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Descended from the king of chefs and chef of kings

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MICHEL ESCOFFIER

HIS NAME was Auguste Escoffier. Any chef worth his salt would know the great Escoffier, codifier of French cuisine, author of culinary bible *Le Guide Culinaire*, and through his Belle Epoque-era customers King Edward VII and Kaiser Wilhelm II, the “king of chefs and chef of kings”.

His great-grandson, Michel Escoffier, swung by Manila earlier this week due to CCA Manila's partnership with the Institut Disciples Escoffier, which formed a French cuisine program with the institution. Aside from his last name, Mr. Escoffier works as the president of the Foundation Auguste Escoffier in France. He travels the world to spread his ancestor's teachings around the globe.

While reminiscing, he told *BusinessWorld* that an American journalist once asked him if he cooked. "I do, but only confidentially; with friends."

Mr. Escoffier, born in 1944, has a background in urban development and telecommunications, working at some capacity with the World Bank and the United Nations. Perhaps it is fate, destiny, or some genetic pull, that in his travels, Mr. Escoffier encountered various fans of his grandfather in several hotel kitchens. "When I visited the kitchens, they all had the *Guide Culinaire*."

"In a nutshell, I would say that he made cooking pass from the Middle Ages into modern times."

His great-grandfather once said, at the height of his career at the Ritz-Carlton in the early 1900s, "Cooking, like fashion, must evolve with time and take into account the changes in people's lives."

Mr. Escoffier explained, "There were hardly any cars in the road at that time, but he already saw that people could not spend as much time eating at the table."

He added that his ancestor also said, in this light, that chefs should create lighter dishes, shorter menus, and enhance the nutritive value of food. Apparently, his ancestor also predicted that cuisine would move from an art to a science. "He was a visionary."

While Auguste Escoffier may be part of the world lost to the wars that followed his career and death in 1935, what survives, more than the grand meals he had created, are the teachings that every fabulous meal stands on a solid foundation of the basics of cooking. "It's like music. You can make music. You can play Chopin, you can play jazz – if you don't know the basics of music, you just make noise." –

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