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Máirtín Mac Con Iomaire

Dublin Institute of Technology, mairtin.Macconiomaire@dit.ie

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## **‘From Jammet’s to Guilbaud’s’**

### **The Influence of French *Haute Cuisine* on the Development of Dublin Restaurants**

**Máirtín Mac Con Iomaire**

Gastronomy, fashion and philosophy are probably what most immediately capture the public imagination globally when one thinks of France. The most expensive and highly renowned restaurants in the western world are predominantly French whereas, historically, Ireland has not traditionally associated with dining excellence. However, in 2011, the editor of *Le Guide du Routard*, Pierre Josse, noted that ‘the Irish dining experience is now as good, if not better, than anywhere in the world.’ Nonetheless, Josse reminds us that ‘thirty years ago, when we first started the Irish edition, the food here was a disaster. It was very poor and there was no imagination’ (*Irish Independent*, 9/1/2011). Thus it may well come as a surprise to many that Dublin had a previous golden age for *haute cuisine* in the decades after 1945, and that it centred on two world-class establishments, Restaurant Jammet and The Russell Restaurant. This chapter will outline the origins of French *haute cuisine* and will trace the story of its movement from private households to the public sphere in the form of restaurants. This brief history of Dublin’s *haute cuisine* restaurants will outline the various stages of birth, prosperity, success, gradual decline, stagnation and then its subsequent resurgence in Dublin restaurants. It will also reflect on the public image of such cuisine and its purveyors over the years.

Since medieval times, Ireland had long been renowned for its hospitality. In the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, employment of professional French chefs by an Anglo-Irish gentry class added a rich and varied cuisine to the Irish hospitality profile. These French chefs were a fashionable addition to the household. Keeping a male cook was considered the height of sophistication, but a French cook carried extra cachet. In Europe generally, French *haute cuisine* developed in the large kitchens of the aristocracy during the seventeenth century, and the pattern spread to the kitchens of wealthy households, to restaurants and clubs. It is interesting that in most of Europe, up until the development of restaurants in the early nineteenth century, food served in public premises was less spectacular than the fare available in wealthy houses. This was also the

pattern in Dublin where the appearance of restaurants was preceded by taverns, coffeehouses and clubs.

While Dublin's restaurant industry emerged in the latter half of the nineteenth century, it was from the dawn of the twentieth century that an international reputation for fine dining developed. Two leading French chefs, the brothers François and Michel Jammet, opened a restaurant in Dublin in 1901 and, up until its closure in 1967, it remained one of the best *haute cuisine* restaurants in the world. In 1949, another French chef, Pierre Rolland, arrived in Dublin as *chef de cuisine* of the Russell Hotel and the restaurant under his leadership also became world renowned. In the mid-1950s, both the Russell and Jammet's were presented with awards from the American magazine *Holiday* for being 'one of the outstanding restaurants in Europe' (*Irish Times* 7/2/1956, p. 11). The high standard of food and service in these restaurants was confirmed in 1963 when the *Egon Ronay Guide* first covered Ireland. They awarded the Russell three stars, the highest possible award, and in the 1965 guide, Egon Ronay wrote: 'words fail us in describing the brilliance of the cuisine at this elegant and luxurious restaurant which must rank amongst the best in the world' (Ronay 1965, p. 464). However, by 1974, when the *Michelin Guide to Great Britain and Ireland* was first published, the only star awarded in Dublin to symbolise an exceptional restaurant was to the Russell Restaurant, which closed its doors that very year. It was not until 1989 that the *Michelin Guide* would again award a star to a Dublin restaurant, to Restaurant Patrick Guilbaud. However, by 2008, six Dublin restaurants shared seven stars (Guilbaud's was awarded 2 stars since 1996), and three Dublin restaurants were awarded 'Red Ms', which symbolise excellent food and a reasonable price. The global recession and banking crisis made subsequent trading conditions extremely difficult, but Dublin's fine-dining restaurants, for the most part have withstood the recession and the 2014 Michelin Guide awarded stars to five establishments and four bib gourmands or Red 'M's. We are in the middle of a new 'golden age'.

### **Origins and Spread of French *Haute Cuisine***

*Haute cuisine* has been influenced by various influential writers / chefs and has experienced a number of paradigm shifts over the centuries from La Varenne, Carême, Dubois, and Escoffier to Point, Bocuse, Guérard, Mosimann, Roux, Waters, Gagnaire, Adrià, Blumenthal and Redzepi. This chapter uses the term *haute cuisine* to cover the evolving styles of elite cuisine produced and

served in restaurants by professional staff from the Escoffier orthodoxy of the early twentieth century through the ‘*nouvelle cuisine*’ movement of the 1970s and 1980s, to the ‘molecular gastronomy’ or ‘modernist’ movement of the early twenty-first century.

French *haute cuisine* in the public sphere can be said to have originated in Paris with the appearance of restaurants during the latter half of the eighteenth century. This phenomenon was greatly boosted following the French Revolution when the number of restaurants increased dramatically (Spang 2000, pp. 130-133; Mennell 1996, pp. 141-142). Restaurants have been differentiated from a tavern, inn, or a *table d’hôte* by a number of factors. Firstly, they provided private tables for customers; secondly, they offered a choice of individually priced dishes in the form of a *carte* or bill of fare; and thirdly, they offered food at times that suited the customer, not at one fixed time as in the case of the *table d’hôte* (Brillat-Savarin 1994, p. 267). The spread of restaurants to London or Dublin was slow, primarily due to the abundance of gentlemen’s clubs which siphoned off much of the prospective clientele for restaurants in those cities. However, meals had been available to the public in Dublin’s alehouses, taverns, inns and eating-houses for centuries. Indeed, Constantia Maxwell noted that Dublin was renowned for its taverns and alehouses since Elizabethan times; such establishments mostly served good solid plain food such as steaks and chops, rather than the elite cuisine which was provided by French male cooks in the homes of the aristocracy (Maxwell 2010, p. 26).

### **Evidence of French *Haute Cuisine* in Private Irish Households**

The eating habits of both the English upper-classes, and subsequently the new Anglo-Irish upper-classes, were influenced by their continental neighbours. Between 1603 and 1649, the first two Stuart kings, James I and Charles I, espoused Spanish, French and Italian fashions and ideas, including cooking (Spencer 2004, p. 134). Many of the Ascendancy families led hedonistic lifestyles (Robins 2001). The Anglo-Irish ascendancy adopted some of the extraordinary hospitality that had been part of the Gaelic tradition but, with the employment of a professional French chef having become the fashion, their conspicuous consumption was much more sophisticated; they thus emulated the eating patterns of London and Paris. Evidence exists in culinary manuscripts and in some printed cookbooks of the period that show how prevalent the

influence of French *haute cuisine* was at this time among the Anglo-Irish aristocracy (Mac Con Iomaire and Cashman 2011, pp. 81-101).

### **The Emergence of Restaurants in Dublin**

Establishments using the term restaurant became common in the latter half of the nineteenth century. Over twenty-six different Dublin-based restaurants advertised in *The Irish Times* from 1865 to 1900, and the notices included an advertisement announcing the opening of a 'High-Class Vegetarian Restaurant' at 3 and 4 College Street (22/6/1899, p. 1). The first specific evidence of a French restaurant serving *haute cuisine* in Dublin is an advertisement in *The Irish Times* for the Café de Paris in 1861. The advertisement is clearly aimed at an upmarket clientele as it directs the attention of the nobility and gentry to their establishment where 'Breakfasts, Luncheons and Dinners &c. are supplied in the best French style' (14/2/1861, p. 1). This restaurant was linked with a Turkish Baths in Lincoln Place and was run by Messrs Muret and Olin. The Café de Paris was enlarged in 1865 for the International Exhibition with the addition of three private dining rooms. They also advertised both 'dinner à la Carte and Table d'Hôte; choicest Wines and Liqueurs of all kinds, Ices, &c. &c.' (25/9/1865, p. 1). In February 1870, the lease of the Café de Paris was offered for sale, and by November of 1870, an advertisement appeared for the Café de Paris with a T. Woycke as proprietor, heralding a 'Restaurant Français A la Carte' with a ladies' coffee room and dining rooms for small parties provided for' (26/11/1870, p. 4).

The opening of a second 'French' restaurant at Maloz Hotel, 20 and 21 South Anne Street, was advertised in *The Irish Times* in December 1870. The proprietor was a Mr. G. Beats, late of the Provence Hotel, Leicester Square, London. He advertised dinners at two shillings at all times, and noted that 'Every thing served in the Parisian style. French Men-cooks kept. A speciality for soups' (9/12/1870, p. 1). It is unclear how long the restaurant prospered, since in November of the following year, advertisements appeared for Walshe's Hotel at the same address. An advertisement in 1876 for the Corn Exchange Hotel and Restaurant on Burgh Quay boasts that no expense will be spared 'to make the Cuisine under a French Chef, the most attractive in the city'. In November 1884, Thomas Corless advertised in *The Irish Times* the presence of a 'First-class French Cook' in The Burlington Restaurant and Dining Rooms, Andrew Street and Church Lane (1/11/1884, p. 4). However, the next specific mention of a French restaurant, rather than a restaurant with a French

cook, is not until an advertisement in *The Irish Times* in August 1890 for a French restaurant attached to the Bodega on Dame Street (28/8/1890, p. 4).

### **Influence of Foreign Chefs / Restaurateurs**

Analysis of the 1911 Census shows that the leading chefs, waiters and restaurateurs during the first decades of the twentieth century were predominantly foreign-born, and had trained in the leading restaurants, hotels and clubs of Europe (Mac Con Iomaire 2008, pp. 92-126). *Haute cuisine* was advertised as available in the dining rooms of the best hotels in Dublin (Gresham, Shelbourne, Metropole, Royal Hibernian) in the first half of the twentieth century and these were the workplaces of those immigrant chefs. Along with the Jammet brothers, other European families such as the Geldofs, Oppermanns, Gygaxs, and Bessons, were also influential in developing the restaurant business in Dublin. Paul Besson came to Dublin from London in 1905 as manager of The Royal Hibernian Hotel on Dawson Street. Over the decades, Paul Besson, along with his son Kenneth and other members of his family, took control of The Royal Hibernian, The Russell Hotel, and The Bailey Restaurant on Duke Street.

Arguably, the most notable amongst those chefs were the Jammets. Michel (1858-1931) and François (1853-1940) Jammet were born in St. Julia de Bec, near Quillan, in the French Pyrenees. Michel first came to Dublin in 1887 as chef to Henry Roe, the distiller. Following four years working in London for Lord Cadogan, he returned to Dublin in 1895, becoming head chef at the Vice Regal Lodge when Lord Cadogan became Lord Lieutenant of Ireland. In 1888, François became head chef of the Café de Deux Mondes, rue de La Paix, Paris, and he then moved to the Boeuf à la Mode, Rue de Valois, Palais Royal, where he married the owner's daughter, Eugenie. In 1900, Michel and François Jammet bought the Burlington Restaurant and Oyster Saloons at 27 St Andrew Street, Dublin from Tom Corless. They refitted, and renamed it The Jammet Hotel and Restaurant in 1901, and it became pre-eminent among the restaurants of Dublin. Its clientele included leading politicians, nobility, actors, writers and artists such as William Orpen and Harry Kernoff, whose painting of the restaurant now hangs in Dublin's Restaurant Patrick Guilbaud. In 1908, François Jammet returned to the Boeuf à la Mode in Paris. There, his two children, Hypollite

and Jeanne, both followed him into the catering trade. They acquired the Hotel Bristol in 1925 which remained in the family until 1978 (Mac Con Iomaire 2009, pp. 956-958).

Jammet's Hotel and Restaurant traded at 26-27 Andrew Street and 6 Church Lane until the lease reverted to the Hibernian Bank in 1926. Michel Jammet acquired Kidd's Empire Restaurant and Tea Rooms at 45-46 Nassau Street at this time and brought some of the fittings from the original premises. When he retired in 1927, his son Louis took over the running of the business while Michel returned to Paris where he was a director and the principal shareholder of the Hotel Bristol until his death in 1931.

The new Restaurant Jammet in Nassau Street traded successfully from 1927 until its closure in 1967. It became *the* haunt for artists and the literary set, and the Jammets took pride in the fact that it was Dublin's only French Restaurant. The new restaurant had, as a centrepiece, four murals depicting the Four Seasons - they had been painted by the artist Bossini in order to discharge his bill in the old Burlington Restaurant. The new premises was described by John Ryan, a regular customer, as: 'the main dining room was pure French Second Empire, with a lovely faded patina to the furniture, snow white linen, well cut crystal, monogrammed porcelain, gourmet sized silver-plated cutlery and gleaming decanters' (1987, p. 3) There were two entrances: the 'posh' one was in Nassau Street, the ordinary one was in an alley off Grafton Street at Adam's Court. The premises boasted a smoking room and an Oyster Bar where lunch could be taken at a wide marble counter from a high stool. The literati, like Liam O' Flaherty and Seán O' Sullivan, drank here. Louis's wife Yvonne had a reputation in her own right as an excellent painter and sculptor and as a member of the *avant garde* painters' group, 'The White Stag'. She also worked on stage and in costume design for the Gate Theatre. W.B. Yeats had his own table in Jammet's. On 6 March 1933, he dined in Jammet's 'Blue Room' with fellow writers A.E., Brinsley Macnamara, James Stephens, Lennox Robinson, F.R. Higgins, Seamus O' Sullivan, Peadar O' Donnell, Francis Stuart, Frank O' Connor, Miss Somerville, J.M. Hone and Walter Starkie. When Josef Reukli, the Swiss maitre d'hôtel, was asked to describe the clientele, he replied '*La crème de la crème*'. In 1944, the new Grill Room was opened upstairs. It was designed by the architect Noel Moffet in a futurist style (Mac Con Iomaire 2009, p. 957).

Over many years, Restaurant Jammet maintained its position as the finest restaurant producing *haute cuisine* in Dublin. Until the appointment of Pierre Rolland as head chef of The Russell in 1949, Jammet's was also 'the only restaurant in Dublin with an international reputation for its cuisine' (Graves 1949). Indeed, according to Lacoste, Jammet's was the only place in the British Isles where one could eat well in the grand French tradition, '*À Dublin, ...on trouve une cuisine digne de la grande tradition française*' (Lacoste 1947).

### **A Golden Age of *Haute Cuisine* in Dublin**

The 1947-1974 period can be viewed as a 'golden age' of *haute cuisine* in Dublin, since more award-winning world-class restaurants traded in Dublin during this period than at any other time in history. In the late 1940s, The Red Bank Restaurant re-opened as a fine dining restaurant with a French head chef producing *haute cuisine*. Newspaper reports of gastronomic dinners held by the Irish branch of André L. Simon's Food and Wine Society provide evidence of the growing interest in *haute cuisine* during this time. Both The Russell Restaurant and Restaurant Jammet received awards from the American magazine *Holiday* in the 1950s for being 'outstanding restaurants in Europe' (*Irish Times*, 7/2/1956, p. 11). Further evidence of Dublin restaurants' status as culinary leaders became evident when the *Egon Ronay Guide* first covered Ireland in 1963. By 1965, Ronay suggested that the Russell Restaurant 'must rank amongst the best in the world' (Ronay 1965, p. 464). The majority of the award-winning Dublin restaurants produced a form of *haute cuisine* that had been codified by Escoffier; it was labour-intensive and it was silver-served by large teams of waiters in elegant dining rooms.

The beginnings of expertise transfer occurred in the early 1950s when an agreement between Ken Besson and the Irish Transport and General Workers Union (IT&GWU) allowed foreign-born chefs and waiters to work in Ireland in return for Irish apprentices being indentured in the Besson-owned Russell and Royal Hibernian Hotels under the guidance of chefs Pierre Rolland and Roger Noblet. *The Irish Hotelier* described Rolland as 'numbered among the ten most distinguished culinary experts in France' (Anon 1954, p. 13). Under his leadership, the Russell Hotel kitchen became a training ground for generations of Irish chefs. By the late 1950s and early 1960s there were fewer foreign chefs or waiters working in Dublin. They had been replaced by foreign-trained



Irish chefs and waiters. During this period, the catering branch of the IT&GWU strongly opposed the employment of foreign staff. Oral evidence suggests that some Irish chefs and waiters were pressurised to take senior positions, in order to exclude suitable foreign-born candidates (McGee 2004; Sands 2003). Two Irish chefs, Vincent Dowling in Restaurant Jammet, and Joe Collins in Jury's Hotel, Dame Street, were sent abroad for training – to Paris and Switzerland – before returning to become *chef de cuisine* in their respective restaurants. The move from French to Irish head chefs, combined with a new Irish culinary aesthetic inspired by *An Tóstal*, may have influenced the change in listings of certain Dublin restaurants in the 1965 *Egon Ronay Guide*. In that year, the classification of Shelbourne Hotel Restaurant, Red Bank Restaurant, Haddington House Hotel Restaurant, Metropole Georgian Room, Intercontinental Embassy Restaurant and Gresham Hotel Grill room was changed from 'French' cuisine to 'Franco-Irish' cuisine. Restaurant Jammet and the Royal Hibernian's Lafayette Restaurant remained listed as 'French', whereas the Russell was listed as '*Haute Cuisine*'. However, restaurants such as the Old Ground Hotel in Ennis and The Pontoon Bridge Hotel in Mayo were listed as 'Plain Cooking' (Ronay 1965).

In the 1950s and 1960s, French classical cuisine was dominant in the Shelbourne, Gresham, and Moira Hotels, although analysis of the *Egon Ronay Guide* indicates a drop in the standard of food in some Dublin hotels by the mid-1960s. The arrival of the Swiss master chef, Willy Widmer, helped to improve the standard of food in Jury's Hotel, Dame Street, during the 1960s; the opening of The Intercontinental Hotel in Ballsbridge in 1963 brought several more foreign-born chefs to Dublin. Both hotels became nurseries for future native culinary talent. However, oral evidence from one of the Intercontinental's Irish chefs, Jim Bowe, suggests that standards dropped again when the foreign chefs left, and as the owners began to focus more on making a profit than on maintaining standards. This was also reflected in the *Egon Ronay Guides*, with the Intercontinental Hotel's Embassy Restaurant which was awarded one star from 1964-66, failing to repeat that success in 1967 or in subsequent years.

### **Decline of *Haute Cuisine* (1967-1974)**

A new phenomenon appeared towards the end of the 1960s when enthusiastic amateurs opened restaurants such as Snaffles on Leeson Street (Nicholas Tinne) and The Soup Bowl in Molesworth Lane (Peter Powrie). This reflected a similar trend that had occurred slightly earlier in England (Driver 1983; Houston-Bowden 1975, p. 127). A number of factors led to the demise of the traditional Escoffier style *haute cuisine* in Dublin restaurants by the early 1970s. Political and economic factors such as the Dublin bombings, the OPEC oil crisis, and banking strikes, all played some part in the demise. It has also been suggested that another factor, the revival of ‘wealth tax’ by the Fine Gael political party in their 1973 election manifesto, resulted in a mass exodus of landed gentry from Ireland. O’Sullivan and O’Neill (1999, p. 161) claim that The Shelbourne Hotel witnessed an instant twenty per cent drop in business in 1973, and that the Russell Hotel was also affected. The latter closed in 1974.

It must also be taken into account that the growing trend towards suburban living and the rising importance of car parking were two relevant factors: they were reasons given for the closure of Restaurant Jammet in 1967 (Hood 2006). Dublin’s golden age of *haute cuisine* ended with that closure, and the subsequent closures of The Red Bank Restaurant in 1969 and the Russell Hotel in 1974. The Royal Hibernian Hotel then assumed the mantle of Dublin’s last bastion of ‘Escoffier style’ *haute cuisine* until it too closed its doors in 1982.<sup>1</sup>

### ***Haute Cuisine (1974-1986)***

The appearance of a growing number of suburban restaurants such as the Mirabeau, Goat Grill, Shangri la, Guinea Pig, Sutton House and The King Sitric during the 1970s reflects this trend towards the suburban, while centre-city restaurants such as Snaffles and The Soup Bowl, opened by enthusiastic amateurs, became the new venues for Dublin gourmards. Country house hotels such as Ashford Castle and Arbutus Lodge, with Russell-trained chefs in their kitchens, then emerged at the centre of *haute cuisine* in Ireland in the 1970s and early 1980s. Declan Ryan of Arbutus Lodge credits discerning French tourists with being the arbiters of taste at his Cork city restaurant and their arrival was facilitated by the new direct Rosslare-Le Havre ferry link in 1973.

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<sup>1</sup> The building was subsequently redeveloped into offices and a shopping arcade, The Royal Hibernian Way.

Fine dining restaurants in Dublin did not totally disappear during the 1970s and 1980s, but there was a distinct decline in restaurants with an international reputation. Restaurants such as The Lord Edward (run by ex-Red Bank chefs and waiters), and The Celtic Mews, run by Joe Gray (ex-Jury's Dame Street) provided consistent '*cuisine bourgeoise*'. The real growth area in good dining at this time, both in Dublin and elsewhere in Europe, was the emergence of restaurants run by chef / proprietors.

### ***Nouvelle Cuisine* and the Rise of the Chef/Proprietor**

The *nouvelle cuisine* movement was rooted in the '*cuisine de marché*' which originated as a rebellion against the Escoffier orthodoxy, particularly as it had become stultified in international hotel cuisine. A synopsis of Henri Gault's 'ten commandments' of *nouvelle cuisine* includes: reduced cooking time for fish, game, vegetables and pasta; smaller menus based on market fresh ingredients; invention of new dishes; embracing advanced technology; the aesthetics of simplicity; and a knowledge of dietetics (Gault 1996, pp. 123-127). Stephen Mennell has pointed out that Gault and Millau forgot to include one characteristic common to most of the *nouveaux cuisiniers*, that they were mostly chef-proprietors of their own restaurants (Mennell 1996, p. 164).

One of the first Dublin restaurants to be opened by a chef / proprietor was The King Sitric (Aidan McManus) in Howth (1971-present). This was followed by The Mirabeau (Sean Kinsella) in Sandycove (1972-1984), Johnny's (Johnny Opperman) in Malahide (1974-1989), Le Coq Hardi (John Howard) in Ballsbridge (1977-2001), The Guinea Pig (Mervyn Stewart) in Dalkey (1977-present), and Rolland (Henri Rolland) in Killiney (1974 –c.1986).<sup>2</sup> The most famous of these early chef / proprietor restaurants were the Mirabeau and Le Coq Hardi. Some of the restaurants listed above shared many characteristics covered in Gault's 'ten commandments' of *nouvelle cuisine*, most particularly the use of fresh seasonal local produce. However, the lack of a codified repertoire makes it difficult to pinpoint who was serving *nouvelle cuisine* in Dublin, chiefly since trends were changing quite rapidly, particularly in the 1980s with influences coming from various ethnic and fusion cuisines.

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<sup>2</sup> Henri Rolland was the son of the famous Pierre Rolland from The Russell Hotel.

Three restaurants, all of which opened in the 1980s, can be said to best represent the *nouvelle cuisine* movement in Dublin. They are Restaurant Patrick Guilbaud, The Park, and White's on the Green. Patrick Guilbaud, a French-born chef, had trained in the leading restaurants in Paris before moving to Manchester to learn English and eventually opening his own restaurant in Cheshire where one of his customers, Barton Kilcoyne, invited him to visit Dublin. He soon moved to Dublin and opened a purpose-built restaurant that set new standards in dining, ones that had been missing since the Jammet era. A description of Restaurant Patrick Guilbaud in *The Irish Times* is brief: 'the restaurant is bright and elegant with French staff serving French food' (2/6/1982, p. 7). The restaurant did not enjoy immediate commercial success; it took a while for the Irish clientele to become accustomed to the small portions and *la nouvelle cuisine d'Irlande* served by Guilbaud. The restaurant, however, did receive critical acclaim, being awarded an Egon Ronay star in 1983, and also earning a recommendation from *The Good Food Guide* in 1983, and a Bord Fáilte award in 1984. Aidan McManus dined in Restaurant Patrick Guilbaud within weeks of its opening and records his shock that the bar 'had been raised so high' (McManus 2008).

The early 1980s proved to be a difficult time for Irish restaurateurs due to a combination of general economic conditions and particular fiscal changes made by the government. Many young Irish chefs and waiters emigrated during this period although some would return during the late 1980s and early 1990s with experience of *nouvelle cuisine* and fusion cuisine gained in the leading restaurants of London, Paris, New York and California. Restaurant Patrick Guilbaud ran into financial difficulties in the mid-1980s, but an investment by two wealthy clients cleared the restaurant's debts. Their trust was rewarded when the restaurant won its first Michelin star in 1989, the first Dublin Michelin star since the closure of the Russell Hotel in 1974. The restaurant was awarded two Michelin stars in 1996 and it moved premises in 1997 with the opening of the five-star Merrion Hotel where it is now located.

For the last two decades of the twentieth century, Restaurant Patrick Guilbaud set the standard of *haute cuisine* that other restaurants emulated. Its kitchen and dining room also acted as nurseries for young talent, both Irish and foreign-born. Some restaurants even advertised that their chef was 'ex-Patrick Guilbaud's' as a marker of the high standard of food they served. Ex-Guilbaud staff have been involved in most successful Dublin restaurants during the last twenty years, including

Sebastian Masi (Commons, Pearl Brasserie, Locks), Stefan Couzy (Morels, Duzy's), Bruno Bertha (Brunos), and Penny Plunkett (Venu, Mercantile).

Other acclaimed *nouvelle cuisine* restaurants in Dublin in the mid-1980s were Colin O'Daly's The Park in the south city suburb of Blackrock, and White's on the Green in the city centre. O'Daly had trained under Russell Hotel chefs in Dublin Airport and in Ashford Castle. The chef in White's was Michael Clifford, who had trained in Arbutus Lodge in Cork and had won a Michelin star with the Ryan family in Cashel Palace, Co. Tipperary, in 1982 and 1983. Clifford had spent twelve years working outside Ireland in restaurants such as Le Gavroche and The Waterside Inn in England, run by the Roux brothers. He had also worked at the two-star Michelin Parisian restaurant Michel Rostang (O'Byrne 1988, p. 23). His food and its presentation were influenced by the *nouvelle cuisine* that he had experienced abroad. In 1988, however, Clifford left to open his own restaurant in Cork. Giles O'Reilly, who worked as chef in both The Park and White's on the Green notes that the late 1980s was a difficult time for fine dining restaurants in Dublin. He points out that apart from Restaurant Patrick Guilbaud and The Park, the new interesting restaurant at that time was Shay Beano's, where Eamon Ó Catháin, an enthusiastic amateur in the style of Powrie and Tinne, cooked French provincial food (O'Reilly 2008). The late-1980s and early-1990s saw the opening of exciting new restaurants such as The Wine Epergne (Kevin Thornton) and Clarets (Alan O'Reilly), both of which produced fine dining despite difficult economic conditions.

### **Rebirth of *Haute Cuisine* (1994-2008)**

Some Irish chefs such as Johnny Cooke (Polo One, Cooke's Café) had worked in America and returned in the late 1980s with the latest Californian food ideas, influenced by Alice Waters and Jeremiah Towers. Other Irish chefs such as Kevin Thornton (The Wine Epergne, Thorntons), Michael Martin (La Stampa, The Tea Rooms), Shay Kirwan (The Commons), Paul Cartwright (Roly's Bistro), Paul Flynn (La Stampa, The Tannery), James Carberry (ESB, DIT), John Dunne (Les Frères Jacques, The Park, Duzy's), and Conrad Gallagher (Morels, Peacock Alley, Christopher's, Mango Toast) returned to Dublin having worked in the kitchens of Michelin-starred chefs in England and France. In turn, these returning Irish chefs trained the current generation of Irish chefs in the latest techniques of *haute cuisine* which remained firmly rooted in the French culinary canon.

Thus the 1990s was an exciting time for Dublin restaurants, particularly in the latter half of the decade. *The Irish Times* reported that Ireland had the most dynamic cuisine in any European country, a place where in the last decade ‘a vibrant almost unlikely style of cooking has emerged’ (McKenna 1996, p. 44). Yet, the real growth in *haute cuisine* did not become apparent until 1994 when The Commons on Stephen’s Green was awarded a Michelin star and both Ernie’s (Ernie Evans) in Donnybrook and Clarets (Alan O’Reilly) in Blackrock were awarded Red ‘M’s’. Factors influencing this new dynamism included the rising wealth of Irish citizens which made dining in restaurants a regular pastime rather than an occasional treat, and also the changing tastes of the Irish public who were more widely-travelled than any previous Irish generation. In 1996, the year Michelin awarded two stars to Restaurant Patrick Guilbaud, Thornton’s Restaurant in Portobello received its first star. In 1998, another Michelin star was awarded to Conrad Gallagher’s Peacock Alley in South Anne Street. Peacock Alley moved to The Fitzwilliam Hotel on Stephen’s Green the following year. By 1999, the chief executive of the Restaurant Association of Ireland (RAI) declared ‘we have a dining culture now, which we never did before’ (Holmquist 1999, p. 43). In 2000, Dublin restaurants were awarded four Michelin stars and eight Michelin red ‘M’ symbols; in contrast, only two Michelin stars were awarded in the Republic of Ireland outside Dublin, and a further two stars were given in Northern Ireland. Dublin, once again, had become the centre of *haute cuisine* in Ireland and a second ‘golden age’ was emerging.

In 2001, Kevin Thornton became the first native Irish chef to be awarded two Michelin stars. In the first years of the new millennium, Michelin stars were awarded to L’Écrivain (Derry Clarke) on Baggot Street, and to Chapter One (Ross Lewis) in Parnell Square which had held Red ‘M’s’ from the mid-1990s. Lorcan Cribben returned from working in The Ivy in London to win a Michelin Red ‘M’ in three different Dublin restaurants in the last decade: Lloyd’s Brasserie, Morel’s at Stephen’s Hall, and Bang Café. Two further Michelin stars were awarded in 2008 to Bon Appetit (Oliver Dunne) in Malahide, and to Mint (Dylan McGrath) in Ranelagh, but like the Russell, Mint closed within a year of being awarded the star. Both Dunne and McGrath trained in Dublin’s best restaurants, such as The Commons, then in London with Gordon Ramsay, Tom Aikens and John Burton Race before returning home. They both remain key players in Dublin’s

fine-dining industry and their kitchens have become the training ground for the next generation of Irish chefs.

In January 2011, *Le Guide du Routard*, the travel bible for the French-speaking world, praised Ireland's restaurants for being unmatched the world over for the combination of quality of food, value and service. This second 'golden age' has been maintained despite the difficult economic conditions of the recession. The 2014 Michelin Guide not only awarded stars to five Dublin restaurants, but also awarded stars to four other Irish restaurants outside Dublin – the highest number of starred restaurants in Ireland since the Guide was first published in 1974. The projection and presentation of Irish cuisine, both foreign-influenced and home-inspired, have given it a notable public profile. Its beginnings were in the origins of French *haute cuisine*; its further progress came in the development of restaurants, especially in the early golden age of Dublin Restaurants, the ones so strongly influenced by French families such as the Jammets, Bessons and Rollands, all of whom adopted Ireland as home. The latest important French influence is prospering: Patrick Guilbaud was advised that if his restaurant was half as successful as Jammet's had been, he would be doing extremely well. Restaurant Patrick Guilbaud, now in its thirtieth year in business, has already outlasted the Russell Restaurant in longevity but has still has another 37 years to go to equal Jammet's as the most influential and successful French restaurant Ireland has had (Ryan 2011, p. 3). There is a neat symbolism involved in Patrick Guilbaud's purchase of the Harry Kernoff painting of Jammet's: it signifies both continuity and tradition, it ties *haute cuisine* to Irish imagery, and it reflects the degree to which French influence has dominated Irish public imagination in that most important area over at least two centuries.

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