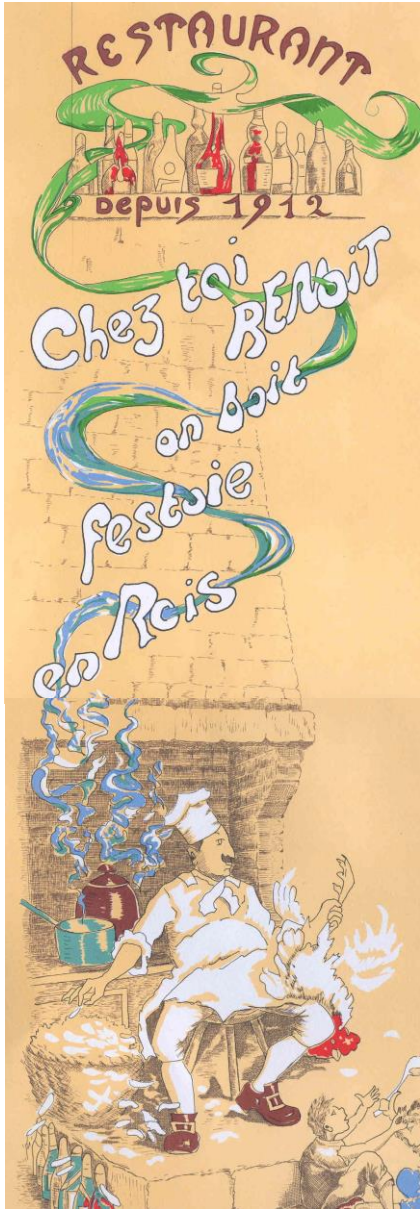


BENOIT.

ALAIN DUCASSE

PARIS



Benoit first opened its doors in 1912 and is now one of the last remaining authentic Parisian bistros around. Sold to Alain Ducasse Entreprise in April 2005 by the Petit family who had been its owners for three generations, Benoit is an address that is renowned for its warm, friendly, atmosphere so typical of a family business.

Food lovers flock from far and wide to enjoy a delicious lunch or evening meal in this animated location, the only Parisian bistro to boast a Michelin star.

Just a stone's throw from the *Hôtel de ville* (Town Hall), the Pompidou Centre and the famous Tour Saint-Jacques, Benoit has been welcoming fans of traditional French cuisine since the early XXth century: "*Chez toi Benoit, on boit, festoie, en rois*" ("Come over to Benoit's and once you're in you'll drink and feast just like a king").

Benoit - Member of Châteaux et Hôtels Collection
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Email: restaurant.benoit@alain-ducasse.com

Website: www.benoit-paris.com

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Open daily

Rivoli/Sébastopol car park

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Capacity: 76 covers

+ Private Function Room with 20 additional covers.

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Lunch menu €39 (starter + main + dessert)

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In the beginning...

Until April 2005, Benoit had belonged to the Petit family for 93 years. The story began in 1912 when Michel Petit's grandfather, Benoît Matray, first bought the restaurant. A butcher by trade and boasting an excellent gustatory memory, Monsieur Matray turned the restaurant into a veritable *bouchon lyonnais**. His customers were the market traders that worked in the nearby artistic and colourful *Les Halles*. The restaurant rapidly became *the* place to eat, an animated spot in which Benoît Matray extended a warm and hospitable welcome. The restaurant was often fully booked, becoming a regular rendez-vous for loyal customers who gathered in large groups to devour the tasty little dishes that made Benoit so famous: those based on authentic French recipes.

At the end of the 1950s, Benoît Matray contemplated selling the business. He even organised a candle auction, but no buyer was found. In reality, he secretly hoped that his grandson would take the reins. Michel Petit had, indeed, joined a Parisian catering school upon leaving sixth form college. Keen to visit the United States, he worked for the Transatlantique cruise company for a while after numerous work placements and a period at the *Cercle Interallié* in Paris. In 1961, Michel Petit finally fulfilled his grandfather's dream, replacing him at the head of Benoit. As it turned out, Michel Petit's own childhood dream of becoming a vet had been sidelined in favour of a trade learnt not only from his grandfather but from his father too, himself a hotel and restaurant owner in Gaillon in the Eure.

Michel Petit and his wife Catherine made several alterations to the premises: they created a private function room on the 1st floor, renovated the kitchens, extended the dining area and made improvements to the cellar where wine was bottled using the traditional Beaujolais method. Michel Petit's ageing mother Marie, author of the closely guarded recipe book that was behind the restaurant's success, was also called in to lend a helping hand. Michel convinced her to put her apron back on and teach him how to make her *blanquette of veal*, *traditional calf's head* and her *rice pudding*... Despite the disappearance of *les Halles'* market stalls, a new group of customers made Benoit their own, perpetuating the tradition of sharing a convivial meal. One day, the pyrographer Lesage, one of Benoit's regular customers, came up with the slogan for which the restaurant has since become famous: "*Chez toi Benoit, on boit, on festoie en rois*" ("Come over to Benoit's and once you're in you'll drink and feast just like a king"). He also personalized the menu with several highly festive drawings, to which Madame Petit later added her own feminine touch.

After many years of hospitable success, Michel and Catherine Petit decided to sell Benoit to the Alain Ducasse Group, which today combines the restaurant's typical bistro traditions with its own modern-day twist. The Petit family could never have imagined that by selling their business to Alain Ducasse, they would end up placing the restaurant on the international stage and that in September 2005 the very name that the family had held so dear to its hearts for almost 100 years - BENOIT - would shine out for all to see in one of the most highly visible districts of Tokyo.

*bistros typical to Lyons serving traditional local cuisine

And today...

The Premises

"For once in my life, I'm not going to talk about cooking, but about the places in which that cooking's eaten!" says Alain Ducasse in his *Dictionnaire Amoureux de la Cuisine* upon reaching the "Bistros and Brasseries" chapter. Benoit is one of those *"memorable places that great artists, from the Second Empire onwards, decorated with mirrors, stained glass and stucco work, enamelled tiles and panelling; those authentic locations that are full of life and where a sauerkraut, a sole meunière or an apple tart are simply a must, all served with a generous helping of conviviality"*.

From the outside, you can't even begin to imagine how comfortable and friendly the restaurant is inside. Its interior is secluded behind delicate lace curtains and huge windows that proudly display the awards the restaurant has earned over the past few years: plates autographed by famous chefs.

Once you're through Benoit's double doors, you enter the world of a traditional Parisian bistro. From the tiling to the panelling, the red velvet wall seats to the copperware, the engraved panes of glass to the imitation marble columns, from the lamps at the bar to the huge mirrors or the Beaujolais-style reproductions, every last detail makes for an exquisitely cosy location in which you feel cocooned from the outside world.

Those who are after still more privacy can make their way upstairs to entertain their friends in the private function room. The centrally-positioned table that dominates this oval-shaped room can seat twenty guests. The walls are adorned with numerous paintings, including a still life, a portrait of the former owner and an advertising poster singing the praises of "black ceremonial clothing" on sale at the "Tour Saint-Jacques" store. The ceiling is painted to resemble an immense glass roof decorated with pots of coloured flowers. Those who allow their gaze to wander will discover old earthenware floor tiles, decorative panels above the doors, a fireplace, a pedestal table, candlestick lamps and antique terrines..

The Cuisine

"Gran, the green beans are overdone!". At the tender age of 12, such were the words that tripped off the tongue of the young Alain Ducasse in a farmhouse somewhere in the Landes. Even way back then, he already knew he wanted to be a chef. Born near Castel Sarrazin amongst the chicks, ducks and geese, brought up surrounded by ceps and foie gras, he grew up in paradise on earth and was introduced to flavour at a very early age. Flavour that he rapidly learnt to respect, preserve and cook. When Alain Ducasse took over Benoit, it was for the very same reasons that he had taken over the *Iparla auberge* and the bistro *Aux Lyonnais* in 2002 with Thierry de la Brosse - Fabienne Eymard wished to give rural produce and French culinary specialities pride of place on his menu to truly honour their flavour.

The €39 lunch menu of the day displayed on the restaurant's easel bears witness to this very desire. It offers a choice of 3 starters, 3 main courses and 3 desserts such as "*Crispy mackerel tart*", "*Daube-style ox cheek*", "*Armagnac savarin, lightly whipped cream*"...

Should you choose to eat *à la carte*, the chef will delight your taste buds with some of France's more traditional dishes: "*Lucullus-style calf's tongue, heart of romaine with mustard*", "*Snails in shells, garlic butter, fine herbs*", "*Nantua-style sole fillets, lightly creamy spinach leaves*", "*Calf's head with ravigote sauce*", "*Home-made cassoulet white beans*", "*Profiteroles Benoit, hot chocolate sauce*"... Every one of these dishes is served in an enormous white porcelain plate beautifully decorated with floral motifs and with a "B" inscribed in the centre. And Madame Petit herself was behind the golden décor which delicately entwines the silver metal cutlery. Fabienne Eymard, chef of the restaurant, leads a brigade of about fifteen cooks.

The Wines

To accompany this flavour-packed menu, the sommelier, Olivier Gresselin, purpose some 350 wines to choose from. Carefully selected by Gérard Margeon, Head Sommelier of Les restaurants d'Alain Ducasse, they honour all the main French wine-producing regions. The wine list at Benoit gives centre stage to the great French classics, the "A-grade" wine growers, the top range vintages, all those great vineyards that have established the country's reputation.

The Service

At Benoit, the welcome and service must reflect the surroundings: simple, warm and of excellent quality.



Since 2005, discover Benoit in Tokyo:

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