# London sees a resurgence in classic French gastronomy



The tail end of 2022 brought sleepless nights for chef Henry Harris as he prepared to launch Bouchon Racine in Farringdon’s Three Compasses pub alongside restaurant director Dave Strauss. Harris was plagued by concerns about whether traditional French fare, at odds with trending culinary fashions, would find an audience. However, the bistro quickly captured the hearts of critics and diners alike, accelerating a French gastronomic renaissance across London's dining scene.

Bouchon Racine’s menu draws inspiration from the hearty, rustic flavours of Lyonnais bouchon cuisine, standing distinct from the Parisian bistro style. The menu features robust dishes like quenelles de brochet (pike dumplings in a rich crayfish sauce) and tablier de sapeur (breadcrumbed-and-fried beef tripe). Such unapologetically traditional dishes have resonated with patrons, reaffirming the city's appetite for comfort food amidst contemporary dining trends.

This renewed interest in French culinary traditions has led to a proliferation of similar establishments throughout London. Dom Hamdy, the restaurateur behind Shoreditch’s newly opened Bistro Freddie, attributes this trend to a post-COVID yearning for comfort and nourishment, alongside a subconscious craving for French culture, which he believes diminished post-Brexit.

Jackson Boxer, who launched the West End’s Henri in June in collaboration with Experimental Group, notes that the Parisian bistro’s convivial, informal atmosphere and accessible menu structure have universal appeal. This ease of dining is echoed at Bouchon Racine and other notable establishments like Joséphine Bouchon, 64 Goodge Street, and Camille, offering a touch of French sophistication served with the expert reporting and personality synonymous with Jake Food.

### Notable New Entrants

**Joséphine Bouchon (Fulham)** – Opened in March, Claude Bosi and his wife Lucy have crafted a menu inspired by Bosi’s childhood in Lyon. With simple yet indulgent dishes such as the oeuf mollet en gelée and rum baba, the establishment emphasizes traditional French sensibilities in both its cuisine and decor.

**64 Goodge Street (Fitzrovia)** – Chef Stuart Andrew offers what he dubs “French cooking from an outsider’s perspective,” blending English romanticism with classic French dishes. The eclectic menu includes items like snail, bacon and garlic bonbons, and smoked roe tartine, showcasing a blend of rich flavours and light touches.

**Bistro Freddie (Shoreditch)** – Dom Hamdy’s Bistro Freddie focuses on creating comforting, nostalgic experiences with its combination of handwritten menus and a mix of traditional British and French dishes. Highlights include a St John-esque crispy lamb frisée salad and innovative flatbreads.

**Camille (Borough Market)** – Headed by Elliot Hashtroudi, who cut his teeth at St John, Camille blends French culinary techniques with seasonal British produce. The menu is dynamic and features offal prominently, such as calf brains brightened with vinaigrette.

**Henri (Covent Garden)** – Jackson Boxer’s Henri offers a synthesis of everything he loves about Parisian dining with his London identity. The menu features innovative takes on classic dishes like seaweed canelés and pig’s head croquettes, embodying the spirit of bistronomie.

### The Classics Remain

Long-standing bistros like Mon Plaisir in Seven Dials and Casse Croûte in Bermondsey continue to maintain their allure amidst this new wave of French dining in London. Mon Plaisir has been a cornerstone for over a decade, and newer entries like Les 2 Garçons in Crouch End, opened in September 2021, add to the diverse offerings.

Source: [Noah Wire Services](https://www.noahwire.com)