



# PRESS RELEASE

Press contact : Jacky G. Lesellier CONM CMA

## ACADEMY OF CULINARY ARTS

### BAGATELLE WHERE BREAD MAKING IS AN EDIBLE ART

"Every night Bagatelle bakers hand knead, hand shape and bake over 48 different types of breads as in times gone by. For at Bagatelle bread making remains a noble art which gives the loaves tastes and shapes like no other...."

"... of course his bread is wonderful - after all, we do buy from Bagatelle...!" Albert Roux on Bagatelle

Apart from over 48 different types of breads, Bagatelle also produces its daily quota of croissants, pastries and Danish - which are made exclusively for Bagatelle Shop in Harrington Road, Harvey Nichols, Cullens and Eurostar - and Danish in over 40 deluxe London hotels - and "traiteur" for special events such as cocktail parties, buffets, lunches, garden parties, dinners, balls and private dining. It is not unusual to see 20,000 products leaving Bagatelle on a daily basis, including different varieties of the same product.

To do all this with the same professional consistency, the same dedication to authentic quality every single day of the year including Christmas, such an organisation needs the leadership and touch of a strong minded man - that's Jacky Lesellier... who, in British eyes is as French as the Eiffel Tower and the baguette itself which, of course, Bagatelle does as well as everything else it puts its ovens to.

Jacky Lesellier comes from a distinguished family of traditional bakers spanning 4 generations. After several years working alongside Gaston Lenôtre to develop and manage a production centre in Singapore, in 1989 Jacky opened Bagatelle in London with his wife Annette and 2 chefs using only the finest flours, inherited skills and recipes determined to make "bread an edible art". He had considered the possibilities of opening a bread "factory" in America and Boston in particular but decided that the Americans "are too dedicated to their fast food culture and weren't ready for such a specialised hand-made product". Through his French solicitor in Paris, Jacky found his partner, Michel Glas, who in turn brought in four of his friends: a Swiss, a German, a Spanish and an American - all stockbrokers and the perfect quarter of international backers!

Philip Britten was the first customer - and still is - and now there are 180, including all the top hotels and restaurants in and around London including the Connaught, Le Gavroche, Langan's, L'Aubergine, Chez Nico, Le Manoir and Le Souffle (among many others). Now the company has expanded into 2,500 square metres in NW10 with 102 staff - All of whom are French. Richard Shepherd recently paid tribute to Bagatelle: "I have watched Bagatelle develop over a number of years and can only congratulate Jacky Lesellier on the growth and consistent quality of his products - obviously a true

professional - and a great supporter of the Académie. On my one and only visit, I was deeply impressed by the standards of the "laboratory" - for this description is more apt than to call it a factory because "factory" implies mechanised standardisation and Bagatelle is anything but that. It was an education - spotless staff in spotless uniforms sporting hygienic masks. Those who weren't fully occupied in one bakery or patisserie process or another were constantly cleaning walls equipment and floors in a fastidious manner. The attention to detail was almost manic. I was almost reminded of a hospital but the smell was so gloriously bready" it was more like heaven and it was certainly a very healthy atmosphere. Nothing winds Jacky up more than to hear the criticism that French bread will not last. It's untrue he declares - although it most certainly is true that the baguette has only a short shelf life because of the nature of the composition and, of course, the French habit is to buy baguettes twice a day. But everything else lasts for at least 2/3 day and the sourdough products keep perfectly well for 7. We are Philistines in this country and are used to eating "tortured British bread which stales in less than 4 hours - the manufacturing process gives dough no time to relax, and therefore develop properly - the result is "a piece of rock". (92% of British bread is manufactured in this way).

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Breads and rolls which have been properly can soon be revived in the evening in a hot oven for a couple of minutes. But this should not be confused with the appalling British habit of eating hot bread that is merely a mask for bread that is, in fact, stale. Jacky adamantly insists that all his customers serve Bagatelle Bread fresh but never hot. This is pure sacrilege! (I sense a "Lesellier wagging finger" of admonishment and that, unless you take care of the bread with the same care and dedication the Bagatelle bakers makes it, then Jacky would rather not sell it to you!).

Jacky is particularly proud of Bagatelle's profile of events and none more so than the affair last May at the French Institute in South Kensington when Bagatelle planned, sliced, chopped, baked, sautéed, delivered and served a cocktail party for over 1,500 at which the guest of honour was no less than the French President Jacques Chirac. Many other catering achievements have included State banquets and catering for Ambassadors; special occasions at The Royal Opera House, National Gallery, Royal Academy of Art, Hermès, Cordon Bleu, Christian Dior, Paribas and every other year Bagatelle takes on the mammoth task of catering for both Farnborough and Le Bourget Air Shows producing over 3,000 meals during the week of the shows. As if this was not enough for the talents of Bagatelle, it also supplies British Airways and Air France and its latest customer is Eurostar.

Its rewarding to note how Jacky Lesellier and Bagatelle proudly display the Académie Culinaire logo of which Bagatelle is member (and for which we are grateful for the constant and generous supply of breads for our Plenary Meetings and other events).

"Jacky Lesellier, Maître Boulanger par excellence" Michel Bourdin said recently "a man of integrity who always ready to improve the quality of his products and to listen to his discerning clients... a great asset to the Connaught Hotel's guests and to the Académie Culinaire's principle: "maintenir, servir et évoluer"". The success and quality of the Bagatelle product is promoted only by its reputation through word of mouth. The only attempt at any form of marketing or PR is a stand at both the Good Food Show and The Restaurant Show. Jacky's bakers are truly imaginative and can come up with ideas to suit any occasion. For the Academie's Specialised Chefs Graduation at Claridge's in July of this year, which was sponsored by the American cookware company, Wagner Ware Corporation, Bagatelle produced 15 centrepieces of rolls and breads fashioned in the shape of a copper pan. These naturally attracted a great deal of admiration and proved the talking point for many guests. Bagatelle success means that the bakery is now "bulging at the seams" and so Jacky is planning to expand into his own purpose built production plant of around 10,000 square metres by the Millennium. Jacky hopes passionately that "that's it - I never want to build another one!"

The traditions of the French baker are safe in Bagatelle's hands".

*Sara Jayne-Stanes*