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Talking food & wine with three-Michelin star chef Peter Knogl of Cheval Blanc in Basel

By [Natasha Heard](#) on 29th October 2018



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‘When you love something, it’s easy’ – What a three-Michelin star awarded chef has to say about his craft.

It isn’t often I get the chance to chat with a three-Michelin star awarded chef, especially after having tasted their food. With only three restaurants in Switzerland that hold the honour (5 in the UK) and 136 in the world, I felt very privileged to not only dine at his restaurant but sit down with Peter Knogl of Cheval Blanc.

Situated in the Grand Hotel les Trois Rois in Basel, [Cheval Blanc](#) is no stranger to some pretty impressive awards. As well as the aforementioned stars, the restaurant currently holds 19 Gault Millau points and Peter was also named the brand’s chef of the year in 2011 and 2015.



Peter is famous around the globe for his French haute cuisine which is enriched with Mediterranean and Asian influences

After cultivating his craft in the likes of France, Spain, Germany, London and Switzerland, Peter, originally from Germany, settled on Cheval Blanc in Basel, on the banks of the Rhine, in 2007, with the restaurant gaining its first star in 2008. The second star followed swiftly a year later and the third (the highest honour that can be handed out) in 2016. According to the Michelin Guide three stars signifies “exceptional cuisine that is worth a special journey”. I live just over 500 miles away, as the crow flies, I would consider that a special journey and I have no doubt that my lunch offered up some exceptional cuisine. You can read my full restaurant review [here](#).

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In between chatting about the World Cup, Brexit and famous faces that had dined at the restaurant, we mostly talked of other restaurants (he was very complimentary of his fellow chefs and their work), his own career but largely food itself and the happiness it can bring, with his passion coming across in abundance.



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Peter was chosen as the Chef of the Year in 2015 by the Gault Millau guide.

An affable character, Peter couldn't compliment his fellow Cheval Blanc chefs enough and, when I brought up the success he has experienced, he was quick to involve the hard-working and loyal Cheval Blanc team in his reply, attributing the restaurant's success to his 'very good, dedicated' team of 8 chefs and 6 waiters, some of whom have worked there for up to 10 years.

When asked how he ensures he and the team stay on top, he declared "when you love something, it's easy, I love the job and it is important to cook to the same level every single day." A hands on chef, he tastes everything, he works every day, checks everything that leaves the kitchen and believes this high involvement is the key to success. His staff are all involved in tasting the dishes and wine pairings to ensure all ideas come together as imagined and also that each and every morsel on the plate is significant.



Cheval Blanc at the Grand Hotel Les Trois Rois in Basel holds three coveted Michelin stars

Passionate about wine, Peter believes the finest wines come from France and Spain, he described the food as the boat and the wine as the force that pushes it. I have to agree the wines were delightful with each course I devoured, adding another dimension to an already excellent plate of food. Not only is it the delicious nectar that is key to a dish it didn't go unnoticed that every plate of food was served with a spoon to scoop up whatever sauce was included. Peter (dubbed the 'king of sauces') explained that quite simply this is where he feels the flavour really stands out within a dish.

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Flavour, fine ingredients and creativity maketh the meal and, living on his family’s farm and with his grandmother running an inn, Peter’s connections to fine, fresh ingredients came at any early age. Cheval Blanc’s food is sourced locally, where possible (a decision made easier by import taxes in the country but an obvious decision nonetheless), is seasonal, but absolutely is not compromised on quality or consistency. Be it Wagyu beef from Japan or truffles from France, expect worldly foods presented in a classic way. I asked what his favourite season to cook in is – ‘winter, as it offers a larder of ingredients full of richer flavours such as venison and winter truffles’ – it happens to be my preferred season to eat out at for the same reason, being English, the need to dine on bulky, warming and rich foods is inherent.



Sauces based on exceptional research play the main part in Peter’s famous flavour compositions

I was interested to know if Peter had a favourite dish to prepare, eat or something that simply epitomised his style – his top three were a crab meat, foie gras and apple dish, an espuma artichoke, foie gras and truffle dish and, finally, langoustine with madras, which I had sampled as part of the summer tasting menu. I heartily agreed that this was a fine dish indeed – sweet, plump langoustine was surrounded by a warming, yet light, curry sauce with fresh, crisp green apple matchsticks. It was one of the most delicious dishes I have eaten and my mouth waters now even thinking about it.

I wasn’t sure what to expect from Peter – an arrogant type with far better things to do with his time than chat with me? Well it wasn’t what I got – a smiling, interesting, pleasant and down to earth person, who is certainly passionate about food and cooking was who I spoke to. A man who simply enjoys what he does. That’s what makes him successful, and it was rather inspiring. He happily declared; “food makes you happy, that’s the quality of life” – and I certainly walked away from this encounter, and from my meal, a happy person.



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