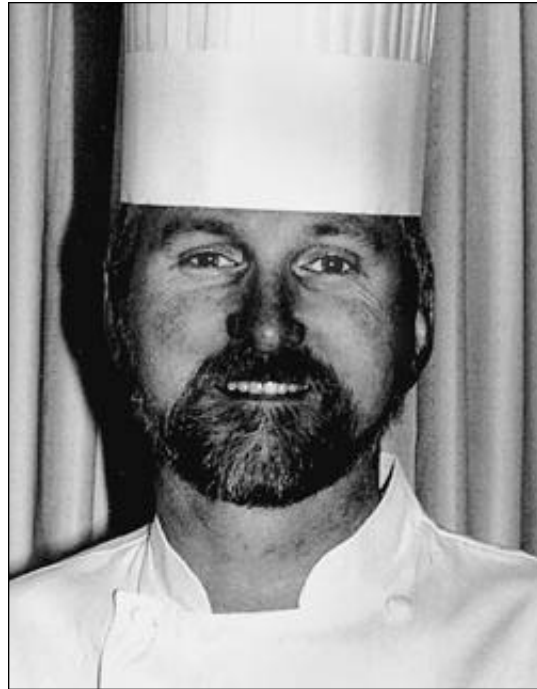


Each issue of *La Toque* profiles a member of our Chefs' Council and describes how his or her training and experience combine to form a resource rich with creative ideas for our clients.

PROF I L E

Baking and Pastry Chef Instructor

Robert Jorin



Here's to Robert!

If you have the pleasure to meet Robert Jorin, bow low and contemplate humbly what thirty years of passionate dedication to craft can accomplish. The tall, soft-spoken Jorin found himself a baking superstar when he and his two teammates won a surprising victory for America, bringing home the gold from the 1999 Coup du Monde de la Boulangerie (World Cup of Baking) in Paris. The

French, accustomed to winning, took second place and the Japanese team found themselves in third.

Already a knowledgeable pastry cook from his years of helping in his parent's bakery, Jorin began his formal apprenticeship at eighteen. Now forty-five, Jorin's particular passion remains the crisp flaky pastries such

as Danish and croissant made from laminated doughs. He has worked in bakeries in Europe and the U. S., owned and operated a small, fine bakery in Northern California for six years, and has taught baking for more than ten years. In addition to the World Cup, Jorin won the James Beard Foundation pastry competition, West Coast region, in 1993.

Born to Bake

"I am a third generation baker. Both my parents and grandparents owned bakeries in Switzerland. There was never a question of what I would become, only when I would start my formal apprenticeship. I didn't ever want to be anything other than a baker.

"While I was still young, my parents sold their bakery in Baden and went to help my grandparents in their shop in Davos, a ski resort near St. Moritz. Though we made pastries and fancy cakes, we focused on bread and had a good wholesale business supplying the local hotels.

"Attached to the bakery was our restaurant. My grandfather was in charge of the baking and my grandmother cooked for the restaurant. She served a full-on lunch for



Winning Style: Jorin's crisp pear tart made with croissant dough wowed Paris judges at the 1999 World Cup of Baking.

her regular customers who ate with us five days a week or more. When my mother took over from my grandmother, she trimmed the menu to simpler foods, including snacks, sandwiches, and soups."

Learning to Work Fast and Efficiently

"As a young man in search of open space, I came to America in 1977 and worked at a bakery in Los Angeles. We made, literally it seemed, tons of decorated cakes. This is where I learned how to ice and decorate cakes fast and efficiently.

"Some years later, after returning to the States to live permanently in 1981, I had a similar experience with croissants. As the head pastry chef in 1982 of Fabrique Delices in San Mateo, California, I was responsible for our daily production of 8,000 croissants."

Returning to Roots

"Probably because I was raised in the small, fine bakery tradition, I had always thought I would someday own a bakery. In 1990, I saw an opportunity in Petaluma, California where I live and opened the Upscale Downtown Bakery. "Sometimes I think I was crazy. At one point, we had about two hundred items available at the same time, everything from bread to chocolate truffles. That must have been in December.

"I did not start out with the intention of doing any wholesale, but several years later, we started doing well with breakfast items including scones, muffins, croissants, and Danish. I sold the bakery in 1996 after I became a baking and pastry instructor at the newly opened St. Helena campus of the Culinary Institute of America, Greystone."

Asian Demonstrations

"The Japanese are very eager to learn new things and to see what is happening in the United States' pastry and

baking business. Recently, I taught three weeks of seminars for Japanese bakeries to introduce them to U. S. agricultural products. I demonstrated how to use foods such as cranberries, currants, and dried apricots in bakery products.

"Since Southeast Asia has loosened up politically and money is available for investment, foreign countries are trying to increase their exports to the region. While vacationing in Vietnam last year, I participated in the Fourth of July Food Festival in Saigon. Under a huge banner, amidst piles of Budweiser and Coke cans and the savory aromas of hamburgers, I made a sabayon sauce from a California late-harvest dessert wine to serve over tropical fruit."

A Brief History of Modern Baking Trends

"Let's start with croissants. First we did chocolate croissants, then blueberry, cherry, almond. Then we went on to muffins and we did the flavor thing up, down, and sideways. Scones were an extension of muffins. They have a batter similar to muffins and, if you don't burn them, they usually turn out. They can also be made by the same staff without much more training.

"Fat-free items flourished in the early '90s but have reversed course. Right now, with the econ-

omy the way it is, I believe people are willing to pay premium prices for breakfast items such as high-class Danish made with really good ingredients—Plugra butter, rich cream, and nice cream cheese fillings plus fresh, seasonal fruit."

Searching for Street Food

"We are searching around the globe for street food to adapt to the American taste. We turned burritos into wraps, and adapted tamales by enclosing cheese and salsa in corn muffins. Now we stuff focaccia and make variations on turnovers and empanadas.

"Bakeries are making specialty sandwiches with breads such



Pursuit of Perfection: Months of practice paid off with a first place-and first-ever for Americans-win for Jorin and his teammates at the 1999 Coupe du Monde.



as onion-walnut or individual ciabatta topped with roasted vegetables. Delis have a harder time offering specialty breads for their sandwiches because of the cost.”

The Ins and Outs of Dessert

“Gone are architectural desserts. Pastry chefs spent more time and attention on the technical aspects of these desserts than they did on flavor. Now we are back to pure basics,—seasonal flavors and nicely sized portions. People want desserts that make them feel good, ones they recognize such as bread puddings, fancy renditions of S’mores including homemade marshmallows, cobblers, tarts, and fruit pies. Plus a good scoop of ice cream if you want it. Even doughnuts show up as dessert in restaurants.”



“My real passion is Danish pastry,” says Jorin who created these delicate and delicious fresh fruit flower pastries with Danish dough for the World Cup competition.

To Fuse or Not to Fuse

“I believe in maintaining the distinctiveness of cultural cuisines: it either flies or it swims, not both. People don’t eat dishes of ‘mixed heritage’ except in California! I am, however, ambivalent. You can take a classic recipe and tweak the flavors in order to align the dessert selection with the style of the restaurant’s cuisine. For instance, a white chocolate and green tea mousse remains a mousse and an apple turnover flavored with cinnamon, all spice, or star anise is still an apple turnover. It is a spiced apple turnover.”

The Spread of Good Bread

“The typical French view of America is as the land of Wonder Bread and Twinkies. For the World Cup of Baking in the Spring of 1999 in Paris, everything we made had ‘preferments’ in them including my croissants, Danish, and brioche. You make a small starter batch and let it age to develop a deep, complex flavor. A good tasting bread requires a long fermentation.

“The spread of artisanal bakeries is an example of the trend for hand-crafted foods. People want to make them the proper way, or the old way, and consumers have the money to pay for products such as wine, beer, cheese, and olive oil made by old-fashioned, slow methods. Maybe it is a balancing act, the slow food balancing the faster pace of life.”

Will Cakes Make It?

“Unless someone figures out how to get specialty cakes to the customer easily, a resurgence of fancy cakes will be difficult. It might be possible for pastry shops to sell their cakes in supermarkets the way we now have bread racks from different bread bakers. When I had my bakery, I was asked by a local, gourmet market to sell my cakes there.

“In Europe, if customers need cake for four, they buy a half cake. I would rather make a six-inch cake to serve four, and decorate it very nicely. Or for individuals, you can make a two-and-one-half inch cake. With today’s technology, you can do very interesting things as individual desserts.”

The Newest Breads

“I think our current interest in Southeast Asian cuisines will continue to evolve and move around the globe until we rediscover India. For example, the newest breads happening now are old breads, flat breads, made possible in restaurants by the availability of fairly inexpensive tandoor ovens. I see the popularity of flavored flat breads definitely increasing, such as nan with garlic or

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