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# Pierre Rolland

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**ROLLAND, Pierre (1912-1993)** chef, born on the 29<sup>th</sup> March 1912 in Frépillon, the Val-d'Oise, near Paris, an only child whose father (first name unknown) was a butcher but died in the First World War. His mother Georgette (née Pouyaut) re-married Louis Dufond, a hotelier, and they had one son Jean. Pierre started work aged twelve in his stepfather's hotel. Later, he trained in the Carlton Hotel in Cannes where he remained after completing his apprenticeship until the war. He married Marguerite Gioanni, from an Italian French family and they had three children, Georgette, Henri and Mireille. During the Second World War he was not called for service as he had a family, and worked as a chef in the perfume industry in Grasse.

In 1949 Ken Besson the owner the Russell Hotel in Dublin offered him the position of Head Chef. The Russell Hotel under Rolland became internationally renowned for the excellence of its food. With Rolland as Head Chef, arrangements for formalising apprenticeship between Besson, and Michael Mullen of the Irish Transport and General Workers Union saw Irish boys being indentured in the Russell's kitchen in return for allowing French and continental chefs work in Dublin. In the 1950s and 1960s the Russell's reputation was world-class. Pierre Rolland was an excellent leader, teacher and mentor according to the words of many of his young apprentices who went on to have rewarding careers. Arthur Magee and Matt Dowling were both indentured in the Russell under Pierre Rolland and recall his professionalism, authority and ability to inspire his chefs and apprentices. In the late 1950s the Russell's manager, Monsieur Maurice Nayrolles, was offered a position in the Bahamas where millionaires like the Rockefeller's used to holiday. He asked Pierre Rolland to go to the Bahamas and to supervise all the kitchens for him. On the 4<sup>th</sup> October 1959 a farewell dinner was held in honour of Rolland in the Moira Hotel Dublin. In attendance were the city's leading chefs, managers and the trade union leader Michael Mullen. For the next seventeen years Pierre would winter in the Bahamas and summer in Europe.

Not used to having time off, he turned his house at La Croix Valmer in the South of France into a Restaurant. He ran it each summer for a number of years. He was enticed back to Dublin in 1962 by Ken Besson who had opened the Old Conna Hill Hotel in Shankhill. The hotel did not stay open long and he reactivated his relationship with the Russell in Dublin. The Russell catered for all state banquets including that for John F.

Kennedy on his Irish visit (June 1963). He was also proud to have cooked for Charles de Gaulle. When the Egon Ronay Guide to Hotels and Restaurants covered Ireland for the first time in 1963, the Russell was awarded three stars, and described as ‘one of the best restaurants in the world’. When Rolland left in 1966, the ratings fell to two stars. In 1966 he cut his ties with the Bahamas and took up the position of Head Chef at the Hotel du Cap in Eden Roc, one of the most expensive hotels on the French Riviera. During this time he was awarded two Michelin stars. When the Michelin guide first covered Ireland in 1974, The Russell was the only restaurant in Dublin to be awarded a star under Matt Dowling who had worked his way up from apprentice under Rolland. Pierre’s son Henri (1937-2000), who trained under his father, ran the Restaurant Rolland in Killiney from 1970 to 1985. Pierre Rolland retired to La Croix Valmer and died on 28<sup>th</sup> December 1993. During his life Chef Rolland won the respect of all who worked under him, he won numerous awards and prizes in culinary competitions in Dublin and Torquay. He is remembered fondly in Dublin as one of the founding fathers of today’s thriving restaurant industry.

Frank Corr, *Hotels in Ireland* (1987); *Egon Ronay’s Restaurant Guides* (1963-1974); *Michelin Guide to Great Britain and Ireland* (1974); Panel of Chefs, Jubilee Stockpot 1958-1983 (1983); interviews with his daughter Mireille Doucette, his grandsons Alain and Phillippe, his former apprentices, Bill Ryan, Arthur Magee, Matt Dowling

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