

BLACK TIE

INTERNATIONAL

FALL 2002

\$15.00 US

Dining Out

With Sheldon Landwehr

In its best moments venerable Le Perigord is one of the finest restaurants offering topical French cuisine in New York.

Executive chef Jacques Qualin, categorically master of his art, has given the ever popular eatery a fresh blast into the 21st Century. Qualin cut his teeth on gastronomic icons like Manhattan's Le Cirque and Jean-George, and Parisian idols Tour d'Argent and Taillevent.

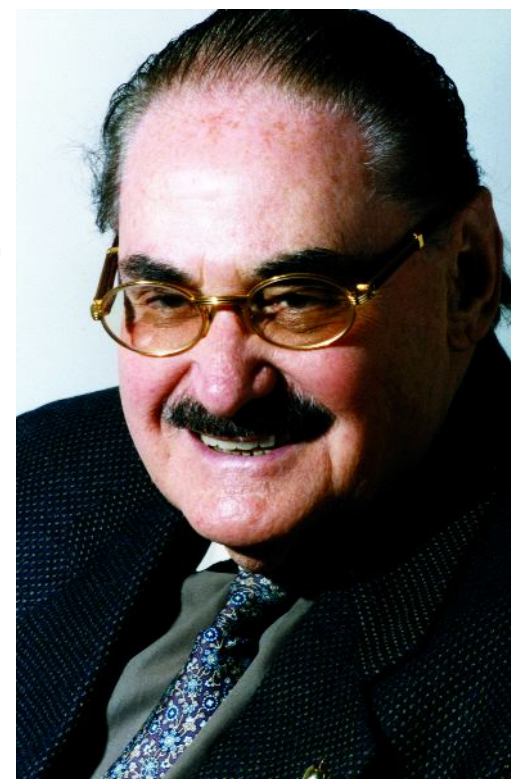
Though much of the past has been retained, Jacques list of specials reveals some of the best work this restaurant has to offer, whether it is in turning out a cold buffet of appetizers covering shrimp, whitefish, asparagus, celery root and plenty more, or signature dishes of foie gras, plump frogs legs complemented by a silky sauce and fresh cranberry bean cake or a simply awesome sweet pea soup, its majestic pale green brew hugging finely cut vegetables (a must).

Soft-spoken owner-host George Briguet, is one of the nicest and most proficient restaurateurs, at home in the kitchen, in the wine cellar, and in the dining room. When visiting Le Perigord, I seldom order from George, but to some extent consult with him, comparing food opinions and wines till the two of us are satisfied with the prospect ahead. Recent jointly arrived-at entrees included turbot, presented in a refined cheese crust drizzled in a delicate champagne sauce, and Dover sole exquisitely grilled, boned at the table and served with a complex mustard sauce which had the tickling zest of fresh mustard, but not so much that it suppresses the twang of the Dover sole. Simplicity underscores roast lobster, sparkling in a coriander broth accented with seasonal vegetables.

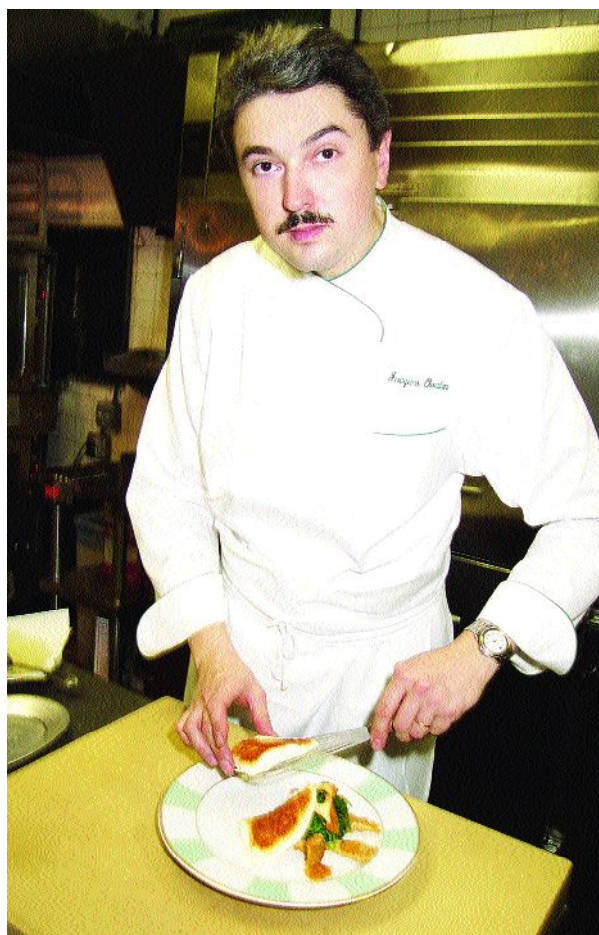
A poultry dish, roasted spiced duck breast, one of the best items on the menu, is especially irresistible when prepared with glazed apples and parsnip puree, and seared venison achieves high marks for its shrewd use of pickled beets and huckleberries. A nearly consummate, tender, succulent rack of lamb, fell from grace by reason of an excessively seasoned surface.

A recent addition to this restaurants repertoire is the game menu. Wood pigeon terrine with foie gras and cumberland sauce, roasted partridge soup with chestnut, seared bear loin with braised red cabbage and roasted mallard duck with huckleberries are a few of the game menu listings. Braised caribou leg en civet with spatzle and roasted faisant with truffle, quince and foie gras sauce are also available.

An ethereal array of feathery light souffle's are the specialty of the house and make for one grand finale to any meal. Choices from the dessert cart include good spicy roast pear, warm chocolate fondant with a scoop of cinnamon ice cream, strawberry chiboust, and an unbelievably light peach tart.



Sheldon Landwehr



Executive Chef Jacques Qualin



Turbot with Comté crust, champagne sauce



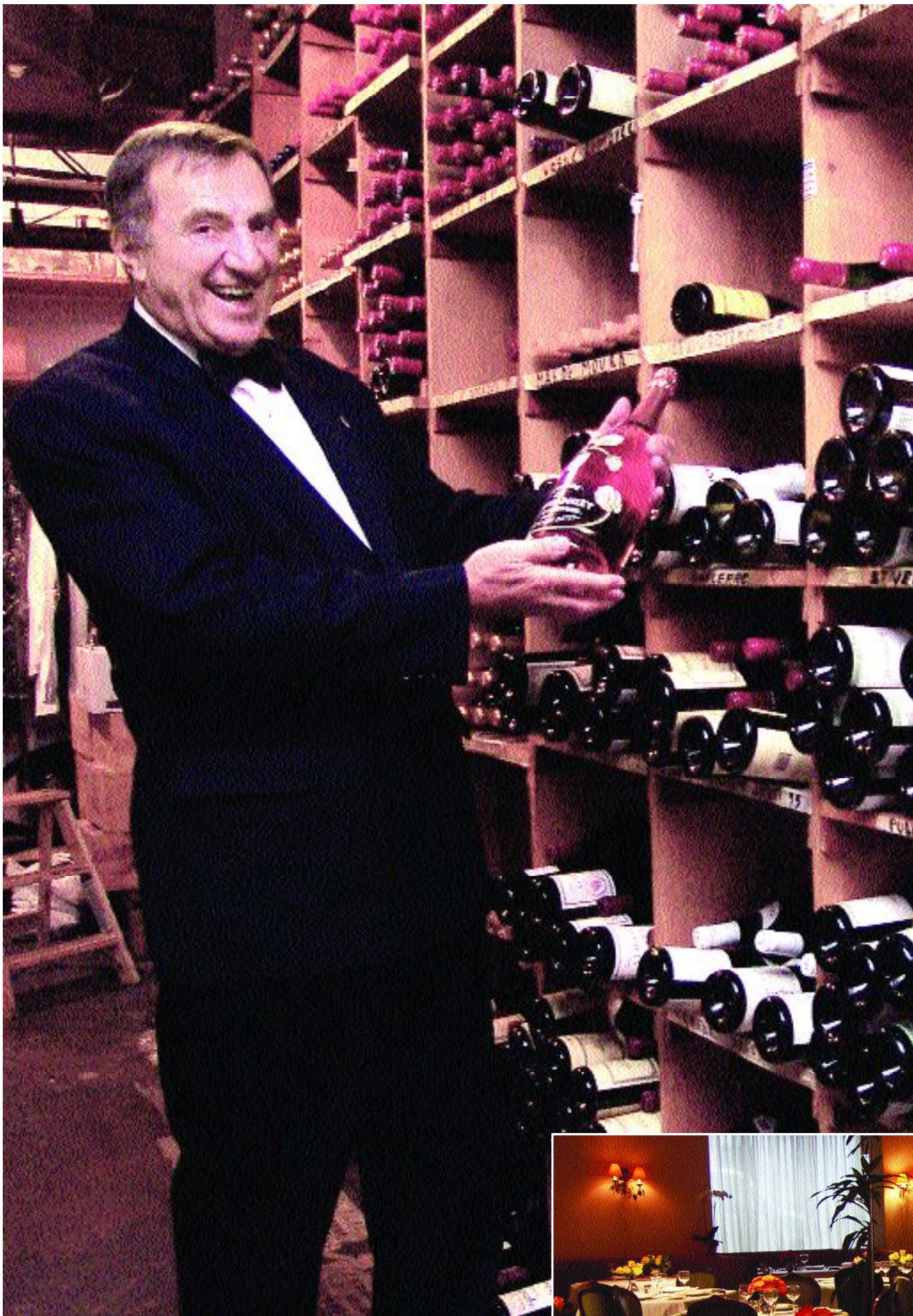
Owner/Host George Briguet



Foie gras and celeriac marble with vin de paille jelly and mixed herb salad



Seared "Millbrook" venison with pickled beets and huckleberries, root vegetable napoleon



The trouble with Le Perigord is its enormously warranted success. It is one of our most elegant but not stiffly dignified restaurants. It has a distinguished clientele of largely regular patrons. It is always comfortably filled but never inordinately crowded so that the formal service and atmosphere are always soothingly quiet and collected, a blessing rare in New York restaurants. There is also enough space between the starched white-clothed tables to maintain a sense of privacy. Plush booth banquettes and carpeting keep noise levels down even when the room is full.

Le Perigord can make for an expensive evening out. Wines (classic French labels) and after dinner drinks can be a killer. Be forewarned that sampling one of the rare vintages or brandies or liqueurs will add greatly to the bill, their merit notwithstanding.

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Le Perigord
405 East 52nd Street, New York
(212) 755-6244.
Serves lunch and dinner.

Dress code. Three course prix fixe lunch (with supplements) \$28; dinner \$62 (\$47 before 6:30 P.M.). A la carte lunch entrees \$18-\$45; a la carte dinner entrees \$25-\$55. Reservations advised. Accepts major credit cards.

photo's by
Rob Rich



Raspberry cake with chocolate mint

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