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# 1741

## Two Interviews at Strasbourg's Top Restaurant

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[▶](#) *In early September 2013 Tourisme Alsace and Office de Tourisme de Strasbourg et Sa Région invited me to Colmar, Sélestat, and Strasbourg. On my second evening in Strasbourg I had supper at the elegant, intimate boudoir "1741," the city's only restaurant with a Michelin star. It's located in a former Bourgeois townhouse across the Ill River from the majestic medieval Gothic cathedral and the extravagantly Baroque Palace Rohan. The Palace, now home to several art museums, was founded in 1741, hence the restaurant's name.*

*Opened in 2012 "1741" is the second-most recent, the most sophisticated (thanks to its predominantly silver décor and its Hermes tablecloths, Limoges porcelain, Baccarat crystal, and Christofle silverware), and the most successful of 33-year-old entrepreneur Cédric Moulot's four restaurants in Strasbourg, his adopted city. Its executive chef and creator of its imaginative, eye-catching, scrumptious seasonal dishes is Alsatian 38-year-old Thierry Schwartz, also the owner/chef with his wife Helene of more rustic Bistrot des Saveurs in the nearby town of Obernai, which also vaunts one Michelin star.*

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### Restaurateur CÉDRIC MOULOT



**Our tastes in food are closely connected to our childhood; what are your first memories of food?**

CM: My grandmother's traditional cuisine. She used vegetables and fruits from our garden and poultry from our farm.

**You were born into a family of restaurateurs. What made you decide to follow in their footsteps?**

CM: Since early childhood, I've spent most of my time in kitchens. As you said, I grew up in a family of restaurateurs. For several generations now this profession has been part of our DNA. We all love this job.

**Wouldn't it have been easier to stay in Thionville in the Lorraine and continue the family business?**

CM: Unfortunately, not. The Lorraine is an economically depressed region; I also really wanted to come to Strasbourg to study at the world-renowned catering school here.

**Who were your mentors and what did you learn from them?**

CM: My godfather. He also studied at Strasbourg's catering school. From him I learned perseverance and the aspiration to achieve the same high quality of his work.

**Why Strasbourg and not somewhere else?**

CM: Strasbourg for its catering school and its quality of life.



**What are the essential qualities of being a top restaurateur?**

CM: Constancy, reliability, self-discipline, humility, and passion.

**What do you like best about your job?**

CM: My customers and cooking.

**The least?**

CM: Paperwork.

**I've read that your professional philosophy is to have your restaurants serve top-quality products and be open 7/7 365 days a year. Is that true of all four of your restaurants?**

CM: YES! I think the client should not have to worry about if we're open or not. For the past 10 years all my restaurants have been open 7/7 and we serve hot food until midnight. We have to be visible.

**Your restaurants *Le Tire Bouchon* and *Le Meiseloeker* seem very similar in fare and atmosphere, how are they different?**

CM: Tire Bouchon, which means corkscrew, has been a *weinstube* since the early 1900s. It's in a building dating from 1605 close to the Cathedral. I took it over 10 years ago. I received the title of Maitre Restaurateur in 2011, an acknowledgement and guarantee of that restaurant's high quality. Tire Bouchon seats 130 and has a terrace for sunny days, and four meeting rooms upstairs.

I created *Meiseloeker* in 2013; it's a little jewel with 90 seats near Place Saint-Étienne close to the statue of "Meiseloeker," a little boy who is carrying a bird cage in one hand and playing pipes like Pan's with the other, so as to charm and catch titmice or little birds.



Le Tire Bouchon façade



Meiseloeker

**I've read that you are setting up a franchise system; does it apply only to 231 East Street? Can you explain your plan?**

CM: I opened "231 East Street" in 2011. It's a gourmet burger joint. After its initial great success, I set up a partnership with Eric Senet, an expert in franchising, so as to expand the concept. Since then we've opened six "231 East Street" in France: in Strasbourg, Colmar, Annecy, Bordeaux, Torcy, and Paris).

We plan to open up to 50 others in France over the next three years. We're also discussing opening other "231 East Street" elsewhere in Europe, in Germany and Switzerland for now. Of course I'm only franchising "231 East Street," not my other restaurants.

**I've heard you admire Danny Meyer. Do you know him?**

CM: I don't know Danny Meyer personally, but I know about his success. But let's remain humble... I struggle every day in the hopes of reaching his level of achievement.

**Danny Meyer's restaurants are all in New York or nearby, and yours are all in Strasbourg. Would you consider opening a restaurant elsewhere? If so, where?**

CM: My dream: Strasbourg – Paris – New York. I go to New York every year. I love that city. I dream about living in New York and opening a restaurant there. To be continued...

**Other restaurateurs you admire?**

CM: Joel Robuchon and Paul Bocuse, a great man.

**You are very young to be so successful; what do you think are the reasons for your success, especially the past three years?**

CM: We cannot speak of success yet... Let's say I started off with a bang, but I still have a lot to accomplish. It's true I've been very lucky, but I've worked hard and made many personal sacrifices.



Booths at 231

**How do you feel about guides and food critics? Have they helped you?**

CM: Yes, a lot! I have a lot of respect for food critics and guides and I'm always proud to be mentioned.

**Up to now you've told me about Cédric Moulot the restaurateur; I'd like to know more about Cédric Moulot the person. For example, what are your favorite foods?**

CM: Tripe and lamb's brain.

**Your favorite cheese?**

CM: Comté.

**A dish you dislike?**

M: Chard.

**Your favorite wines?**

CM: Wines from Burgundy.

**Your favorite beers?**

CM: The "Fischer tradition."

**Besides hamburgers and fries, your favorite American dish?**

CM: Ribs.

**A favorite dessert?**

CM: Mille-Feuille.

**Your favorite color?**

CM: Red.

**Besides your work, what do you like best about Strasbourg?**

CM: The quality of life, the antique dealers and the Cathedral.

**What is never missing in your home refrigerator?**

CM: CHEESE!

**What instrument did you play in the Municipal Band of Valleroy?**

CM: I played the trumpet.

**You collect art and have decorated all your restaurants with the works of Alsatian artists; do you paint or sculpt?**

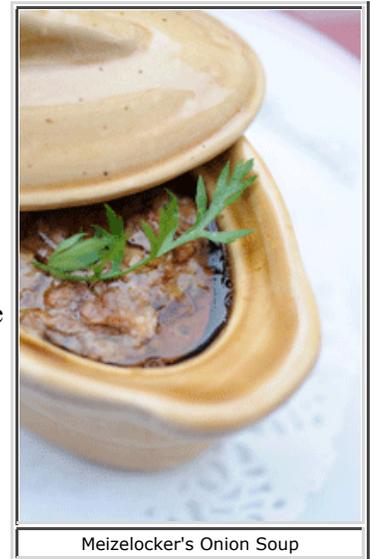
CM: Unfortunately not... I'm bad at drawing. But yes, I love art in all its forms. I asked the artist and painter François Zenner to transform the Tire Bouchon's facade and contribute to smartening up the street and the neighborhood around the Cathedral.

**If you hadn't become a restaurateur, what profession would you have chosen?**

CM: Professional musician.

**Do you have a pipedream? That means a dream for your future?**

CM: To be as successful as possible, raise a family, stay healthy, and to realize my dreams.



Meizelocker's Onion Soup

## Executive Chef THIERRY SCHWARTZ



**Our tastes in food are closely connected to our childhood; what are your first memories of food?**

TS: I have very earthy, soil-related memories of our village farm's produce.

**Why and when did you decide to become a chef?**

TS: From the time I was very small because I've always been a foodie.

**Can you tell me a little about your career? Where did you study? Where were you an apprentice? Where did you work?**

TS: I did a stage at the hotel school here in Strasbourg and then gained experience in several famous restaurants, for example *Le Crocodile* here in Alsace; in Brittany, and the Low Countries. In 1993 I joined Joël Robuchon's team in Paris, then at Alain Ducasse's *Jules Verne* in the Eiffel Tower, later at the luxury bed-and-breakfast Maison Laurent in Pieusse near Carcassonne, and as Chef de Parti at the *Chalet du Mont d'Arbois* in Megève in Haute-Savoie under the guidance of Alexandre Faix. In 1997 I became Chef de Cuisine at *La Taverne du Mont d'Arbois* and a year and a half later its Executive Chef. In 2002 I came back to Alsace

with my wife to open *Le Bistro des Saveurs* in Obernai. In May, 2012, I began this adventure here at *1741* with Cédric Moulot, its founder and owner.

**Who were your mentors and what did you learn from them?**

**TS:** From Robuchon I learned self-discipline and preciseness, and from Alexandre Faix I learned everything else, especially that it's important to have your own personality.

**What are the essential qualities of a top chef?**

**TS:** Simplicity, hard work, passion, and humility.

**You work with your wife. How do you divide the responsibilities?**

**TS:** Yes, I work with my wife at our bakery *Saveurs Bretzel* and at our restaurant *Bistro des Saveurs*, both of which are in Obernai. At *1741* in Strasbourg I'm a partner with its founder/owner Cédric Moulot. Together we create our menus according to what's in season.

**What do you like best about your job?**

**TS:** I love cooking and being part of a team, sharing with others. I love discovering new products, talents, and personalities and all the diversity that's part of our profession.

**The least?**

**TS:** The paperwork.

**What's your culinary philosophy?**

**TS:** To prepare delicious food using the best ingredients available.

**In a nutshell, how would you define your cuisine?**

**TS:** Simple, natural, and from the soil.

**What is your signature dish and other specialties?**

**TS:** The simple melted organic carrot created in 2005, and "the egg inside the egg with black truffles" created in January 2008 for the *Bistro des Saveurs*. I make it here at *1741* too and depending on the season we live it up with different wild mushrooms. For *1741* we've also created "Spaghetti with Crayfish and Caviar." Again, the spaghetti sauce can be made with meat or with fish depending on what's available at the market and the clients' preferences.



**Other chefs you admire?**

TS: Alain Passard and Jacques Maximin.

**What do you think are the reasons for your success?**

TS: Success doesn't exist; every day is a new challenge, a new chance, brings a new judgment, different from yesterday and the day before.

**How do you feel about guides and food critics? Have they helped you?**

TS: I think highly of them. Yes, their judgments have given me satisfaction.

**Up to now you've told me about Thierry Schwartz the chef; I'd like to know more about Thierry Schwartz the person. For example, what are your favorite foods?**

TS: My mother's beef roulade.

**What are your favorite Italian dishes?**

TS: Pasta and tiramisù.



Salon Robert de Cotte

**A dish you dislike?**

TS: There isn't one.

**Your favorite wines?**

TS: Organic wines.

**Your favorite beers?**

TS: "Météor" brewed by the Haag family.

**A favorite dessert?**

TS: Alain Faix's "Le Brest-Paris."

**Your favorite flower?**

TS: Whatever's in season.

**What is never missing in your home refrigerator?**

TS: Vegetables, the vegetables that are in season.

**Chefs are well known for having collections, often of motorcycles, fast cars, or watches; what about you? When I came to 1741 I believe your collection is of old books printed in 1741, correct?**

TS: My personal collection of 100-year-old chartreuses is at the *Bistro des Saveurs*. Here at 1741 we have a number of books printed that same year. We house it in the "Robert de Cotte" Room on the first floor. The collection



belongs to our founder and owner Cédric Moulot; it's a wink, homage to the history of Strasbourg because 1741 is the year that Palais Rohan, across the river from here, was built.

**If you hadn't become a chef, what other profession would you have chosen and why?**

TS: A farmer. I work with many local farmers to think up and develop my dishes here at 1741. I greatly admire the Truttenhausen Farm for its varieties of historical vegetables; the Sonnenberg Farm for its cheese; and the Château à Saint-Hippolyte for its saffron.

**Do you have a pipedream? That means a dream for your future?**

TS: I prefer to live in the present.