Dreams, Plans, Achievements!

It was at the end of the last century that I became a chef.

Things were different, very, very different in Hungarian gastronomy in those days.

A decade or two has passed since then; we became a free country and at that time we had bold, audacious dreams. We dared to dream because the world had opened up. We even dreamed of the Bocuse d'Or. *Wouldn't it be just incredible to one day represent Hungary at the most famous gastronomic competition in the world? - we would often discuss amongst ourselves.*

And then we dared to dream even bigger. We realized that the oft-repeated slogan, "Hungarian cuisine is world famous" is only mentioned within the borders of Hungary.

We, the revolutionaries of the time, dreamed of Michelin stars, Bocuse d'Or participation and first-class Hungarian gastronomy for ourselves and for those who would follow us.

Many long years passed before we realized that our dreams were slowly turning into concrete plans.

We were not always satisfied with the pace of progress, but the process had started, the sourdough culture had started to ferment. There was no going back or even looking back. We improved and evolved, working with diligence, perseverance, humility, developing ever more and ever stronger confidence in our abilities.

I would say that when the first Michelin star arrived in Budapest in 2010, very few people would have imagined that less than 12 years later, Hungary would boast the brightest achievements and the most Michelin stars in the entire region.

Two restaurants in Hungary now have two Michelin stars. If I may be so bold as to name them and offer my congratulations and sincere thanks to them: Platan and Stand.

Seven more restaurants have earned one Michelin star in 2022. Congratulations to 42 Restaurant, Babel, Borkonyha, Costes, Essencia, Rumour, and Salt. I am sure that this is just the beginning of a beautiful journey, and many bright stars will shine in Hungary's sky.

Paul Bocuse was perhaps not only the greatest chef of his time, but the institution he created 36 years ago, the Bocuse d'Or competition, is to gastronomy what the Olympics is to sport. Generally, competitions are primarily focused on performance, winning and results. The Bocuse d'Or, however, is far more than that, it is a regular meeting of a large and ever-growing family, it is about being together, thinking together, exchanging experiences, and demonstrating to everyone the right direction for the development of gastronomy in the world.

We have also learned from Paul Bocuse that the most important thing in gastronomy is to listen to the new generation. The competition itself is testimony to this.

In 2022, Hungary could host this wonderful event for the second time in the history of Bocuse European competitions. Both competitions have been stunning successes for Hungary. The Hungarian team came first in 2016 and second in 2022.

Just as important for me is the fact that on both occasions, more than 500 young colleagues and students were able to get involved in the Bocuse d'Or and get a taste of what it is like to work at the top tables in Europe.

A decision was made on the occasion of our debut at the Bocuse d'Or in Lyon in 2013, and we determined and developed a plan to put the Hungarian team on the podium at the results ceremony within 10 years. We mobilized and joined incredible forces, we all pulled together and we worked, worked and worked. Just like for the success of a good restaurant, success in such a competition depends on teamwork.

Obviously, coming third in the 2023 Bocuse d'Or in Lyon is the latest milestone in the history of Hungarian gastronomy. It is an amazing success for all Hungarian chefs, whether they actively supported the Hungarian team or were simply with us in spirit during the competition.

Congratulations to Bence Dalnoki, Patrik Nyikos, Tamás Széll and Szabina Szulló.

It was an honor, and brought a tear to my eye to finally fulfil my dreams and be part of the Hungarian team as we shared the moment when Dominique Crenn announced: HUNGARY!

Dear friends from around the world! I would also like to offer my particular appreciation to you all for helping us join the international gastronomic circuit and to become successful in the Bocuse d'Or family.

Thank you Geir Skeie, Serge Vieira, Odd Ivar Solvold, Orjan Johannessen, Ronni Mortensen.

My special thanks to Rasmus Kofoed.

On behalf of the Hungarian Bocuse d'Or Academy, I would like to thank the Hungarian Tourism Agency and the Hungarian Government for having believed in us and for having seen this competition as a way to promote Hungary's reputation. Thank you all for your help, support and work in making our dreams and plans a reality.

Zoltán Hamvas