



PURSUIT OF PERFECTION

Within the walls of a historic castle, aglow under dazzling crystal chandeliers, Chef *Christian Scharrer* serves up award-winning cuisine to the cultivated ambience of a bygone era at gourmet restaurant Courtier, located in Germany's luxe Wiessenhaus Resort.

PHOTOGRAPHY BY XXX

CHRISTIAN SCHARRER

Born into culinary lineage, chef Christian Sharrer spent much of his childhood in his grandparents' restaurant. Surrounded by gastronomy growing up, Christian was inspired by how food was able to bring people together, inviting them to indulge in the shared pleasure of dining in unison. It is thus no surprise that the German chef finds joy in gathering guests around him to savour in his carefully crafted cuisine. It is, however, Sharrer's desire to achieve perfection in his kitchen that has led to his irrefutable success in the culinary industry.

"Cooking has always been and still is an important part in my life. My great-grandmother was already a cook in Switzerland and France and her daughter, my grandmother, was already cooking in her own business. I have absorbed all impressions since childhood. To make things better, more perfect and perhaps even a bit different appealed to me enormously."

"The important thing is that you enjoy what you do and that you do it perfectly. If you look closely, you will find exceptional chefs in every good restaurant or kitchen. The ambition to prove myself and the will to keep up captivated me right after my training and hasn't let go of me ever since."

"I wouldn't only call being a chef a 'career goal', but rather 'life goal'. However, goals sometimes shift and get outgrowths. At that time it was 'to become a really good and professional chef', today it is rather 'to be an outstanding

chef, surrounded by a perfect, dynamic team' and 'to fill an arena with friends, regular guests and lovers of good food as entertainers and ambassadors of culinary pleasure and fine cuisine.'"

Just as Christian's goals have evolved throughout his career, so has his culinary style: "As a young man at the very beginning of my cooking life, I emulated my great heroes. Gradually I emancipated myself, freed myself from structures and tried and tested variations until I was able to leave my own culinary fingerprint. My ingredients, which must never be left aside: home, personality and world view. They are always part of the recipe, as well as the hope of being at some point good enough until I catch up with my goals."

Now, three decades after his culinary career began, Sharrer helms the kitchen of two-Michelin-starred Courtier at Weissenhaus, one of Europe's most beautiful luxury resorts. Located in an authentic castle, Courtier is a classic French restaurant that exudes the same elegance as its setting. The restaurant's meticulously crafted cuisine also fuses classics with sophistication, creating food that, like the location, is graceful, authentic and steeped in antiquity.

"The basis [of my cuisine] is classic elements and dishes, some of them from my home in Baden, which I adapt in a contemporary way. Balance and harmony always have first priority in our compositions, immediately after the flawless and perfect quality of the produce. Every dish must have the power to become a favourite dish. The time of year and the



CLOCKWISE FROM ABOVE
Weissenhaus Resort
from above; Boathouse
Restaurant at Weissenhaus;
Courtier's Terrace.





CHRISTIAN SCHARRER



PREVIOUS PAGE Scallops,
Artichoke, Bread.

RIGHT Cod, Beetroot,
Horseradish.

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season determine the script; they are our inspiration and thus the most important metronome by which we orientate ourselves. I greatly appreciate the luxury of exercising our passion in a generous daylight filled kitchen that reveals an extraordinary view through large windows, from the Grand Paddock to the sea.”

“Hospitality, zeitgeist without forgetting where we come from, German. The design is always subject to the zeitgeist and fashion; we are not free of it, but rather a part of it. At the moment, we are experiencing a kind of reduction, a focus on a single product. That seems right and important to me. Our standard for finished work is that our guests very much and positively remember what they have experienced and would like to repeat it. We don’t just want to serve guests and satisfy their appetite, we want to inspire and spoil gourmets and fans alike, that is our ambition.”

“Harmony, absolute concentration, diligence and craftsmanship: that’s what you should see on a plate. These are the ideas that drive us. In the Courtier there is no room for self-promoters, it is all about the guest and his unique experience, which is bursting with tradition, innovation and a meaningful melange of aromas.”

The ingredients which are transformed into these “meaningful melange of aromas” on Christian’s plates are carefully sourced and selected, and their quality is of prime importance to the chef: “The explicit quality of the products is most important to me, being regional comes second;

CHRISTIAN SCHARRER

I just have to be this honest. Just as important, however, is the trust in the producers, i.e. the farmers, the bakers and all those who have committed themselves to high-quality premium products.”

“We cooperate with an Oldenburg nursery during the summer and autumn months. Game and fish from the surrounding lakes are usually high in quality here and for this reason they nearly always find a place on our shopping list. Unfortunately, the views of many large farms in Holstein do not always coincide with the needs of a small gourmet restaurant. For this reason, we are always on the lookout for idealists, madmen and perfectionists among the producers, of whom there are simply too few.”

The journey that leads to the chef’s impressive culinary creations is equal parts technical and creative: “The ‘ride out of the station’ couldn’t be more unspectacular and unromantic, because the journey begins with detailed technical discussions with producers, suppliers and various partners. Then follows my favourite meal and a Charles Eames Lounge chair, which is in my library of cookbooks. There I sit and look out into my garden, where herbs grow, albeit somewhat wildly. Now I let my thoughts run free. This is by far the most beautiful part of my creative work.”

“Then I head to the desk. There I make the detailed drawings with all my ideas, amateurish but highly motivated. This is also where the logistic concept around a dish is created: how is it prepared, which supplier, etc.? As the

penultimate step, the test cooking begins, then the joint tasting with my boys and girls and the subsequent, never-ending search for ways of improvement. After this process, which takes sometimes more, sometimes less time, a dish finds its way onto our menu. After the establishing of the dish it is always necessary to get the feedback from our guests and the final documentation.”

“There is no favourite dish per se, it is the concepts of the dishes we are currently working on. At the moment it is one with veal head. I am very satisfied with the result. On the one hand, because I find it extremely exciting to interpret such a traditional dish in a modern and new way. On the other hand, it is deeply satisfying for me when guests who may be reluctant of such underestimated and forgotten products entrust themselves to us and engage in something new.”

In the coming year, the chef aims to focus on his mental and physical wellbeing, while continuing to hone his culinary craft: “Above all, I want to stay healthy and true to myself and my nature. In addition, I only want to do things that give me pleasure and that mean fulfilling my technical and culinary dreams and visions. Previous dishes should be meticulously documented and further developed. I would like to broaden my view of the new and always be curious during the development of concepts, because the development of new dishes and surprising concepts is gaining evermore in importance, as is the desire to be unique and not interchangeable in gastronomy.”



CLOCKWISE FROM ABOVE-
LEFT Christian Scharrer and Courtier Pastry Chef, Simon Eberhardt, in the Weissenhaus Orchard; Greenhouse in Weissenhaus’s Rosary and Aroma Garden; Courtier’s Dining Room.
OPPOSITE Pigeon Breast.



CHRISTIAN SCHARER



RIGHT Mango, Chestnut, Coconut.

“Next year, as in the last year, I will live by the motto: Stagnation is regression. Especially for the Courtier, I have committed myself to consolidating our network of producers around us and purchasing my resources from the best producers and from excellent growing areas all over the world. Goods that I cannot buy, I would simply like to grow myself, if possible. I plan to invest energy in my own cultivation anyway. I like the idea of trying and harvesting fresh garden vegetables in our greenhouse, as we already do with herbs and citrus fruits. It brings a lively and spicy scent to my nose and evokes an atmospheric and peaceful image of harmony with a small piece of freedom.”

As for Sharrer’s views on the future of haute cuisine and cooking in general: “Soon it will no longer be enough just to cook well, you have to be a trainer, role model and motivator as well as entertainer, visionary and of course a warm host. We have understood and accepted this challenge.”

“There are incredibly good products, highly trained and forward-thinking chefs. Only in a different way than abroad, the scene is discussed more cautiously and especially in Germany it is held true that the prophet does not count in one’s own country (a great thinker is appreciated more in a foreign country than in one’s own). Moreover, I have the impression that we do not stand by our heroes. When I was recently on a gourmet tour in Belgium and we wanted to try a Belgian beer for an aperitif, we found ourselves in a typical pub and got into conversation with the people of

the village. The surprising thing was that the pride of the locals was this remarkable restaurant in the middle of the community. In Germany it could be that the taxi driver does not even find the address.”

“‘Everything changes, nothing fades.’ A saying hundreds of years old, but still topical. There will always be people who are looking for that something special and those who offer it. Specialists will invent themselves and let the offer grow until they threaten to drown in the masses, that is one theory of many. For this reason, too, it is our constant task to grasp the zeitgeist and adapt the ‘Gourmet Restaurant’ concept to these needs. Topics that move a society are particularly reflected in gastronomy. And so, of course, we are also linked to the big issues that move society: equal rights, acceptable working conditions, the right to education, conservation of natural resources, fair trade, animal welfare, and much more. These are the things that have to be implemented in a modern gastronomic business and I can see a success story here.”

“I believe every chef who simply loves what he does. A good chef will always have a need, and a want to satisfy it, to use his impeccable goods economically and skilfully, always under the aspect of a well-balanced ecological balance and fair and environmentally friendly production. This complex tightrope-walk on the summit of different clientele has to be balanced and you have to decide which pass you want to conquer.” ■