

Edited Interview with Patrick Guilbaud in Restaurant Patrick Guilbaud (20/2/2008)

Máirtín Mac Con Iomaire (MM) Patrick Guilbaud (PG)

1. **MM:** So Patrick, When and where were you born?
2. **PG:** I was born in Suresnes on the outskirts of Paris but my family comes from Brittany, Brest my mother, Cognac, my father. I consider myself more a mixture of Breton and Cognac, but I only lived in Paris for ten years of so. I was born in 1952 (22 March) but my family moved then to Normandy, to Brest and then to Cognac, we moved around.
3. **MM:** How many was in the family?
4. **PG:** Chantalle, Issobel, Brigitte, four sisters and I, five in all and I was the second eldest
5. **MM:** What did your parents do?
6. **PG:** My father was an engineer in a company called Ferodo working with bricks or construction. My mother's family were in the restaurant business in Brest. She had always been involved, indirectly speaking, in the business.
7. **MM:** Did you do your schooling in Paris?
8. **PG:** I did my schooling in a place called Le Vallois in 1967 to 1969 when I was around fifteen, it was an aviation school. The story is that my mother and father divorced and since I was the only boy I had to stay with my dad and my sisters went to my mum. So when I finished school at fourteen I wanted to go to catering school but my father said absolutely not, you'll go and follow my footsteps and go to engineering school. That was not very successful (laugh).
9. **MM:** But you did want to go to catering school?
10. **PG:** Oh yes, of course, I wanted to stay in the trade, you know.
11. **MM:** Had you experience of it during the summers in your mother's
12. **PG:** We worked part time in families business, we used to help with the potatoes, clean the glasses, whatever had to be done, each summer. I never managed to go to catering school in the end because I was too old, so I decided to go to an apprenticeship in a restaurant in Paris called Ledoyen (2 or 3 star Michelin) in the kitchen around 1969-70. Then I went to the British Embassy in Paris, and I worked with Christopher Soames.
13. **MM:** How long did you stay in Ledoyen?
14. **PG:** I think I stayed the best part of eighteen months, the name of the proprietor was Lejeune, the chef I can't recall his name although I met him about two years ago in Paris. In that job the 'piano' (the solid top range) was operated by coal, but things changed very quickly after that.
15. **MM:** How did you get the job in the British Embassy?
16. **PG:** When I was doing my military service, they realised I was a chef and the Elysee Paris all the chefs go there to serve, and the guy said I can find you a place in the British Embassy if you like, and I said 'fine, I'll do that, no problem at all'.
17. **MM:** Was this part of your military service?

18. **PG:** No it wasn't. I only did a week of military service because I was sick and the military said that I was exempt so I did a week or three months, some very short period anyway, and then I started in the British Embassy as a helper. There is no grade in the Embassy, you do everything, the front of house, the kitchen, the washing up, everything.
19. **MM:** Were you on your own?
20. **PG:** No there was a big staff there, about ten, to do breakfast, dinner, parties when they had parties, do the floor – actually it is a very good thing to learn how to do, to dress, it is a completely different thing to do than the restaurant business. You receive the president of the French Republic, the Minister of England, it is like Buckingham Palace with a lot of protocol – how to serve them, it is very interesting. You are a 'valet de pied' and you do everything from the cooking to the floor. You did not do the bed, that is the only thing we didn't do.
21. **MM:** 'Valet de pied', that would be a footman? How long did you stay there?
22. **PG:** Yes a footman, I stayed there about a year or so and from there I went to Munich, Germany, in the Hotel Morzet. I wanted to learn German, which I didn't do (laugh), I went there to do open a new restaurant. I stayed in Germany for about a year, around six months in Munich and then six months in Berlin, where I did all kinds of stuff, I was wild (laugh) I can't remember half of it – I came back with no money (laugh).
23. **MM:** We all need those experiences (laugh), so what was your next step?
24. **PG:** Going back to Paris, I went to work in a restaurant called La Maree with Mr. Trompier, it was a very famous fish restaurant in Paris and I worked there for another year or eighteen months. I worked in the kitchen there and then I moved to the Midland Hotel in Manchester. I think that is what I did, did I work anywhere else?
25. **MM:** Well that would have you coming to Manchester in 1974 or so. What was the link with Manchester?
26. **PG:** Yes that is right, the British Embassy was the link with Manchester, they had asked me if I wanted to go to England to learn English that they would make arrangements. I can't remember the name of the fellow who was head of the 'valets de pied'.
27. **MM:** Was the Midland Hotel part of the railways?
28. **PG:** Yes, absolutely right, it was. 'You know your things'. I stayed in the Midland Hotel where I worked in the kitchen of the French Room which was the quality restaurant there, and there was so many people in the kitchens and the problem they had, which I discover with most hotels is really you cannot mix a good restaurant with a hotel, you just can't do it. Impossible to do, you have to do breakfast, parties and things, different *mis en place*, you can't monitor the quality. You can monitor some of it but not all of it. There was so many people, I only met the chef once there.
29. **MM:** Were you a *chef de partie* there?
30. **PG:** Yes, a *chef de partie*.
31. **MM:** It must be hard to be motivated in a place like that?
32. **PG:** Yes, so I moved from there after about eighteen months and moved to a restaurant called La Marmite in Manchester which I became the manager. It was a small French restaurant in Manchester.

33. **MM:** I was talking to Jean-Jacques (Caillabet), was that his restaurant at the time?
34. **PG:** Yes I worked for him there, I was his manager.
35. **MM:** This was your first front of house position in a restaurant, did you prefer being outside over the kitchen?
36. **PG:** It was very difficult for me to start with, because obviously I did not say to Jean-Jacques that I was a chef to start with, because I just wanted to try the front of house to see how it was, but it was a different world. It is difficult to move to the front when you work at the back of the kitchen. It is actually easier in the kitchen sometimes than the front of the house, I tell you, because some of the customers don't have a clue, but it was a great experience for me. I learn an awful lot how to deal with difficult situations and then when you go back into the kitchen you realize sometime you have to (hold your tongue). I could understand the frustration of the chef, but it was a very interesting situation for me.
37. **MM:** You were there for about a year and a half or so?
38. **PG:** Yes, that was '74, maybe around two years, I think I did well for him.
39. **MM:** I think he moved into a bigger restaurant after that, with a casino attached?
40. **PG:** Yes, you are correct, it was called *L'Elysee*, which I didn't want to move into so after that I opened my own restaurant called Le Rabelais in Alderley Edge and I stayed there from 1977 to 1980. Alderley Edge was in Cheshire near Nantwich and Winslow, it is where all the big stars from Manchester United lived – the Martin Edwards and those people. ICI was there. I went back into the kitchen, back cooking, and my wife Sally took over the front of the house, and we did well, we kept it for three or so years.
41. **MM:** And where is Sally from? Where did you meet her?
42. **PG:** She's Welsh, I met her when I was in the Midland Hotel, she worked for a company called Mary Quant (clothing and make up company). When we opened Le Rabelais, it was a very small operation; it was me in the kitchen, Sally in the front of house and with two waiters and a barman. I was on my own with a *commis* in the kitchen to start with and then we grow as business got better.
43. **MM:** How many seats?
44. **PG:** Funny enough I was thinking about that a couple of weeks ago, if I recall we had about fourteen tables of four, so fifty two seats, and at the weekend we used to do about one hundred and twenty so we turned the tables over a few times.
45. **MM:** So it was more like a Brasserie than trying to do *haute cuisine*?
46. **PG:** Yes, absolutely, I never tried to do anything to (fancy). It was a starting restaurant for us.
47. **MM:** Your next step after that was to come to Ireland, how did that happen? Why did you pick Ireland? What was the influence?
48. **PG:** It is very interesting, we had a customer called Barton Kilcoyne, who used to come to my restaurant in Alderley Edge, and Barton for some reason had a building business in Cheshire and when he came to the restaurant, he used to sign the bill. Because my restaurant was a small and we never had customers signing the bill, I asked my wife why the hell is this person signing the bill for? He would send a cheque at the end of the month and pay, you know. Anyway, one month,

then two months went by and no money came in and one day I went to see him and said 'excuse me Mr. Kilcoyne, but if you want to come to my restaurant you will have to pay the bill', and Barton said 'I'm terribly sorry, I thought my secretary did that for me, so next time I go to Dublin I will send the cheque straight away', which he did. So we became friends after that, and he said 'why don't you come to Dublin and see what is going on', and we went to Ireland on vacation in 1979 or 1980 and I said to Sally 'I think this would be a very nice place to live'. Anyhow, it is very funny because the 1970s and early 1980s in England, it was booming because Margaret Thatcher, and I didn't realise that Ireland would not be following things, and I was very confident. Barton sold me the site on Baggot Street and we built on it. Also, Barton had introduced me to a fantastic man called Arthur Gibney who was an architect and I spoke to Arthur and said that if I come to Ireland I want you to design a restaurant for me and I do not want a restaurant which is going to be stuffy, I want space, I want you to create me a space where people are going to be comfortable. At the time I never thought it was going to be a Michelin star restaurant. My aim was to open a restaurant which I would like to go and eat in. That was my aim, I always felt that goal in a restaurant was to buy the best ingredients you can and then cook them as simple as possible, to make them interesting for the customer to eat. And everything evolved around that, we built up a reputation around the things. No people to start with said that we were *nouvelle cuisine*, but we were never *nouvelle cuisine*. They thought we were *nouvelle cuisine* because the portions were smaller because if you went to a restaurant in Ireland in the 1980s or 1970s there was an immense amount of food on the plates. (laugh)

49. **MM:** I call it the PHD of food, the Pile High and Deep (laugh), you wouldn't know whether to eat it or climb it (laugh)!!!
50. **PG:** Pile High and Deep (laugh) exactly, so when I say, I was never trained like that, so I only did what I used to do.
51. **MM:** But this was effectively the first purpose built restaurant in Dublin and probably in a lot of other places too?
52. **PG:** I would say it was the first purpose built restaurant in any European capital city because you could not do it in Paris or London, there is no room, Brussels, Madrid, Rome, they are all city so you can't find a place like that, I'm sure somebody did it, but you know, that was my dream. To open a restaurant, to design it with the help of Arthur, and build it in a capital city, that was a great carrot for me.
53. **MM:** And you were still very young, you were twenty nine or so?
54. **PG:** Yes, I was twenty nine, I was young. I sold my restaurant in England very well, I made good money on that, so I was quite well off if you like, in some ways for someone who was twenty nine years old. But that went very quickly, all my money, I kept some aside but most of it went into the business.
55. **MM:** Was Guillaume (Lebrun) with you from the very start in Dublin?
56. **PG:** He was a *commis* at the time, I had a chef working for me who was my number two in England, when *Le Rabelais* grew into a bigger restaurant the staff also grew, so the number two came with me, his name was Mark... I'm going senile with the names, he was French and only lasted for eighteen months and then he went to America. My idea was that I would go back into the kitchen, but I was speaking with my wife about it and she said 'Patrick, for you to go back', because Sally was not working in the restaurant at the time, she had my little daughter, we had my son already and she was minding them, and she said 'for you to go back to kitchen is to go backwards, you need to project yourself forward'. She was clever in that, so I needed to find a chef and I had a look around in my kitchen and I saw Guillaume, which to me was the man who had the most potential to become a great chef. He was very good at sauces.

57. **MM:** Where did Guillaume come from?
58. **PG:** *Lenôtre* (Gaston Lenôtre's famous Paris restaurant) in Paris, and I made a deal with Guillaume, I said if you want to be the chef here you need to involve yourself in the business. He was very young at the time, and he said 'sure, we'll do that' and he changed his feelings and became the chef and he has been the chef ever since, and a partner as well, both himself and Stefan (Robin) are partners.
59. **MM:** Was Stefan with you also from the beginning?
60. **PG:** No, Stefan came around five years later.
61. **MM:** Your first few years here were hard enough, weren't they?
62. **PG:** The first ten years here were really difficult, because it was a difficult time, we had huge interest rates, up to 24% interest rates, forget about that, you know.
63. **MM:** You had bought the site from Barton Kilcoyne, did Barton have a share in the business? Did you need a strong cash flow to operate?
64. **PG:** And the building was mine as well, Barton had 25% in the business. Barton didn't contribute any cash flow whatsoever, none, not a penny. I put in all the money, so that was a fact, but then I think it was in 1984 or maybe 1986 we were in trouble because we couldn't pay our VAT and things and the tax was very high at the time, we used to be spending nearly 80% in tax, it was crazy stuff. It was a very difficult time, and we had tough time, so I had to bring another partner in, and that's where Loughlin Quinn and Martin Naughton from Glen Dimplex got in and they bought Barton out.
65. **MM:** So they bought Barton's shares out?
66. **PG:** Practically, but not all of it, they bought some of my shares and some of Barton's out and they reduced the borrowings. They cleared the bank out basically and that was a huge help to us as we don't have the bank on your back. It helped get me over the tax problem, because when you pay 24% interest in the bank on borrowings, it is a lot of money every month, but because it took that out, that was a great help to the business. Now I want to be serious about that, they only put the money in at the start, but I never touched a penny, we cleared the most of the bank debt, that was a great help to us, but since then they didn't put a penny in. Just to make sure because some people think they were like a fairy godmother to us (laugh). I think it is very unfair on them people thinking that, it is a very solvent business, we do it ourselves here. But, I must say, it was psychological to believe that people of the caliber of Loughlin and Martin Naughton trust you. They were good customers at the time and I remember them saying will with come in with you, we will own 25% or what ever it was at the time of the business, we are there, you can come and speak to us if you want at any time, but the only thing we ask you to do is not to drop the quality. We want your restaurant to always try to be the best you can. So that was a great help, (great for confidence).
67. **MM:** Well someone of that standing to show faith in you and to demand you keep the quality must have been reassuring?
68. **PG:** (pointing to the brain) Up there it was great.
69. **MM:** Your first Egon Ronay star came in 1983, the first Good Food Guide award came in 1983, you opened up a business in Baggot Street next door to Doheny & Nesbitts pub, you opened up a *traiteur* (delicatessen) in 1985, was that only for a year or so?

70. **PG:** We had a great idea, we had bought the building there and changed it completely and put a *traiteur* in, but it is all about management, and that was a big lesson to me, we had the wrong person in there.
71. **MM:** Around that time too, you started doing ready meals for Quinnsworth when they opened in Merrion Centre. Did you need a factory for that?
72. **PG:** No, we did it from the back of the shop, it was very good that, a very good product, today it would be working great, people do it now on a big scale. That closed when the *traiteur* closed. At the same time my mother came over and got involved in Matt the Thrasher's. She had remarried with my father in law, Jacques, and she retired from the business in France and she was bored to death and wanted to come and do something. Then Tony Ryan came to see me and said we want to do something with Matt the Thrasher's in Limerick and will I come in with him to do it? It was doing badly at the time and I put things together with my mum and they stayed for about eighteen months or so.
73. **MM:** Your sister also had a place in Powerscourt Town House Centre for a while?
74. **PG:** Isabel came with me when we opened the restaurant and she worked for about five years and we split company, she was too impatient, and she opened a restaurant, I can't remember what it was called, and she discovered that running a business is not the same as working for someone else. She admitted that herself.
75. **MM:** Had you a loyal staff or did people move quite a bit? Marc Amand stayed with you for about five years?
76. **PG:** I have staff that stayed with me for long period of time, Marc Amand was my number two, he was a good lad, he worked his way up to number two. You would have to talk to Guillaume about the kitchen staff.
77. **MM:** I remember hearing you talk before about difficulty in getting ingredients when you moved here first?
78. **PG:** There was nothing there, in 1981 I used to go to the market every morning and carrots, cabbage, onions, potatoes, and even the potatoes were more soil in the bag than potatoes (laugh). It was very lacking in fruit, in the early 80s the vegetable market was nothing.
79. **MM:** How did you get over that? Did you have to start importing stuff?
80. **PG:** We asked the guys, some of the guys were very receptive in the market, the Giles and that. I used to say will you bring some fucking new stuff in, we need to have shallots at least and we need to have herbs, and they did. To be fair to them they did, I think they made a lot of money out of it which is great.
81. **MM:** Ireland is renowned for its fish, were you using the French man, Raymond, who used to bring the fish up from Cork for all the top restaurants?
82. **PG:** We used to go to the fish market at first but Guillaume used to say it was useless because you needed to buy a 100kg of fish or a mixture of fish. I think Raymond is still around but we don't work with him any more. We work with Wrights of Howth now and we used to buy whole turbot and sea bream in the market but now things are much better, you can buy nearly anything you want, to a limit. We used to bring our *foie gras* from France and our cheese from France which is funny when you think about it today. It's incredible, my supplier used to phone me from France to say our cheese was on the way, they would put a lump of *foie gras* in the middle, the airport people didn't have a clue what it was, and we go to customs and you get your invoice and you would have to go back to Nassau Street to have it stamped and then back to the airport to

collect it (laugh), I mean crazy stuff, this was all the time, the bureaucracy, the amount of time it took, so you can imagine it was just as well I didn't go back into the kitchen.

83. When we first started doing the cheeseboard, every restaurant in Ireland that did a cheeseboard had wrapped cheese (laugh) portions of wrapped cheese (MM: calvita and easy singles - laugh) and I spoke to the fellow from the Mirabeau, Seán Kinsella, and he said 'Patrick, forget the cheeseboard, you will lose your shirt on the cheese', but I said that I was going to do a proper cheeseboard.
84. MM: On that subject, when you arrived first, who was the main competition?
85. PG: The *Coq Hardi* was the big name at time, John Howard and that was it I suppose, The *Mirabeau* was finishing. I would say we changed the attitude of a few people when we opened.
86. MM: Then Colin O'Daly opened around 1984 or so?
87. PG: Yes and then Whites on the Green opened around 1986 with Michael Clifford who had worked in Arbutus Lodge. Whites on the Green opened because the property market was going slow and they had the property so they opened a restaurant. They were never restaurateurs.
88. MM: On a smaller scale, Jean Jacques Caillabet had come to Cork and opened up the *Café de Paris*, a type of Brasserie type of place. When you think about it, he was too far ahead of his time because that is exactly what Fallon & Byrne, and Venu and all these places are doing now, but the market wasn't there for it then.
89. PG: You know for Brasseries you need to have young people, older people and younger people, a mixture of people coming in to eat. In Ireland in the '80s going out to eat was very expensive, so the concept of going out to eat cheap food in a restaurant, people didn't know. Either you had a bit of money and you went anywhere, or you had no money and didn't go anywhere. It was either McDonalds or Guilbaud's (laugh). It is why restaurants opened like Jean Jacques (*Les Frères Jacques*) which is a very good restaurant, a very local restaurant.
90. MM: Your customers when you opened must have been the elite, the business men, did the business entertainment tax relief change affect you much?
91. PG: I think it happened fairly soon after I arrived in 1983 or 1987 so did it make a difference to the business? It must have done, I can't remember but it must have done. To me the biggest concern was that the VAT was far too high, the taxation on the restaurant on staff, on profit, was so high that it was practically impossible, how we managed to do it, I do not know.
92. MM: VAT on food changed from around 24% down to 10% and that was a big change but still on the wine it was around 27% or so, it was ridiculous.
93. PG: But there was also a duty on wine, and I just think that people here binge drink because they might not be able to afford it tomorrow. The taxation on wine here is too high anyway.
94. MM: When the first Michelin star came in 1989, was it a big moment for you?
95. PG: Oh, yeah, it was a huge moment for us because it did bring us back. We had a very tough time in the '80s and the restaurant was very steady doing business, but very tough, the margins very small and the taxation very high, and interest rates were high, so for us when the Michelin star arrived it was very important, not for me, but for my staff and partners because 'yes, we are doing something right'. I think we were the only one in Ireland at the time, defiantly the only one in Dublin. (note: In 1989 the Park Hotel and the Sheen Falls, both in Kenmare also won a Michelin star. But in 1991 and 1992 Guilbaud's was the only Michelin star in the Republic of Ireland; Roscoff in Belfast also had a star those years). It was something that was very important

for the restaurant; it was like a consecration or something, if you like. The staff had been working very hard to try and achieve things, my partners were very delighted to be partners with us with a Michelin star, which said we'd arrived and that was good. And also for the customer, for the Irish customer to realise that maybe they were supporting a restaurant that was worth supporting.

96. **MM:** Success breeds success, if you are perceived to be successful, people like to be associated with you. Stefan was with you by this stage?
97. **PG:** Stefan arrived around in 1985-86.
98. **MM:** So from then on you have had a very solid back bone of staff in all key departments? Is there anyone who has worked with you that you who you considered to be outstanding and went on to be successful elsewhere?
99. **PG:** Marc Amand, he was a very determined man with a great knowledge of product. In front of house I had a fellow called Charles Derain who left us around a year ago having been our sommelier for ten years, he has his own business now in wine, but if he had stayed he could have become one of the best sommeliers in the world. An outstanding guy. That was in the past, I can't speak about the present, but Laurant Steraud who has gone to America now was a very outstanding manager in the front of house.
100. **MM:** What percentage of your staff would have been French and what percentage would have been Irish? Was it always a mix?
101. **PG:** I think on average since we started here in the restaurant we'd have about forty staff. We'd have about fifteen Irish, twenty French, and five of different nationalities.
102. **MM:** Did you feel there was a good enough quality of Irish people coming through or was there a difficulty in getting Irish people of the right attitude?
103. **PG:** I think the Irish people do not want to serve, we tried but we can't find a good Irish front of house manager, good Irish waiters, they don't want to do it, it is not their thing, they don't feel it is the job for them. Otherwise, it is difficult to find good Irish people (for the dining room). Back in the kitchen, a lot more Irish people, which is great.
104. **MM:** Penny (Plunkett) stayed with you for a long time. Was she one of the first women to work in your kitchen?
105. **PG:** Penny stayed a long time, she is in Venu now. She is great, she is fantastic. Penny was outstanding as well. Penny was one of the first women to work in the kitchen, she was outstanding, she was tough, and she is still working for us in Venu.
106. **MM:** Did you notice more women coming into the kitchens in the last ten years or so?
107. **PG:** Yes, it did, my feeling in the catering industry is we all know it's a very tough business, because the unsociable hours, the pressure of the work, so I always say to my chef, Guillaume, you must try to treat your staff as well as possible, do not be rude to them, be hard and tough but fair. That is the thing we must always be, and it drives me absolutely demented when I see a television programme like The F Word because, ok, he promotes the business, I agree with you there, I have no problem with that, but he really does nothing to attract young people, which is terribly sad. I think I have always worked all my life to try and bring respectability to the kitchen and the restaurant business, to try and make sure that when you go to the bank, if you are a restaurant people, they will say 'oh yes, we know your restaurant, we will loan you money'. All these guys, what they are doing is they are taking everything away, the credibility of the business is going rapidly, it is fine for five minutes but after a while it is absolutely crazy. It drives me absolutely mad, it is a disaster for the restaurant business, you know.

108. I had a customer in the restaurant who asked me 'can I go into your kitchen, is it chef swearing?', and I say 'what do you mean?' In the kitchen we have seventeen staff, nobody speaks, they are all working, the chef is the only person who speaks and there is shouting at things, you know.
109. **MM:** What prompted you to move from Baggot Street to the premises in which we are now in the Merrion Hotel?
110. **PG:** Well, space, the address. First thing is we had a beautiful building where we were there off Baggot Street in the purpose built restaurant, which was fantastic. This is a purpose restaurant by the way except for the front two rooms, but the kitchen and the restaurant are purpose built. I think why we moved here is that Loughlin Quinn and Martin Naughton were involved in the hotel next door, in The Merrion, but I said to Loughlin and Martin at the time if they wanted us to move here we would do it on three conditions: (a) we are completely independent from the hotel (b) we have our own front door, and (c) we have our own kitchen, because what I said to you before about hotels. And we are all not involved at all with what is happening in your hotel, but at the same time you can use our name to promote your hotel if like, because in the early days that was important to them, you can use our name with your PR and that there is an established restaurant in your hotel, so that was the deal.
111. So what happened then is that it made Guillaume and Stefan bigger partners in the restaurant, it was better for them in the long run. They could buy a more shareholding in the business, Guillaume and Stefan, Loughlin and Martin reduced their shareholding, I stayed as I was and Barton was gone.
112. **MM:** So the deal was, the carrot was that for a reduction in their shareholding you did them a favour by bringing the business and the prestige associated with it here to their new hotel? Did the second star come here or before?
113. **PG:** No that came before (we moved).
114. **MM:** You were building up, like Mary Swanzy, a collection of art. Was that your interest or was it Loughlin and Martin's?
115. **PG:** That was Loughlin, Martin and I. The three of us worked together very hard on that. Most of the art in the restaurant is owned by the two boys, I have a few, the business has a few, but art today is very expensive to buy.
116. **MM:** What I'm saying is that two things, first the building in Baggot Street and second the art on the wall was rising in value all the time even if business wasn't that great, so it was a good investment. Because there is a great Harry Kernoff picture of Jammet's hanging in the bar.
117. **PG:** I bought that for a thousand punts in 1982 or 83, which was a lot of money at the time and I had to pay for it out of my money because the business could not afford to buy it.
118. **MM:** Well it was a good investment because he is starting to be appreciated now, Harry Kernoff, but it is the type of thing you would not want to sell anyway because of the historic link with Jammet's, it's great.
119. You saw a change happening in the 1990s with Kevin Thornton, Alan O'Reilly, Colin O'Daly made a name for himself first, and later the Commons opened up and later then Conrad Gallagher starts opening up?
120. **PG:** Well that was fantastic, Ireland is moving in the right direction, it is fabulous to see the number of new chefs coming through, this guy from Mint – McGrath, and Thornton as well, and Derry Clarke in *l'Ecrivain* and Chapter One and Ross Lewis. A capital city of the caliber of

Dublin should have more good restaurants. I know it's tough but two things, the product are good and the cheffing is even better, which is great. I mean this is a great asset, it is fantastic.

121.MM: You opened up a bakery at one stage, when did that happen?

122.PG: That was in the mid 1990s. It burnt down but we rebuilt in Finglas, it is still going but I sold out, I own the property but I don't own the business any more. Olivier owns the business now.

123.MM: Was it the same with *Maison de Gourmet*, did you sell out of that as well when you invested in Venu?

124.PG: That's right. I would say that the biggest challenge to the catering industry is going to face today is the EU law on hygiene, the HACCP, because it is something we need to learn about, but it is also something we need to control a bit better, I think it has gone over the top. We don't want to loose product, I think the product for us, we must get very good product, and the more these guys interfere with the product, the less quality we are going to get, we are going to all the same kind of bland stupid product which have no taste.

125.MM: So you are talking really about the idea of un-pasteurised cheese and this kind of stuff?

126.PG: I don't understand why we can't have un-pasteurised cheese, just tell me why, it is crazy stuff. Is it because somebody gets sick some time? We have to build up our immune system. My mother is eighty three and she never gets sick, and she explains it by saying 'I don't wash five times a day like you' (laugh), it is stupid but true, she has a shower maybe three times a week and that is it, she washes her face and that but we have to develop our immune system a bit better than we are doing. On the one hand, we obviously have to control the product without destroying the product, on the other hand we have to build up our immune system to cope with these things otherwise we are going to have product on the market that are all the same and which taste all the same. That is why I say when I go to America I say the food tastes rubbish because the it tastes of nothing, just generic food.

127.MM: Would you describe the food in the restaurant as French food or modern Irish food?

128.PG: It is Guillaume's and my food, people say we are French, of course we are French, I am born in France so is Guillaume and Stefan, but Guillaume is here twenty eight years and he is only forty four, he is living longer here than he did in France, in his family he has two sons and a daughter and is married to an Irish lady, he is bound to have Irish ideas and so his food is modern Irish, I don't like the term modern Irish because it means nothing. His food his food, it is Guillaume's food. It is the way Guilbaud's is designed it is the restaurant's food. It is a mixture of French and Irish, because the product is local product, we try and work with local product. When we can't find it, we find it in France or wherever we can find it, but what we are trying to do is what we think is alright for the food, not stupid things, today the big fad is foam, foam everywhere. The most important thing about a restaurant business, that is my opinion, is that the customer comes to you, they eat your food and when they leave they say 'I'm going to go back'. The rest is completely irrelevant, you could have five star or three star, if nobody comes to you it is of no relevance. At the same time you must do what you feel is right when you are a chef. You must create your own personality in the kitchen and in your restaurant. So you need to balance the two, you can't be open to all, criticism is very good, I always welcome criticism in the restaurant, I will always listen, ok maybe he has a point, let's try and work on this one, or sometime I say 'no this is very stupid', so you have to balance what is a successful restaurant. What I would judge Guilbaud's at is that we have been here twenty seven years and we are still one of the top restaurants in Ireland and we try to be as good as we can be all of the time and we renew ourselves all of the time. Why do we renew ourselves all of the time? We have new blood coming in every eighteen months in the restaurant. We change our staff; we let them go after eighteen months, except the top guys. This brings new blood into the restaurant all the time, it is very tough on the

top guys, Guillaume and Stefan because they have to keep training the new guys, but it is so good for them because it keeps them fresh. He will speak to the new guys and get new ideas and that is why I think we are always fresh with new ideas. I know sometimes that customers complain because we have new staff and they don't know me, I think it is the best thing.

Discussion about the waiters in Snaffles years ago who were there for twenty years.

129.MM: What is your ambition now? I know this is outside my research area (the year 2000)

130.PG: I would always like to go for my third star, I know I would be disappointed if I did not achieve it in my life, but I might not achieve it. I would love to get three stars. I would love to bring Ireland, to bring Dublin a three star Michelin. That would be great. My big problem is now that I am not getting younger, and the problem of getting three stars is you have to keep it. I would hate to see three stars for one year and then to become two stars again, so sometimes I do not worry about it too much.

131.MM: It would be the cherry on the cake!

132.PG: Correct yes, but also for Guillaume and Stefan, it would be fantastic to see them awarded three stars because they deserve it, the guys are working so hard in the business and all my staff are great, and through the years all the staff who have worked here, the Penny's and the Marc Amand's, all those guys that have contributed to the restaurant, all the guys who have worked here over the last twenty five years, some of them were bad, 90% of them were good, and I can say with my hand on my heart that most of my staff who have been working here will have good memories of Guilbaud. Very few will have bad memory of Guilbaud and that to me is something.

133.MM: That is a good thing to be proud of and on that note I'll thank you very much for your time.

134.PG: My pleasure.

End of Interview