

Bon appétit! London named food capital of world ... by French chef

Jeremy Josephs
and Alice Ross

LONDON outstrips Paris – and the rest of the world – with its cuisine, according to the “chef of the 20th century”.

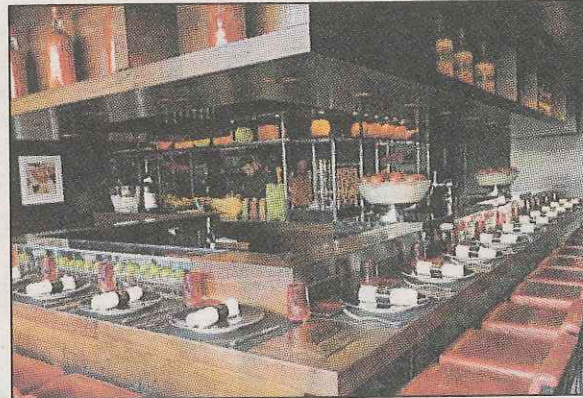
Joël Robuchon, who has 25 Michelin stars to his name, made the astounding statement after opening a new restaurant in Paris.

In an exclusive interview with the Standard, Robuchon, who has a restaurant in Soho, said he “would argue that London is very possibly the gastronomic capital of the world.

“Why? Because it’s only in London that you find every conceivable style of cooking. When it comes to what’s new in cooking, to innovative cuisine, it’s all happening in London. It’s the same in the agro-alimentary business. The epicentre is not Paris but London.”

Robuchon, 65, attributed the quality of the capital’s restaurants to its rich diversity of cultures and the intense competition to attract diners.

“If you had asked me this question 30 or 40 years ago I would have told you precisely the opposite – that



London was where you were likely to eat terrible food,” he said.

“But now the tables have turned. Because it’s in London you will find the best Japanese, Indian and French restaurants.”

Richard Harden, publisher of the Harden’s London Restaurants guide, said that even the suggestion that London might now stand shoulder-to-shoulder with the world’s best culinary cities represents a major change.

“Twenty years ago nobody could have argued that,” he said. “London has really come from nowhere.”

Robuchon once threw truffled

When it comes to what’s new in cooking, it’s all happening in London!

Joël Robuchon

FIVE OF THE BEST

Richard Harden’s London top five:
Viajante, E2: “It’s the only really innovative top restaurant in London.”
Marcus Wareing at The Berkeley, SW1: “London’s best all-round central dining room.”
Le Gavroche, W1: “Four decades of old-fashioned Gallic excellence.”
The Ledbury, W11: “Antipodean chef puts Notting Hill on the world map.”
The Square, W1: “An undersung great British chef cooks French.”

langoustine ravioli at Gordon Ramsay when the young Scot was training with him at his Paris restaurant, Jamin.

“I was younger and hot-headed then – more impulsive too,” he said. “As for Gordon’s shouting and screaming, I wouldn’t take too much notice of it: but it does make good viewing on TV, for sure.”

The chef’s London restaurant, L’Atelier de Joël Robuchon, has two Michelin stars but his philosophy is that the perfect meal does not exist. “Because one can always do better, because you should constantly be striving to improve,” he said.