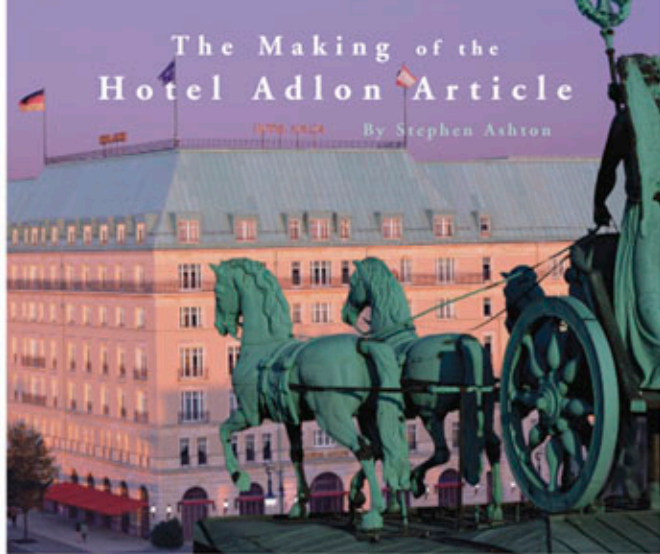


The Making of the Hotel Adlon Article

By Stephen Ashton



A summer evening in the Napa Valley is highlighted by the premiere of "Eat Your Heart Out," the debut film of Felix Adlon, at a screening under the stars at the Wine Country Film Festival. His father, the film's producer, is the famed German director/writer Percy Adlon who is best known for "Bagdad Café," "Sugarbaby," "Salmonberries" and "Rosalie Goes Shopping."

Approaching the seating area before dark, smoke is seen rising from the stage, and exotic aromas are wafting over the crowd. The two Adlons are heard arguing about the advantages of European filmmaking vs. American, while standing in front of two stoves cooking up a storm! Their conversation cuts from film references to food references. Each, of course is adamant about his film theory...and his particular recipe! The audience is about to taste the shrimp delicacies and declare the winner!

At that time I thought it was just a good natured father/son competition. I was soon to discover, however, that the Adlon name, famed in film lover's circles has an illustrious history associated with royalty, presidents and great artists dating back to the 1900's.



Percy Adlon



Lorenz Adlon



Felix Adlon

It is little wonder then, that Lorenz Adlon's descendents, Percy and Felix Adlon, are dedicated artists—first in film and writing, but not that far behind in the culinary arts.

In fact, Felix was so attracted to the culinary world of cuisine that he recently enrolled in the School of Culinary Arts in Pasadena, and in spite of his career as an accomplished actor, writer and director, is about to graduate as a chef and take up an internship with Hotel Adlon's famed former chef in Germany. He plans to become a professional chef!

My encounter with the Adlon family inspired me to make the famous Adlon Hotel in Berlin my hotel of choice during my subsequent trip to the Berlin Film Festival. Although a hotel of extraordinary architectural brilliance and historical significance, our story to you, the reader, revolves around the incredible cuisine that stands as the icon of excellence you can still expect from such a venerable institution today.

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THE HOTEL ADLON

A TRADITION OF EXTRAORDINARY EXCELLENCE IS RESTORED.

Text and Photos By Stephen Ashton

LORENZ ADLON WAS THE FOUNDER OF THE MOST FAMOUS HOTEL AND RESTAURANT IN EUROPE THAT CATERED TO KAISER WILHELM, THE TZAR OF RUSSIA, EDISON, FORD, ROCKEFELLER, PRESIDENT TAFT AND ALBERT EINSTEIN. CHARLIE CHAPLIN WAS STRIPPED OF HIS TROUSER-BUTTONS WHEN RAUCOUS CROWDS SWARMED HIM ON THE ADLON STEPS AFTER THE BERLIN PREMIER OF "CITY LIGHTS" AND MARLENE DIETRICH, DISCOVERED AT THE ADLON, UTTERED HER FAMOUS LINE... "I WANT TO BE ALONE."



Meticulous setup in the Winter Garden for a lovely lunch

Coming from humble French roots ("our name was originally 'Adelón,'" great grandson Percy Adlon says, "before my forefathers settled in Mainz, Germany"), Lorenz Adlon started his career life as an apprentice to an amazing builder/designer and in short order became a master carpenter. Adlon became an avid wine aficionado and returned to his family's Medoc region in France to study and refine his palate. He moved to Berlin and soon was known as a fine restaurateur and wine purveyor with millions of bottles cellared in Berlin.

By chance Lorenz Adlon encountered Germany's emperor Kaiser Wilhelm II and proposed an extraordinary new hotel, to be the most progressive hotel in all of Europe. It would be right in front of the Brandenburg Gate, amid the great buildings of state near the venerable Reichstag. The Kaiser was impressed with this self-made man and offered his blessings.

When the Hotel Adlon opened in 1907 it amazed even the most skeptical with its



advanced features (like its own electric plant, freezers for foods and advanced communications) and particularly, its beauty: Golden Cloudy Marble from Sienna and Red Marble from Verona for floors and stairs; Wainscoting of Cuban Mahogany, painted Sycamore wood, frescoed stucco ceilings and silk and damask dressed the expansive lobbies and rooms. Paintings and busts, ivory inlays, Louis VI and Queen Anne furniture all drew praise from the Kaiser, himself.

From that day on the Hotel Adlon was an unbridled success... the place to be – and the place to be seen. Wilhelm II took refuge in the warmth and excitement of the Hotel to avoid the drafty rooms of the royal palace. Other noble families moved into the Hotel's suites and sold their winter houses and it was the favorite haunt of Enrico Caruso, Mary Pickford and Rudolf Valentino, Richard Strauss and Thomas Mann.

Although the Hotel building managed to survive WWII's devastation of Berlin, most of it burned and only a small part was maintained as a Hotel under socialist rule in the then "East" Berlin.

The fall of the Berlin Wall and the subsequent reunification of Germany in the 1990's led to truly revolutionary architectural possibilities: futuristic and modern architectural wonders in the no-man's land of Potsdamerplatz and elsewhere in East Berlin; and the construction of a new Adlon Hotel on the very site of the original Adlon – not as a new modern expression – but in the style of the original Adlon! It would use the finest materials, would keep the exterior just the way it was, and create the atmosphere of the original grand scale. It would pay homage to a time gone by. It would go against common belief that it is impossible to "build it like they used to."

Elephant Fountain in the Lobby



What started us on this journey of discovery however is, after all...

THE ADLON CUISINE.

A hand in the traditional, coupled with a eye to the future, the Executive Chef staff of the Adlon hotel has the responsibility of preserving the reputation of Adlon traditions, while including recipes and presentations reflective of contemporary taste.

Today's chefs are Executive Chef Rainer Sigg and Thomas Neeser, Chef du Cuisine of the exclusive gourmet Lorenz Adlon Restaurant.

After a chat with Chef Rainer, he takes me to his kitchen and starts preparing some new dishes for the gourmet menu. He came on board within the last year and is putting his touch on the style and

substance of the menus for the four major restaurants in the Hotel, all under his magic wand.

He is preparing some of his newest creations, Sigg and Neeser are visual artists as well as culinary masters.



Perigord Truffles



Executive Chef Rainer Sigg



Leek cream soup with monkfish medallions and tomato fondue

See Page #118 for Recipe

Spring chicken cutlet with sautéed spinach, potato-foie gras strudel and Perigord truffle sauce

This gorgeous dish is a work of art that makes the palate soar. Chicken married with layers of foie gras, spinach, carrots and Perigord truffle in the most beautiful fashion. At the center is a slice of foie gras, sandwiched by carrot slices. Spinach, then chicken breast wraps it up and a slice of Perigord truffle topped off by parsley. The cutlets are served on a Perigord truffle sauce with slices and a Potato foie gras strudel.

Marinated Tuna with green asparagus and caper pancake



This, melt-in-your-mouth delicacy defies the senses. It appears to be a simple dish, but the flavors are so complex and yet fresh, it is no wonder that the recipe and procedures are so extensive.



It is a joy to see Chef Rainer work. I have the privilege of being with him in the kitchen when there is no other prep taking place. It is like being with a painter in the studio and Rainer's movements are like dance; his hands like a sculptor when he meticulously plates each ingredient.



Spring chicken cutlet with sautéed spinach, potato-foie gras strudel and Perigord truffle sauce



Marinated Tuna with green asparagus and caper pancake.

See Page #118 for Recipe



The Original Duck Press



French scallop with Black Truffle



Bonito Tuna Tartar with Imperial Caviar topped with gold leaf and served with 2000 Riesling QbA Robert Weil Rheingau

The Adlon Tradition of Pressed Duck

I ask Chef Rainer what is on the menu from the earlier time of Lorenz.

"Ah," he says. "He was famous for his Canezon à la Presse,

French Pressed Duck, and we specialize in it still!"

"I have to try that," was my reply.

"Friday night," he says.

"Friday night it is."

Arriving at the very exclusive Gourmet Restaurant "Lorenz Adlon", I am met with a glass of Dom Perignon 1995 and delectable Amuse Bouche specialties. The dining room, the library by day, is lined with books, candle light and rich wood. Perhaps, there are 4 tables. The domed ceiling is a fresco that transports you to another time and place, reminiscent of the Adlon's original room.

The sense is that of being in a home...comfortable and lived in. It is very intimate and couldn't be more romantic. Outside the window is the beautifully lit Parthenon-inspired Brandenburg Gate, and as we are upstairs on the Mezzanine, we are at eye level with famous sculpture, the "Quadriga," consisting of the goddess of peace, Eirene, driving a four horse chariot in triumph.

The table is meticulously set, with a feel of the 1900's. The first course delivered sizzling in its cooking pan, on a silver tray are a pair of French Scallops with a healthy slice of Black Truffle, floating on white cauliflower purée in white truffle sauce.



2000 Riesling Robert Rheingau

Bonito tuna tartar follows looking so beautiful, with its glimmering topping, that I am compelled to pause, sip the fine Riesling and thoroughly take in the mandala on my plate, trying to identify each element. The ball of tender tuna sits on a disc of gescacho aspic, encircled by diced egg white, cornichons, a bit of yellow egg, and to my delight, a healthy dollop of Imperial caviar crowned with a glint of gold leaf! (It's good for you!) Every morsel fills my palate with succulent flavors that marry perfectly with the 2000 Riesling QbA Robert Weil Rheingau, with its flinty freshness.

The Preparation & Serving of Pressed Duck

Text and photos by Stephen Ashton



General Mgr. Gens Ast describes the process of making Pressed Duck



The Set Up, put together tableside, consists of duck press, Hennessy Cognac and Madeira Wine, salt and pepper.



A half cooked roast duck comes to the table.

Restaurant Manager Gens Ast and his team start orchestrating the utensils and setup for the Duck Courses.



First, carve off the breasts and legs.



Here, restaurant Mgr. Gens Ast selects which parts head to the press and which are presented on your plate. Here, the fatty parts are headed for the press.

Lorenz Adlon brought the recipe and Press from France where the dish originated in the town of Rouen (hence the name of the sauce – "Rouennaise") in the mid 1800's, and by the 1890's Princes and Presidents were raving about this flavor-filled delicacy. The recipe, like a migratory bird, spread to the Americas and it was a great favorite of, among others, Jack London.



Sauce starts with a reduced duck jus and red wine sauce into which goose liver pate and the duck liver are cooked at the table. Madeira is added.



Cognac is added to the pate and reduction before the duck juices from the press are added.

The stage is being set for a remarkable show: first the equipment. On study tables are placed a beautiful cylindrical press, actually the original that Lorenz brought from France: a heated deep-dish into which the breasts of duck will be place in reduced red wine sauce, carving knives and strong forks, a table with a burner and pan, a bottle each of Cognac and Madeira, salt and pepper.



Slicing of the breast



Duck breasts are removed. This meat is the first of two duck courses in the meal.

Mr. Ast brings the partially roasted duck, unstuffed, out of the kitchen and carefully carves off the legs and thighs, then the breasts. Only this meat will be served, in two courses. Everything else – meat, skin, bones,



All parts other than the breasts and legs are severed into pieces to be put into the press.



It takes teamwork to create Adlon's Pressed Duck right at your table.



Some of the most delicious parts of the roast duck are put into the cylinder



The cylinder is secured in place and sealed with the strong case that can withstand the extreme pressure of the screw press



The stage is set for pressing



The juices begin to flow



Duck juices and blood are added to the wine, brandy, Madeira, jus, liver pate and cooked together with only salt and pepper and a bit of lemon.



The Cognac is about to be set aflame

wings and the back, which is cut into pieces, go into the press. (See the photos and captions for a step by step description.) The breast pieces are placed in a deep pan in reduced red wine sauce on a glowing hot plate and the legs go back to the oven to be roasted to completion for the second course.

Then the press is loaded and the two men start turning the screw. Slowly liquid begins to flow from the trough, first red blood, then more complex pressings of the contents.

In the meantime his colleague is working away on the sauce, melting the duck and goose liver into red wine reduction jus, salt and pepper, lemon and Madeira wine. The aromas are beginning to fill the room and all eyes are on this SHOW! The pressed nectar is slowly stirred into the pan with the rest of the sauce and cooked until the color and consistency of chocolate.

The breasts are cut diagonally into aiguillettes and finally the breast is plated with a flower of potato (pommes maxime) and pressed steamed greens. The sizzling "Rouennaise" is spooned onto the meat, giving it a final cooking.

The Caneton à la Presse ("Lorenz Adlon" Pressed Duck) is a mouth-watering extravagance, the extracted flavors of the cooking from the skin, cooked blood sauce, the meat juices and the Madeira, Cognac wine



The tender breasts are sliced into *aiguillettes* and will receive their final cooking under the sizzling sauce on your plate.



The Classic Lorenz Adlon Pressed Duck with Rouennaise sauce, Pommes Maxime and pressed steamed greens.



The second Duck Course: Thighs served on Salad with Truffle and Muscato Grapes, brought to your table completely cooked and paired with Pinot Noir. Cooking was completed while the first course was being pressed.

sauce with foie gras and duck liver paté make a perfect marriage with a bold Chardonnay.

The Second Serving of Roasted Duck on Salad with Truffle and Muscato Grapes goes beautifully with Pinot Noir.

And finally, Praline of Pear and Almond with Williams pear sorbet, makes a refreshing, perfectly matched dessert for this leisurely evening meal.

The Hotel Adlon is "a must see" in a city that is moving at break-neck speed into the future. It is a step into that timeless zone of elegance, style and exquisite harmonious design. Even the way fish is served on a tray at the weekend brunches is an experience of visual ecstasy.

It is little wonder then that Lorenz' descendants, Percy and Felix Adlon, are dedicated artists— first in film and writing, but not that far behind in the culinary arts and the "Shrimp CookOff" at that Napa Valley outdoor Film Festival event greatly challenged the audience to decide whose recipe they preferred. In the end, it was Percy's more spicy version that won the prize, and the Adlon Family Tradition continues.



The View of the Four Horses atop the Brandenburg Gate as seen from the Lorenz Adlon dining room.