



Chef Clement Gelas and members of his staff at Courchevel, in Park City. Photo courtesy Courchevel Bistro.

Courchevel Bistro: A Taste of French Alps Cuisine in Park City, Utah

Is it possible to find a café serving exceptional [French cuisine](#) in Park City, Utah? The answer is a resounding yes. On a chilly evening in January, our hearty ski appetites were satisfied by a delectable assortment of regional French dishes prepared by Chef Clement Gelas at the Courchevel Bistro, a [Talisker Club Bistro](#), located on Main Street. Named after Park City's sister city in the French Alps, this intimate restaurant housed in the renovated historic Coal & Lumber Building has been delivering first-rate service and authentic French-European cuisine since its opening in the summer of 2019. The Bistro appeals to both visitors and locals, as well as members of the exclusive Talisker Club.

Upon entering the restaurant, we passed by the adjacent café-bakery that closes at 4pm daily. We peered into a glass case displaying an assortment of sweets. Had our schedule been more flexible the next day, we would have gladly returned to splurge

on one of these treats.

On the way to our table near the front-facing windows, we walked by bar height seating facing the open kitchen, where several individuals were busy preparing dinner. While none of those seats were taken, most of the candlelit tables were already filled with guests. Our Long Island-born waiter, Jon, and our sommelier, Bill, were punctual and informative with their introductions. Instead of ordering from the bound menu, our multi-course meal was pre-selected by Chef Clement, and Bill was orchestrating the wine selections. We only provided two dietary requests—neither one of us would eat pork, and I preferred to eat fish rather than meat.



The interior of Courchevel Bistro. Photo provided by the restaurant.

FIRST COURSE at Courchevel Park City

Within no time, a rectangular basket of bread with a container of butter was placed on the table. Bill poured our first glass of wine, and Jon set a Brie Baked Puff Pastry with

homemade marmalade along with a row of sliced crostini, baked at the Red Bicycle Baker in the middle of our cozy table. We were told that Chef Clement considers this a classic dish and a must-have at Courchevel. Like most of the other items on the menu, the ingredients were sourced from local entities. As we took sips of the Lucien Albrecht Cremant d'Alsace, we simultaneously detected how the mild creamy taste of the baked brie complimented the homemade marmalade.



Brie in puff pastry with toasted baguette. Photo by The Traveling Bornsteins.

Bill checked in to see if we liked the first wine. When asked about the criteria he used during his selection process, he responded “I wanted the accompanying wines to be reflective of our concept as a whole. It is not about finding the most expensive, the most famous, or the highest-scoring wines, rather it’s about finding the right wines. We have worked hard sourcing wines from the eastern regions of France, from which our cuisine originates.” Our first wine fell into this category.

After we had savored this classic, we tasted the smoked trout niçoise. Instead of the more customary tuna, Chef Clement uses slices of an in-house smoked trout. The thinly sliced trout is set on a bed of sliced vegetables and mixed greens lightly covered with a verjus vinaigrette. Bill left the remnants of the Lucien Albrecht Cremant d'Alsace and poured the Domaine Richel Apremont for this course. While I cannot call myself a wine maven, I thoroughly enjoyed how the wine tasted with this classic fish dish.

MAIN COURSE

My husband Ira's meat request was met with a special rendition of the restaurant's classic beef burgundy entrée made without the bacon-chive mashed potatoes. This dish was enhanced with roasted mushrooms and cipollini onions. Chef Clement included this on his menu because "it is a traditional dish that is great for a ski town." I savored every bite of my Idaho trout bouillabaisse made with a saffron broth, crawfish emulsion, and an assortment of vegetables. Bill used his creativity to select a wine that paired equally well with both meat and fish. Both Ira and I both found our glasses of Lucy Rose a pleasant accompaniment to our respective dishes.

Our main course also included an order of vegetable pasta, which was prepared with a spinach puree, roasted mushrooms, tomato confit, and garlic bechamel. Bill gladly introduced us to another wine when he poured the Chanin Pinot Noir. During his presentation, Bill mentioned that "The two domestic wines (the Lucy Rose and the Chanin Pinot Noir) are examples of small, independently owned producers who make outstanding wine. These winemakers put their lives into their wineries, and I feel humbled to be able to share them with our guests."



Vegetable pasta served at Courchevel Bistro. Photo by The Traveling Bornsteins.

FINALE

Our robust appetites were quickly being replenished by the nourishing, home cooked foods. If I wanted to leave room for dessert, it wasn't possible to finish every morsel. I'm glad that I looked ahead to the encore, a baked blueberry clafoutis, another classic French dessert that has become a staple of the restaurant since its opening. The Domaine des Bernardins Muscat Beaumes de Venise was an added bonus. This after dinner wine helped to draw out the flavor of the blueberries.



Clafoutis, a classic French dessert. Photo by The Traveling Bornsteins.

To gain a better appreciation of why the combination of flavors were accentuated while sipping the wine, I asked Bill if he could elaborate further on his wine pairing philosophy. He replied, “I try not to overthink the pairings, as the goal is to find balance. Ideally, the wine should elevate the food, and the food should elevate the wine. That said, delicious wine tends to go well with delicious food.”



Chef Clement photo by Courchevel Bistro.

INTERVIEW WITH CHEF CLEMENT AT COURCHEVEL BISTRO

When we were considerably younger and not concerned with the consumption of saturated fat, Ira and I would frequent French restaurants. During those encounters, we did not have the opportunity to taste any cuisine that mirrors Chef Clement's French-European cooking style. After being so fascinated with my new gastronomic find, I was curious about Chef Clement's background and what he hopes to accomplish in Park City. I'm sharing what I learned.

At what point in your life did you decide to become a chef?

Cooking has always been a passion of mine. When attending hospitality school, I was lucky enough to receive an internship with nine Michelin star chef Marc Veyrat. It was there where I met an incredible group of people who have influenced my career greatly.

To what degree has your formal culinary education affected your professional career as a chef?

I began my formal training with Marc Veyrat, then worked with French Michelin star chef Jean Sulpice, who now owns the Auberge du Père Bise in Talloires. In my training, I was exposed to a variety of different techniques and methods which I have now adapted into my own unique style.

Why did you choose to relocate to Utah?

I first visited Utah on a ski trip with friends from Long Island, where I traveled around the state and fell in love with the beautiful landscape and outdoor lifestyle.

When you compare your days as a European chef at Michelin star restaurants in the French Alps to your time in Utah, are there any differences in your selection of ingredients, cooking style, and/or menus?

The biggest difference is the style and speed of service. In Utah, especially with families, guests often prefer to be in and out. At Courchevel, we have pulled elements from the European culture to deliver the ultimate fine dining experience.

What has been your greatest achievement to date?

My two children have been my greatest achievement!

Can you describe what you hope to accomplish by sharing a regional French cuisine with restaurant-goers in Park City?

With Courchevel, we aimed to deliver a unique French-European cuisine that was not yet available on Main Street. I believe that the delicious French Alp comfort food will be well appreciated in Park City, as both destinations have various synergies.

Is there a reason why the name of Park City's sister city was selected for the

restaurant's name?

We chose the name Courchevel as it represents the inspiration from which we derive from. We hope to deliver the same type of delicious food and dining experience as if guests were in the French Alps. The city of Courchevel is also very close to my native home in France.

What sets your cuisine apart from other French cooking?

Crozets are unique to the city of Courchevel. They are a house-made buckwheat pasta served with a bechamel sauce made with local cheese.

Does your location in a Utah mountain town outside Salt Lake City create any culinary or ingredient challenges?

No, there are some amazing artisans that supply us with ingredients such as cheese, apple cider, honey, etc.

Are there any ingredients that you prefer to incorporate into your entrees and/or do you avoid any items?

I always have fresh fish and a lamb dish. I like to keep some items off the menu if they don't fit the style of the restaurant.

Does Courchevel Bistro have any signature dishes or desserts that showcase the restaurant's cuisine?

Our signature dish is the Fromage blanc with poached pear.

Are you anticipating making any changes to the menu within the next year?

At Courchevel, our menu always evolves with the season. Our dishes will always be continually improving and offering something new.

After being introduced to this region's culinary secrets, I will be on the lookout for more opportunities to indulge in this regional cuisine. Until I experience something similar, Courchevel will remain at the top of my list for a French-European dining experience in the United States.

— Story by Sandy Bornstein. Photos, except where noted, by The Traveling

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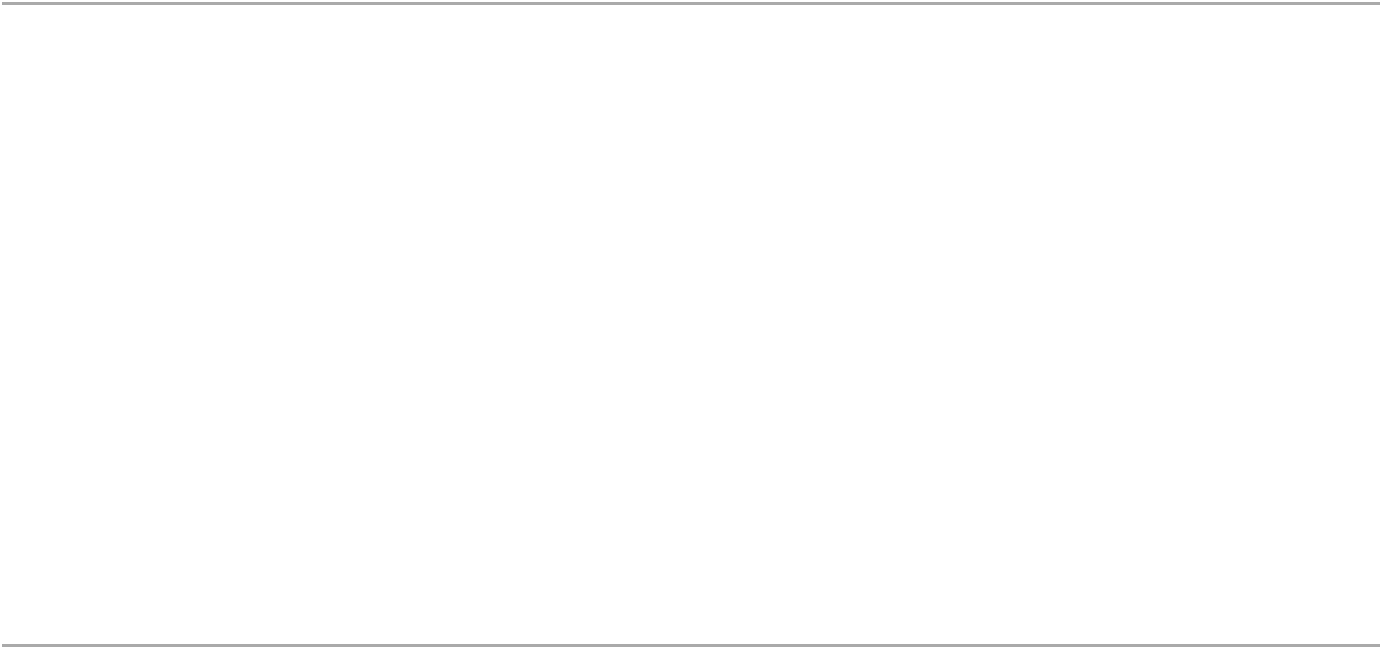
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