



*“THE CLASSIC
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—DAVID WALTUCK

FRENCH TRANSLATION

AS CITY FOODIES OPT FOR SOPHISTICATED YET UNFUSSY COOKING, THREE CHEFS BOLDLY UPDATE A FAVORITE CUISINE. **BY AMY ZAVATTO**

French technique is the undisputed rock-solid foundation for much of the greatest cuisine known to man. But like grammar, you have to know the rules before you can break them. These three New York toques are creating modern twists on classic French dishes that would have even Escoffier applauding.

MÉLANGE MAESTRO:

Aaron Bludorn, Café Boulud

Aaron Bludorn recently took over as executive chef after nearly six years on the line at Café Boulud. “Chef Daniel encourages us to be as spontaneous as possible,” Bludorn says of Michelin-starred chef Daniel Boulud, known for playing with updated techniques or adding global influences to his cuisine. For Bludorn, modernity often means interpreting the flavors of a classic dish as a sensory-enhancing mélange, a deconstruction. The dish he’s been playing with of late is wild king salmon, built around a classic

ratatouille. “I make a smooth orange-hued purée, almost like a really flavorful tomato soup,” he says. “Then I pick each vegetable represented in baby form and make a garden of those on the plate, cooking each with a different method.” 20 E. 76th St., 212-772-2600; cafeboulud.com

FLAVOR FANATIC:

David Waltuck, Élan

“My cooking style is based on French cooking, but with an American



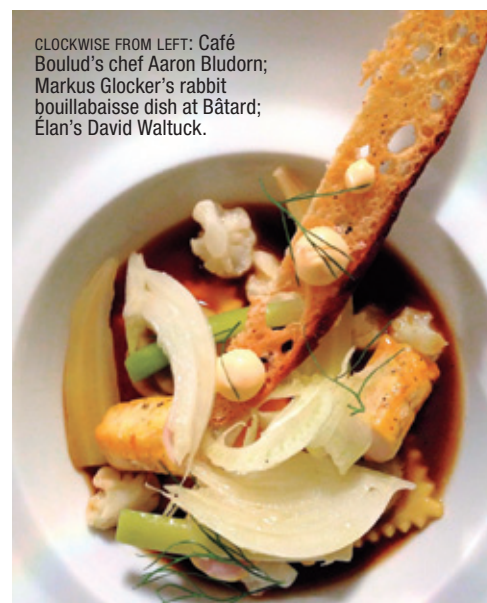
overlay,” says Élan’s David Waltuck. A few sumptuous examples: fried oysters with caviar remoulade or potato potstickers with truffles. But for Waltuck, modernizing French often means intensifying flavors. For example, he found “market vegetables à la Grecques” too delicate for his modern palate, he says. “The classic version didn’t have the intensity I like to put in my food. There are more aromatics in mine, and the reduction it goes through leads to a more powerful dish.” 43 E. 20th St., 646-682-7105; elannyc.com

SIMPLE COMPLEXITY:

Markus Glocker, Bâtard

Austrian-born Markus Glocker, an affable Gordon Ramsey alum, says one of the challenges for classically trained chefs is interpreting dishes for the modern diner who eschews fussiness and formality but doesn’t want to compromise on complexity of flavor. Or, as Glocker puts it, “[I’m

cooking] in a simple way, but with good technique and the best product; it’s not pretentious on the plate.” Dish to try: Glocker’s époisses. At Bâtard he combines a bit of the aromatic cheese with apple chutney, shaved truffle, and some sparkling wine, a decadent riff on the cheese and wine consumed in the fields when white Burgundy is harvested. “The époisses were so rich, they’d use a few drops of white wine to cut it,” he says. Here Glocker follows that same idea, but it’s the last two twists—the house-made chutney, cleverly hinting at the traditional notes found in Chardonnay, and the shaved truffle, an earthy but upscale nod to the field workers who favored the dish—that make this Bâtard favorite at once grounded and elevated. Also try Glocker’s rabbit redux on traditional bouillabaisse. “Bouillabaisse is saffron and different fish poached, roasted, and seared,” he explains. “We wanted the same idea, just with rabbit.” 239 W. Broadway, 212-219-2777; myriadrestaurantgroup.com **G**



CLOCKWISE FROM LEFT: Café Boulud’s chef Aaron Bludorn; Markus Glocker’s rabbit bouillabaisse dish at Bâtard; Élan’s David Waltuck.