

# Et Cetera, Et Cetera

—Another Great  
New Paris Bistro

WHEN A THREE-STAR Michelin chef from the legendary Ledoyen restaurant on the Champs Élysées decides to open a chic new bistro, there is bound to be interest. Few establishments in Paris have a longer tradition than Ledoyen, which began under the reign of Louis XVI as a luxury restaurant in 1791. It later became popular among artists like Cézanne, Degas, Monet and Picasso in the 19th century. And while Ledoyen goes down in history, that doesn't mean the menu, nor the creative mind behind it, are traditional. Head chef Christian Le Squer's culinary philosophy is clear: "The food should be creative and surprising but easy to understand." So his modern message is to keep it to *l'essentiel*, the essential – pure and simple.

Under Le Squer's direction, Ledoyen has reached the top, earning him his third Michelin star in 2002. Le Squer, a 46-year-old Breton, has become one of the most universally respected chefs cooking at the moment. In a private dinner

at the Ledoyen, I learn that LeSquer is modest and charming, which is rather unusual for a chef.

But now Le Squer has his sights set beyond the Champs-Élysées. He is creating waves in Paris and abroad with ETC, *Epicure Traditionnelle Cuisine*. The 40-seat bistro, which opened in April, offers extraordinary cuisine like Ledoyen, but uses unique products, subtle techniques and a shorter menu. The contemporary space, designed by Paris-based studio KO, is a lesson in understated elegance. Le Squer says they strived to "create a certain elegance in the decor and a certain elegance in the cuisine". He oversaw the concept and menu, but he has entrusted complete responsibility to one of his protégés, Bernard Pinaud, who worked with Le Squer at Ledoyen.

The cuisine is delicate, exquisite and sublime, with authentic recipes such as *Fantaisie Voyages: Terre et Mer* (smoked haddock spring roll with chicken liver and lamb hock) which Le Squer modestly says is a success. *Boudin Maison*

*avec jus de fruit passion* (blood pudding with passion fruit juices) is already a classic. And *Caramel au goût de Carambar glacé* (Carambar candy flavoured caramel ice cream) is a work of art. Also of note is ETC's extensive wine list, assembled by Gérard Tournier, chef sommelier at Ledoyen.

The pressure on top chefs can be intense, so I ask Le Squer about the challenge of retaining the precious and lucrative third star. Le Squer says customers "look at you as if you are an artist", but "for the chef, nothing has changed". He gets great satisfaction in cooking for guests who appreciate good food, and top honours help draw that crowd. Attracting the attention of Paris' high-end hotel concierges and discerning gourmands, word-of-mouth about ETC is quickly spreading. Customers will no doubt appreciate Le Squer and Pinaud's unwavering commitment to perfection.

—Paul Ross



ETC, Paris