



CHEFS

In Search of Gold at the Bocuse d'Or

by Liz Grossman — FEBRUARY 21, 2017



Philip Tessier, Mathew Peters and Thomas Keller seconds after they found out they just took the gold at the Bocuse d'Or. PHOTO: SIRHA

As a glittering cloud of red, white and blue confetti exploded over thousands of spectators and “The Star-Spangled Banner” boomed throughout Lyon’s cavernous Euroexpo arena, I grabbed my camera and jumped the wall of the press box, to get closer to the action as the crowds descended upon **Mathew Peters** and **Harrison Turone**, who had just made culinary history by winning America’s first gold medal at the Bocuse d’Or.

Peters, Turone and their coach, **Philip Tessier**, made it to the stand, their dumbfounded teary expressions captured on the massive jumbotron looming above. They clutched the gold statue of Bocuse and posed for photos with a parade of legendary chefs including **Alain Ducasse**, **Georges Blanc**, **Thomas Keller** and **Daniel Boulud**.

“It was a frenzy,” recalls Peters, who didn’t realize they’d won until he heard the national anthem play. “You’re standing there and everything is spinning—your heart is racing, it’s noisy and you have an immense amount of adrenaline, and then, before you know it, you come to.”

It's no wonder Peters and Turone were in a daze, having just presented their show-stopping dishes after two intense years of planning and practice. They had achieved their dream and won over an arena full of screaming fans from all over the world, even if only a few people back home in America would understand the magnitude of their win.

But for those in the know, the Bocuse d'Or cooking competition is like *Top Chef* on steroids, albeit without the fan favorites, tasting notes or snarky back-stories, and journalists came from all over the world to cover the 30th anniversary of this biennial competition. We were confined to a small space opposite 12 six-by-three meter kitchens while we watched 24 teams from around the world compete. For two days, we contorted ourselves around camera lenses and clunky tripods, terrified to leave our spots for water, lunch or bathroom breaks lest we miss a minute of the action. Fueled by almonds and clinging to every last bar of power on our phones, we endured hours of screaming crowds, blaring bullhorns and European techno music while we kept our eyes glued to every over-the-top platter that paraded by us on its way to the judges' table.

But it was worth it to take in Team Japan's blue-lobster stuffed chicken, split in half by a shimmering samurai sword over a wooden box decorated with origami birds and delicate vegetable garnishes. Or Team Denmark's lavish interpretation of **Paul Bocuse's** famous Bresse chicken cooked inside a pig's bladder, which when inflated and placed high on a silver pedestal in the center of the tray looked like a science fiction egg laid from another dimension. Or the platter from Team France, known for its jaw-dropping presentations, with chicken and crayfish carefully placed amid a winter mountain scene complete with a rose rising out of the middle.

As each platter passed us, the crowds in the soaring grandstands erupted into a cacophony of noise, a raucous sea of waving flags, painted faces and colorful signs. The Norwegians took the idea of "more cowbell" to a whole new (ear-splitting) level, while the French brass band played "La Marseillaise" at top volume over and over again. The Aussies came armed with didgeridoos that droned on in my ears long after we left, while the Japanese repeatedly beat two massive drums. Bullhorns blared from the American section, as did clapping, hollering, chanting and whistling—the volume only increasing as the chefs approached the finish line, and becoming exponentially louder as the winners were announced.

So why does this competition warrant frenzy in Europe while flying below the radar in America? The Bocuse d'Or is old-school cooking: dishes from Escoffier plated in ornate presentations that would be out of place in most trendy American restaurants. But it's starting to gain attention among American chefs, especially since 2008, when Thomas Keller, Daniel Boulud and Paul Bocuse's son **Jérôme** joined forces to create a foundation that would help build, train and finance a stronger Team USA. The heavyweight chefs' involvement caused a definite shift in the tide of the competition previously known for attracting mostly hotel and catering chefs.

"[The foundation] really gave us some legitimacy," says **Gavin Kaysen**, vice president of the team, who represented the USA in 2007 and coached the team in 2009, 2011, 2013 and 2015. "And for a while now, it's been restaurant chefs coming out of the woodwork to do it—guys from the **Daniel Humm**, Daniel Boulud or Thomas Keller crowd seeing it as an opportunity to help excel themselves and their career.

"If you win in Europe, it changes your life," Kaysen continues, noting that chefs who compete are connected to an ever-growing list of coaches, past competitors and mentors, ready to help them onto the next step. "We hadn't seen that here because we haven't won before. We're starting to see the effects of that and how it's going to help propel someone in their career. You have one of the best Rolodexes in the world after you do this."

The new spotlight shone on the competition means it has caught the attention of chefs you'd think are more focused on scoring a Michelin star or Beard award. **Greg Baxtrom** has spent the last year collecting accolades from virtually every food publication as the chef/owner of one of Brooklyn's hottest restaurants, **Olmsted**. But he says Bocuse "means almost everything about being a chef. Even based on the structure—with a commis, a cook and a chef, it's an example of how it actually works."

Chris Pandel of Chicago's **The Bristol** has similar respect for Bocuse. He recalls two types of students in culinary school, the "*garde-manger* nerds" who wanted to push boundaries with over-the-top showpieces, and the ones who just wanted to cook. He admits he is the latter, but is inspired by the former.



Bocuse is one of the most impressive things in the culinary world. It's mind-blowing.

—Chris Pandel



“As I’ve gotten older, I look further back than I do forward,” he says. “Bocuse is one of the most impressive things in the culinary world. It’s mind-blowing. They are so fucking good at their craft, but they’re not only great chefs and amazing bosses. They’re amazing coaches, and their technical knowledge is so sound they can take over the hardest culinary competition in the world. I wish I was that good of a cook.”

Baxtrom agrees that Bocuse is about more than just showmanship, but also the discipline and teamwork it takes to get there. “It’s got to be a little show-y, but the point is to acquire skills and perfect them,” he says. “The chefs who participate are about teaching skills to younger generations. That’s also a huge part of what we all do. We learn to roast a piece of meat and look around for who’s going to replace us on the station when we move up.”

“To me, [the Bocuse d’Or] is the ultimate metaphor for restaurant cooking,” says writer **Andrew Friedman**, who followed **Tim Hollingsworth** and *commis Adina Guest* to the 2009 competition for his book, *Knives at Dawn* (Atria Books, 2011). “Any chef will tell you that you have to prove it every day. You could have a great service and get a three-star Michelin rating or four-star *New York Times* review, but the next morning everyone has to come in and do their prep, and if something goes wrong at one table, the rest doesn’t matter. You pour all this stuff into it and get one shot.”

Still, if you compare the Bocuse d’Or to reality cooking shows, it makes sense that most Americans, and even some chefs, are still confused or were even unmoved by Team USA’s win. The American food press covers every Michelin and Beard announcement breathlessly, but for *Eater’s* article about the Bocuse win, the sub-headline read: “Three Reasons Why We Still Don’t Care.”

“If you’re not a chef, or even if you’re a young chef, you may not know what it is,” Friedman says. “The average American doesn’t know who Bocuse is and they don’t know what ‘d’Or’ means, so you’re already coming to it from a bit of a disadvantage. The name itself is a little impenetrable to your average American.”

Tessier agrees that in order to get people engaged in the Bocuse d’Or, it needs to be accessible and entertaining. “It’s difficult to ask Americans to follow a cooking competition in France that happens every two years with little to no hope of U.S. placing or winning, and that is also difficult to follow,” he notes.

And while chefs including Baxtrom and Pandel followed the competition all the way to the final moment, it’s still a struggle to get most Americans to care. But that’s changing.

“I think Bocuse is gaining more momentum in the U.S.,” says Kaysen. “But we’ve also accepted the fact that it doesn’t need to be mainstream like *Top Chef*. There’s actually a romance and important part of why it’s not,” he says. “We don’t necessarily do this in our restaurants everyday; it changes the way we think about food. So instead of five or six services a week—you have one sole event you’re focused on. When there’s a curveball here, you have nothing you can rely on.”

And just like any competition, there were plenty of curveballs hurled at Team USA. It wouldn’t be Bocuse without them... **[Next](http://plateonline.com/how-bocuse-dor-began)**
(<http://plateonline.com/how-bocuse-dor-began>).



CHEFS

How the Bocuse d'Or Began

by Liz Grossman — FEBRUARY 21, 2017



Paul Bocuse poses in the middle of a posse of chefs at the first Bocuse d'Or in 1987.

Years before the American flag was raised outside **Paul Bocuse's** flagship restaurant in Lyon, the chef was a young soldier fighting in World War II. He took a bullet from the Germans, and was sent to an American field hospital for a life-saving blood transfusion. "After that, he felt he had American blood in his veins and from that day on, he felt he owed something to the U.S." says his son Jérôme, now president of the Bocuse d'Or. The elder Bocuse's pride for America and admiration of its culinary scene grew in the late '70s, when he traveled here to try what he considered the best beef and Idaho potatoes in the world.

"My father was traveling all over the world, promoting his cuisine, but was also interested in discovering other cuisines," Jérôme says. "He thought it was important to gather all of those chefs from all of those different countries in Lyon."

In 1987, Bocuse decided to bring global food to Lyon by creating a cooking competition, at which 24 chefs from around the world would create dishes that showed off their country's style and ingredients. There would be bronze, silver and gold medalists, and the dishes—a meat platter and a fish platter—would be judged on taste and presentation (cleanliness of the kitchen and waste would later be taken into account). The jury would be made up of the presidents of each team. "The idea was to discover [other] countries' food," says Jérôme. "But it was hard to get chefs

to compete. There was a lot less awareness about what countries were doing unless you traveled and saw what was happening,”

Today, more than 60 countries vie for spots in a venue twice the size as the original, and instead of prepping for just a few weeks, they train as long as two years.

“Things have evolved and now you can more easily see what chefs are doing around the world just by opening your computer,” says Jérôme. “So maybe it’s lost a little of its original idea, to have this sense of discovery. But it still keeps growing.”

That’s true. Every year the Bocuse d’Or gets more applicants, supporters, young chefs, advisors, coaches, spectators, and media, so much so that a new, larger arena is in the works for 2019. “I think my father never envisioned the dimension of the event now,” Jérôme says.



Regis Marçon of Team France tearfully takes the gold at the 1995 Bocuse d’Or.

“Bocuse is a huge innovator, and even though this style of service is very antiquated, this competition was created by somebody ahead of his time. He was the Thomas Keller or the Grant Achatz of his time, and what he did for the industry was huge.” — *Andrew Friedman*

“Bocuse is a huge innovator, and even though this style of service is very antiquated, this competition was created by somebody ahead of his time,” Friedman notes. “He was the **Thomas Keller** or the **Grant Achatz** of his time, and what he did for the industry was huge. This was before TV competition shows, so although the format remains a bit of the past, I think it’s very much in keeping with who Bocuse is to continually tweak it.”

It’s no surprise that it’s been Europeans, mostly French, who won the competition. Denmark, Norway and Sweden have also taken top spots nearly every year since the competition started.

“The reason these countries do well over and over is that the past champions tend to stay involved,” Friedman says. “So if you’re a Norwegian candidate, you have four or five medalists giving you feedback as you’re developing your stuff and we never had that before.”

While France has taken the gold seven times, and Norway has ranked in the top three nine times, **Rasmus Kofoed** of **Geranium** in Copenhagen holds the distinction of being the only chef to place three times—he took the bronze in 2005, silver in 2007 and gold in 2011, as documented in the movie, *The World’s Finest Chef*.

Kofoed says he wasn’t inspired to compete in Bocuse until his country took the silver in 1993. “**Jens Peter Kolbeck** won with his turbot with smoked scallops and beef tenderloin with foie gras and truffle,” he says. “I still remember the photo and that kick-started me.”

Kofoed says to compete, you have to be “a little crazy and have the passion for gastronomy, and a winning spirit. You need to be a little hungry. It’s a challenge and some people don’t want to risk it. What if they don’t win? What if they get 11th or 12th? Some chefs are a little afraid.”

Since his wins, Kofoed has returned to the competition to coach, and enjoyed the increased business at his restaurant.



Rasmus Kofoed and his heavy medals from the 2005, 2007 and 2011 Bocuse d’Or.

“Bocuse raises awareness of the chef and the restaurant and introduces both to a new audience of food lovers,” he says. “We opened Geranium in the middle of the financial crisis of 2010, and I feel like if it wasn’t for my winning in 2011, Geranium might not be in existence today. Winning the gold was unbelievable, but for me it was more about the creative process, and progressing every day to see that you can do something better,” he says. “You’re developing yourself as a human being and that was the most inspiring and valuable part.”

2011 Bocuse d’Or. PHOTO: CLAES BECH-POULSEN



Léa Linster accepts the gold, while Pierre Paulus takes silver and William Wai nabs bronze at the 1989 Bocuse d’Or.

Bocuse has traditionally been dominated by European competitors, mostly men. That said, women do compete each time. This year, **Jessika Toni** represented Team Uruguay and **Giovanna Grossi** represented Team Brazil. Female chefs have served as leaders and *commis* for almost every competition, going back to the first one in 1987, when **Susan Weaver** represented Team USA (she applied under the name S. Weaver to not immediately let on that she was female).

But the only woman to take the podium is **Léa Linster** of Luxembourg, who nabbed gold in 1989. “I was lucky I could compete, because at that time, it wasn’t normal that women went to a competition like this and especially not in France,” she says. Her trophy-winning dish was a lamb saddle in potato crust, a dish she still serves at her namesake restaurant.



Léa Linster at the 2017 Bocuse d'Or, speaking about how more women should compete. PHOTO: LIZ GROSSMAN

“People still talk about her dish,” says **Carrie Nahabedian** of Chicago’s **Naha** and **Brindille** restaurants, recalling meeting Linster at **Paul Bocuse Restaurant** the year after Linster won the gold. “Paul Bocuse has been in my restaurant twice and I’ve heard him say that he’d love to see more women compete in the Bocuse d’Or because they cook from the heart and soul, and Léa’s dish was very much like that.”

“It’s a complex issue,” Friedman says. “It’s not like hoards of women applicants are being turned away, at least not in the U.S. This struck me while I was working on my book, and I asked a number of women chefs about it. Many were left cold by the style of food, and a lot of them felt they already have to compete a lot just to succeed in male-dominated pro kitchens. Make what you will of the fact that two women did represent the U.S. in the early years of the competition, when the food was less show-offy than it is today.” **Next** (<http://plateonline.com/team-usa-gets-mentor>).



CHEFS

Team USA Gets a Ment'or

by Liz Grossman — FEBRUARY 21, 2017



Jérôme Bocuse, Thomas Keller and Daniel Boulud of ment'or Culinary Foundation PHOTO: MENT'OR

In 2008, Paul Bocuse asked Boulud, Keller and Jérôme to start the Bocuse d'Or USA Foundation (now called the ment'or Culinary Foundation). The mission was to get Team USA to the podium—ideally to take the gold—and offer sponsorships, grants and *stages* so young American cooks could afford to compete. (Kaysen, who as a competitor before the foundation started, had to raise his own funds, find his own training space and build his own team from the ground up.)

“Paul Bocuse wasn’t satisfied that Americans were participating,” says Boulud. “He wanted them to win, and was adamant that the only way they could get better was by having better chefs manage that program. It was the perfect timing. We were all together and could really focus.”

Keller also didn’t hesitate to take on the challenge. “He asked that we bring a U.S. team to the competition and of course, I said ‘yes.’ You never say ‘no’ to a chef,” he says. “My appreciation and respect for what he’s done for our profession is beyond words. Many people don’t understand all that he’s contributed to the culinary world, beyond France. He’s opened doors for chefs, set the standards for fine dining and changed lives.”



Thomas Keller and Daniel Boulud give the thumbs up before competition day. PHOTO: LIZ GROSSMAN

“From the support standpoint, I think that’s what’s important about it,” Friedman notes. “I don’t want to speak for Thomas, but of those three guys, the most interesting involvement to me is Keller. Jérôme is *Monsieur Paul*’s son and Daniel is from Lyon and he apprenticed for Bocuse when he was a kid. But Thomas is American. What I think is interesting is that people like Bocuse were deities to these guys. Thomas is of the generation when the idea of being an American kid with culinary aspirations was sort of a curiosity, and the French were the people who had the knowledge to share. So I think for him to have grown up and attained the position he did in this country and then go over there at the behest of this guy...it’s almost impossible to describe what someone like Paul Bocuse meant to someone like Thomas.”

Fueled by the efforts of some of the leading chefs in America, the foundation has been successful at fundraising, and broadened its scope to develop young cooks into great chefs, regardless of whether they become potential Bocuse competitors.

“What started as a training program strictly for the Bocuse d’Or competition has evolved to focus on so much more than that, including young chef competitions and a grant program that’s awarded more than a half-million dollars to young chefs eager to advance their careers,” Keller says. “Ment’or is all about passing down what we’ve learned and inspiring the next generation of chefs. It’s our duty.”

“It’s about keeping a steady evolution of talent and being able to do something for young chefs that no one did for us,” says Boulud. “It’s very gratifying to be able to help a young kid dream bigger to get better and one day become the next generation of great chefs.” With Young Chef and *Commis* competitions held throughout the year, ment’or has provided 73 young chefs with stages around the world since it began.

The opportunity to compete in the Young *Commis* competition last year kept 21-year-old **Brendan Scott** in the industry.

“The restaurant I was at in San Francisco was abusive and I was burnt out when I left,” he says. “I was debating if I wanted to cook, but getting to go to the Bocuse d’Or and seeing that many thousands of people passionate about the same thing I was, I got to focus and was reminded of how passionate the industry is about food. It made me want to get back out there.”

Scott won the chance to attend the Bocuse after taking second place in the Young *Commis* competition. A continuing education grant also allowed him to do *stages* at **Atera**, **Daniel** and **The Nomad**, and spend time in the kitchens of **Blue Hill**, **Momofuku Ko** and **Eleven Madison Park**. At 21, Scott is now too old to be a Bocuse *commis* (a *commis* has to be under the age of 22 at the time of competition), but he hopes to compete one day.



Young Chef Competition winner Vinny Loseto helps Team USA with training. PHOTO: DAVID ESCALANTE



Mimi Chen wins first place at the 2016 Young Commis Competition. PHOTO: MENTOR

“As someone looking to one day be in that position, it’s incredible to see Team USA mount the podium and take first place,” he says. “But cooking in a restaurant and in a competition are two different things. They have to find cooks who are looking for a competition setting versus a

restaurant setting.”

And that setting may not be for everyone. “The junior Bocuse programs are for cooks to figure out if this is something they want to do or not,” Scott says. “Maybe it’s something they weren’t as interested in as they thought, but it’s an incredible opportunity if you are.”

“The reason we’re in this country with a ton of chef-owned restaurants is because of guys like this,” says **Pandel** of the chefs behind ment’or and the program itself. “They broke ground for us. Even the *haute cuisine* days in France were all based on that conversation with them and if they hadn’t continued to push, we’d all become irrelevant in our careers. Our direction would’ve changed a long time ago had it not been for people who pushed continually from the days of turning the restaurant into something more than just a pit stop.” **Next** (<http://plateonline.com/road-lyon>)

MORE ABOUT IN SEARCH OF GOLD AT THE BOCUSE D'OR



INTRO

[In Search of Gold at the Bocuse d'Or](#) ([/bocuse/search-gold-bocuse-dor](#))



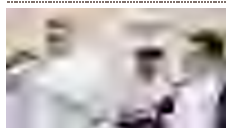
CHAPTER 1

[How the Bocuse d'Or Began](#) ([/bocuse/how-bocuse-dor-began](#))



CHAPTER 2

[Team USA Gets a Ment'or](#) ([/bocuse/team-usa-gets-mentor](#))



CHAPTER 3

[Road to Lyon](#) ([/bocuse/road-lyon](#))



CHAPTER 4

[Developing the Recipes](#) ([/bocuse/developing-recipes](#))



CHAPTER 5

[A Show-Stopping Platter](#) ([/bocuse/show-stopping-platter](#))



CHAPTER 6

[Competition Day](#) ([/bocuse/competition-day](#))



CHAPTER 7

[The Morning After](#) ([/bocuse/morning-after](#))

Bart P. replied on March 8, 2017 [PERMALINK \(/COMMENT/68376#COMMENT-68376\)](#)

Great info, hope to share this with our Culinary team of Sint Maarten to inspire them and to inspire young chefs and future chefs of Sint maarten Dutch caribbean



CHEFS

Developing the Recipes

by Liz Grossman — FEBRUARY 21, 2017



Team USA unveils its California-inspired vegan plate. PHOTO: SIRHA

historically, each of the 24 teams competing at Bocuse d'Or had to come up with a vegetable plate and meat platter (usually with fish). This year, the committee that determines the required dishes decided the vegetable plate would actually be vegan and the meat platter would be the team's take on Bresse chicken and crayfish.

"This was the 30th anniversary and the first theme of the Bocuse d'Or was Bresse chicken," **Jérôme** says. "It was important to bring the chicken back as a classic recipe from Lyon and for my father. It was interesting to have it reinterpreted by chefs from all over the world."

Jérôme and the committee felt the same way about the somewhat controversial decision to require a vegan plate. "I don't think vegetarian is a phase," he says. "You see it all over the world and it's becoming more common. But it remains challenging for a chef to cook vegan, whether in a restaurant or competition. We have to stay conservative with the contest, but still be aware of what's happening around us."

The vegan dish requirement, a first at the Bocuse ("and hopefully a last," laughs Tessier) was unexpected, to say the least.

H I remember Gavin was on a call with Daniel [Boulud] and Thomas [Keller], and he asked them, ‘When did vegan become hip in France?’ — Philip Tessier

“It was a huge hurdle,” says Tessier. “I remember **Gavin** was on a call with **Daniel** and **Thomas**, and he asked them, ‘When did vegan become hip in France?’”

“It’s kind of crazy to have a vegan dish, but I like it,” said Kaysen. “It makes us all think differently. It would be boring to do the same thing after a while.”



Mathew Peters places the chicken breasts on the meat platter. PHOTO: DAVID

ESCALANTE



Bresse chickens lined up on competition day PHOTO: LIZ GROSSMAN

But even knowing the required themes of each dish, the team still had to contend with ever-changing rules. “It’s a pretty chaotic way of communication,” Tessier groans. “They come out with a file in the beginning of September that [announces] the proteins, and then at the end of November, a bunch of new information comes out. The worst part is that everyone is asking questions through the fall, and they don’t answer them until the beginning of January.”

Details like the number of garnishes allowed on a plate, the types of fish to be used, and what can be made and brought in ahead of time will shift and can derail a recipe plan that’s been in place for months. Peters found out months after working on his menu that nothing pickled, preserved or juiced would be allowed.

“We had products we were hoping to preserve and take with us, but they slowly got kicked off to the side. Now we have a lot of pickled elements sitting in the refrigerator that need a home,” he laughs.

While some of the confusion comes from the language barrier, shifting event logistics and technicalities over whether a component is a garnish or ingredient, Tessier believes the changes in requirements are somewhat intentional.



Team USA's gold medal meat platter PHOTO: SIRHA

“Part of their goal is to make it so people aren’t just robots making this stuff,” he says. “Six years ago, they were taking criticism because the chefs were getting the meat and fish protein [information] at the beginning of the year and had a whole year to train. They were super-robotic about how they did everything, and they thought, ‘Are these guys great chefs, or just robots plugged into a machine?’ Now they’re trying to make things a little more challenging, but it makes a bit of chaos on our end. It makes these little stressful moments when you’re already riding the roller coaster as it is and then you have these little things flying in.”

Les vegans

The vegan requirement might have been unexpected, but wasn’t too far-fetched for Peters, who was accustomed to daily changing vegetarian tasting menus at **The French Laundry** and **Per Se**.

“My goal was to make this dish taste less like a vegan dish, and to bring the richness and buttery flavors without being able to use them,” says Peters. “It’s not something we’re traditionally trained on. It’s something that’s developed over the last few years to some degree, and has become more popular, especially in restaurants.”

For the vegan plate, each team was allowed to bring in two ingredients that represented their country. The rest of the produce was “shopped” as a group in a market by the competing chefs as an opening night ceremony at the competition. Peters was most excited by the ingredients he could bring in that personalized the plate and represented California produce.

“I wanted to pay homage to the fact that I’ve worked on both sides of the country,” he says. “With California being the produce capital, with the amount of product they supply and how beautiful it is, we felt like the vegan dish should come from that coast.” After toying with the idea of artichokes, they decided to feature green almonds and asparagus, even before the rest of the dish was finalized.

“We felt like they didn’t have green almonds in France, and they have such a short growing window so we compressed and froze them, which was a blessing because it actually made them taste better,” Peters says. “We had no idea where to put them or how they’d play into dishes, but we knew we wanted to put them somewhere.”

On competition day, what ended up on the plate was a mélange that channeled spring with green asparagus wrapped with cremini mushrooms, amandine potato, toasted green almond custard, red wine shallot, Meyer lemon confit, “Parmesan” crumble (made with green almonds and nutritional yeast) and sauce Bordelaise, all topped with delicate green curls of pea tendrils and violet flowers. The bright pops of green and perfect dollops of toasted almond custard on the stark white plate conveyed the bright, sunny colors and flavors of spring Peters wanted, and resembled a deconstructed salad plucked straight from a California menu. **Next** (<http://plateonline.com/show-stopping-platter>)

CALIFORNIA GREEN ASPARAGUS
Enveloped with Cremini Mushrooms,
Rock Crushed Amandine Potato,
Toasted Almond Custard, Red Wine Shallot,
Meyer Lemon Confit, “Parmesan” Crumble
and Pea Tendrils with Sauce Bordelaise

TEAM USA 2017



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The vegan menu

(http://cdn.plateonline.com/sites/default/files/b_ch4_vegan.jpg)

POULET DE BRESSE AUX EQUEVISES

“POULET DE BRESSE”

Mixed Mushroom Sausage, Braised Wings,
Vie Jaune Claret and Sauce Ameristone

BRESSE CHICKEN LIVER QUENELLE

Hudson Valley Lois Gras, Yellow Corn Custard,
Black Eyed Peas, Celery Vinaigrette and Toasted Pistachios

NORTH AMERICAN LOBSTER TAIL

Meyer Lemon Mousse, Black Truffle and Cherish

DARNSHILL

SLOW POACHED SWEET CARROTS

Vidalia Onion Soufflé, Fennel Poller, “Tulle,”
Shaved Pickled Carrots and Flowering Watercress

SUGAR SNAP PEA CRISP

Sweet Pea Crumble, Pea Atoli and Chutis

ROSE FINN POTATO

Potato Purée, Potato Casserole,
Black Truffle and Caramelized Scallion

TEAM USA 2017



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The meat platter menu

(http://cdn.plateonline.com/sites/default/files/b_ch4_meatmenu.jpg)



CHEFS

A Show-Stopping Platter

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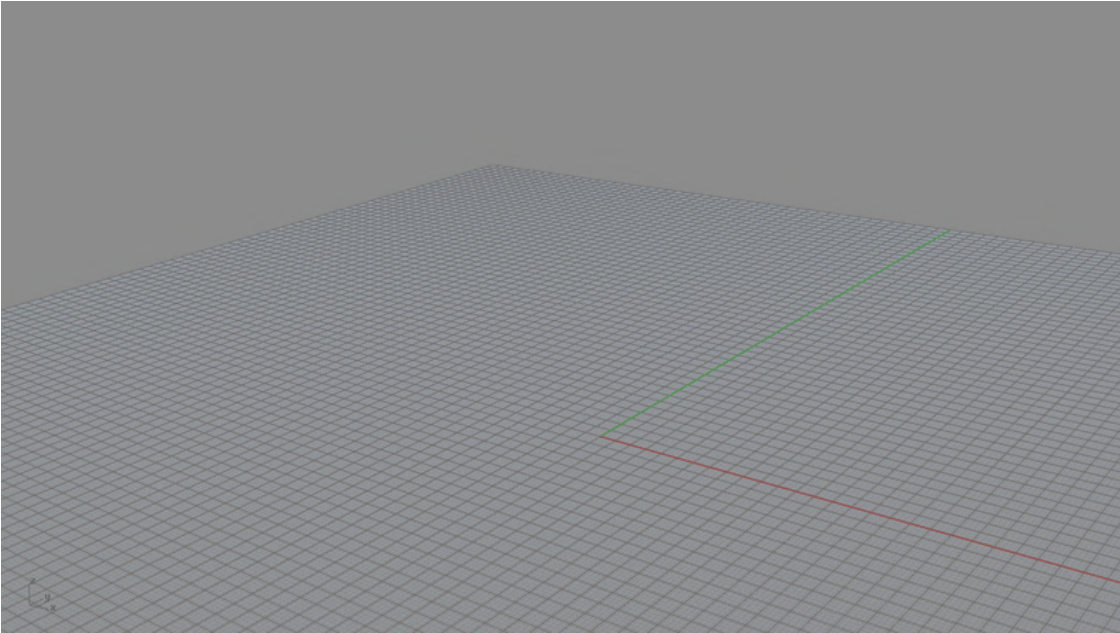


The final meat platter walks. PHOTO: DAVID ESCALANTE

The only time the noise level seems to diminish during the Bocuse d'Or is when a Crucial Detail platter makes the rounds. Martin Kastner of the Chicago design firm famous for creating the serveware at Alinea was asked to design Team USA's meat platter in 2015. When it was presented, a hush fell over the grandstands. "I remember thinking this is either really good or really bad," Kastner recalls. The response proved positive; Tessier's platter took top prize for the meat course.

"Martin is really the fourth guy on the team," Tessier notes. "He's spent an incredible amount of time with us, detailing out multiple pieces to help bring the food to a level that's not only more precise but also efficient. To do the level of food we're trying to do in the time we have is really difficult, and he's been a huge asset to getting us to another level of execution."

Kastner agreed to design Team USA's platter in 2017, but not until he met Peters and knew they were compatible.

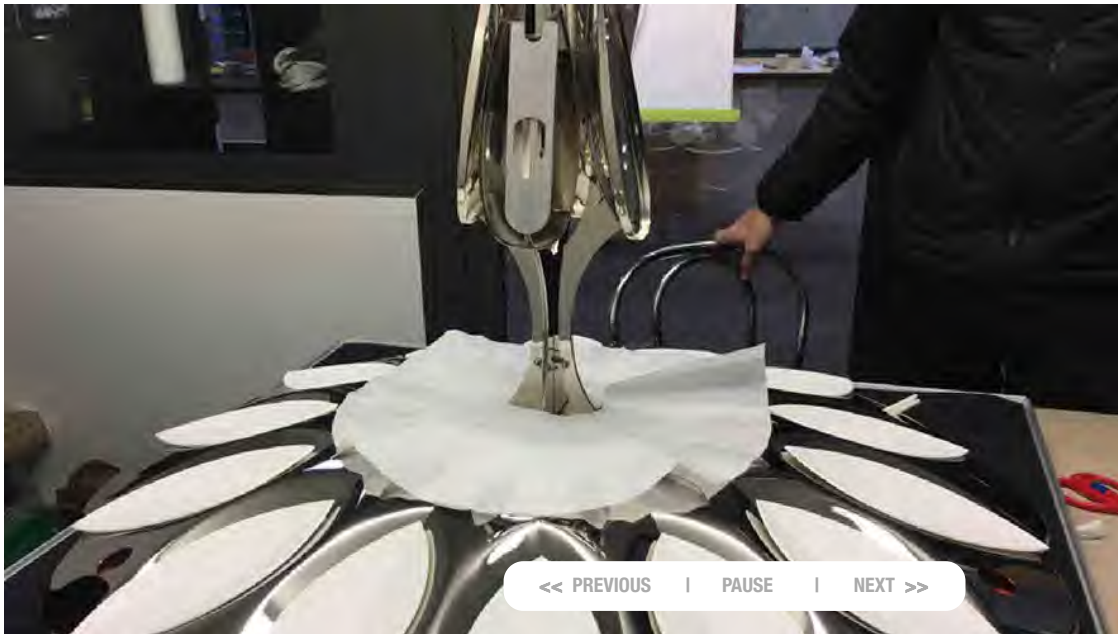


The platter comes together DESIGN: CRUCIAL DETAIL

“It needs to be a person I find a common language with,” says Kastner, who wanted to get a sense of Peters’ vision via mood boards they created for [food](http://www.gomoodboard.com/boards/cbZJLhn0/share) and [design](http://www.gomoodboard.com/boards/KcLts7Fu/share). “I try to connect the food and the platter in terms of form and function, so we’re trying to remove anything we don’t need. My approach to design is somewhat negative. I’m from Eastern Europe, so I’m a little bit like, ‘what do I not want it to be?’ So that’s how I establish my parameters. And from there I think about more positive stuff. But it’s an ongoing conversation with the chef.”

Kastner and Peters went back-and-forth about the platter’s design and functionality for nine months, making sure to adhere to the competition parameters. Not only is there a size limit, but the platter can’t weigh more than 40 pounds, while being large enough to hold 14 tasting portions for the judges, and serve as a vehicle to showcase the food. It also must be easily carried for a good 10 minutes past the judges. And since the food has to be hot, they had to figure out how to keep the heating elements hidden.

“We made the platter hollow, so we were able to put all the heating components inside,” says Kastner. “It’s a part no one would see. The guys would power the heat by switching on the circuits.” Kastner used an ultra-lite honeycomb material, and added holes to the large centerpiece to further reduce the weight. He also designed finger grips on the bottom to keep hands from interfering with the top surface (one of his pet peeves).



<< PREVIOUS | PAUSE | NEXT >>

Last platter check before the competition. The skirt/bib is there to catch any drips from the chicken or lobster. PHOTOS COURTESY

OF CRUCIAL DETAIL

But even the most copacetic collaboration between chef and designer means nothing once the TSA gets involved. Kastner's plan was to hook up the heating elements and circuit board inside the bone china and silver platter once he got to Lyon, but the TSA was not having it.

"Everything was pulled apart so it wouldn't look like something dangerous, but the TSA still removed the box," he laments. With just a few days to the competition, Kastner found himself running all over Lyon looking for relays, diodes, transistors, capacitors and resistors. "Soldering a kit like it's 1985," Kastner posted to Instagram, showing the mess of shop-class-worthy electronics he had to rebuild the night before the competition.

Time-saving tools

While the platter gets the fame and glory on competition day, Kastner says he was more excited about the custom tools, gadgets and molds he created that stayed behind the scenes but bought Peters and Turone precious time.



Martin Kastner shows Turone how to work the carrot shaving attachment. PHOTO: MEG SMITH

“With Phil, I spent a lot of time [observing] his process,” says Kastner. “I asked him where he spent his time and what he could improve. That’s why we came to the conclusion to make tools—they are just as important as the platter—to improve efficiency.”

In the end, more than a dozen tools made it to competition day, like a quick-release mixer attachment that helped shave carrots down to a cone in seconds.

“That tool saved us an hour,” recalls Turone, who worked on the carrot garnish for the meat platter. “Before, we had to sit and cut them all with a knife, and he created a tool that shaved them down in five seconds.”

Kastner made silicone molds Peters used to create perfect linear indentations on the chicken breasts, as well as potato presses that gave the potato glass (translucent domes that tasted like salt and vinegar chips) their perfect round shape. He also designed paper cloches that served as presenting pieces for the vegan plate.

“The idea is that you’re trying to make it as experiential as possible for the judges—but not get in the way,” he says. He initially wanted the cloches to be made of parchment but “we couldn’t get it to obey,” so he settled on velum, which had a similar look but more structure.

The patterns were made for the cloches, but all 60 pieces couldn’t be finished until they arrived in Lyon—and were folded by hand (taking over an hour each), mostly by **Mimi Chen**, who got to accompany the team to Bocuse after winning the Young Commis competition in 2016 (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vy3Dj4NST7E>).

“Phil jokingly asked, ‘why are we doing this?’” recalls Kastner. “I was like, it’s something we can try here, where time has a different meaning than in a restaurant. You wouldn’t get to try it anywhere else, you wouldn’t have the time, so let’s just do it.”



“The idea is that you’re trying to make it as experiential as possible for the judges—but not get in the way.” —*Martin Kastner*



Ultimately, they were worth the effort. The cloches, lifted by the servers in perfect synchronicity to reveal the vegan plate, wowed the judges.

And when you’re competing at Bocuse, it all comes down to the impact of that final execution. “We spend nine months working on it and then it’s out of our hands,” says Kastner. “When you’re there, you’re in suspense without the ability to influence the results, so that part’s a little tough.”

Next (<http://plateonline.com/competition-day>).



CHEFS

Competition Day

by Liz Grossman — FEBRUARY 21, 2017



The judges table on competition day. PHOTO: MEG SMITH

After thousands of hours of preparation, the competition day was at hand. The suspense began the second Peters and Turone began their well-choreographed dance at 8:40AM on the second day of the competition. They were guided minute-by-minute by Tessier, who remained perched outside the kitchen firing almost telepathic guidance.

“It’s kind of like squash,” says Ming Tsai, who’s been involved with Bocuse fundraising and support efforts since the Foundation started, about the hours of cooking.

“It’s hard to shoot a long game of squash, and it’s hard to shoot a five-hour cooking competition,” Tsai says. “We’re used to seeing a competition in half an hour, but this is more like a marathon, a triathlon. Only the fittest survive. You make one mistake and you lose, it’s that simple.”



Turone focuses while Arnold flexes over the kitchen. PHOTO: LIZ GROSSMAN

For Team USA, the drama had started an hour before, when the coaches made their way through each kitchen to inspect every ingredient, countertop, speed rack and cooler for contraband. "I felt like they were there forever," recalls Peters. "They want to know what's going on and make sure no one is cheating, so they pull your food out and disorganize it. You have to keep a close eye out and be patient."

Having only 10 minutes to get reorganized after the inspection was enough for Turone to feel thrown off his game before they even began cooking. "We had our run down to the minute, and when you're thrown off five minutes, it throws off the whole run," he says.

An hour later, Turone found himself behind by 20 minutes, and was starting to panic. Each team is given a local commis from the Institut Paul Bocuse to help out, and the student assigned to Team USA didn't speak English. "We met him 20 minutes before and I was getting my station set up and trying to explain how to do everything," Turone says. The language barrier on top of the mess after the judges' inspection were Turone's worst nightmare, but things got worse. One of his first jobs was to make the pretzel tuiles for the carrot garnish. They were supposed to slide neatly off the mold, but instead broke off in his hand.

"It's a tricky process and you have to pluck each one off," says Turone, "But the dough was too dry and they stuck to the metal. During our practice runs, it happened in the beginning, but the last couple of months leading up to the competition, it was no problem."

Maybe it was the do-or-die glare coming from the shirtless Arnold Schwarzenegger posters, or the razor sharp stare from Tessier, but Turone didn't flinch and the crowd growing around the Team USA kitchen didn't detect the distraction.

"It's like going to a golf tournament and seeing Tiger Woods play," I heard someone whisper behind me about Team USA. "90 percent of the crowd follows him and not the other players."



Peters prepares the potato molds. PHOTO: DAVID ESCALANTE

Peters and Turone remained focused on fixing the mishap. “That was his first project,” says Peters. “It could’ve deterred everything but he stayed focused. He put his head down and said, ‘I’m going to remake them and we’re going to get back on track.’”

They did, but not long before Peters faced another crisis as they began preparing the meat platter. The bases for a potato garnish also stuck to the molds and shattered instead of sliding off. Tessier and Peters just looked at each other.

They first tried putting them in butter, which didn’t work. Then they decided to pop them into a steamer for 25 minutes to soften them up. “The judges could sense it,” recalls Tessier. “When they saw me shut down and focus, I could feel everyone give us a bit of space. I remember thinking if these things didn’t come off the molds, we’d have no garnish!”

Tessier fired off a few frantic texts to his wife and mom: ‘Pray these things come off the molds!’, and as they headed into the last 35 minutes of the competition, things came together. “It was nothing short of a miracle,” says Tessier.

All the while, the growing crowds in the stands didn’t suspect a thing. The arena began to fill with spectators and the collective shouts of “U-S-A!” “Ma-thew Pe-ters!” and “Go Har-ry!” dominated the entire arena. The American section was among the rowdiest, best-decorated and loudest groups in the stands, waving streamers, signs, pompoms and massive American flags, dressed in capes and cowboy hats and shouting encouragement via bullhorns.

While Turone admits he was able to tune out most of the noise that day, the yells and music eventually fueled him.

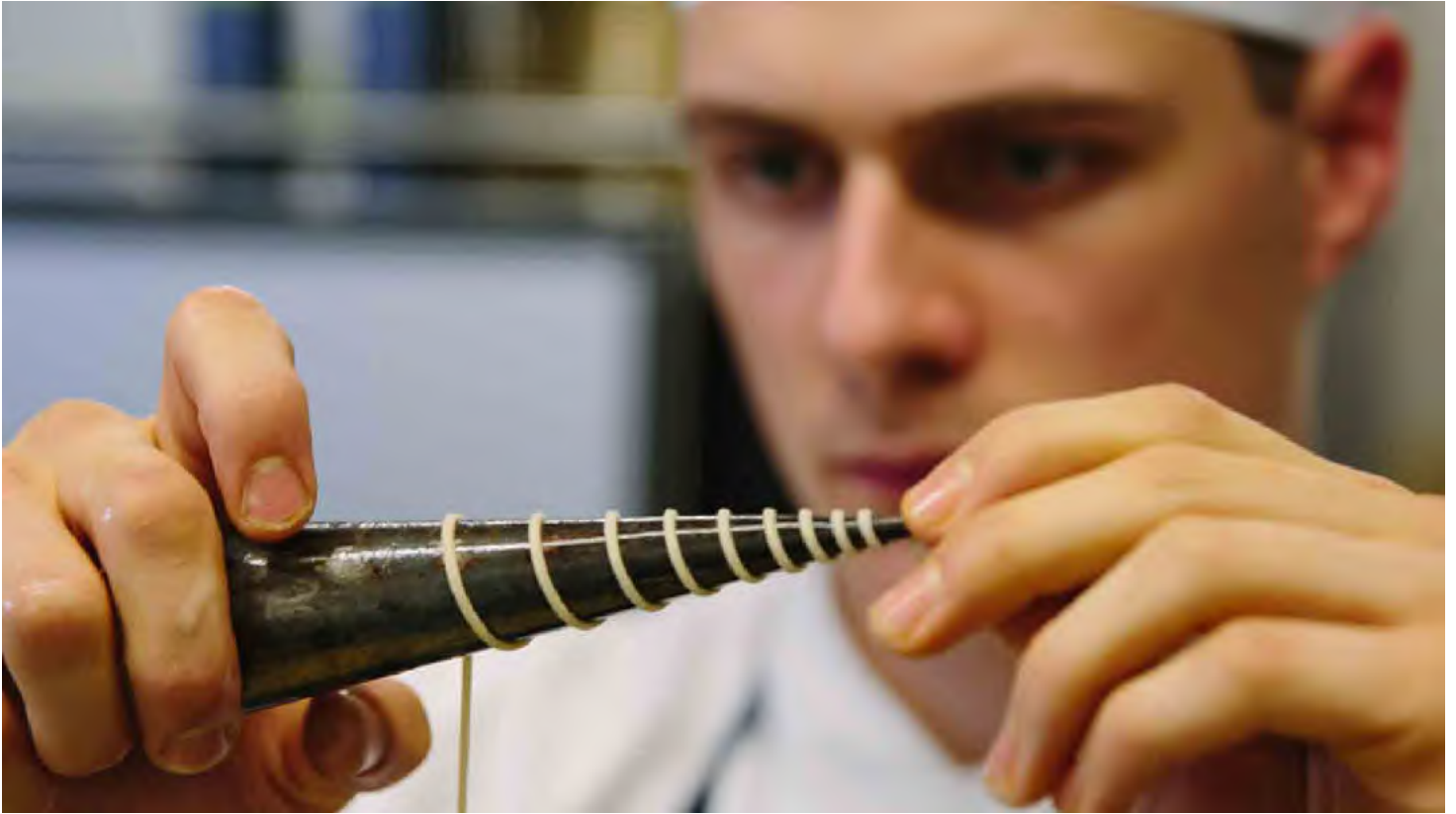
“It’s nice to hear the chants when you’re in a different country with 23 other countries around you,” he says. “It gives you a little tickle, puts a little fire under you. You’re not just doing it for yourself, you’re doing it for your whole country.”



“It’s nice to hear the chants when you’re in a different country with 23 other countries around you. It gives you a little tickle, puts a little fire under you. You’re not just doing it for yourself, you’re doing it for your whole country.” — *Harrison Turone*



By noon, with just minutes to show time, the media were kicked out of the kitchen area and sent to the press box for the duration of the judging, to leave room for the 24 judges, a dozen for each dish. Two judges were perched in the middle to try both dishes and cast a vote in case of a tie: **Joël Robuchon** (who served as the first president of the Bocuse d’Or in 1987) and last year’s gold medal winner, Norwegian chef **Ørjan Johannessen**. “You need to have a big stomach,” Johannessen laughed to the emcee who asked he was prepared to judge 24 dishes.



Turone delicately twists the pretzel tuiles. PHOTO: MEG SMITH

Finally, it was time for Team USA's platter to parade past the judges. The vegan dish went first, followed by the meat platter. Peters and Turone had made up all but three minutes of the lost time, so were still in a mad dash to get the garnishes, chicken and lobster tails loaded up onto the platter. The lobster shells started to dry up on Peters, so instead of affixing them to special hooks under the chicken breasts, he ended up placing them around the base where microgreens were supposed to go.

"We skated out of that box in just enough time," recalls Tessier. "Watching them keep their composure, despite all of these things that were challenging us, was really impressive," he says. "It validated all of our training and everything we had done to push ourselves. It's like our coach **Robert Sulatycky** (who took fourth place for Team Canada in 1991) said: 'You have to be like a duck in the water, on top you're smooth sailing and on the bottom your feet are furiously moving.'"

And once they were finished, it was smooth sailing indeed as the finished vegan plate followed by the meat platter slowly made their way around the arena before being plated for the judge's tasting (no one noticed a few rogue lobster shells that rolled around the base).

A hush fell over the crowd for the first time that day.

“If you don’t have the moment when your platter comes out and everyone’s just like, ‘wow!’ you won’t win,” says Tessier. “In 2013, when France’s platter came out, it was a beautiful gold platter of Versailles and instantly a story was told and instantly it was different and it was instantly amazing.”

“All these little things didn’t really go as planned, so we were a little defeated,” admits Peters. “But you can think about all the things you knew went wrong, which is the beautiful thing about cooking—no matter what happens in the kitchen, the customers out front have no idea what to expect. What they see on the plate is what they think the chef has prepared for them. That was a good thing for us.”

Turone was also disappointed, but tried to remain hopeful during the stressful waiting period, when the teams are packed like sardines in a separate room as scores are tallied. “Richard Rosendale told us you have to only worry about things you can control, and at Bocuse d’Or, there are so many things that are out of your control and you just have to be able to accept it,” Turone says. “I can get frustrated and angry, or I can accept it and do what I have to do to push forward, and that’s what we did.”

The winners



Philip Tessier, Matt Peters, Thomas Keller and Harrison Turone seconds before hearing the results. PHOTO: LEA LINSTER

Finally, it was time to announce the silver, bronze and gold winners, along with awards for best meat and vegetable plates, promotional campaign, poster and commis. The long ceremony of thanking endless sponsors, past winners and other Bocuse supporters only added to the arena's slowly rising blood pressure. Finally after more thank-yous, acknowledgments and drawn-out presentations, the winners were announced. Jerome Bocuse started with bronze, handing it to Team Iceland, and the silver went to Team Norway.

As Jerome pulled the final ballot from the envelope, he paused with a hint of torturous hesitation, looked up at the crowd with a smirk, and asked, "Are you ready?" "They were born ready!" nervously joked one of the emcees as all cameras, live feeds and phones focused on Jerome. With his announcement of "United States!" the entire stadium exploded in a frenzy of red, white and blue streamers.

"Once I heard bronze and silver go, my whole body started tingling," recalls Turone. "We got close and started squeezing each other and at that point we knew we won. You hear your national anthem in another country and you can't explain that feeling."

As the national anthem played, Peters, Turone and Tessier proudly took to the top podium while Thomas Keller waved the American flag high overhead.

"I was overcome with a huge sense of accomplishment and national pride," says Keller. "It was very emotional for me to wear that gold medal around my neck for the world to see. We felt like Olympians." Later that night, the gold trophy would be passed around at an after-party at Bocuse's restaurant Comptoir de L'Est, eliciting tears from Keller and the rest of the team while the national anthem was sung and bottles of Champagne uncorked until the wee hours. **Next**

(<http://plateonline.com/morning-after>)



The winners pose on the podium. PHOTO: SIRHA



CHEFS

The Morning After

by Liz Grossman — FEBRUARY 21, 2017



Team USA poses near their plaque with the gold Bocuse. PHOTO: LIZ GROSSMAN

The morning after the competition was frigid and still—a welcome contrast to the frenzy of the previous day—as my cab snaked uphill along the Saône River, a few miles north of Lyon. We arrived at **Paul Bocuse's Abbaye de Collonges**, the oldest three-Michelin-starred restaurant in the world. It's on the iconic patio out front where Bocuse winners receive their bronze plaques on a culinary walk of fame. With the teams still making their way there after a late night of celebrating, I had time to walk around the front courtyard, where I saw murals of famous Lyonnaise chefs, a life-size bronze statue of Bocuse crossing his arms in signature fashion, and the American flag waving out front.

Inside, classic silver platters emerged from the kitchen, overflowing with pistachio-studded *pâté on croûte*, *saucisson en brioche*, calf's brains and roasted pig's head, while red wine glasses were filled and sugar sculptures of Bocuse trophies were placed next to elaborate cakes for the celebratory breakfast. Resting quietly on a marble table near the back was 91-year-old Paul Bocuse himself, draped with an American flag scarf around his neck, posing for photos while keeping an instinctive eye on his busy kitchen.

T “That’s the one breakfast you want to be at, because if you’re there you did something right.” — *Mathew Peters*

Finally the winning teams arrived, and we gathered outside while their plaques were placed in the walkway. “We got to meet [Chef Bocuse], which was one of the highlights for me,” says Peters. “I know how much it meant for him, but also to Thomas and Daniel and everyone involved, to be able to get that etched into the front of the building where it will be there for as long as that restaurant is there. It goes down in history at that point. That was a really special day. That’s the one breakfast you want to be at, because if you’re there you did something right.”

“We’ve gone to the winner’s breakfast since we’ve been involved, but the two most meaningful were when Phil and Matt put down the bronze plaques with their engraved names,” Boulud says. “For all of us on the American team, it was the moment of pride we awaited to give to Paul Bocuse: Team USA on the podium, two times in a row.”



The courtyard of Paul Bocuse' L'Abbaye de Collonges PHOTO: LIZ GROSSMAN



Bocuse cakes and sugar trophies PHOTO: LIZ GROSSMAN

And no matter who takes the podium, to Boulud and the rest of the team, just being back in Lyon and at the winner’s breakfast is like being home.

Those long-standing connections are what makes Bocuse d’Or important to chefs like Tessier. “That’s why Paul started it,” Tessier says. “It’s all about community and chefs from across the world getting to know each other, working together, and creating a family that’s beyond the borders of your restaurant.” Tessier, whose book *Chasing Bocuse* (Prestel, 2017), is due out this fall, recalled how nervous he felt, walking through the Bocuse courtyard when he first visited the restaurant at age 20, and how much has changed since he competed. “To think my name is engraved at the entrance of this amazing restaurant alongside these other incredible chefs is like a dream. You don’t dream that kind of dream, it doesn’t exist, it’s so far beyond what you would hope for and now we’re a part of this incredible family of chefs.”

And the newest and youngest member involved, Turone, was more than grateful for the opportunity to join the Bocuse family.

"I learned something many people don't learn for another 10 to 15 years, that I can take with me and keep developing," he says. "You can always learn to cook, but you can't always learn how to inspire someone or talk to them or manage."

But the moment may have meant the most to Keller, who had finally achieved his mission to take Team USA to the top. After Team USA won the silver medal in 2015, Chef Bocuse turned to Keller and uttered a single challenge: "Gold."

Donning an American flag scarf, Keller crouched down to pose for photos with newly laid plaque, and the entire team placed their hands on the golden trophy. As the cameras clicked, I heard Keller say with a smile between camera flashes, "lightning struck twice."

Afterwards, Peters took advantage of the quiet after the storm with a few much-needed days off with family in Paris and London. When he returned to the States, his victory lap began in San Francisco, where he made rounds, trophy in tow, to restaurants including **Coi**, **Mourad** and **Saison** to thank the chefs and staff who supported them along the way (an NYC tour is slated for late March). The dream team was also tapped to take part in a growing roster of culinary events and appearances—from Pebble Beach Food & Wine to Yountville Live. And their win looks like the next step towards raising the competition's profile in America; in mid-March, they'll appear on "The Jimmy Kimmel Show" to do an on-stage competition-style battle against Kimmel for the best recreation of their carrot garnish.

"It's what we wanted—to be able to do this on stage and promote it and get the ordinary day-to-day person to understand what this is all about, and get excited for the next time around," says Peters.

And aside from cooking for a "bucket list" dinner with **Yannick Alléno** in Paris this spring, Peters is most excited about his next step—opening a fine-dining restaurant, most likely in Austin.

But he's not done leaving his historic mark on the Bocuse d'Or. As this year's gold medalist, he's invited back in 2019 to be the first American to serve as an honorary judge, and he'll continue to help promote the competition among the chef community in the States. And even further down the road, if Turone fulfills his personal goal of competing in 2027..."I told him I'd be his coach," Peters says. **The End**



The team places their hands on the trophy by Mathew Peters' plaque. PHOTO: LIZ GROSSMAN

MORE ABOUT IN SEARCH OF GOLD AT THE BOCUSE D'OR



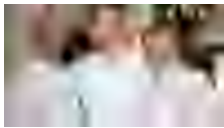
INTRO

[In Search of Gold at the Bocuse d'Or](/bocuse/search-gold-bocuse-dor) (</bocuse/search-gold-bocuse-dor>)



CHAPTER 1

[How the Bocuse d'Or Began](/bocuse/how-bocuse-dor-began) (</bocuse/how-bocuse-dor-began>)



CHAPTER 2

[Team USA Gets a Ment'or](/bocuse/team-usa-gets-mentor) (</bocuse/team-usa-gets-mentor>)



CHAPTER 3

[Road to Lyon](/bocuse/road-lyon) (</bocuse/road-lyon>)



CHAPTER 4

[Developing the Recipes](/bocuse/developing-recipes) (</bocuse/developing-recipes>)



CHAPTER 5

[A Show-Stopping Platter](/bocuse/show-stopping-platter) (</bocuse/show-stopping-platter>)



CHAPTER 6

[Competition Day](/bocuse/competition-day) (</bocuse/competition-day>)



CHAPTER 7

[The Morning After](/bocuse/morning-after) (</bocuse/morning-after>)

Luigi L. replied on March 2, 2017 [PERMALINK \(/COMMENT/68361#COMMENT-68361\)](/COMMENT/68361#COMMENT-68361)

It was an Amazing experience to be there in person to watch this accomplishment and to watch my son Vincenzo Loseto been part of Tean USA!

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Trevor R. replied on March 5, 2017 [PERMALINK \(/COMMENT/68371#COMMENT-68371\)](/COMMENT/68371#COMMENT-68371)

Well done! This team is very inspiring.