays with two contrasting couples: turnip with coffee and butter whisked with lemon. A mix of crunchiness from the turnips, runniness from the lemon butter, a floral/acidic pairing, and the sensation of raw butter in the mouth, which she likes to use more and more.

The runny centre, a suave, playful and light texture

Ever more interested in her quest for lightness, Anne-Sophie Pic is increasingly using the runny centre – a solid structure from which escapes a liquid that can be more or less thick, such as a seasoning, vinaigrette or other sauce. Her current experiments are focused on reconciling nutritional balance and pleasure. This texture that implodes and allows for plays of hot and cold can be found in Sisteron lamb, saddle and rack roasted in a sauté pan, runny banon cheese and rocket with sweet onions from the Cévennes, capers from the island of Pantelleria, black olives, rocket. In this dish, the banon has a crunchy coating of sweet onions and plays its score against a background of Provençal flavours.

Another version, the fresh morel millefeuille, creamy aged parmesan with morels and sweet mace, conceals a sabayon with aged parmesan that coats all leaves of this marvellous dish...

Anne-Sophie Pic designed the menu of the Beau-Rivage Palace to complement the beautiful natural surroundings that can be seen from the hotel's terrace. A mix of classic products including frogs' legs and veal sweetbreads, cult ingredients such as red tuna and Dublin Bay prawns, and a tribute to the flowers of spring such as lavender, agastache and violets, a quest for purity in the presentations, simplicity while playing with contrasting textures. Anne-Sophie Pic has created a menu that leaves room for emotion and for appreciating the balance she achieves between creativity and simplicity.

Details

- Open since April 15th
- Lunch service: 12-2pm
- Dinner service 7-10pm
- Weekly closing Sunday and Monday
- Weekday lunch, 75 CHF
- Emotions menu 185 CHF (6 dishes), 240 CHF (7 dishes)
- Pic Collection menu, 330 CHF

Lausanne, April 2009.