



With participants of *The Restaurant*



Blanc's restaurant and hotel Le Manoir aux Quat'Saisons



Chef Raymond Blanc

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Michelin-starred French chef RAYMOND BLANC'S TV show, THE RESTAURANT, promises the same pleasant irreverence as the dishes he whips up

Anyone who has watched *The Restaurant* on BBC Entertainment will agree that chef Raymond Blanc is as close as you can get to the idea of a fairy godmother in the food industry. Himself a mentor to over 20 high-profile chefs now spread all over the world (including the famous Heston Blumenthal; his protégés command, between them, over 35 Michelin Stars), the master cook owns the celebrated Le Manoir aux Quat'Saisons, the Brasseries Blanc, and was awarded an OBE in 2007 by the Queen of his adopted country, England. "Not bad for a little French man who arrived in Britain with absolutely nothing!" his website paraphrases. But these aren't the only reasons Blanc finds himself in a commanding position these days. At a time when cookery shows have taken over primetime soaps, Blanc's *The Restaurant* stands apart.

Not one to ferret away his recipes or hide his methods (the irony—he's a French chef), Blanc believes in sharing and encouraging

talent. Maybe this has to do with the fact that he himself never had any formal training and learned much from his mother, the famous Maman Blanc. But whatever his reasons, participants on his show, *The Restaurant*, possibly benefit more than those competing on other, less benevolent series. The final prize for the winning couple is a restaurant of their own, and an opportunity to go into business with Blanc himself.

With its third season on air in India since last month, *The Restaurant* is the broadcast parallel to Blanc's life. Nine couples with little or no restaurant experience compete for the top prize, all the while learning on the job. "In any show that I may do, I would always want to pass down good values. Such series should not be about being abusive and sensationalist," says the restaurateur.

As a chef, he lays emphasis on respecting food, especially foodstuff vis-à-vis the environment, ethical methods of production, seasons, localities and local produce, the heritage and traditions of particular areas, and



Blanc's chocolate mousse

modern methods of cooking to increase efficiency. "You shall waste not," he admonishes on the phone from London, where, at the time, he was busy with Le Festival aux Quat'Saisons, a yearly culinary and cultural extravaganza, now in its 20th year.

While he has never been to India, he admits to having had two Indian amours—one a Bengali beauty whose ambi-jhinga he remembers fondly, the other a pretty Punjabi who gave him a penchant for Indian spices. "I am very familiar with Indian cooking, and love it all. I even have over 50 Indian chefs working with me in my various restaurants," he says. "I would love to host a show in India." We hope he gets to, and join prayers with budding chefs from across the country. ■

Raymond Blanc's The Restaurant airs every Tuesdays at 8P.M., all through November, on BBC Entertainment.

By Varun Rana