



Jean-Luc Naret: He gives the nod to the chefs who make it to stardom – the criteria are strict and bestowing a star on someone is a great responsibility. Jean-Luc Naret has been known to withdraw to the palm grove in the garden of the Paris Guide Michelin office to carefully ponder his options before he decides.

he gets up at six in the morning and goes to bed at midnight. In-between, Jean-Luc Naret is busy being the sixth director in the history of the Guide Rouge Michelin. Ever since his arrival three years ago, his acknowledged aim has been to give the centenary guide new directions. Available today on the Internet, by GPS as well as via sundry other new gadgets, the starry selection is still able to make the world of gastronomy quake in its shoes. All the more so since it extended its reach across the Atlantic where the first edition dedicated to New York was presented at a VIP event at the Guggenheim Museum last November. And that is merely the beginning – San Francisco is the next target, with Asia close behind on the waiting list. Forty years old, Jean-Luc Naret has set a dynamic course for the Guide's future that is contagious in its ambition. Naret has a wide range of experience to his credit, accumulated in the wake of his finishing the Ecole Hôtelière de



Paris at 21. He worked in the Venice-Simplon-Orient-Express, the Bristol in Paris, the Saint-Geran and the Residence on Mauritius, and the Sandy Lane on Barbados. "I dreamt up several innovations that have meanwhile become standards. On the beach, for instance, I made the staff make their rounds with cold serviettes and freshly squeezed juice. To improve the teamwork I invited every employee to spend a night at the hotel. Their single duty was to lunch and share their experiences with me the next day." Initiatives like these helped make his reputation as a "dreammaker". After having run these sumptuous palaces, Jean-Luc Naret worked for His Highness the Aga Khan to develop tourism in countries such as Mozambique and Kenya, with a special brief to rely, if possible, on locally available talent. "It was then that I was contacted by Michelin to run the Guide Rouge. I felt like accepting the challenge and like looking at the venerable institution with fresh eyes." Obviously, Naret's eyes were discerning: the New York guide has already sold upwards of 150,000 copies, and the French guide remains a bestseller with no fewer than 370,000 readers in 2005 alone. So what about Naret's private life? "Well, my way of life has changed since I started working for Michelin. When I was still working as a hotel manager I was spoiled. I began the day with a walk on the beach or some water-skiing. These days, I can honestly claim that the only sport I practise is running after aeroplanes!" Even though he is on the road three out of four weeks, Naret attempts to spend



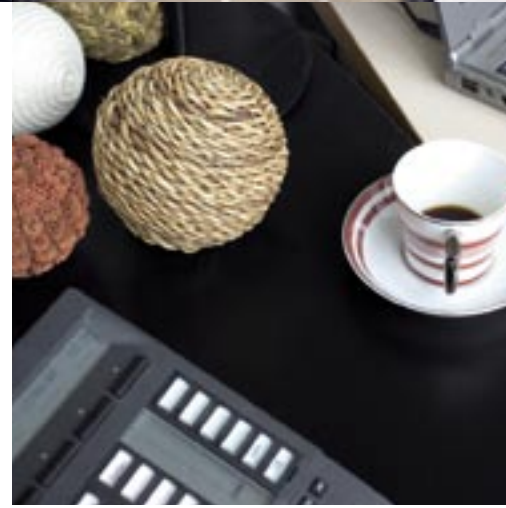
the weekends with his family, his wife and three children. Unless they are relaxing in their house in Normandy, they all remain in Paris, in their apartment in the 7th arrondissement, and use the occasion for shopping sprees.

"I regularly go to the Nespresso boutique in the rue du Bac, near my apartment, to stock up with Roma capsules (to get me started in the morning) and Ristretto (to enjoy after my meals). I've been a Nespresso aficionado right from the start and have acquired several machines over the years."

In fact, while he was still manager of the Sandy Lane Hotel, Naret was responsible for equipping the rooms with Nespresso machines. Obviously, taste is of supreme importance for Jean-Luc Naret, who claims to swear only by a single cuisine – that of his wife. "She's a true master, and a family meal remains for me the pinnacle of gastronomic pleasure," he maintains. Despite his busy schedule, Naret forces himself to go on holidays occasionally, preferably to go to Mauritius, "where we have our roots." Clearly Jean-Luc Naret has excellent memories of his years spent as hotel manager on the beautiful island. "Even though I'm very happy to head the great institution that is Michelin, my true passion remains the hotel business, and I know that I'll get back to it one day." In the meantime, however, Jean-Luc Naret is not content to rest on his laurels and is already busy considering future developments for the guide that was originally given to clients of Michelin.



Jean-Luc Naret knows how to make travelling an enjoyable pastime. After 11 European countries he took the world's No. 1 gastronomic guide across the ocean to New York, with San Francisco soon to follow. The next target: Asia.



MASTER OF THE CONNOISSEURS

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Star Maker
With his ambitious plans Jean-Luc Naret, Director of the gourmet authority Michelin Guides, is reaching for the stars – as well as for a Roma in the morning and a Ristretto in the evening. In-between, the Michelin man works at full throttle.

Whether it is the development of topical selections or the conquest of Asia, he particularly strives to maintain the independence and homogeneity that made the little Red Book so successful in the first place. "Bestowing or withdrawing a star is a task that needs to be done, a responsibility. Somebody once told me that the French particularly relish having their say in two fields – football and gastronomy. Which is why they are especially keen followers of two nominations – of the trainer of the national football team and of the director of the Michelin Guides!"