# 9. Experiencing French cookery in nineteenth-century London

*Valerie Mars*

***Introduction***

This chapter discusses London's nineteenth-century French cookery and a little of its history before 1800. London's nineteenth-century French cooks were to be found in households, hotels, restaurants and, not least, in print. They were producing a cuisine transposed from one culture to another where they had to accommodate to a range of tastes and values differing from those of the cuisine's origin. The question is how French was London's French cuisine? Or was it sometimes something that might not have been recognized as French by the French and informed gastronomes? The aim is to locate the variety of French and French-style cuisine in this fast-changing city. How was this experienced by both French and English cooks and consumers, for French cookery was not always well understood? This problem was not particular to nineteenth-century London.

***Predecessors: French cooks in London before 1800***

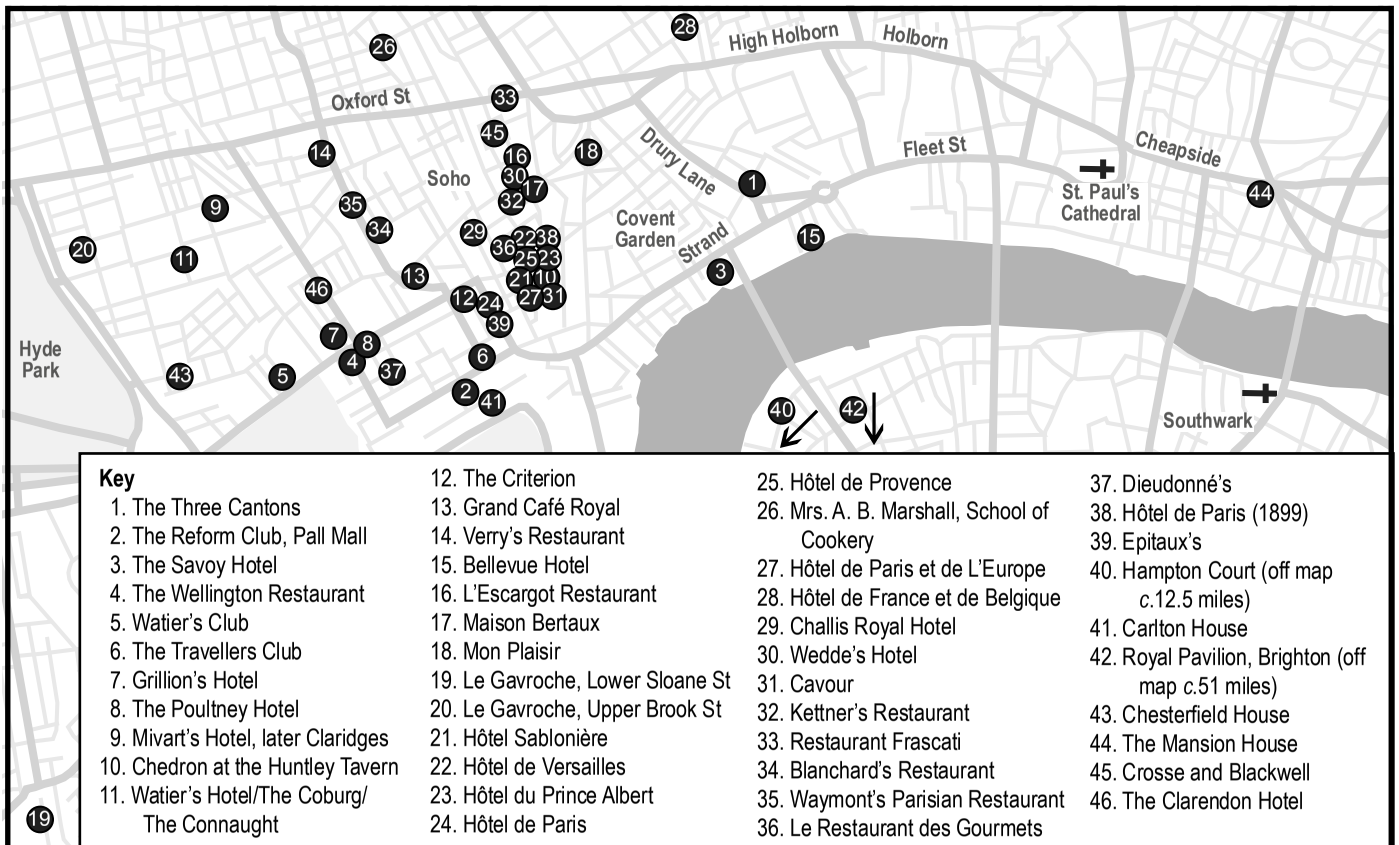
For centuries French cooks had followed a long tradition of working for London's rich and powerful. The early modern period sees them at the Tudor and Stuart courts. Henry VIII's French cook is recorded as Pero Doulx who served at Hampton Court. Described as 'the French yeoman cook for the king's mouth', he was paid and clothed accordingly.[1] By Elizabeth I's reign, Harrison refers to 'the nobility whose cooks are for the most part musical-headed Frenchmen and strangers'.[2]

French influence continued in print with Robert May's *The Accomplisht Cook* in 1617.[3] He had, when ten years old in 1598, been sent to learn his

[1] *Letters and Papers Foreign and Domestic of the Reign of Henry VIII*, ed. S. J. Brewer (2nd edn., 1861–3), quoted in P. Brears, *All the King's Cooks: the Tudor Kitchens of Henry VIII at Hampton Court Palace* (1999), p. 113.

[2] *Harrison's Description of England in Shakspere's* [*sic*] *Youth. Being the second and third books of his Description of Britaine and Englande. Edited from the first two editions of Holinshed's Chronicle, 1577, 1587*, ed. F. J. Furnivall (3 vols., 1877–1909), i, *Extracts from Harrison's Chronology and from Foreign Writers on England*, bk. II, ch. 4, p. 144.

[3] Robert May, *The Accomplisht Cook, or the Art and Mystery of Cookery*, a facsimile of the 1685 edition, with foreword, introduction and glossary supplied by A. Davidson, M. Bell and T. Jaine (Totnes, 1994).




Map 9.1. Places mentioned in the text (Base map: London *c.*1850)

trade for five years in the household of 'a noble peer', the first president of Paris.[4] John Murrell's *A New Booke of Cookerie* appeared shortly after in 1630, 'all set forth according to the now, new, English and French Fashion'.[5]

French culinary influence was found not only in the employment of French cooks but also in important cook books that were translated into English. French cuisine was set out in a new system of cookery: La Varenne's *Le Cuisinier François* was published in Paris in 1651 and 1652, followed by an English translation in 1653. The foundation stocks and sauces recorded by La Varennne were still the basis of French cuisine in the nineteenth century.

Major French works continued to be translated throughout the eighteenth century. In 1702 François Massialot's *Court and Country Cook* comprised translations of two books on cookery and confectionery.[6] There followed other fashionable French cookery books in translation such as Vincent La Chapelle's *The Modern Cook*, which appeared in three volumes in 1733, and was continued with a fourth edition in a single volume. The author had been chief cook to the earl of Chesterfield (1694–1773).[7] This was followed by a translation of Menon's fashionable *Les Soupers de la cour, ou, la cuisine reformée*.[8]

During the eighteenth century the importance of employing a French cook for many of London's elite households is shown in a letter written by the duke of Newcastle to Lord Albemarle, the British ambassador in Paris. In 1754 the duke had lost Monsieur Clouet, his French cook, to Albemarle (see Figure 9.1).[9] Feeling perhaps that an obligation was due to him, he wrote to Albemarle asking his help in finding a replacement. The duke's letter showed that he knew what he liked. His cook was to embody all the specialist skills that were undertaken by separately skilled cooks in France. Newcastle liked 'little *hors d'œuvre* or light *entrées*', 'plain simple dishes',[10] and

[4] May, *The Accomplisht Cook*, p. 13.

[5] John Murrell, *A New Booke of Cookerie Wherein is set forth the newest and most commendable Fashion for Dressing or Sowcing, eyther Flesh, Fish, or Fowle. Together with making all sorts of Iellyes … All set forth according to the now, new, English and French Fashion. Set forth by the observation of a Traueller. I. M.* [i.e., John Murrell] (1630), title page.

[6] François Massialot, *The Court and Country Cook* (1702), in translation (see V. Maclean, *A Short-Title Catalogue of Household and Cookery Books Published in the English Tongue 1701–1800* (1981), pp. 1–6).

[7] Vincent La Chapelle, *The Modern Cook* (1733) (see Maclean, *Short-Title Catalogue*, p. 85).

[8] Menon, *The art of modern cookery displayed. Consisting of the most approved methods of cookery, pastry, and confectionary of the present time* (translated from *Les Soupers de la cour, ou, la cuisine reformée*), trans. B. Cleremont (1767).

[9] R. Sedgwick, 'The duke of Newcastle's cook', *History Today*, v (1955), 309.

[10] Sedgwick, 'Duke of Newcastle's cook', p. 317.


Figure 9.1. The Duke N–le and his Cook, 1745. British Museum, Prints and Drawings. Registration Number: 1849, 1003.27.

Caption: The duke of Newcastle with his French cook M. Clouet. The kitchen is equipped with charcoal stoves for French cookery.

he revealed a taste for what could be termed French mid century nouvelle cuisine that seemed to match well with contemporary English taste. He also asserted that he did not like 'strong soups' or 'disguised *entrées* and *entrements* [*sic*]'.[11] Disguise was a term used by the English to refer to the use of sauces as masking ingredients, and was a recurring theme. Signifying more than a preference but a patriotism, or more accurately a chauvinism, 'disguise' was equated with French 'deception' throughout the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.

Of one recommended cook, Newcastle wrote:

> I own I like the man extremely, his temper and disposition. But I can't say that his qualities as a cook are quite what I wish … his *plats* don't seem to please here; and are not just what I like. They are generally composed of a variety of things, and are not the light dishes and clear sauces which Cloe excell'd in. They

[11] Sedgwick, 'Duke of Newcastle's cook', p. 311. The duke of Newcastle's French cook, M. de St. Clouet, was assisted by William Verral, who later wrote a cookery book to teach 'the whole and simple art of the most modern and best French Cookery' to his local Sussex gentry.

> are unintelligible or *des grosses pièces, accommodées de leur façon. Les plats légers* are, I suppose, out of fashion. In short, it is not what carries authority with it and what would make people asham'd to disapprove.

Newcastle was not easily accommodated, and he wrote to Lord Albemarle yet again, in 1754, making a further request for renewed efforts in finding a skilled French cook from a great French household. In what appears to be a bout of hyperbolic exasperation, he asserts: 'This town swarms with them [French cooks] and there is scarce a young boy, or even a country gentleman, who has not his French cook'.[12]

This outburst certainly suggests that French cooks were plentiful but it is difficult to know the quality of their work or how far their cookery was adapted to English tastes. Newcastle could not find the ideal cook – even allowing that he needed a man with multiple skills[13] – or the correspondence with Albemarle would not have gone on for a year

A further indication of the status of male cooks, who were predominantly French, was that they earned wages well above those of female cooks. J. Jean Hecht gives examples: in 1795 a male cook was paid fifty-five to sixty guineas a year, a female cook a mere ten guineas.[14] These differentials continued throughout the nineteenth century.

### *Some of London's nineteenth-century French cooks and chefs*[15]

Haute cuisine was experienced in London by French residents and travellers as well as native Londoners. French cooks were to be found not only in elite households but in the exclusive clubs of St. James's and the hotels and restaurants of Mayfair. Bourgeois French travellers and residents, along with native Londoners, were also catered for in French restaurants and hotels around Leicester Square and Soho. Baedeker and other guides to London offered services to suit a range of incomes and tastes.[16]

During the first half of the century visitors were more inclined to choose French hotels and restaurants, but as London became more cosmopolitan, French travellers appear to have ventured beyond exclusively French establishments. Similarly, as more Londoners began to visit and live in

[12] Sedgwick, 'Duke of Newcastle's cook', p. 314.

[13] The French guilds' rules forbade cooks trained in one skill to practise others in which they were not qualified. English rules allowed any trade to be followed after apprenticeship.

[14] J. J. Hecht, *The Domestic Servant Class in 18th Century England* (1956), pp. 142, 147.

[15] *Oxford English Dictionary* (2nd edn.), iii, gives T. Ingoldsby, *The Ingoldsby Legends* (1842), as the first literary reference to a chef. By 1860 Charles Dickens refers to both a chef and a menu in *All the Year Round*, lxxiv (1860), 567.

[16] K. Baedeker, *Londres suivi d'excursions dans l'Angleterre du Sud* (Coblenz, 1866); K. Baedeker, *Great Britain Handbook for Travellers* (1866) and (1894).

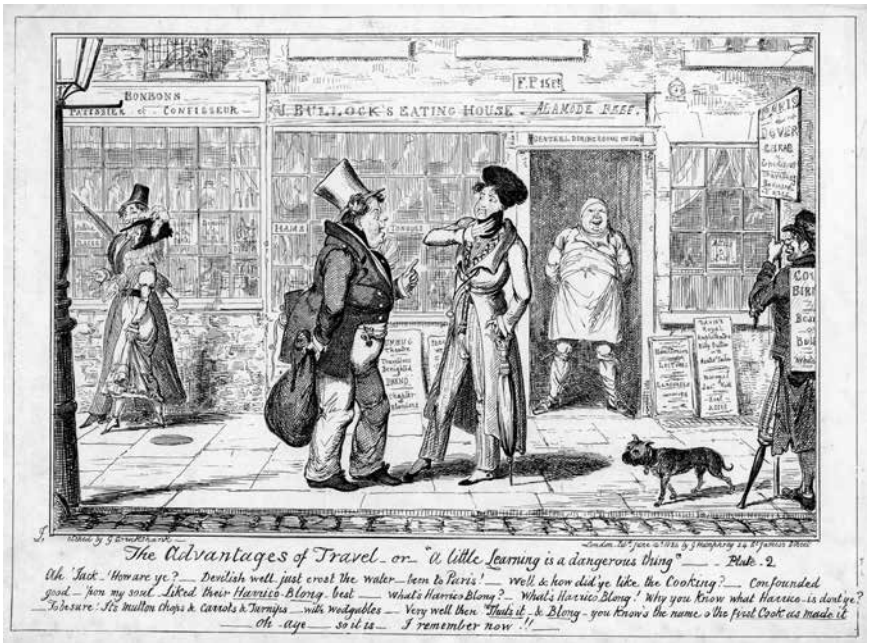



Figure 9.2. George Cruikshank 'The Advantages of Travel – or – a little learning is a Dangerous Thing', 1824. British Museum, Prints and Drawings. Registration Number: 1861, 1012.356.

Caption: A typical Alamode beef house

France they in turn brought back tastes for both *haute* and bourgeois cookery.

In culinary London not all that appeared French was as French as its attribution suggested. Beef, sold at traditional cooked meat shops and dining-rooms, and advertised as 'Alamode Beef', was not the French bourgeois dish *bœuf à la mode*. It had lost something in the translation. George Cruikshank's 1824 *The Advantages of Travel – or – a Little Learning is a Dangerous Thing* showed an extremely fashionable young man in a state of shock outside an alamode shop being addressed by another who wears the blue coat of the chauvinist Beefsteak Club. The latter's understanding of French dishes was demonstrably limited (see Figure 9.2).[17]

G. A. Sala similarly describes most of these shops in the 1850s and 1860s as offering an à la mode beef that 'with the exception of its bovine foundation,

[17] G. Cruikshank, *The Advantages of Travel – or – a Little Learning is a Dangerous Thing* (1824), repr. in *London Eats Out: 500 Years of Capital Dining* (1999), p. 68.

presented no culinary resemblance to that *bœuf à la mode* which is one of the standing dishes of the French *cuisine bourgeoise*'. Sala, however, tells of visiting an exceptional à la mode shop with Alexis Soyer, the famous French chef. The Thirteen Cantons, in Blackmore Street, Drury Lane was where the alamode served was distinctive because of the 'remarkably luscious and tasty sauce, or rather soup with which it was accompanied'. After Jaquet the proprietor had retired he told Sala what his secret ingredient was: 'Morella mushroom powder, made from mushrooms gathered near London'. Sala believes this to be the common morel.[18]

Certain views of French cookery in England recur, such as Henri Misson's observation in 1650 that most of those who did not know France 'have very little idea of our tables'.[19] It is a view repeated in the nineteenth century, as here by Louis Eustache Ude: 'I have frequently met with young men who pretend to high birth and scientific knowledge, and who are yet unable to judge anything in cookery beyond boiled chicken and parsley and butter'. Yet Ude concludes that professional cooks will find 'some good judges that will advocate your cause, and perseverance in right principles will give a man of your profession the rank of an artist'.[20]

Joseph Florance, French cook to three generations of dukes of Buccleuch, tells the young duke in 1817: 'I should strongly advise that the master cook should wait at table when there is company, an epicure wishes to know what dishes are composed of'.[21] This also suggests that some of the duke's guests may have been somewhat less than familiar with French cookery.

Unfamiliarity with haute cuisine is not considered by Urbain Dubois. He did not work in London but could be read in translation. In 1872, Dubois's ideal French host (women were not considered arbiters of elite taste) is described as one who carefully selects a dinner and is addressed as the *amphytrion*,[22] a title unusual in England, in spite of an English penchant for classical allusion. This may reflect some of the uncertainty surrounding gourmet tendencies, suggesting that little social capital was to be gained in exhibiting a deep knowledge of haute cuisine. [23]

[18] G. A. Sala, *Things I have Seen and People I have Known* (2 vols., 2nd edn., 1894), ii. 202–5.

[19] M. [Henri de Valbourg] Misson (*c*.1650–12 Jan. 1722), *Memoirs and Observations in his Travels over England, With some Account of Scotland and Ireland, Disposed in Alphabetical Order*, trans. J. Ozell (1719), p. 316.

[20] L. E. Ude, *The French Cook: a System of Fashionable, Practical and Economical Cookery Adapted to the Use of English Families* (14th edn., 1841), p. xlv.

[21] A. French and G. Waterfield, 'Loyal servants', in G. Waterfield and A. French, with M. Craske, *Below Stairs: 400 Years of Servants' Portraits* (2003), pp. 57–75, at p. 75.

[22] U. Dubois, *Cosmopolitan Cookery* (1872), in translation.

[23] P. Bourdieu, *Distinction, a Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste*, trans. R. Nice (Cambridge, Mass., 1986), p. 114.

Views of nineteenth-century French cuisine are mainly offered by cooks whose London published works are augmented with menus and comment to assist the reader. Published opinions from diners and critics grew in number as travel to and from France increased after 1815. Throughout the nineteenth century the cachet of employing a French chef continued and is often described as having begun and concluded with two great French chefs: Antonin Carême (1783–1833) and Georges Auguste Escoffier (1847–1935).

French haute cuisine is essentially an evolving craft. Escoffier says that when updating old methods to satisfy 'modern demands', 'The fundamental principles of the science which we owe to Carême … will last as long as cooking itself'.[24] There were those for whom there was no other cuisine which could compare with the French. The widely travelled Elim D'Avigdor wrote, with the unshakeable authority of the nineteenth-century epicure: 'French dinners cannot be compared with those of any other nation'.[25]

London's new and old money, as in the previous century, continued to offer French and French-trained cooks plenty of employment. Ude's *The French Cook; or the Art of Cookery developed in all its various braches* [*sic*] (1813–41) went through many editions with some improvements in its translations. Abraham Hayward, a noted epicure and critic, in *The Art of Dining* lists 'the most eminent cooks and *pâtissiers* of the present time in England', though they would for the most part only keep their reputations during the lifetime of their colleagues and maybe that of their diners.[26] With the exception of Jules Gouffé (1807–77), none of them wrote cookery books. Nearly all are French but Hayward only selects those employed by the aristocracy, excluding those who worked for other wealthy employers. Their pay was high, to match the status they had in their households – Ude was reputedly paid 300 guineas per annum by the earl of Sefton, followed by a pension of £100 per annum.[27]

These French cooks (or chefs as they were later known) would usually have worked in London during the social season, and for most of the rest of the year have been expected to return with their employers to their country estates. Similarly, from July 1816 to late 1817 Antonin Carême, employed by the prince regent, was obliged to travel between Carlton House in London and the Royal Pavilion in Brighton. His stay in England was brief. One of the reasons why Carême left his post so soon, Ian Kelly found, was the

[24] G. A. Escoffier, *A Guide to Modern Cookery* (1907; 5th impression, 1968), p. xii.
[25] E. D'Avigdor, *Dinners and Dishes* (1885), p. 199.
[26] A. Hayward, *The Art of Dining, or Gastronomy and Gastronomers* (1852; 1883 edn.), p. 77.
[27] Hayward, *Art of Dining*, p. 75.

constant travel between two places.[28] Carême's greater legacy is his published works, from which a number of recipes were translated into English.[29]

It can be argued that Carême's real influence in London was through Charles Elmé Francatelli (1805–76), who was described as 'advancing culinary art to unprecedented perfection in this country'.[30] He had worked for Carême in Paris and, almost as briefly as Carême, for the royal household. For two years, from 1841 to 1842, he was chief cook and maître d'hôtel to Queen Victoria. Francatelli also cooked for clubs and for the nobility. His works for upper- and upper-middle-class households are *The Modern Cook*, *The Cook's Guide* and *The Royal English and Foreign Confectioner*.[31] E. S. Dallas notes that Francatelli's 'great work', *The Modern Cook*, was in its twenty-third edition in 1877 'and of such authority that many of the best people swear by it'.[32]

Francatelli was also praised by Hayward, who described his dinners at Chesterfield House as being 'the admiration of the gastronomic world of London'.[33] His was an ideal interpretation of French haute cuisine and its influence is indicated in the French dishes chosen for the lord mayor of London's spectacular banquet to promote the 1851 Great Exhibition. For that occasion the caterers departed from the usual, mainly English bill of fare. The banquet's French dishes, although not exclusive to Francatelli, can be recreated from recipes in *The Modern Cook*.[34]

Hayward's lesser opinion of Francatelli's famous French contemporary, Alexis Soyer, derives from the fact that although 'his name has been a good deal before the public' and 'he is a very clever man, of inventive genius and inexhaustible resource … his execution is hardly on a par with his conception'.[35] Soyer's genius for publicity ensured that his reputation has

[28] I. Kelly, *Cooking for Kings: the Life of Antonin Carême, the First Celebrity Chef* (New York, 2003), pp. 121–53.

[29] M. A. Carême, *The Royal Parisian Pastrycook and Confectioner* ed. J. Porter (1834); M. A. Carême, *French Cookery Comprising l'art de la cuisine française; Le Patissier Royal; Le Cuisinier Parisien*, trans. W. Hall, etc. (1836).

[30] *Dictionary of National Biography*, ed. L. Stephen (1889), xx. 163.

[31] C. E. Francatelli, *The Modern Cook: a Practical Guide to the Culinary Art in All its Branches* (1845); *The Cook's Guide and Housekeeper's and Butler's Assistant* (1848); *The Royal English and Foreign Confectioner: a practical treatise on the art of confectionary in all its branches; comprising ornamental confectionary artistically developed. Also, the art of ice-making, and the arrangement and general economy of fashionable desserts* (1862).

[32] E. S. Dallas, *Kettner's Book of the Table* (1877; 1968 edn.), p. 3.

[33] Hayward, *Art of Dining*, pp. 75–7.

[34] V. Mars, 'North and south: two banquets given to promote the Great 1851 Exhibition', in *Celebration: Proceedings of the Oxford Symposium on Food and Cookery, 2011*, ed. M. McWilliams (Totnes, 2012), pp. 184–216.

[35] Hayward, *Art of Dining*, pp. 76–7.

lasted well beyond his lifetime, so that he continues to be promoted in biographies and articles. In his time he was the model for Mirabolant in Thackeray's *The History of Pendennis*[36] and was also satirized in *Punch*.[37] His early fame came as chef to the Reform Club, where he designed their innovative kitchens and to which he took visitors on tours. While there he gave several well-publicized dinners and banquets, as described by his secretaries.[38]

Soyer, like Francatelli, also wrote for the middle classes. He created *The Modern Housewife*, written as a series of letters from 'Hortense' at 'Bifrons Villa, St John's Wood', advising her friend Eloise, at her country cottage. In 1857, Soyer signed an indenture with Edmund Crosse and Thomas Blackwell, Italian warehousemen of Soho Square, to produce 'Soyer's Bottled Sauces'. The terms on which this was agreed included two years' advertising in the daily papers – worth £200.[39] Soyer's name was to be constantly before the public in print. If they could not employ a French chef, Soyer could add relish to their meals.

Chefs' works continued to be translated. Jules Gouffé, the son of a French pastry chef, was, at sixteen, recruited by Carême. His brother Alphonse, *pâtissier* to the queen, in 1868 translated and adapted Jules's *Le Livre de cuisine* as *The Royal Cookery Book*. The work is divided into two sections: 'Household cookery' and 'High class cookery'. Alphonse comments 'that he has endeavoured to adapt the recipes to the capabilities and requirements of English households', thus suggesting that English kitchens could not truly replicate French cookery.[40] Among the reasons were the different types of stoves and ranges.[41] Alphonse uses English where possible but 'all the terms belonging to that special culinary nomenclature which I have been compelled to adopt; although of French origin, most of these have now, by their constant recurrence, become household words in England'.[42]

By the end of the 1860s more dinners were being served *à la Russe*, requiring menu-cards that were usually written in French. More Londoners

[36] W. M. Thackeray, *The History of Pendennis* (2 vols., 1869 edn.), p. 261.

[37] *Punch*, e.g. vol. xix (July–Dec. 1850), 191.

[38] F. Volant and J. R. Warren, *Memoirs of Alexis Soyer* (1859; Rottingdean, 1985), 'Diner à la Sampayo', pp. 92–5; 'Dinner for 150 given by members of the Reform Club to Ibraham Pacha, 3 July 1846', pp. 87–9.

[39] Private collection, *Indenture*, 31 March 1857, between Alexis Soyer and Edmund Crosse and Thomas Blackwell.

[40] J. Gouffé, *Le Livre de cuisine*, trans. as *The Royal Cookery Book* by A. Gouffé (1868), pp. v–vi.

[41] V. Mars, 'Ordering dinner: Victorian celebratory domestic dining in London' (unpublished University of Leicester PhD thesis, 1997), pp. 147–56.

[42] 'Translator's preface', in Gouffé, *Royal Cookery Book*.

had by then spent time in France, but comprehension was by no means universal. Auguste Escoffier, when at the Grand Hôtel in Monte Carlo, found that à la carte menus were not understood by many of his English clients, who would ask the maître d'hôtel to order their meal. Later, at the Savoy, to solve this problem Escoffier composed *prix fixe* dinners for bookings involving four or more diners.[43]

### *Pleasing both French and English tastes*

French cookery certainly held its place as the cuisine that could demonstrate luxury. Yet French haute cuisine was not always the exclusive choice. In print and in households both French and English cuisines would often be found together – as in Murrell's *New Book of Cookerie*, referred to above.[44] Misson had noted in 1698 that 'There are some noblemen that have both *French* and *English* cooks, and these eat much after the French manner'.[45]

During the nineteenth century English and French cuisine in the same establishment was still a familiar style. In 1860, Captain Gronow (1794–1865), remembered the cuisine of his youth at dinners he attended as 'wonderfully solid, hot and stimulating … The French or side dishes consisted of very mild but very abortive attempts at continental cooking'.[46] Throughout the period French haute cuisine was still both loved and hated. This was in part due to its political role in symbolizing recurrent views of all things French; but it was, at the same time, the cuisine of Europe's elites. Therefore, to please all who sat at table, two tastes needed to be accommodated. The lord mayor of London's banquet given on 15 June 1849[47] has just such a bill of fare.

French cuisine, therefore, did not supplant English cookery, which had its own admirers, including French cooks who worked in London, such as Ude. As a French cook working for English employers, he possibly flatters his English readers in writing 'cookery in England, when well done, is superior to that of any country in the world'.[48] Domestically and commercially the problem of pleasing both tastes was solved by offering both English and French dishes.

In Urbain Dubois and Emile Bernard's *La Cuisine Classique*, the two cuisines are put within the formal structure of separately styled services.

[43] A. Escoffier, *Memories of my Life*, trans. L. Escoffier (New York, 1997), p. 90.
[44] Murrell, *New Booke of Cookerie*, title page.
[45] Misson, *Memoirs and Observations*, p. 314.
[46] Capt. R. H. Gronow, *The Reminiscences and Recollections of Captain Gronow*, ed. J. Raymond (abridged version, 1964), pp. 45–6.
[47] Museum of London, Acc. No. 37, 146/20, Mansion House bill of fare.
[48] Ude, *French Cook*, p. xliii.

They describe two different menus: dinner *à la Française* and dinner *à l'Anglaise* are two separate styles, with only minor differences, such as *à l'Anglaise* serving turtle soup. The choice of cuisine reflected predominantly French or English taste, influencing the choice of service style. This was a way to differentiate between French- or English-biased cuisine among the cosmopolitan gourmet elite. *La Cuisine Classique* gives examples of both menus. Its *à l'Anglaise* menu for twelve conforms to a typically elaborate English dinner. To show the structures more clearly, I will give only the main ingredient of dishes, although a high degree of elaboration was incorporated into almost every one.[49]

The English dinner comprises, as a first service, two soups, one of which was mutton broth; two fish, salmon and haddock; two *relevés*, lamb and a chicken pie; and four *entrées*, chicken breasts, hare fillets, foie-gras and mutton cutlets. The second service begins with two roasts, ducklings and grouse; two *relevés*, a fondu and rice croquettes; plus six *entremêts*,[50] sole in aspic, young peas English style, orange jelly, peach pastries, plum pudding, artichoke bottoms and a 'scarlet' tongue on the sideboard.

The *à la Française* menu for twenty-two is selected, for the most part, from dishes that cater to French taste, which slightly alters the dinner's structure. Two soups are followed by hot *hors d'œuvre*, then by two *relevés*, salmon garnished with shrimps and English roast beef, and finally by four *entrées*. This is similar to the parallel section of the *à l'Anglaise* menu. The second service, like the English, begins with two roasts, turkey with foie-gras and barded quails, with two flancs (or side dishes), pâté de foie-gras and a basket of crayfish. *Entremêts* were again similar to those on the *à l'Anglaise* menu, with a *charlotte Parisienne* instead of plum pudding, but there are only four. These are followed by two more sweet dishes, a Neapolitan gateau and an orange *croquenbouche*, which are served as 'relevés de rôtis' that replace the roasts on the table.

Some restaurants also offered the same accommodation to divided tastes by providing both French and English cuisines. In an 1858 advertorial in *London at Dinner; or Where to Dine*,[51] the author notes that both English and French tastes were perfectly catered for at the Wellington Restaurant, 53 St. James's Street and 160 Piccadilly, where:

[49] U. Dubois and E. Bernard, *La Cuisine Classique* (Paris, 1856), pp. 8–9.

[50] 'Entremêts – or second-course side dishes – consist of four distinct sorts namely: – cold entrées, dressed vegetables, scalloped shell fish and lastly, of the infinitely-varied class of sweets' (C. E. Francatelli, in *The Cook's Guide and Housekeeper's and Butler's Assistant* (1861; 1884 edn.), p. 488).

[51] Anon. [Lord William Pitt Lennox], *London at Dinner, or, Where to Dine* (1858; Newton Abbot, 1969), advertisements, pp. 2–11.

> the kitchens are two in number, each quite independent of the other. In one the English chef rules the roast [*sic*]; and in the other, one of the cleverest and most accomplished artistes that Paris can produce prepares, with the aid of his subs, 'petits diners', which the travelled English allow to excel the dinners served in the restaurants of the French capital.

The Wellington offers 'set dinners' between three and nine o'clock from 3*s* for six courses, to 8*s* for eight courses with more choice. All these menus are of their French dishes. At the same time the English kitchen lists joints and fish with favourite English sauces – typically boiled turbot with lobster sauce. There are also 'made dishes', the English equivalent of *entrées*. These include Soyer's famous recipe 'Cutlets Reform', as well as cutlets served with soubise (a white sauce with onion purée) or with tomato sauce, as well as the usual chops and rumpsteak. Also on these à la carte lists are 'soups', 'poultry and game', 'sweets' and 'sundries' that reflect traditional English taste.[52] Later, when Frederick Leal writes in the promotional booklet for the Restaurant Frascati in the 1890s, he makes a similar claim for their two main kitchens, English and Parisian.[53]

### *Learning to cook like the French bourgeoisie and offering recherché dinners*

French bourgeois women were set as an example to counter the widely held genteel disdain of the English for contact with the cooking process. Much was written in England to dissuade this flight to gentility. As early as 1825 an anonymous physician's choice of dishes is directed especially to 'families hitherto unaccustomed to French cuisine'.[54] His was not an original work but an adapted translation of one of the most popular French cookery books *La Cuisinière de la campagne et de la ville; ou nouvelle cuisine économique*.[55]

Like all French cookery books the work begins with the proper way of making and using stocks. He names three basic stocks: 'Stock or first broth, consommé or jelly broth, blond or veal gravy'. There are essential instructions for cooking *pot-au-feu* in the French manner and explanations of how the beef 'answers three purposes: 1st, as a soup; 2ndly, as a dish of bouilli and vegetables; and 3rdly, for a reserve of stock'. Eliza Acton

[52] Anon. [Lennox], *London at Dinner*.

[53] Museum of London, Ephemera, L.75.52, F. Leal, *The Restaurant Frascati*, p. 19.

[54] Anon., *French Domestic Cookery, Combining economy with elegance adapted for the use of Families of Moderate fortune By an English Physician many years resident on the Continent* (1825), p. 1.

[55] M. L-EA [L.-E. Audot], *La Cuisinière de la campagne et de la ville, ou La Nouvelle Cuisine economique; précédée d'un traité sur les soins qu'exige une cave, et sur la dissection des viandes à table* (3rd edn., Paris, 1823).

(1799–1859) encouraged her readers to make soup, something that is 'so well understood in France'. She had spent a year in France as a young woman where she got to know French domestic cookery.

The Anonymous Physician makes clear that to cook in the French way a number of items must always be ready for use: 'dried herbs, preserved vegetables and fruits, bay leaves, onions, shallots, eggs, bacon and anchovies'.[56] This may have been unusual in middle-class Victorian kitchens, particularly those ruled from above-stairs, which were well known for the imposition of extreme economies.[57] Other writers followed Acton, such as Miss Crawford in her 1853 *French Cookery for English Families*.[58] The same appeal to adopt French cookery is continued by Percy Lindley who asks: 'Were the middle classes only but slightly acquainted with the domestic cookery of France, they would certainly live better and less expensively than at present'.[59] The Anonymous Physician told his readers that one of the advantages of French cookery was that it gave 'their dinners a genteel, and rather *recherché* appearance'.[60] In the aspiring and competitive circles of London's celebratory domestic dining, some of these French techniques offered a required elaboration.

While these new dinners were not quite replicating the work of elite French cooks, the dishes served needed a higher level of skill. Eliza Acton advises against her readers attempting a 'timbale';[61] it was not appropriate to their resources (see Figure 9.3). Like much of the professional French cook's repertoire, a timbale required technical expertise, an extensive *batterie de cuisine* and sufficient assistants. Both Thackeray and Dickens found these new dining circles a subject for satire. They attacked those who did not keep a French cook and therefore required caterers to provide extreme, *recherché* dinners, Dickens's 'Veneerings' being the ultimate arrivistes.[62] Satirical remarks were made about patties from pastry shops, items not easily cooked at home by the typical plain cook.

[56] Anon., *French Domestic Cookery*, p. 1.

[57] V. Mars and G. Mars, 'Fat in the Victorian kitchen: a medium for cooking, control, deviance, and crime', in *The Fat of the Land: Proceedings of the Oxford Symposium on Food and Cookery 2002*, ed. H. Walker (Bristol, 2003), pp. 216–36.

[58] Miss (F.) Crawford, *French Cookery for English Families* (1853).

[59] *English and French Cookery*, attributed to A. H. Wall, ed. P. Lindley in *The Housekeeper* series (*c*.1890), p. 16; see E. Driver, *A Bibliography of Cookery Books Published in Britain, 1875–1914* (Totnes, 1989), p. 634.

[60] Anon., *French Domestic Cookery*, p. 1.

[61] E. Acton, *Modern Cookery for Private Families* (1845; 5th impression, 1868). The figure is from a facsimile of the 1855 edition (1966), p. 390; Glossary, p. xxvi: 'Timbale – a sort of pie made in a mould'.

[62] C. Dickens, *Our Mutual Friend* (2 vols., 1860–2), i, ch. 2.

Figure 9.3. Timbale of lamb sweetbreads in shells, Fig. 97 from Urbain Dubois, *Cosmopolitan Cookery* (1869).

A timbale is an elaborate recipe that is produced by chefs. Mrs. Acton advises her readers against attempting an imitation.

Arbiters of domestic taste warned against an aspiration to offer dinners above the givers' means and rank. Such warnings are found throughout the period. This one, from 1864, is by A. V. Kirwan who, like Hayward, was a lawyer and who also wrote on gastronomy in *Host and Guest*:

> Why, however, it will be asked, should persons of a couple or three thousand a year give so pretentious and costly a dinner? Because everyone in England tries to ape the class two or three degrees above him in point of rank and fortune, in style of living, and manner of receiving his friends. Thus it is that a plain gentleman of moderate fortune, or a professional man making a couple of thousands a year, having dined with a peer of £50,000 a year in Grosvenor Square or Belgravia, seeks when he himself next gives a dinner to imitate the style of the marquis, earl or lord lieutenant of a county with whom he has come into social contact.[63]

This style not only displeased those who promoted French bourgeois cuisine but also connected with an undercurrent of prejudice and male chauvinism that was to continue throughout the century. Much chauvinist rhetoric had traditionally cited dishes such as fricassée as 'disguised' and therefore as an unacceptable French practice. Yet in spite of this, upper-middle-class dinner cuisine remained a material expression of feminine separation from contamination by the natural.[64] Service *à la Russe* removed the sight of whole joints, in their natural animal form, from the table, since in this service joints are carved on the sideboard.[65]

[63] A. V. Kirwan, *Host and Guest: about Dinners, Wines and Desserts* (1864), p. 76.

[64] M. Douglas, *Purity and Danger: an Analysis of Concepts of Pollution and Taboo* (1966).

[65] V. Mars, 'A la Russe: a new way of dining', in *Luncheon, Nuncheon and other Meals: Eating with the Victorians*, ed. C. Anne Wilson (Stroud, 1994), pp. 117–44.

Houses for the nascent professional classes were built during the second half of the century in new suburbs such as Kensington. Their inhabitants were to create their own fashionable dinner-giving circles. These dinners, largely organized by women, began to acquire a more feminized aspect. Food had to be served in a style that concealed its natural form. Recipes for masking sauces and aspic jellies offered the desired effect. This trend was typically derided by the pseudonymous Fin-Bec who had lived in France and promoted a French style of domestic entertaining. As an arbiter of taste, Fin-Bec wrote of French bourgeois domestic entertaining offering well-cooked modest dinners that reflected the hosts' status. He gives a satirical view in his journal *Knife and Fork*: 'There is plenty of pretension in middle-class houses. The *entrées* do not lack. But preserve me from a Bayswater *filet aux olives*, a Kensington *Salmi*, or, above all, a suburban *Soubise*'.[66]

Marion Sambourne, with her husband Linley Sambourne, the *Punch* cartoonist, reflected this trend at the dinners they gave at their Kensington house. The dishes Marion most admired when dining in other houses within their circle almost always included labour-intensive arrangements of ingredients, usually diced or similarly cut up. She describes a Russian salad in her menu notebook. It is an arrangement within an aspic border of carrots, turnips, beetroot, new potatoes, olives, egg and anchovy, cut very fine and mixed with mayonnaise or sharp sauce. First seen at a dinner with their neighbours Mr. and Mrs. Marcus Stone on 21 March 1881, it appears later on one of her own menus.[67] A classic version can be found in Francatelli's *Cook's Guide*.[68] Other examples of this style are in the books of Mrs. Marshall,[69] Mrs. de Salis[70] and Madame Emilie Lebour-Fawcett.[71] All offer recipes for dinner-party cookery and all of these authors claim French experience. Only Madame Emilie Lebour-Fawcett is French and a Cordon Bleu.

With the introduction of service *à la Russe*,[72] the more fashionable dinners required menu-cards to be placed on the table. These were often written in

[66] Fin-Bec [pseud.], *Knife and Fork*, ed. W. Blanchard Jerrold, i (Sept.–Oct. 1871).

[67] Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea Library, M. Sambourne, *Menu Notebook* (*c*.1877–83).

[68] Francatelli, *Cook's Guide*, no. 374.

[69] Mrs. Marshall [Agnes B. Marshall (1855–1905)], *Mrs A. B. Marshall's Cookery Book* (Marshall's School of Cookery, *c*.1888). Variations and an enlarged edition were published at least until 1902.

[70] Mrs. de Salis [Harriet Anne de Salis], *Cookery à la Mode*; the first of a series, *Savouries à la Mode* (1886), with further books in the series brought together in *A la Mode Cookery* (1902).

[71] E. Lebour-Fawcett, *French Cookery for Ladies* (1890).

[72] *The Servants' Guide and Family Manual* (4th edn., 1835), 'Duties of a butler', p. 94. The earliest note of *à la Russe* being fashionable in London was for the 1829 season, but it may have been known in London from 1815.

French or 'menu French'. Mrs. Marshall gives all her recipe titles in both languages, as does Mme. Lebour-Fawcett and Mrs. de Salis.[73] Mrs. Marshall is the most entrepreneurial of these authors. She sold kitchen equipment and other aides to producing *recherché* dinners. She also gave classes for cooks and their mistresses where 'she initiated them into the mysteries of dainty dishes'.[74] Mme. Lebour-Fawcett, author of *French Cookery for Ladies*, lectured at her Kensington cookery school. She remarked on her pupils 'obtaining rapid and almost marvellous successes in a hitherto alien pursuit – successes which I own have surprised as much as they have gratified me'.[75]

These young women were not, however, always going to dine at each other's houses: restaurant dining became fashionable from the late 1880s.

### *Eating out: haute cuisine*

Early in the nineteenth century French cooks could move from cooking for great houses to cooking in clubs and hotels. The prince regent is reputed to have asked his cook Jean-Baptiste Watier to open a dining club, with Madison, the prince's page, as manager, and Labourie, also from the prince's kitchen, as cook. Watier's Club opened in Bolton Street, Piccadilly in 1807. Captain Gronow, who knew Paris in 1816, was a member. He describes the dinners as exquisite: 'the best Parisian cooks could not beat Labourie'.[76] It closed in 1819, the same year that the Travellers Club was founded. Talleyrand became a member when he was ambassador to London.[77] On finding the food unacceptable he had the head chef, John Porter, study Antonin Carême's works.[78] Porter subsequently published a translation of Carême.

Lord Crewe's cook, Alexander Grillion, opened Grillion's Hotel in 1813 in Albemarle Street, which had a number of hotels catering for the aristocracy and royalty.[79] At 105 Piccadilly, a private mansion was opened as a hotel, the Pulteney, in 1814 by the French cook, Jean Escudier. Like Watier's it did not last long, closing by 1823. Louis Jacquier, the cook who had served Louis XVIII during his stay in England, opened the Clarendon Hotel in Old Bond Street in 1815. It was described as 'the only hotel in England where a man could eat a genuine French dinner'.[80] The price for this was £3–£4.

[73] She was alleged to be plain 'Mrs. Salis'.

[74] A. B. Marshall, *Mrs A. B. Marshall's Cookery Book* (1894 edn.), advertisements, p. 3.

[75] Lebour-Fawcett, *French Cookery for Ladies*, p. vi.

[76] Gronow, *Reminiscences and Recollections*, p. 60.

[77] Charles Maurice de Talleyrand-Périgord, 1er prince de Bénévent, 1754–1838, ambassador to the Court of St. James's, 1830–4.

[78] Kelly, *Cooking for Kings*, pp. 220–1.

[79] M. C. Borer, *The British Hotel through the Ages* (Guildford, 1972), p. 186.

[80] Borer, *British Hotel*, p. 188, does not give a source for the quotation.

Not all of these establishments were short-lived. In 1815 another French cook, Jacques Mivart, opened a hotel on the corner of Brook Street and Davies Street. John Tallis notes in 1851 that it accommodated royal and other grand foreign guests.[81] In 1854 he sold out to Mr. and Mrs. Claridge, and the hotel was rebuilt in 1898 and renamed Claridge's. In the previous year Watier's hotel was rebuilt as the Coburg, in Charles Street, and was later renamed the Connaught.[82] Charles Street became Carlos Place.

At this time grand hotels were being built that required the means to serve haute cuisine to large numbers of people. This involved organizing kitchen brigades together with the French system of *fonds de cuisine*, the foundation, stocks, sauces and mixtures first recorded by La Varenne. Auguste Escoffier reorganized this for a number of palatial hotels both in London and abroad. In London he worked at the Savoy from 1890 with L. Echenard, remaining there until 1897. He then moved to the newly built Carlton Hotel in 1899, where he stayed until 1920.

With entertaining in new restaurants and hotels becoming fashionable, Escoffier, encouraged by Urbain Dubois, started writing his *Guide culinaire* in 1898, which was published in its final form as *A Guide to Modern Cookery* in 1907. It was a systematic reorganization of the repertoire of haute cuisine. In it Escoffier continued to draw on the works of Carême, Dubois and Bernard. Eugène Herbodeau notes that he also included ideas from the fourteenth-century Viandier of Taillevent. It was designed to enable the smooth and systematic production of meals in great hotel kitchens.

At the Savoy and later at the Carlton, Escoffier offered lighter meals to serve a new clientele. This novel interpretation of the repertoire not only suited a more hectic age but was also made to please the 'respectable' women who could now dine out. Previously, dining out had been an almost exclusively male activity. Escoffier's pupils and literary executors, Eugène Herbodeau and Paul Thalamus, in their biography, tell of Escoffier dining with Mme. Duchêne, the wife of the manager of the Ritz. She asked him, 'What is the real secret of your art?' Escoffier replied, 'Madame, my success comes from the fact that my best dishes were created for ladies'. The authors list some of the period's most glamorous women, for whom Escoffier created dishes: Réjane, Rachel, Mary Carden, Adelina Patti, Yvette, Sarah Bernhardt and several others. The best known of these tribute dishes is Pêche Melba for Nellie Melba.[83] Escoffier's recipes, as might be expected, catered to current

[81] J. Tallis, *Tallis's Illustrated London in Commemoration of the Great Exhibition of All Nations in 1851* (2 vols., 1851), i. 190. For Jacques Mivart, see *The Epicure's Almanack: or Calendar of Good Living* (1815), p. 164.

[82] Tallis, *Illustrated London*, i. 189.

[83] E. Herbodeau and P. Thalamus, *Georges Auguste Escoffier* (1955), p. 41.

feminine tastes: salads, quail, poultry and many *entremêts* or sweet dishes. At the same time as men and women were dining together at these grand hotels, others were enjoying dining out à la carte at the Criterion's East Room or at Verrey's, as Lieutenant-Colonel Newnham-Davis, restaurant critic of the *Pall Mall Gazette*, did with two female guests.[84]

### *Bourgeois dining out around Leicester Square, '[une] place spécialemont fréquentée par les Français'*[85]

In 1868 John Timbs depicts a cosmopolitan Leicester Square. He quotes Maitland's 1739 description of the parish of St. Anne's (Soho and Leicester Square) as so greatly abounding with the French, 'that it is an easy matter for a stranger to imagine himself in France'.[86] This description was still valid during much of the nineteenth century. It was repeated when Sala met Soyer and went to his rooms in Soho. He describes the area as 'a district that retains many of its Gallic attributes, but which in 1850, was almost as French as the Rue Montmartre'. He lists French *charcutiers*, restaurants, hotels and shops with more French trades on the upper floors. John Burnett gives the French immigrant population in and around Soho in the 1860s and 1870s as 8,000.[87]

Diners with less to spend could always find French bourgeois cookery in and around Leicester Square, the site of several French hotels. Tallis's 1851 guide book describes the square: 'On every side rise hotels with foreign names, kept by foreign landlords and marked *Restaurant.* Occasionally a label may be seen in the window with the inscription *Table d'hôte à cinque heures*'.[88] These dinners were served at a shared table to hotel guests of both sexes and to non-residents. The 1858 edition of *London at Dinner* recommends 'in Castle Street, Leicester Square, a very unpretending little house, "Rouget's," [which] gives English and French dishes capitally done. The soup Julienne is as good as is to be had in London'.[89] In 1816 Papworth describes it as a French house where 'a *table d'hôte* affords the lovers of French cookery and French conversation, an opportunity for gratification at a comparatively moderate charge'.[90]

[84] Lt.-Col. N. Newnham-Davis, *Dinners and Diners: Where and How to Dine in London* (1899), pp. 32, 151.

[85] Baedeker (1866), p. 8.

[86] J. Timbs, *Curiosities of London* (1868), p. 515.

[87] J. Burnett, *England Eats Out: a Social History of Eating Out in England from 1830 to the Present* (Harlow, 2004), p. 95.

[88] Tallis, *Illustrated London*, i. 99.

[89] G. A. Sala, *Things I have Seen and People I have Known* (2 vols., 1894), ii. 243–4.

[90] J. B. Papworth, *Select Views of London* (1816), p. 54.

In 1851, *London Made Easy* offered a list of French hotels in and around Leicester Square: Hôtel Sablonière et de Provence, at 17 and 18; in Leicester Place, Hôtel de Versailles (2), Hôtel du Prince Albert (11) and Hôtel de l'Europe (16). In the Haymarket, Hôtel de Paris (58) and the Café de l'Europe (9)[91] had originally been Epitaux's Restaurant. Nathaniel Newnham-Davis describes it as being in the Opera Colonnade and later in the Haymarket. He says that in early Victorian days it was one of the very few restaurants where good French cookery could be found.[92]

The longest-lived of these hotels was the Sablonière (1788–1867), whose original owner was Antoinetta La Sablonière. Mme. La Sablonière's management was followed by Louis Jacquier and a succession of others.[93] The 1866 edition of Karl Baedeker's *Londres* describes the Sablonière as a *maison française*, by then at 30 Leicester Square.[94]

These hotels and premises adapted and changed, but French ownership continued. In 1834 Domnique Deneulain opened a boarding house at 18 Leicester Square, and after some changes to the arrangement of buildings from 1845 to 1868, 17 and 18 became the Hôtel de Provence; then between 1869 and 1892, the Hôtel Sablonière et de Provence; and finally from 1893 until its closure in 1919 it reverted to being Hôtel Provence.[95] In 1879, it is listed as a place 'where a dinner may be had at moderate prices'.[96] Baedeker in 1866 advises the *table d'hôte* at five o'clock: 'It costs 4 shillings at Hôtel Sablonière, and at the opposite corner of the square, l'Hôtel Provence has the same proprietor and the same prices'.

Charles Dickens knew the Sablonière. In recounting a walk around the West End in 1851 in search of exotic tourists who might be visiting the Great Exhibition, he notes Leicester Square as no more foreign than usual: 'some delightfully mysterious gushes of French cookery were wafted upwards from the kitchens of the Sablonière'.[97] His son, Charles Dickens the younger, mentions Sablonière in his *Dictionary of London* as the 'Sablonière and Vargue's Hôtel de l'Europe'. These restaurants were not only for continental visitors:

> Artful seekers after surreptitious good dinners, who knew London well certainly had some foreign houses in the back settlements of Soho or of Leicester Square,

[91] A. Hall, *London Made Easy: Being a Compendium of the British Metropolis* (1851), p. 1.
[92] Newnham-Davis, *Dinners and Diners*, p. 218.
[93] *Survey of London*, xxxiii–xxxiv: *St. Anne Soho*, ed. F. H. W. Shepherd (1966), pp. 488–503.
[94] Baedeker, *Londres* (Coblenz, 1866), p. 8.
[95] Shepherd, *Survey of London*, pp. 488–503.
[96] C. Dickens the younger, *Dickens's Dictionary of London, 1879: an Unconventional Handbook* (1879; 1972 edn.), p. 224.
[97] C. Dickens, 'The foreign invasion', in *Household Words*, lxxxi (11 Oct. 1851), 62.

> to which they pinned their faith, but the restaurant, as it has been for many years understood in Paris practically had no place in London … We have still no Café Riche or Café Anglais.[98]

He lists restaurants specializing in *table d'hôte* dinners. In Piccadilly, in the Criterion's West Room, there are French dinners at 5*s*. Other restaurants he notes may also have had a French *table d'hôte* but they are simply listed as offering *table d'hôte*, so these may be less than truly French.[99]

The 1894 edition of Baedeker's Guide still describes the Leicester Square area as 'Much frequented by French visitors' and lists the Hôtel de Paris et de l'Europe, Challis Royal Hotel and Wedde's Hotel.[100] In or near Leicester Square he notes there are French restaurants, some in recommended hotels, such as Wedde's and the Hôtel de Paris. The Cavour is listed as a hotel and café, with French cuisine and 'attendance'.

These hotels' frequently advertised attraction was food and accommodation at moderate prices, which was necessary as the exchange rate with sterling was not favourable to the French. An undated advertisement directed French visitors to the Hôtel de l'Europe that had been established in 1840 at 15 and 16 Leicester Place and promised '*un restaurant à la française*, offering a moderately priced dinner'.[101] It is listed as Vargue's Hôtel de l'Europe in 1879.

Not all visitors were well served. When Auguste-Jean-Baptiste Defauconpret, who visited London in 1816, was asked if he was going to stay at L'Hôtel Impérial de Saint Petersburg[102] as his intended lodgings were not ready, he instead stayed at the French restaurant Chédron, at the Huntley Tavern, where the owner 'fleeces like an Englishman'.[103]

In the last years of the century Lieutenant-Colonel Newnham-Davis reviews a wide range of restaurants with French chefs, offering truly French repertoires. He says that around the Cavour 'there has always been a savour of Bohemianism'. Newnham-Davis had known the Cavour and its proprietor M. Philippe for some time. This proprietor was his own maître d'hôtel (and grew his own herbs and vegetables in the orangery and garden). Newnham-Davis describes 'the *Poulet Sauté Portugaise*' as 'a triumph of bourgeois cookery', but he is not quite as satisfied with the rest of the dinner.[104]

[98] Dickens the younger, *Dictionary of London*, p. 224.
[99] Dickens the younger, *Dictionary of London*, p. 224.
[100] Baedeker, *Baedeker's London and its Environs* (9th rev. edn., 1894), p. 8.
[101] Museum of London, Ephemera collections: hotels, Acc. No. 375, Advertisement.
[102] 'L'Hôtel Impérial de Saint Petersburg' appears to be a pseudonym for an untraceable hotel.
[103] A.-J.-B. Defauconpret, *Six mois à Londres en 1816: suite de l'ouvrage ayant pour titre quinze jours à la fin de 1815* (Paris, 1817), ch. 1.
[104] Newnham-Davis, *Dinners and Diners*, ch. xxviii, pp. 128–31.

Newnham-Davis offers another of his discoveries, a place that his upper-middle-class readers may not have known, Le Restaurant des Gourmets in Lisle Street, which had a shabby exterior in a run-down location. He finds a truly French restaurant where the staff and most of the customers are French and he shares a table with three French greengrocers. His dinner costs a modest 2*s* 7*d*. For this he has a herring *hors d'œuvre*, bread, soup for 2*d* which he thinks is as good as that to be had for 2*s*. He thinks less of the turbot and capers, but praises the gigot haricot and the omelette that follows. He also has cheese, and a half of *vin ordinaire*. But as he does not think much of it, the proprietor shrugs and offers him instead a pint of claret that he had bought cheaply from M. Nicols of the Café Royal.[105]

Dining out, as an entertainment, had been an almost exclusively male activity until the late 1880s. Previously women could only respectably visit cafés and restaurants such as Verrey's in Regent Street. Blanchards at 1–7 Beak Street, Soho, established in 1862, forbade ladies after 5 p.m.,[106] though if a woman was staying alone in a hotel she might dine in a private sitting-room. Families could dine at the commensal *table d'hôte* in the French hotels. In the 1890s entertaining in restaurants gained in popularity. Those who could not afford to dine in the new grand hotels could have dinner and supper parties. They were now places for men and women to dine together, usually to enjoy French cuisine. Almost all the menus in *Dinners and Diners* are in French.

In 1899 Nathaniel Newnham-Davis's revues were collected as *Dinners and Diners: Where and How to Dine in London*, directed at the new clientele. He does not always describe a restaurant's customers but lets the reader take a clue from the particular guests he takes to each establishment. Newnham-Davis was well aware that many diners were unfamiliar with French cuisine. He advises them to compose a menu to suit their tastes and appetite from the à la carte selection with the help of a friendly maître d'hôtel.[107]

Apart from restaurants in hotels, the number of French-owned restaurants increased during the second half of the century and, of all of these, possibly the most well known and long-lasting was the Café Royal. Its predecessor had been opened in Glasshouse Street in 1865 by Daniel Nicolas Thévenon. He had previously fled Paris as a bankrupt wine merchant. With his wife Célestine Lacoste he opened a café-restaurant that was so successful that it expanded into several premises in Regent Street, where it became the Café Royal. Famous for its wine cellar and as a favourite meeting place for

[105] Newnham-Davis, *Dinners and Diners*, ch. xiv, pp. 65–8.
[106] Baedeker (1894), p. 8, and Dickens the younger, *Dictionary of London*, p. 224.
[107] Newnham-Davis, *Dinners and Diners*, foreword: 'The difficulties of dining' (n.p.).

Bohemian London,[108] it is ranked by Charles Dickens the younger in 1879 as being on a larger scale than the older Verrey's. He notes that 'At both these houses, people who know how to order their dinners will be thoroughly well served'.[109] Baedeker's 1894 edition stars Kettner's Restaurant du Pavillon as a French house, at 28–31 Church Street, Soho. Auguste Kettner had been chef to Napoleon III.

### *Conclusion*

How French was London's French cuisine in the nineteenth century? The rich who employed French chefs continued to enjoy French haute cuisine as they had in the eighteenth century. Likewise, when they dined out they could eat at hotels that offered the same cuisine. Bourgeois French visitors could find familiar style and service at the French hotels and restaurants around Leicester Square. The rest of the scene appears to have been somewhat uneven. The basement kitchens of London's upper-middle-class houses do not appear to have become the new home of French bourgeois cookery. Instead French elaboration was used to add a much-desired *recherché* touch. Yet through the nineteenth century the influence of French cuisine steadily grew. The lord mayor of London no longer offered a predominantly English bill of fare but an *à la Russe* menu in French. New patterns of dining out gave both men and women new opportunities to eat a meal cooked by a French chef.

Some names remain familiar to us: L'Escargot, opened in 1894, where they reared their own snails in the cellar; Kettner's, referred to in Baedeker's 1894 edition; and Maison Bertaux, the patisserie in Greek Street, opened in 1871, said to have been founded by two Communards and still flourishing.

During most of the twentieth century, even through hard times, the place of French haute cuisine remained secure as the ideal cuisine for elite dining. A fashion for French menus continued until the 1950s, regardless of how little the dishes related to their titles. In the early 1960s, with a new bias towards youth and informality, inexpensive French cookery was to be enjoyed in the new bistros. A taste for French bourgeois cookery had been reintroduced in 1951 with Elizabeth David's *French Country Cooking*,[110] and as a result, more English households began to enjoy French bourgeois recipes than appears to have been the case following the publication of *French Domestic Cookery* in 1825.[111] Those who read *French Country Cooking*

[108] G. Deghy and K. Waterhouse, *Café Royal: 90 Years of Bohemia* (1955), pp. 17–35.
[109] Dickens the younger, *Dictionary of London*, p. 224.
[110] E. David, *French Country Cooking* (1951).
[111] Anon., *French Domestic Cookery*.

and its sequel, *French Provincial Cooking*,[112] cooked the recipes themselves, unlike their predecessors who asked their plain cooks to produce dishes from an unfamiliar repertoire.

From the second half of the twentieth century cuisines from around the world flourished in London. Today, in spite of London now offering a greater range of cuisines, an entry in Michelin's Red Guide[113] still gives the imprimatur of French culinary standards, and their prized rosettes continue to offer chefs the ultimate accolade. In this postmodern London, French cuisine and French influences still flourish. Bourgeois diners can still eat at Mon Plaisir in Monmouth Street just north of Leicester Square and haute cuisine still thrives in Mayfair at Le Gavroche in Upper Brook Street.

[112] E. David, *French Provincial Cooking* (1960).
[113] *Guide Michelin: Great Britain and Ireland* (2012).