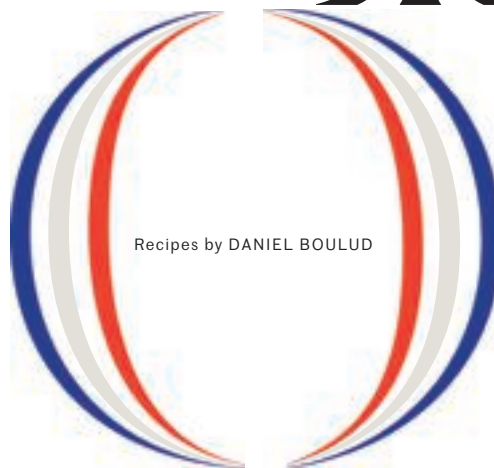


# Don't Mess with

In which we eat our way around town with hometown hero Daniel Boulud and find that all is well in the gutsy gastronomic capital

BY ADAM SACHS | Photographs by Helen Cathcart

**A** *bouchon* is not a bistro. Bistro: a term deprived of meaning, splashed about globally, indiscriminately. Toulouse has bistros. So, too, Tuscaloosa and all points in between. • The *bouchon*, by contrast, is a fixed type, a local phenomenon, stubbornly immutable even as the world around it insists on changing. The *bouchon* does not travel. Only here—where the snaking Rhône and Saône rivers meet, and the charcuterie shops in the old town are hung with swaddled, pear-shaped pork sausages called *Jésus de Lyon* and the windows of the *pâtisseries* piled high with the distinctive hot-pink pralines that figure into nearly all local pastry variants—do we encounter this endemic species, the true workingman's *bouchon lyonnaise*. • What does it look like? Not much. Plain butcher's paper over red-and-white-checked tablecloths. Buttery light on plastered peach-colored walls hung with chipped enamel strainers, whisks and ladles, posters advertising extinct liqueurs and Marcel Pagnol films, patinated copper pots and garlands of drying garlic.





And at the center of the room, anchoring it, or circulating with the chatty patrons, pastry-bound multi-meat pâtés so massively voluminous they are named after *pillows*.

Quality of fare varies, but there is a comforting conformity of ritual in these establishments. They are built to welcome, to err on the side of over-feeding. *Bouchon* means “bottle stopper” and there is certainly wine here, lots of it and none very fancy. (A local partisan once noted, approvingly, that, in addition to the bodies of water mentioned above, the city was served too by a “third river, the Beaujolais, which never dries up and is never muddy.”)

There’s another explanation for the name: *Bouchonner un cheval* refers to the act of brushing a horse with straw.

“In the old days these were places where you could have your horse cleaned and fed and you could also get a little bite,” Daniel Boulud said, quickly glancing at the menu at La Munière. The *bouchon* menu is not meant to be lingered over or debated. One just orders a lot of everything, much of it shared in communal, all-you-can-eat platters and cocottes. That evening

we began with a frisbee-sized slice of the house terrine, or *oreiller* (“pillow”).

“Foie gras, Guinea hen, chicken, duck gelée,” Boulud said, itemizing the pillow’s layers. He took a sip of wine and continued: “truffle, duck heart, the rest of the duck...”

Boulud, the celebrated king of French gastronomy in New York, operates a posh constellation of restaurants in Manhattan, Singapore, Palm Beach, and beyond. But Lyon is where he is from, where he studied and mastered his craft and it’s the food of this region that runs in his blood. The first Café Boulud operated on the family farm in Saint-Pierre-de-Chandieu, twelve or so miles southeast of the city. The family Boulud hunted, raised cows, pigs, goats, chickens, squab, and rabbits; made wine; and sold their cheese, vegetables, and eggs at market. The only thing imported was fish, which was bought off a truck that drove by on Fridays.

“I wanted to get out of the farm so bad!” Boulud said, smiling. The grow-your-own self-sufficiency—fetishized and in vogue now—would have felt cloying to a starry-eyed 14-year-old trainee peeling carrots in the kitchen at Nandron, then an estimable Michelin



#### LA MEUNIÈRE

11 rue Neuve

Chef Olivier Canal (left) shows off the massive meat-filled *oreiller de la belle meunière*, one of the traditional ways to begin a meal (above) at this classic *bouchon* lyonnaise which has been given a gentle makeover by Canal and his partners. “These pâtés are like 25 pounds,” says Daniel Boulud, digging in (right).

**LE SUPRÊME**

106 cours Gambetta  
Gâteau de foie blonde, a pretty chicken liver cake, and tête de veau sauce ravigote are two Lyonnaise classics reimagined at this warm and welcoming modern restaurant owned by husband-and-wife team Yun Young Lee and Grégory Stawowy.

**CAFÉ SILLON**

46 avenue Jean-Jaurès;  
cafe-sillon.com  
Mathieu Rostaing-Tayard turns out inventive, seriously delicious dishes from the small kitchen of this lively neo-bistro with a bit of Scandinavian style. There's something of the Lyonnaise swagger in Rostaing's pairings of delicate rabbit kidneys with purple cabbage, and pork confit with chard and maple syrup.



*Its bakeries and markets are just part of why Lyon proclaims itself to be the gastronomic capital of France.*



two-star temple on the quai Jean-Moulin.

Boulud is the most unstoppably curious, energetic, and gracious of chefs, which is why he allowed himself to be lured away from his parents' farm and vacationing family for a series of meals during which I pestered him with a trio of repetitive questions: *What's so great about Lyonnaise cuisine? Why does the rest of this prideful country allow this one city to proclaim itself as The Gastronomic Capital of France without putting up a fight? And: Could you please pass the pig's snout salad?*

To the first two items on my agenda, Boulud offered a balance of explication and allowing the food to speak for itself, which, this being Lyon, it did with swagger.

Geography and supply, Boulud advised, were keys to understanding its place in French cooking.

"The bounty of the region created a cuisine that's rich in diversity. All around there is wine. You have the *poulet* from Bresse nearby, the *brochet*, or pike, coming from the rivers and lakes, crayfish, frogs legs," he said.

"South of Lyon it is California, a garden all the way down to Provence. North there is the bounty of vegetables and to the west, mushrooms and Charolais beef."

"In Paris the cooking was fancier, more refined but it was a different clientele," he said. "Here it was the *cuisine bourgeoise*. The food was gutsier, not so cheffy."

Hungry for un-cheffy things, I mentioned the

snouts. "Ah, the schnoz," Boulud said, enthusiastically. "Rolled, poached, and sliced thin."

The mustardy *salade museau* was part of a perverse onslaught of platters that soon filled the table. Jellied veal trotters, lentils, *cervelat* (a dense and delicious pink boudin) and potato salad tossed with more saucisson. We had no horses but these "salads" alone would have fed a calvary.

"Don't get comfortable!" Boulud advised the table. It was our first day in Lyon. We were filling up too quickly, like amateurs. Anyway, we were already late for our second dinner of the evening.

The first chef in France to be awarded Michelin's highest three-star rating for two restaurants at the same time was not the globetrotting restaurateur Alain Ducasse in the 1990s, but a stout and feared Lyonnaise woman named Eugénie Brazier in 1933.

La Mère Brazier as she was known was part of a remarkable lineage of female chefs that helped define the culinary identity of the area and make its restaurants legend. It's hard to think of an example (in or out of France, before or since) where a group of women have exerted such explicit, lasting influence on a restaurant culture as the *mères* of Lyon.

"She had the biggest cojones in all the region," Boulud said admiringly as we entered the elegant quarters of restaurant Mère Brazier on rue Royale for our second dinner. Her restaurant in the country

**L'AUBERGE DU PONT DE COLLONGES**  
40 rue de la Plage,  
Collonges-au-Mont-d'Or;  
bocuse.fr  
*Paul Bocuse's restaurant, situated just a few miles north of Lyon, and where he's known as the grandfather of cuisine nouvelle, has had three Michelin stars for more than 50 years, longer than any other restaurant in history.*

## WHAT TO DRINK WITH YOUR LYONNAISE MEAL

In Lyon, diners mostly gravitate toward robust Côtes-du-Rhône and lots of rounded and textured beaujolais to pair with the region's hearty food. Below are four picks from Michaël Dell'Aira, the general manager and sommelier of Lyon's Le Suprême restaurant.

**Clusel Roch Côte-Rôtie (2012 vintage; \$50; garnetwine.com):** A refined syrah from just south of Lyon, with hints of ripe red fruits (like cherries), truffles, and leather. Serve with red meat.

**Yves Gangloff Condrieu (2012 vintage; \$100; hitimewine.net):** A dry, aromatic white from the viognier grape, with elements of dried

apricots, lemon confit, and exotic fruits. Pair with pan-seared foie gras, cooked rind cheeses, and apricot tarts.

**Jean Louis Dutraive "Domaine de la Grand'Cour" Fleurie (2014 vintage; \$30; mwc wine.com):** A superbly elegant and balanced gamay, with notes of kirsch, violet, and iris flower. Pair with sausage, pork, and charcuterie.

**Alain Graillot Crozes-Hermitage (2013 vintage; \$30; whwc.com):** A full-bodied yet softly tannic syrah, with notes of blackberries and spices. Serve older vintages with red meat and younger with charcuterie.





## Meringue Floating in Crème Anglaise (Île Flottante)

**SERVES 4**

Active: 1 hr.; Total: 1 hr. 30 min.

Sprinkled on top of these delicate meringues—which float in a vanilla custard—are praline roses, caramel-coated almonds dyed a bright pink. The color's a bit shocking, but they're a staple of Lyonnaise *pâtisseries* and lend a nice crunch and color to this white-on-white backdrop.

- 3¾ cups sugar
- ¼ tsp. Preema red food color powder (kalustyans.com)
- 8 oz. (2 cups) whole almonds
- 1 Tbsp. orange blossom water
- 2 vanilla beans (1 scraped, 1 split)
- 3 cups milk
- 6 egg yolks
- 10 egg whites

**1** In a small saucepan, combine 2 cups sugar and the red food color powder with ½ cup water over medium-high. Using a

candy thermometer, cook until the temperature reaches 118°, about 18 minutes. Stir in almonds, orange blossom water, and vanilla seeds; stir until crystallized, 4 minutes. Spread praline roses out onto a parchment paper-lined baking sheet until cool.

**2** Place the split vanilla bean and 2 cups milk in a heavy-bottomed saucepan and bring just to a simmer over medium heat. Whisk egg yolks and ¼ cup sugar in a mixing bowl. Reduce heat to low and slowly whisk ½ cup hot milk into egg mixture, then whisk egg mixture into remaining hot milk. Cook, stirring constantly with a wooden spoon, until mixture is thick, about 15 minutes. Remove from heat, strain through a fine sieve, and transfer to a bowl. Stop the cooking by placing bowl into a larger bowl of ice water. Scrape seeds from vanilla bean into custard and discard pod. Cool the crème anglaise to room temperature, then refrigerate until cold. (Store in refrigerator for up to 3 days.)

**5** In a medium saucepan, combine the remaining 1 cup milk with ½ cup sugar and 8 cups water; boil. Reduce the heat to maintain a simmer and cook until the sugar has dissolved, 2 minutes. Reduce the heat to medium-low and keep warm.

**6** In a large bowl and using a hand mixer,

beat egg whites to soft peaks, 3 minutes. Add ½ cup sugar and continue beating until stiff peaks form. Using a 2-cup measure and working in batches, form meringue into a half sphere and submerge in the milk mixture. Cook, turning as needed, until the meringues are firm on the outside, 3 to 4 minutes. Using a slotted spoon, remove and drain on a paper towel-lined baking sheet.

**8** Divide the crème anglaise between 4 shallow bowls and top each with a meringue. Sprinkle with praline roses.

**9** In a small skillet, heat the remaining ½ cup sugar and 1 tablespoon water over high, and cook, stirring occasionally, until the color of dark amber, about 6 minutes. Quickly, and using a spoon, drizzle the caramel over the meringues until set. Serve immediately.

## Tête de Veau

**SERVES 10–12;** **PAGE 45**

Active: 30 min.;

Total: 4 hr. plus overnight soaking

“For me, eating calf’s head is a must in Lyon—even for breakfast,” says chef Daniel Boulud about this Lyonnaise specialty. “It brings back memories of family gatherings and special occasions. We used to raise and slaughter our own calves growing up.” Instead of tackling the butchery on your own, have your butcher do the heavy lifting for you: Ask for the meat, tongue, and brain to be separated from the skull, but leave the skin on because, as Boulud says, “it’s not *tête de veau* without the skin.”

- 1** (12–15 lb.) skin-on calf head, deboned, meat cut into 2-inch pieces, tongue removed (have your butcher do this for you)
- 1½** Tbsp. kosher salt, plus more
- 8** large carrots
- 6** ribs celery
- 4** leeks, trimmed and washed, white and green parts separated
- 3** medium yellow onions, peeled
- 3** bay leaves
- 3** sprigs thyme
- 6** whole cloves
- 1** bunch parsley, stems and leaves separated, plus 2 tsp., finely chopped
- 1½** lb. fingerling or German butterball potatoes, peeled
- 2** hard-boiled eggs, peeled
- 1** cup mayonnaise
- ¼** cup Dijon mustard
- 2** Tbsp. red wine vinegar



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AND PRIDE.

closed years ago and Brazier herself passed away in the 1970s. But her presence is firmly felt, both in terms of her creations still served here (Bresse chicken *demi-deuil*, or “half mourning,” with black truffle tucked under the skin) and the lasting influence over Lyonnaise chefs.

“No other city had a matriarchy like this one,” Boulud said. Many women were working as private chefs for bourgeois families. After the devastations of the first World War, some of these women stepped into the public realm, filling a void left by the men who didn’t come home.

“The young chefs who followed, they loved these

mothers because they were more macho than the men.” We are served another pillow (partridge, wild duck, pheasant—sweeter than the first and more refined) and the truffled *poulet* in silky *sauce suprême* by Mathieu Viannay, suave inheritor of Mère Brazier’s kitchen.

There’s pleasure, even a certain logic, in alternating meals between these high-gloss dining rooms with their pinpoint lighting, table-side service and velvety drapes and the more cluttered, low-ceilinged rooms of the *bouchons*.

At Mère Brazier the *quenelle* is called a *mousseline de brochet* and is served with fingers of lobster meat and an absinthe-laced seafood sauce. It costs €55 and

- ¼ cup chopped cornichons
- 2 Tbsp. capers
- 2 tsp. finely chopped chives
- 2 tsp. finely chopped tarragon,
- ¼ tsp. cayenne pepper

**1** Soak the calf brain overnight in cold water. Put the calf head and meat, the tongue, and 1 tablespoon salt in a large pot. Cover with cold water and bring to a boil. Reduce the heat to maintain a low simmer and cook, skimming any scum that rises to the top, for 15 minutes. Add 2 carrots, 1 stalk of celery, the leek greens, 1 onion, 1 bay leaf, and 1 sprig of thyme and simmer for 1½ hours. Strain and discard the water and vegetables.

**2** Add the head, meat, and tongue back to the pot and cover with fresh water and the remaining ½ tablespoon salt. Bring to a boil and simmer for 45 minutes, skimming any scum that rises to the top.

**3** Tie the remaining 6 carrots, 5 stalks of celery, and the leek whites in a bundle with butcher's twine. Stud the remaining 2 onions with the cloves and tie the remaining bay leaves together with the remaining thyme and the parsley stems. Add the vegetables to the pot. Cook an additional 30 minutes, then add the potatoes; continue cooking another 30 minutes.

**4** While the head continues to cook, remove some of the cooking liquid into a small pot and add the brain. Simmer for 20 to 25 minutes, until firm, then set it aside, still in the liquid, to cool slightly.

**5** When the head meat is tender, remove the pot from the heat and strain out the tongue and the vegetables, keeping the head meat inside the liquid. Peel the skin from the tongue and slice it thinly, on a bias, about ¼-inch thick. Cut the carrot, leek, and celery into 2-inch segments and discard the onions and the herbs. Leave the potatoes whole.

**6** Meanwhile, remove the white from the hard-boiled eggs and chop finely. In a medium bowl, whisk the hard-boiled egg yolk with the mayonnaise, mustard, and red wine vinegar until it becomes a thick paste. Stir in the chopped parsley, the reserved and chopped egg whites, the cornichons, capers, chives, tarragon, cayenne, salt, and pepper and set the gribiche aside.

**7** In a large, shallow serving dish, arrange the vegetables along the outside, then add the pieces of head meat. Add the slices of tongue and place the brain in the center. Garnish with parsley leaves and serve with the gribiche.

## Pike Quenelles with Sauce Nantua (Quenelles de Brochet)

**SERVES 4**

Active: 1 hr.;

Total: 3 hr. plus overnight resting

When he was a young kitchen apprentice, Boulud made 200 of these *quenelles* each week. "Fifty percent of the pleasure of the *quenelle* is in the sauce—without the sauce, it's not that interesting," he says. Traditionally, they are served with a *sauce Nantua* (made from crayfish from the region of Nantua), but you can use any shellfish, such as crab or lobster.

- 1½ lb. skinless, boneless pike or sole, roughly chopped
- 4 large eggs, lightly beaten
- 6 cups heavy cream
- Kosher salt and freshly ground white pepper
- Cayenne
- Nutmeg
- 3 (1 lb.) crayfish or whole lobster, steamed
- 2 Tbsp. olive oil
- 4 large button mushrooms, roughly chopped
- 2 carrots, peeled and roughly chopped
- 2 ribs celery, roughly chopped
- 1 leek, roughly chopped
- ¼ cup tomato paste
- 2 oz. cognac

**1** In a food processor, grind the fish until smooth. Transfer to a large bowl and gently stir in the eggs. Slowly stir in 2 cups cream, salt, pepper, cayenne, and nutmeg. Cover and refrigerate overnight.

**2** The next day, separate the meat from the crayfish shells. Slice the tails into ½-inch-thick slices and refrigerate meat until ready



to use. Heat olive oil in a large saucepan over medium-high. Add crayfish shells and cook, smashing them to extract their juices, 7 to 8 minutes. Add the mushrooms, carrots, celery, and leek and cook until soft, 10 minutes. Add tomato paste and cook 2 minutes. Stir in cognac and cook until the liquid has almost evaporated, 1 minute. Stir in remaining 4 cups cream, reduce the heat to maintain a simmer, and cook 20 minutes. Strain sauce through a fine-mesh strainer over a bowl, discarding solids. Season with salt and pepper and keep warm.

**3** Meanwhile, line a work surface with plastic wrap. Place 1 cup mousse on the edge of the plastic wrap closest to you, leaving about a 2-inch border. Working from one long end and using plastic wrap to lift and guide, roll up mousse, creating a log. Twist the ends of the plastic wrap to secure. Wrap in plastic wrap one more time and set aside. Repeat process with remaining mousse until you have four logs.



**4** Bring a medium saucepan of water to a low simmer. Add the mousse logs and place a smaller saucepan or weight over them to ensure they stay submerged. Cook until set, about 45 minutes, then remove from the water. Wait 5 minutes, then transfer to an ice bath until chilled.

**5** Heat oven to 375°. Unwrap logs and place each into individual oven proof casserole dishes, or place all in one 9-by-13-inch baking dish. Cover each with ½ cup of sauce and bake until bubbling, about 12 minutes. Divide tail pieces between each baking dish and increase oven temperature to 425°. Bake until the tops of each mousse are golden brown, 6 to 8 minutes longer.





**LA MÈRE BRAZIER**  
12 rue Royale;  
lamerebrazier.com  
Mathieu Viannay's cooking offers a refined polish on dishes that are elemental and gutsy. The stiff collar of his chef's jacket is banded in the tricolor, a tell-tale indication of his membership in the *Meilleur Ouvrier de France*, a club for elite culinary bad-asses.



is expertly constructed, elegant, and altogether pleasant. At Daniel & Denise, a *bouchon* we ate at the next day, a more rustic but altogether serviceable *quenelle* with *sauce Nantua* will run you €18 and might easily be the centerpiece of a stabilizing lunch on its own—if, that is, one hadn't signed on for the immersive Daniel Boulud experience. As it happened, chef Joseph Viola (cropped grey hair, blue architect's glasses, sneaky smile) sent out seemingly everything his kitchen knew how to make, much of it exceptional.

I'm a sucker for tripe and Viola's *gras-double à la lyonnaise* is addictively good, both deeply meaty and buoyantly light, layered with strands of sweet onions and tart with vinegar. Perfectly pink pan-fried calf's

liver was followed by an entire saucisson with pistachios, stuffed, like a prison-break weapon, inside a buttery brioche loaf.

"Ok, that's a feast," Boulud admitted. Then the *sabodet* arrived and a low moan (exhaustion, elation) floated over the table. *Sabodet* is like a louche French cousin to Italian cotechino, less a cohesive sausage, more a purple-skinned loose amalgam of pork head, skin, and belly meat, braised in red wine.

This is when you really want to be dining with someone like Daniel Boulud. Someone who can speak about the process and seasons and importance of properly seared pig's skin.

"In the winter when you kill the pig it's also the

**DANIEL & DENISE**  
Multiple locations;  
danieletdenise.fr  
Joseph Viola's trio of simple but elegant dining rooms offer an exemplary introduction to the classics of a *bouchon* menu: *tablier sapeur* ("fireman's apron") which is tripe—pressed, breaded, and fried in the manner of a *schnitzel*—saucisson in buttery brioche, and perfectly cooked calf's liver.



## 1. Fromage Blanc Spread (Cervelle de Canut)

**SERVES 4–6**  
Total: 5 min.

This dish, which translates literally to “silk worker’s brain,” is said to be named for Lyon’s 19th-century silk weavers, who’d often make a lunch of the smooth herbed-cheese spread. Chef Boulud’s family used to make it with fresh goat cheese, but fromage blanc works just as well. Serve with salad, potatoes, or toasted bread.

- 12 oz. fromage blanc
- 1½ Tbsp. finely chopped chervil
- 1½ Tbsp. finely chopped chives
- 1½ Tbsp. finely chopped parsley
- 1½ Tbsp. finely chopped tarragon
- 2 tsp. olive oil
- 2 tsp. red wine vinegar
- 2 tsp. white wine vinegar
- 1 garlic clove, mashed into a paste
- Kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper

In a medium bowl, mix fromage blanc with chervil, chives, parsley, tarragon, olive oil, vinegars, garlic paste, salt, and pepper. Refrigerate until ready to serve.

## 2. Lentil Salad with Pork

**SERVES 6**  
Active: 20 min.; Total: 40 min.

Make sure the lentils are fully cooked, says Boulud, “otherwise, they don’t absorb the seasoning.” Make sure to taste a few minutes before they are drained: They should be creamy with just a slight bite.

- 1 small yellow onion, peeled
- 6 whole cloves
- 1 lb. puy lentils soaked overnight
- 1 lb. skinless pork belly
- 2 carrots, trimmed and peeled
- 1 rib celery
- 3 Tbsp. Dijon mustard
- 3 Tbsp. white wine vinegar
- 3 Tbsp. finely chopped parsley
- 1 red onion, thinly sliced
- Kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper

**1** Stud the onion with cloves. In a large saucepan, cover the onion, the lentils, pork belly, carrots, and celery with 6 cups water. Bring to a boil. Reduce the heat to maintain a simmer and cook, uncovered, for 15 minutes or until the lentils are tender. Drain, discarding the onion. Finely dice the carrots and celery and cut the pork into ¼-inch thick slices.

**2** In a medium bowl, whisk the mustard and vinegar. Add in the vegetables and pork belly along with the lentils, parsley, red onion, salt, and pepper and toss to coat. Transfer to a bowl to serve.

## 3. Lyonnaise Salad with Sausage and Walnuts

**SERVES 6**  
Total: 5 min.

Sausage is the pride of Lyon, and here, instead of being served piping hot, it gets the cold treatment—tossed with a bright vinaigrette and chervil. “It’s the perfect way to eat sausage along with other salads,” says Boulud.

- 1 lb. saucisson pistache or mortadella, cut in ¼-inch-thick slices, then quartered
- ½ cup chopped toasted walnuts
- 2 Tbsp. finely chopped parsley
- 2 Tbsp. finely chopped shallots
- 2 Tbsp. walnut oil
- 1 Tbsp. white wine vinegar
- Freshly ground black pepper

In a medium bowl, toss all ingredients together and transfer to a serving platter.

## 4. Potato Salad with Herring

**SERVES 6**  
Active: 5 min.; Total: 20 min.

The key to this potato salad is its powerful ingredients: Cured herring and bracing red wine vinegar give each bite a pop of flavor. Boulud will just as soon toss in mackerel, sardines, or anchovy, so feel free to swap in your preferred seafood.

- 1 lb. fingerling potatoes
- ¼ cup finely chopped white onion
- 2 Tbsp. finely chopped chives
- 2 Tbsp. olive oil
- 2 Tbsp. red wine vinegar
- 2 Tbsp. white wine
- 2 cured herring fillets cut into ½-inch pieces (about 5 oz.)
- Kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper

**1** In a medium saucepan, cover the potatoes with water and boil until tender, 15 minutes. Cool slightly, then slice into 1-inch pieces.

**2** Toss potatoes in a large bowl with remaining ingredients and serve warm.



same time you're pruning your vines," Boulud said. "So you burn the pig on a fire made with the vine trimmings. Ideally you are making eau-de-vie too, so you cook the *sabodet* in the skin and stems of the grapes so there's this wine flavor and alcohol flavor and nothing on the farm is wasted."

It's an eloquent disquisition on a scenario nearly none of us can relate to (pigs, vines, foods dictated by the rhythms of the seasons as opposed to the on-demand desires of hungry travelers).

**P**aul Bocuse's restaurant sits a few miles north of Lyon, on a bucolic compound just past the spot where the Pont Paul Bocuse crosses the Saône river.

Passing through its gates feels a bit like crossing the border into a slightly surreal land of food worship, a Vatican City of haute Lyonnaise gastronomy. A cobblestoned rue des Grands Chefs winds past a lengthy fresco depicting the history of French cuisine: Napoleon through the great Fernand Point, the *mères*, Julia Child, and leading to the 90-year-old godfather of *cuisine nouvelle* himself, Bocuse. The *maison* is green with pink shutters and painted with large images of the crowing rooster, Bocuse's spirit animal.

Bocuse has had three Michelin stars for 50 years. It's understandable to fear that an institution like this would be resting on its laurels—and a great pleasure to realize that it's not.

We pose for pictures with Bocuse in the kitchen, among the toques and gleaming copper, before the great man is lead away.

"We're in the temple of Lyonnaise food now!" Boulud said, as genuinely excited as I've seen him.

We eat poached foie gras on sweet cooked quince; a *salmis* of Bresse pigeon in a sauce of liver, heart, onion,

more foie gras. This is luxury food, indulgent food, but there's nothing dainty about it. It's as lusty in its refined way as the nose-and-foot salad of a *bouchon*.

A *loup de mer*, or sea bass, the size of a skateboard is presented to the table wrapped in acres of puff pastry.

"Ah, I cut the lemons and cleaned the *loup* for this dish when I was a *stagiaire* here at 15!" Boulud exclaimed, pleased to see a dish he's known in some capacity since 1972.

And the fish—big, buttery, in a sharp *sauce Chorron*—was...*perfect*. An un-updated throwback worth a dozen new-fangled smeared plates at restaurants you can't remember the name of after you leave.

*Cuisine nouvelle* was meant to be an answer to the aspic-laden old ways. Now here it was, decades later, preserved in its own kind of protective aspic of time and reverence and pride.

"I think what is special about Lyon is you have this rich *cuisine bourgeoise*," Boulud said. "And then, you have the *bouchons* where you really see the talents of the *charcutier*, the *pâtissier*, the *boulangier*. Then you had the *mères*, and then the legends like Fernand Point, and Bocuse who trained with him. People had money to spend on food because it was an industrial city, plus you had hundreds of incredible *auberges* nearby in the countryside."

It added up. Here was a culture of eating that is, like the *bouchon*, specific, local, animated by some proudly out-of-step distillation of pure retrograde Frenchness.

While we waited for the cheese cart to roll our way, I asked Boulud what Lyonnaise cuisine could teach the world.

"Oh Lyonnaise food don't care a damn to teach the world anything!" he answered, laughing. "As long as they keep themselves happy with what they love the most, they are fine."

*A gathering of chefs: After a morning market run to Les Halles, but before heading off to work, the local chef's club Les Toques Blanches Lyonnaises meets for a machon, or workingman's breakfast. The group met at chef Gérard Sénélar's Carpe Diem to give Daniel Boulud an award while he was in town; speeches were made, swords drawn, dirty jokes told, steamy tête de veau was eaten for breakfast.*