

An indecent obsession.

Jacques's appreciation of art, cinema verité and brutally modern architecture all mark him as a Frenchman. Even his curious attraction to narrow-hipped women with short hair and small breasts is somehow intrinsically French. His obsession with snails, on the other hand, borders on fetishism. For him, the idea of eating anything other than a Burgundy snail, born in the wild and collected by hand is affront to his gastronomic sensitivity. "I would never touch a snail from anywhere else," he sneers. "They have no taste." Even the popular petit gris is beneath his contempt. "Pieces of burnt rubber with the smell of swamp water," he declares with a foppish wave of the hand. Predictably, Jacques is also fastidious when it comes to the preparation of his beloved Burgundy snails. With their tiny livers removed (it interferes with the flavour, apparently), they can take up to an hour to cook, culminating in the last minute addition of butter, herbs and garlic. Even here Jacques refuses to compromise. He uses only premium quality Isigny butter, freshly picked garlic and hand-cut wild herbs. While we at Le Soufflé obviously take our escargot very seriously, we're rather more tolerant of the other 115 edible species than tragically fixated Jacques.



Nipples not included.

The French reputation for sauciness doesn't stop at the semi-nude beaches of the Cote D'Azur or lissome showgirls strutting their stuff at the Folie Bergere. In France, sex is part of the culture. Their passion for passion knows no bounds. And if they can squeeze it into a wine glass, so much the better. Which probably explains the myth that the champagne coupe, or saucer-shaped glass, was modelled on the breast of Marie-Antoinette.

It certainly seems an irresistible thought. But as titillating as it may be to imagine yourself supping wine from the royal bosom, you will never find anybody at Le Soufflé serving your favourite brand of bubbly in what amounts to a glass brassiere. Plainly, it was never designed for drinking champagne (although we can whole-heartedly recommend it for brightly coloured cocktails decorated with prissy little umbrellas and maraschino cherries). At our

restaurant in Ratu Plaza

we put our faith

in the less

romantic,

more

usual

flute.

And,

while

we'd

be the

first to

admit

it does

not have

the frisson of

*pressing your lips to Marie-Antoinette's majestic bust,
it is undoubtedly a far more satisfying way to enjoy the pleasures of champagne.*



*lust
greed
gluttony
sloth
anger
envy
and
national
pride*

Arrogant and snobbish - two words that describe the French temperament to perfection. A third (if a third were needed) would probably be 'proud'. Proud of their own snobbish arrogance, in fact. A defining characteristic that is never more apparent than when it comes to food. Who, for example, but the French could describe a humble soufflé as "the culinary invention that represents the highest form of human endeavour"? Delicious? Yes. Melt-in-the-mouth? Unquestionably. But if it's to be accorded metaphysical significance, someone has obviously lost the plot.

Sadly, the identity of the master chef responsible for the soufflé is lost for all time. Frenchmen however, are undivided on the subject. It was, without doubt, a Frenchman. Its elevation to the rarified status of haute cuisine is also credited to.... yes, you guessed it.... another Frenchman. Antoine Beauvilliers, the world's first restaurateur, who pompously declared (as only a Frenchman could) that no meal would be served in his Parisian restaurant unless it included a soufflé. And while we at Ratu Plaza acknowledge chef Beauvilliers with more than just a passing nod (well, he did write the definitive work on French cuisine), there's not a single trace of his.... er....what were those two words again?

