



Sandoz-Pic: four generations of family-run hospitality & gastronomic excellence

A new alliance combining old-fashioned grand hospitality and Michelin starred cuisine in the most opulent surroundings takes luxury to a new level, reports **Margie Goldsmith**

A collaboration has just been formed between the Sandoz family-owned Beau-Rivage Palace Hotel in Lausanne, Switzerland and the Pic family-owned Maison Pic Restaurant of Valence, France.

Both lay claim to over four generations of family leaders, one in the world of hospitality and the other in the world of haute cuisine. Each offers an experience that dates back to an age

of elegance, extravagance and grace, and both continue to strive for originality and perfection. They have come together to open a restaurant run by the three Michelin starred chef Ann-Sophie Pic in the luxurious and decadent surroundings of the Beau-Rivage Palace Hotel. The Beau-Rivage hotel is one of the few remaining hotel palaces in Europe. It was designed 151 years ago by an architect who specialised in building palaces, explaining the hotels palatial feel.





Don't be surprised if you feel underdressed strolling in Salle Sandoz, the Beau-Rivage Palace's grand ballroom complete with glittering crystal chandeliers, 18th century frescoes, a stained-glass cupola and large windows overlooking Lake Lemman (also known as Lake Geneva). Walk down the impeccably polished marble hallways, and you'll feel as though you're on your way to a ball hosted by Marie Antoinette and Louis XVI. This is not surprising because from the beginning, the Beau-Rivage Palace was home to lavish balls and galas.

The name Beau Rivage, or beautiful shore, was appropriate, as every room was built to look out to soaring views of the lake, the French Alps and Evian-les-Bains on the opposite shore. Located in the small fishing port of Ouchy, the hotel first catered to those young aristocrats making the Grand Tour of Europe, and later to well-heeled tourists summering in Lausanne.

From the start, the opulent Beau-Rivage Palace received international recognition not only for its lavish balls and galas, but also for its superb quality of service. The First World War caused a temporary end to the era of decadence, when the Beau-Rivage became a haven for refugees. Many previously well-heeled guests had to leave behind their baggage on departure as payment. But after the War, the hotel regained its splendor, and the international jet set returned.

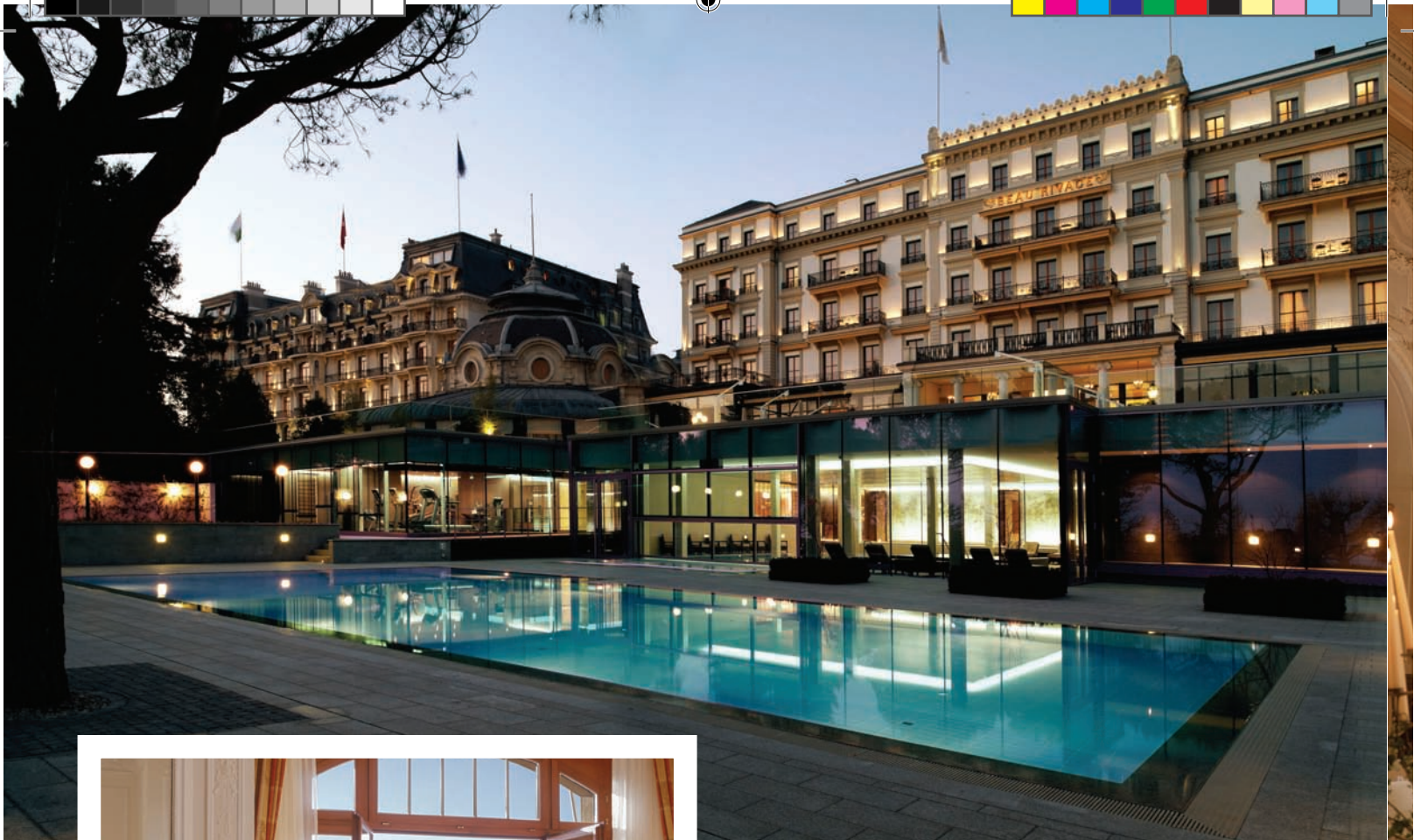
The unique site, elegant furnishings and quality of service quickly earned the hotel an international reputation. It went out of its way to nurture its guests, as shown by an advertising brochure from the 1930s. "Guests of Beau-Rivage are no chance visitors but friends who come to breathe again, amid the unchanged glorious scenery, that atmosphere they love of peace, tranquillity and frank cheerfulness," it reads.

The Beau-Rivage's leather-bound guest books reveal the names of such luminaries as Coco Chanel, Charlie Chaplin, Mary Pickford, Gary Cooper, the Duke and Duchess of Windsor, Richard Gere, Cindy Crawford and Rod Stewart. Noel Coward and Somerset Maugham not only stayed here, but also featured the Beau-Rivage Palace in their writings.

But a grand hotel is only as good as its owners. For well over a century, four generations of the Sandoz family have been the financiers and decision-makers behind the Beau-Rivage Palace. The Sandoz Family Foundation, not dissimilar to the Rockefeller Foundation, is the hotel's major shareholder with the freedom to act independently. The hotel operates under the motto: "Tradition Moving Forward," meaning it maintains its opulent historical features while initiating modernisation improvements.

In 2002 the Family Foundation authorised a \$74 million renovation and in 2005, allowed the addition of Cinques Mondes, a 15,000-square-foot \$10 million destination spa.





The Sandoz family first moved to Lausanne in 1882. Frenchman Edouard-Constant Sandoz, his wife Olympe (sister of the co-founder of watchmaker Longines) and their three sons bought an estate on the shores of Lake Lemman, le Denantou, very close to the Beau-Rivage. They moved easily in the wealthy bourgeois circles of Lausanne and enjoyed entertaining; one notable example was a reception they hosted where 800 guests dined al fresco.

Sandoz was a successful entrepreneur who, in partnership with Dr Carl Kern, founded SandozSA. He helped finance the development of several local and regional companies, one of which was the Societe du Beau-Rivage Palace. He was also a philanthropist and established a tradition that his heirs would continue to this day.

In 1952, one of his three sons, sculptor/painter Edouard-Marcel, took over the board seat of the Societe. Like his father before him, Edouard-Marcel did not impose himself on the day to day running of the hotel. Instead he concentrated

on preserving the natural beauty and unique architecture of Ouchy, the small fishing port on whose shores the Beau-Rivage Palace is located. To prevent further development of Ouchy in 1957, Edouard-Marcel donated 4 million francs to the city.

His other contribution to the area and hotel can still be seen today in the 10 manicured acres of the hotel, where many of his sculptures still reside. Walk among the gardens and you will see a full-sized family of bronze donkeys, peacock planters dotted on the lawn filled with colourful flowers, a pair of white marble greyhounds gracing the lobby steps and a large white marble statue in the foyer commemorating the 1912 peace treaty between Italy and Turkey.

Edouard-Marcel was responsible for setting up The Sandoz Family Foundation in 1964. He intended it to encourage innovation, entrepreneurship and to protect fundamental social values. In 1972, the artist's daughter, Nicole (now 93 years old) married Dr Jacques Landolt, who was the next Sandoz family member to serve on the board of the Family Foundation.

Their son, 62-year-old Pierre Landolt, has been president of the Sandoz Family Foundation since 1994 and oversees the Foundation's interests in hotel enterprises, telecommunications and watch making. He says: "In my opinion, the Beau-Rivage Palace is an excellent example of what can be accomplished through the combination of tradition and innovation."

Like the three generations before him, Pierre Landolt does not interfere in running the hotel's day-to-day affairs. The secretary general of the Foundation, Maitre Olivire Verrey, says: "It's more important for the Foundation to find a good General Manager than to find money."



One of the hotel suites complete with a terrace overlooking Lake Geneva and the French Alps (left) and the ornate Anne-Sophie Pic Beau Rivage Palace restaurant which looks like a royal banqueting hall fit for Louis XVI (above)

In 2003, Francois Dussart took over as general manager of the Beau-Rivage. He was charged with the responsibility of preserving the hotel's authenticity and continuing the century-old tradition of making guests feel that the hotel is home. Dussart has an impressive hotel background, having studied at the prestigious Ecole Hoteliere in Lausanne and worked at various international Hyatt Regencies before taking on his current role. He manages the hotel's 169 rooms and suites (including the opulent 1,500-square-foot presidential suite with a private roof-top terrace), the resort's legendary wine cellar that houses some of the world's most remarkable wine (around 600 crus and 75,000 bottles), two bars with terraces, and three lake-facing restaurants: the Café Beau-Rivage, a luxurious brasserie, Myako Lausanne which services traditional Japanese with the freshest sushi and sashimi, and the hotel's newest three-Michelin star French restaurant, Anne-Sophie Pic Beau Rivage Palace.

Just as the Sandoz family business shares four generations of its hallmark, "Tradition Moving Forward" in the hospitality industry, the Pic family rules the gastronomic world with four generations of top chefs from Valence, southeastern France. Three of these generations have received Michelin guide's coveted three stars – an honor that cannot be passed down, but must be earned. Anne-Sophie Pic is the only French woman to hold the Michelin Guide's three-star rating, in a country dominated by testosterone-charged alpha chefs. She is the first French female to

receive three stars in more than 50 years, and was also voted Top Chef in France last year by her fellow chefs.

Anne-Sophie Pic's arrival at the Beau-Rivage Palace is due in large part to general manager, Francois Dussart, who knows her and her husband socially. Says Dussart: "A partnership for our new gastronomic restaurant was simply a matter of finding the right fit at the right time. Beau-Rivage Palace in Lausanne and Pic in Valence have very strong common values, which favored a common project." Anne-Sophie Pic's 3-star restaurant at the Beau Rivage Palace opened April 15, 2009. Like the Sandoz family, Pic's eponymous restaurant represents four generations of family owners embodying a culture of excellence with special attention to service.

Anne-Sophie Pic's great grandmother, Sophie, started the family cooking tradition when she opened a bistro in Ardeche called Le Pin. Sophie used to cook the game caught by her husband on his 12 farms, and soon became passionate about cooking. When her son Andre (Anne-Sophie's grandfather) was born, Sophie taught him to cook. Andre eventually took over Le Pin, and then sold six of his father's farms to open Restaurant Pic, where he became famous for his crayfish gratin. In 1934, he was recognised as one of only five Michelin Guide three-star French chefs. Andre moved his restaurant to Valence, on the main road from Paris to Cote d'Azur, because there was not enough business in the rural area of Ardeche. The restaurant was never empty again.

"Edouard-Marcel was responsible for setting up the Sandoz family foundation in 1964"



Superstar chef Anne-Sophie Pic carries an air of modesty, a rare trait in the male-dominated world of Michelin-starred chefs with sky-high egos (left)

Jacques, Andre's son (Anne-Sophie's father), followed his father as owner/chef, and became famous for his sea bass with caviar. In 1973, Jacques earned his three Michelin stars. Anne-Sophie's brother, Alain, studied under his father, hoping to become the next chef/owner. Anne-Sophie, ten years younger, was not

Sophie Pic is a self-taught chef. "My father was always talking about food and during the little time we had together, he was always tasting, so I grew up tasting food," she says. "He formed my palette." To Anne-Sophie, taste is still the most important thing for her, and she loves to play with textures. "I don't want too many ingredients on the plate," she says, "I want the customer to taste each ingredient." Anne-Sophie, a petite and extremely modest chef in spite of her extraordinary accomplishment, allows the cuisine to be the star, not herself. Her menu, which presently features inventive meat, poultry and fish options, includes fresh fish from Lake Lemane, (which the soaring windows of her restaurant face), local organic eggs, Simmental Beef, and vegetables from local food producers. 30% of the menu at the new Beau-Rivage restaurant is new and the rest is the same as her restaurant in Valence.

interested in cuisine. "My room was right over the kitchen, so I needed to breathe new air," she says. "I wanted to experience something different." She left home for business school in Paris, and from there went to New York's Manhattan Institute of Management. Her first job was in Tokyo in the marketing department of Moët Chandon, followed by a stint in Paris working for Cartier's Yves St Laurent brand. "I wanted to experience the world of luxury products, and I saw that what I was interested in was savoir faire," she says. "I needed these experiences to acknowledge that I was more interested in creating with my hands."

"She is the first French female to receive three stars in more than 50 years"

In 1992, Anne-Sophie returned to Valence to learn how to cook under her father, but three months after she returned home, he died unexpectedly. Anne-Sophie was 23 years old, and was not appreciated in the kitchen. Her brother, Alain, was jealous and she was refused help from many of the chefs who had worked with her father because she was a woman. When she criticised a chef she was supervising for something he had done, he told her: "You can't say anything to me because I knew you when you were in diapers."

The restaurant is, very cozy and has two distinct sections with their own separate focal points. One area overlooks the lake and Alps and the other is dominated by a marble fireplace that soars to the ceiling. The beautiful linen tablecloths are identical to the ones she uses in Valence, but everything else is new. Each table has a Baccarat vase with tea roses, a Baccarat crystal candle/lamp and white Limoges tableware. The staff of 25 (12 serving in the restaurant and 13 in the kitchen) has been hand-picked by Anne-Sophie with many coming from her restaurant in Valence.

Although gastronomy courses through her veins, Anne-

"In Valence it's a family-run business," she says. "Here, we're in a big beautiful palace and we are adapting ourselves to this place. We have our own culture but will also take part in their culture." When asked where she will be in ten years, she smiles and says: "Cooking is my passion. I hope in ten years I'll be strong enough to do this job." And her son? Will he be the next Pic to take over and earn three stars? Her dark eyes twinkle. "Who knows?" she says, "he is only three." ●

