



A chat with Regis Herviaux, head chef at the **g Hotel**

Regis, also known as 'Reggie' to his Irish friends, was born in a beautiful town in France called La Gacilly in 1973. I can vouch for the fact that it is a beautiful town as, by coincidence, I did a house swap last summer with a family who lived about 10km away. It's a small world. The food we ate last summer in that area was very good indeed, but not at all fussy — just great ingredients cooked simply and with lovely sauces. This seems to be the philosophy that Regis has brought to his own cooking at the **g Hotel**, as the biggest emphasis is on getting the very best raw ingredients and cooking them simply, but always with something extra that not all people can do in their own kitchen. These small extras like sauces take years of training.

Speaking of which, Regis has had a wide ranging experience starting off in a very traditional **hotel** in his local town where absolutely everything was made in the kitchen — no exceptions — to a stint in the Caribbean island of St Lucia where there were 80 chefs in a couples only **hotel**, to a tiny island off Newfoundland called St Pierre Et Miquelon. It was of course a French island and he started work there in a French restaurant and moved later to work with a master butcher to help him expand his business. Later on he moved to Ireland where he spent time in such notable kitchens as Ashford Castle, Cregans Castle, Cashel House **Hotel**, and the Marriott.

He is passionate about food and when I pushed him to suggest a different career he was very definite that cooking it had to be. A typical day starts at 9am and will not finish until after last orders — that is a long day and his advice to any aspiring chefs is that if you watch the clock for quitting time, don't go there, forget it, it is not for you. Although he and his team at the **g Hotel** have selected some top quality suppliers, every single order is checked for quality and consistency before the delivery person can get a signature, and his rule is three strikes and you are now an ex supplier.

I asked him what his plans were for the menu, and he said that some changes were imminent to reflect the change in seasons (mind you, as I write this it feels more like November than May). I also got the impression that he would like to introduce some more adventurous dishes, however we both agreed

that this is not a good time to play around with dishes that may or may not appeal to most people's palates.

When asked what his favourite meal would be, I was surprised by his answer: Some slices of James McGeogh's air dried lamb, some mature cheese, tapenade, hummus, and a nice chilled bottle of Rose D'Anjou, finished off with a nice cigar. He is adamant that we should focus on more simple pleasures like simple picnics, good breads, cheeses, and when cooking at home to focus on simple cooking, not glossy complicated cookbooks. His motto is 'try to improve, not to impress'.

As both Regis and his wife are chefs (Deirdre is a chef in Ashford Castle), they like to eat out where possible. His most recent discovery was the Pearl Restaurant in Dublin, very French and very good. That's on my 'A list', a must visit.

Finally, some quick questions and answers:

Hobbies: Restoring a 1973 XJ12 Jaguar and fishing for pike (a vastly underrated fish for cooking here in Ireland).

What do you think of celebrity chefs? Did you ever see a French one? I think not.

Favourite place to holiday: Home to parents in France.

Favourite gadget: Apple iPhone.

Favourite cookbook: Larousse Gastronomique.

Favourite food: Scallops and velvet crabs, the scallops to eat and the crab to make a sauce.

What do you think of Michelin star rated restaurants? They are the best, especially in France. It's a cast iron guarantee of quality.

Car of your dreams: BMW M5.

Watch out for some gourmet food and wine dinners that the **g Hotel** is planning, if you want to be informed of special dinners in the future e-mail csullivan@theg.ie or phone 091 865200 and ask for Colm Sullivan.

