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Portrait of an artist 廚藝家

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Notorious for eschewing meat and fish at his Paris restaurant Arpège, visionary chef Alain Passard is equally renowned for his inspirational role as a mentor. 因突然宣布其巴黎餐廳Arpège停止供應魚類和肉類菜式而名噪一時的Alain Passard，不僅自己擁有遠大的目光，在培育人才方面也成績斐然，麾下人才輩出。 **By Kee Foong**

Portrait 廚藝家 of an artist

Alain Passard is not afraid to leap into the unknown. The chef-patron of restaurant Arpège in Paris, which has held three Michelin stars continuously for more than 20 of its 32 years, is an avid skydiver, having logged more than 1,000 jumps. Jumping out of planes, he at least has a parachute to cushion the fall, something he lacked when he took the greatest leap of all, declaring Arpège meat-free in 2001. It was a move that shocked the culinary world.

"Everyone was against me," says Passard. "They said I had lost my mind, having received three Michelin stars for cooking meat, and throwing it all away." He'd staked his entire reputation and the future of his venerable restaurant on vegetables, with no idea how it would turn out. Against the odds, he retained all three stars without skipping a beat, blazing a trail for haute vegetarian cooking. Although meat and seafood have since returned to the menu, his beloved vegetables remain the star.

Passard abandoned meat for several reasons, some personal, others professional. It wasn't long after the time of what was commonly known as mad cow disease, a potentially fatal bovine disease that could be passed on to humans. After that, "I felt like I had written the last page of animal cookery and wanted a new chapter," says Passard. "I wanted to really do something different that would use more produce. I didn't know anything about vegetables, but I love colour and you can do it with vegetables more than meat," he says. Spurring him on was the challenge of trying something new, and a determination to prove his critics wrong.

Alain Passard無懼一頭栽進未知領域，這位知名的餐廳主廚兼老闆熱衷跳傘，試過1,000多次從高空一躍而下。不過，相比起2001年毅然宣布其米芝蓮三星餐廳Arpège不再供應葷菜的決定，從飛機往外跳，至少還有降落傘可倚恃。Arpège現時已開業32年並連續20多年榮獲米芝蓮三星，當年的決定曾經震動整個廚藝界。

Passard說：「所有人都反對我的決定，說我失去理智；還說是烹調肉類菜式讓我獲得米芝蓮三星，這樣等於自己放棄一切。」雖然不知道這個決定會導致怎樣的結果，但他仍義無反顧地將自己的聲譽和這間備受推崇的餐廳的未來押在蔬菜上。出人意料的是，他的餐廳不僅沒有失去米芝蓮三星，反而開闢了高級素食的潮流。現時，餐廳已恢復供應肉類和海鮮佳餚，但素食菜式依然是鎮店之寶。

Passard之所以放棄肉類菜式，除了私人的理由，也有專業的考量。當時歐洲剛爆發瘋牛症不久，那是有可能感染人類的致命疾病。在那件事之後，他認為：「自己已寫下了肉類烹調的最終章，希望開展新的一頁。我想嘗試在菜式裡加入更多農作物，一改以往的做法。雖然我當時對蔬菜還不甚了解，但我喜愛色彩繽紛的東西，而蔬菜的顏色要比肉類豐富得多。」挑戰新事物，以及要批評者跌破眼鏡的決心，成了他前進的動力。

IMAGES BY J.C. AMIEL; S. DELPECH; STEPHANIE FRAISSE; DOSSANTOS LEMONE; DOUGLAS MCWALL; SOPHIE ROLLAND



Coming from an artistic family – his father was a musician, his mother in fashion and his grandfather a sculptor – Passard knew from an early age that he wanted to do something with his hands. “I wanted to create, to design and to produce things,” he says. Aged 14, he landed his first job as an apprentice chef, after replying to an advertisement in a local newspaper in Brittany, from where he hails. But the seminal moment was when he went to Paris to work for Alain Senderens, a giant of French cuisine.

Senderens, who Passard describes as “a unique chef who had no comparison, more like a painter or artist”, is the mentor he credits with helping him discover creativity in the kitchen. “He was the type of chef who wanted to shock colleagues and challenge them. He wanted to change the rules of classic French cuisine,” says Passard. Although it was an incredibly intense working environment, it was exactly where he wanted to be.

Expanding on the idea of mentors, Passard says, “Having a mentor is a bit like a gift from the sky, but they are also like a double-edged sword. On one side it is good because you have someone who is focused on you, and training you and teaching you the most important skills that you need in the job. But you also need to be independent and develop your own personality, not just copy someone.” It’s what he has done since taking over Senderens’ restaurant in 1986, earning himself a place alongside his former master as a culinary legend.

出身藝術家庭，父親是音樂家，母親從事時尚工作，祖父則是雕塑家，Passard從小就知道自己想要利用一雙巧手進行創作。他說：「我小時候就想要創作、設計或製造一些什麼。」14歲時，他在家鄉布列塔尼的報紙上看到一則招聘廣告，於是應徵並得到人生第一份廚師學徒的工作，從此踏上大廚之路。不過，他直到加入法國廚藝巨星Alain Senderens在巴黎的餐廳，才遇到工作上的重大突破。

Passard形容Senderens是「獨一無二、只此一家的廚師，甚至比起廚師，更像一位畫家或藝術家」。Senderens讓他茅塞頓開，讓他知道廚房也是發揮創意的地方。Passard解釋：「他是那種喜歡激發和挑戰同事的廚師，想要顛覆傳統法國料理的規則。」在如此緊張的環境裡工作，Passard卻感到如魚得水。

說到導師這角色，Passard認為：「擁有一位良師是上天的恩賜，但同時也是一把雙刃劍。優點是有人關注你、訓練你，將這一行所需的最重要的技能傳授給你。不過，你同時也需要獨立、發展自己的特色，不能一味抄襲或模仿。」他在1986年接手Senderens的餐廳之後，正是憑著自己的獨特性，成為能跟恩師並駕齊驅的廚藝大師。

This page, from top left: Fresh Strawberries; Beans, both at Arpège.

Opposite page, from top: Arpège’s Beetroot Sushi; and Multicoloured Vegetable Ravioli

本頁左至右：Arpège分別以新鮮士多啤梨和青豆炮製的兩道菜式

對頁上至下：Arpège的紅菜頭壽司及色彩鮮艷的意大利蔬菜餃子

Now 62 years old, Passard has mentored his fair share of chefs who’ve gone on to greatness, including Pascal Barbot, of three-Michelin-star L’Astrance, David Toutain, whose eponymous restaurant is one of Paris’ top tables, and Bertrand Grebaut of Septime, which cracked the World’s 50 Best Restaurants list in 2016. Any thoughts of slowing down are quickly dismissed. “I really only became chef when I was about 40,” says Passard. Before that it was all about learning, and “even now, I am always looking for new ideas”. For him, “cooking is like art or passion, but you need to keep practicing”.

It’s this devotion to his craft that keeps him at the top of his game, and Arpège as relevant as ever, garnering numerous stars and awards over the years. Passard believes that such awards are important for recognition. Since receiving a star in the restaurant’s first year of operation, he feels that Michelin has been supportive of him and his style of cooking. The stars are not an end in themselves, but encourage him always to strive for the best and remain creative. Being creative is at the heart of everything he does, because “like a dancer, writer or artist, if you don’t have creativity, you have nothing”.

Unusually for a chef of his stature, Passard has always had just the one restaurant, and no plans to open another. Diners will find him on most days at his maison on Rue de Varenne in Paris’ seventh arrondissement, waiting to receive fresh produce from one of his three garden farms, and to honour his guests, who are likely to spend a small fortune on the experience. “You are here tonight because you want to celebrate something, and I should be here to show respect to you, the customer, and say, ‘Thank you for choosing Arpège,’” says Passard.



現年62歲的Passard指導過的廚師之中，可謂人才輩出——Pascal Barbot的L’Astrance餐廳榮獲米芝蓮三星評級，David Toutain在巴黎開設與自己同名的餐廳一桌難求，Bertrand Grebaut的Septime躋身2016年全球50最佳餐廳，但他沒想過要放慢腳步，就算有，也會很快拋諸腦後。Passard說：「我直到40歲才真正成為一位廚師。」之前的歲月對他來說只是學習階段，「即使現在，我也總是在尋找新的構思。」對他而言，「烹飪就像藝術或嗜好，分別是烹飪會熟能生巧。」

正是這種全心全意獻身廚藝的精神，讓他始終站在頂峰，Arpège多年來屢獲殊榮，贏得多不可數的米芝蓮星星和獎項就是最好的證明。Passard相信獎項代表業界對他的認同，具有重要意義。Arpège開業第一年就榮獲一星殊榮，於他而言，這是米芝蓮對他及其烹調風格的支持。摘星不是最終目的，但可以鼓勵他精益求精、不斷創新。不論做什麼事情，他總是以創意先行，因為「就像舞者、作家或藝術家，沒有創意就什麼都沒有了。」





It's still all about your hands. Arpège is a very labour-intensive and manual kitchen 我們仍然強調手藝，Arpège的廚房仍然採用勞工密集的工作模式，以人手處理各種工序

Dishes at Arpège, such as the famous hot-and-cold egg or the bouquet de roses apple tart may be incredibly refined and contemporary, but the cooking remains, in many ways, very traditional. Contraptions such as a sous vide machine, are not for Passard. "It's still all about your hands," he says. "Arpège is a very labour-intensive and manual kitchen. There is someone roasting the pans, and someone who checks the fire and flames – my team are the creators of texture, taste, perfume and vision."

When it comes to technology, however, Passard is not averse to social media platforms, and knows that they are part of today's dining experience. He has more than 250,000 followers on Instagram, which he uses as an education tool. "Now people are confused about when produce is available and I wanted an opportunity to help my followers learn about seasons," he says. "For example, tomatoes are not in season in winter when it's minus 15 degrees, while April and May are great for asparagus," he says. With this desire to educate, he joined the International Culinary Institute as an Honorary Advisor.

Passard is also aware that social media and shows such as *Chef's Table* on Netflix, which dedicated an episode to him, have brought him a new audience. And it's the audience and customers, new and regular, that Passard believes chefs should satisfy. After all, eating out is ultimately about pleasure and enjoyment.

有別於其他地位尊崇的名廚，Passard名下只有一家餐廳，他也不打算開第二間。大多數的日子裡，他會坐鎮位於巴黎第七區Rue de Varenne街的Arpège，親自等著點收由他名下的三個農場生產的新鮮農作物，並且親身接待不惜花巨款來這裡品嚐美食的客人。他說：「客人一般是懷著慶祝什麼的心情來這裡享用晚餐，我應該親自表達謝意，向大家說一聲：『謝謝你們選擇了Arpège。』」

Arpège的菜式如著名的冷熱蛋或形狀如玫瑰花的蘋果撻等，賣相都異常精緻、現代感十足，但烹調方法卻大致上沿用傳統技巧。Passard不喜歡用真空低溫烹調機這類新奇的現代廚具，他說：「我們仍然強調手藝，Arpège的廚房仍然採用勞工密集的工作模式，以人手處理各種工序，有人負責掌鍋，有人留意火候。我的團隊是食物口感和色香味的創造者。」

不過，Passard卻不抗拒社交媒體這類新科技，甚至明白這是當今餐飲體驗的一部分。他把有逾25萬名追隨者的Instagram當作有力的教育工具，他說：「現代人分不清農作物的生產季節，我希望藉著這個渠道幫助追隨者了解四季與農作物的關係，例如番茄不能在冬季零下15度的氣候生長，而4月和5月則是蘆筍盛產的季節。」汲汲於知識傳授的Passard亦接受國際廚藝學院邀請，擔任學院的榮譽顧問。

Passard也意識到社交媒體和電視節目如Netflix《主廚的餐桌》(他曾是其中一集的嘉賓)等能為他帶來新的觀眾。他認為，不管是觀眾還是客人，不管是新知還是舊雨，廚師都必須盡量去滿足他們。畢竟，外出用膳的終極目的不外乎是開開心心享用一頓美食。



This page, from top: Lobster at Arpège; the restaurant's exterior

本頁上至下: Arpège的龍蝦菜式; 餐廳的外觀

Opposite page, from top: Arpège's Vegetable Tabbouleh; inside the dining room

對頁上至下: Arpège的Tabbouleh蔬菜沙律; 餐廳的用餐區

