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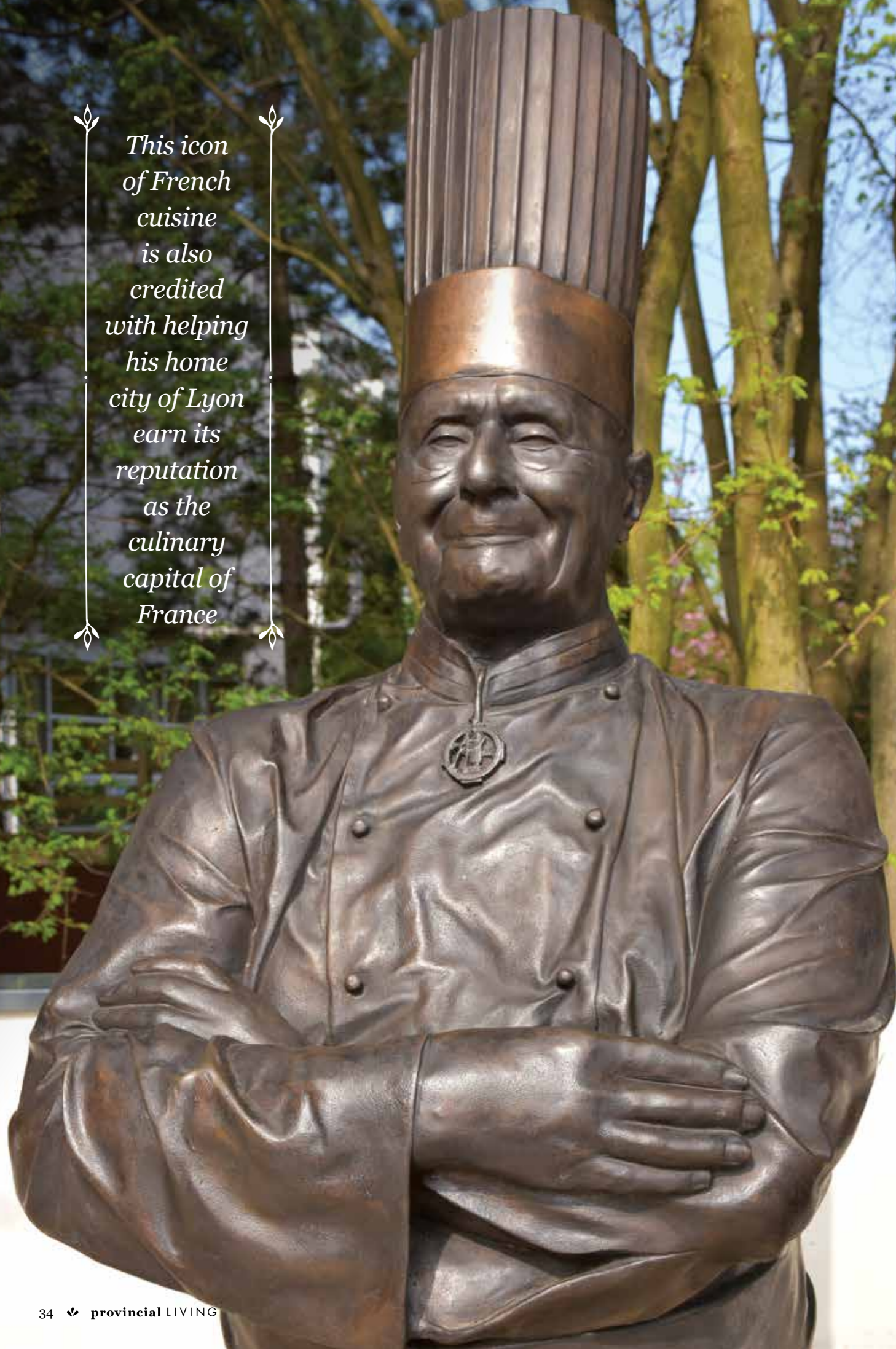
A legendary chef's
lasting legacy

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Institut Paul Bocuse:

A legendary chef's lasting legacy

LOUISE REYNOLDS visits Institut Paul Bocuse and discovers that the world-renowned chef's legacy lives on in the future leaders of gastronomy and hospitality who train there.

Dressed in a smart suit and wearing white gloves, 18-year-old Franck meticulously places wine glasses on a table. He holds each one up to the light, inspecting for marks or flaws before placing it in just the right place. The room, with its ornate woodwork, chandeliers and paintings, could be in a luxury hotel. In fact, it's a school and Franck is learning the fine art of service excellence.

Franck is one of more than 700 students at the Institut Paul Bocuse (institutpaulbocuse.com), one of the world's top training grounds for future chefs and hoteliers, offering programs in culinary arts and hospitality management at Bachelor and Masters levels, as well as conducting PhD research programs in food science.

The institute bears the name of legendary French chef Paul Bocuse, who co-founded the institute with AccorHotels Group founder Gérard Pélisson. Bocuse, who died in January 2018 aged 91, has been referred to as the Pope of gastronomy and was named Chef of the Century by the Culinary Institute of America in 2011. This icon of French cuisine is also credited with helping his home city of Lyon earn its reputation as the culinary capital of France, if not the world.

Bocuse's passing "...has a particular resonance for the institute, since we have the honour of bearing his name," institute CEO Dominique Giraudier said in a statement in January 2018. "We're sad. We have lost a spiritual father. Bocuse's never-ending quest for excellence is, for us, an example, a source of inspiration."

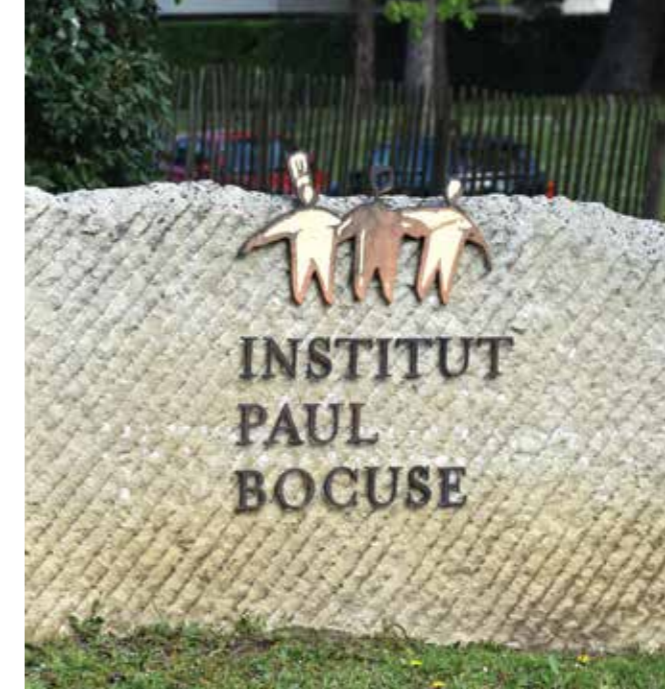
While Bocuse's name, marketing gold in the culinary world, has no doubt helped to attract students from around the world, the institute has forged a reputation for excellence in its own right since opening its doors in 1990. The 2018 Eduniversal Ranking placed its MSc in International Hospitality Management second among the best Masters programs. In late 2017, the institute won Best Innovation in an Educational Program at the Worldwide Hospitality Awards.

Not surprising then, a place here is highly coveted and competition to get in is fierce. Just one in four applicants is successful. To gain a place an applicant must write a letter explaining why they want and deserve to be there. They also need high academic marks, proficiency in French and a reference from an industry professional. The final step is a cut-throat selection interview.

Once accepted, future chefs and service professionals gain hands-on experience under the watchful eyes of top industry experts. Hotel management students cut their teeth working at the institute's five-star partner hotel, the Hôtel Le Royal Lyon – M Gallery by Sofitel in the heart of the city. Students work in the kitchen and help run all aspects of the hotel from reception to housekeeping. The hotel's restaurant, L'Institut (l-institut-restaurant.fr), is also operated by students with leading chef Cyril Bosviel.

Students must master every element of fine-dining service, from washing plates to setting tables with precision

Back on campus at Château du Vivier in Ecully, future chefs gain experience at the institute's two working restaurants. At Saisons (saisons-restaurant.fr), a fine-dining restaurant open to the public and rated as "very good" by the 2018 *Michelin Guide*, students must master every element of fine-dining service, from washing plates to setting tables with precision. In the institute's Expérience bistro (experience-restaurant.fr), students practise rapidity of service over 45-minute sittings and get used to the pressures of a busy kitchen that many will face in their future careers. >>



explains research director, Agnès Giboreau.

“We want to understand what makes a good meal in terms of food and everything around the food: the room, the ambience, the plates and also the service interactions, the type of restaurant and so on,” she says.

At any given time, ten to twelve PhD research projects are underway, addressing anything

from encouraging children to accept new foods to the link between food consumption and health, and working with diabetes, cancer and Alzheimer’s patients.

In April 2018, the institute partnered with French health insurance company APICIL to produce a plain language booklet based on a 2015 PhD project that identifies strategies for improving nutrition in the elderly, including those with Alzheimer’s disease. The research found that sensory stimulation is important in countering under-nutrition in nursing homes.

“A characteristic of a very old person is the loss of sensitivity, both in the mouth and with sight,” Agnès explains. “This research showed that when you put some more flavour in the food, adding things like pepper, spices, garlic – something giving stronger sensations in the mouth – it helps elderly people to enjoy food more and eat more.

“We recommend a stronger sensory experience in the mouth and also good visual appeal. The presentation of the food on the plate should be easy to capture. You don’t put white food on a white plate. If you have a white food, it’s preferable to serve it on a dark plate. We need to make sure it’s easy to see where the food is. Visual sensations should be strong.”

Ensuring a meal was a full taste and visual experience made Paul Bocuse a culinary revolutionary. He will continue to influence those inspired by him through the institute’s research programs and the training of future culinary leaders.

“I did and still do admire Paul Bocuse,” Raphael reflects, “He is the one that took the chefs out of the kitchen and gave our job a different status. He was a character. He represented French cuisine but also the French way of life to the world: good food, good wine, good company. He also embraced all aspects of the dining experience: the service, the wine, the restaurant, the plates and cutlery. He was telling a story. And that now is probably the most important part of our job: telling our personal story to the customer through a dining experience.” ♣

The program is certainly demanding. Chef Stefan Poyet, a 2009 graduate now based in Indonesia after stints at Melbourne’s Bistro Thierry and The French Brasserie, recalls an almost military-style training.

“We had intensive cooking classes for two years, surrounded by a lot of talented and renowned chefs, working with excellent products and the latest equipment,” he says. “It prepared us for what is often a harsh environment and it also opened doors for me.”

Institut Paul Bocuse graduates have achieved high levels of success. In March 2018, for example, Fabien Vergé landed Taiwan’s first Michelin star for his French restaurant, La Cocotte, in Taipei.

When Raphael Szurek, head chef at Silvester’s restaurant at the Sydney Harbour Marriott, applied to the Institut Paul Bocuse in 2003 he was dreaming of Michelin stars too.

“I grew up in a family of foodies,” Raphael says, “My grandfather was a butcher and my dad a great home cook.

The family would gather to enjoy long lunches and dinners, food and wine, sharing this precious moment around delicious food.”

He gained a place at the institute after finishing secondary school and spending his holidays working in a local restaurant near his home in France.

“The institute’s chefs and teachers were very impressive, all with an amazing passion. We learned the basics first and then could express our creativity in different projects,” he says, “When you enter the real world after school you have the highest standards and an uncompromising attitude,

which are the keys to success.”

In addition to training the next generation of the world’s leading chefs and hotel managers, food science research is undertaken at the Institut Paul Bocuse Research Centre. Research is focused on understanding what makes a good meal, from the food itself to the context of its consumption,

That is probably the most important part of our job: telling our personal story to the customer through a dining experience

WHERE TO FIND INSTITUT PAUL BOCUSE GRADUATES IN AUSTRALIA

Silvester’s, Sydney Harbour Marriott Hotel, Sydney

silvesters.com.au

Head chef Raphael Szurek, Culinary Arts and Hospitality Management Degree and Bachelor of Hospitality and Restaurants Management, 2006

“What I got at the Institut Paul Bocuse was passion for the job. I learned the respect of the ingredients and the respect of working with people from different cultures. I was shaped into being a leader and a thinker, not just a follower.”

Lillette – Maison de la Gourmandise, Malvern, Victoria

facebook.com/lillettepatisserie/

Owner/proprietor Christina Bourrat, Master of International Hospitality Management, 2011

“It was an amazing experience. It’s not just about learning how to carry a drink tray or to cook. Hospitality is about understanding different people and cultures. I apply everything I learned at Institut Paul Bocuse at my café. I remember everyone’s orders, their name, likes and dislikes.”

PROGRAMS FOR FOOD ENTHUSIASTS

The Institut Paul Bocuse also offers week-long intensive programs for amateur food enthusiasts. Participants learn from a top chef in the institute’s kitchens. The program is aimed at people who have no professional background in restaurants but a keen interest in gourmet food and cooking. The popular program draws participants from around the world. It operates in French each June and in English each July.