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Anton takes a fresh new look at food

ONE of Britain's most original and inventive cooks is Swiss Anton Mosimann, *maitre chef des cuisines* at the Dorchester Hotel and a leading exponent of the so-called *nouvelle cuisine* ("Smaller portions, more selection, fresher ingredients").

It was at the invitation of compatriot Roger Manser, head of the hotel and catering department at Brighton Technical College, that I attended a demonstration of "Cuisine à la carte" which he gave recently.

It was a real experience to see him at work. Needless to say the finished product – *Rendezvous de fruits de mer* – was perfection.

It consisted of various seafood in a delicious sauce of fish stock, white wine, double cream, Noilly Prat, herbs and butter. Like all masters he made it look such an easy dish to prepare.

Anton, who was born in Solothurn in 1947 and was given his top job at the Dorchester in 1976 at the age of 29, believes food should be presented "honestly" and not disguising the ingredients.

"Make it simple", is his guiding principle, "but make it perfect".

He is very flexible in putting together his menus and is always guided by the availability of ingredients, all which must be fresh. Frequently he gets an inspiration for a new dish while walking through the wholesale market. His *Terrine Covent Garden* is one example.

He hardly uses any flour in his sauces. Gone are the days when the ladle almost stood upright in the *saucière*. Vegetables are cooked very lightly, in seconds rather than minutes.

He looks upon cooking as a form of art and also believes a good cook is an eternal appren-

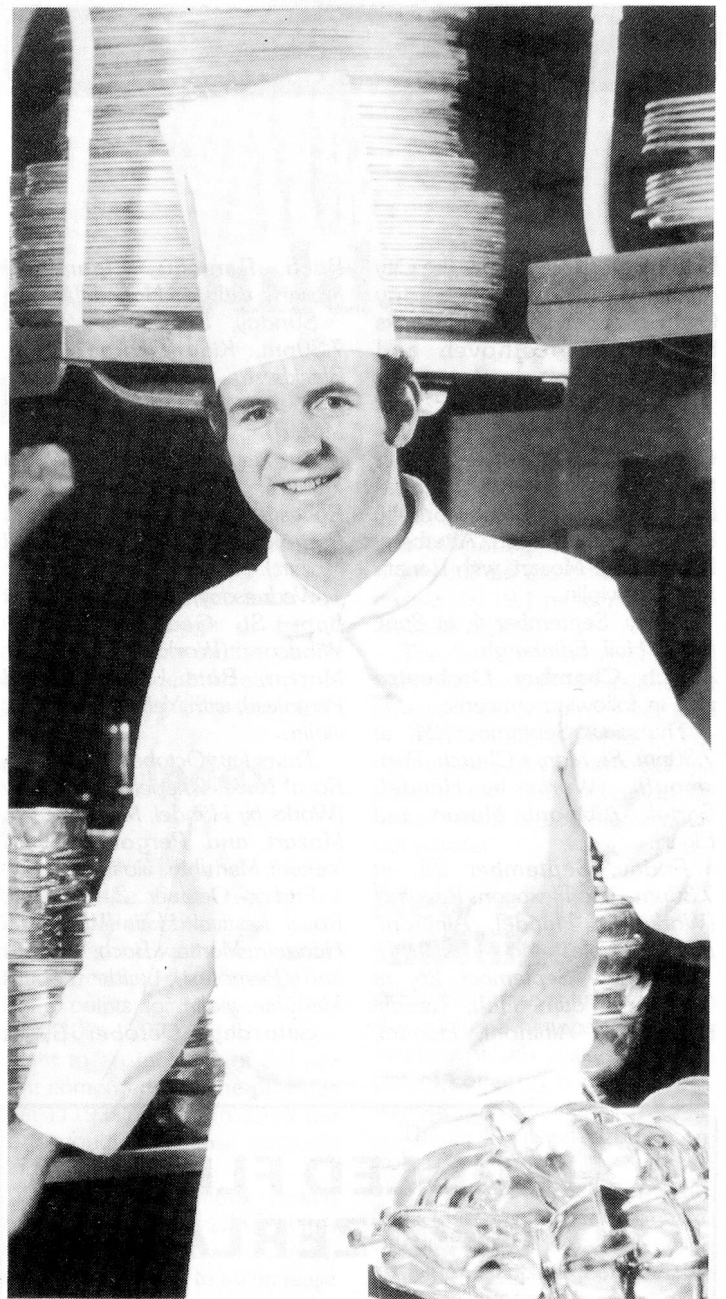
tice. He always tries to improve on his last performance and is ever willing to learn from others. Anton goes off at least once a year to work in the kitchens of one of the great French chefs such as Paul Bocuse, Michel Guèrard or the Troisgros brothers.

He likes to take two or three of his chefs to any serious cooking competition that is going, as an opportunity to perfect their skills and to prove their worth. He himself has won more than 30 gold medals.

Anton seems to have a compulsion to communicate his knowledge and his skill to his younger colleagues. A sous-chef who assisted at the demonstration in Brighton told me he considers his apprenticeship has only just begun again since he started to work under Mosimann.

To Anton Mosimann happiness is seeing 120 people not just satisfied but delighted. Part of happiness for him is surprise. This is why he devised for the Dorchester the *menu surprise*, a meal at a set price which varies every day and consists of anything fresh at hand, an idea which has proved very popular.

This philosophy of happiness is applied to all aspects of his work. In order to make his guests happy, his staff must be happy. He greets as many as possible of the people who work under him – there are about 80 of them – every morning personally, shakes them by the hand and wants to know if anything worries them.



Anton Mosimann in the Dorchester kitchen

"An unhappy cook is dangerous to me", he says.

Even the ingredients must be "happy". He gave the example of the Scottish cattle in beautiful green pastures, slaughtered – while happy – in their familiar environment. If the animals had been herded into lorries and subjected to a long anxious journey before being killed their muscles would tense up, resulting in tough beef.

Anton's working day begins at 8.30am. The morning is occupied with staff-meetings, checking and planning the day's menu and general administration. At midday he disappears into the kitchen and does not appear

again until 2.30pm.

At 3 o'clock he goes home for a couple of hours with his family, his Swiss wife Kathrin and his two young sons, Mark, four, and Philipp, six. Then he is back, preparing for the evening service. Every day he cooks for at least three hours, often five or six. He is lucky to be home by 11pm.

Is there any time at all for leisure in his life? Fortunately he likes travelling. He has recently returned from Singapore and on the day previous to the demonstration in Brighton was in France on a promotion tour.

He collects old cookery books and has so far amassed around 4,000. He is also interested in sport and likes jogging in particular.

And now he is an author, too. His book, called "Cuisine à la carte" (Northwood Books, London, £12.95) is a collection of more than 200 illustrated recipes.

'Make it simple but make it perfect'