



No Need to Cross the Seine For Cyril Lignac's Bar des Prés

After the original in Saint-Germain-des-Prés and an address in London, the French chef is bringing his crudo-centric eatery to Paris' Right Bank. BY LILY TEMPLETON

Bar des Prés Montaigne was decorated by Studio KO, who have been collaborating with the French chef for two decades.



Cyril Lignac



Here and right: Bar des Prés



Fans of Cyril Lignac's cuisine, rejoice. The French chef and TV personality is set to put the traditional rivalry between the two sides of the Seine to bed with the opening of a new outpost of his crudo-centric Bar des Prés on Paris' Right Bank. "When I found this spot on Rue Bayard, there were many in the area who are already my clients in Saint-Germain-des-Prés and it would save people from having to cross Paris, because traffic is a bit complicated now," he says.

Now they won't have to brave rush hour and crossing bridges for his cuisine that plays on a menu of fish, seasonal produce and flavor-packed seasonings, with the opening of its latest address this week.

A stone's throw from tony Avenue Montaigne, with Dior, Chanel and Loewe among its closest neighbors, the Bar des Prés is the third of its kind after the 2021 opening of a second one on London's Albemarle Street in Mayfair.

For Montaigne's 36-seat eatery, which will have another 22 spots on its terrace come warmer days, the chef once more called on Paris-based architectural practice Studio KO.

"We started together 20 years ago. They weren't well-known – and neither was I," he says. Not only have they designed the first Bar des Prés in 2016 and its recent

renovation, as well as his five pastry shops, but they also designed Lignac's apartment.

"And that's important because if I ask them to do my apartment, it's that I absolutely love what they do," he says.

The idea was not to clone the initial Bar des Prés, which opened eight years ago, but to give it a remake. "I wanted a chic restaurant, somewhere elegant, comfortable, of the moment, light," he says of the brief. "A place where you can come eat every day and feel good, casual."

From the street, the midnight blue façade stands out against the sandstones hues of the building and offers a glimpse of golden light inside.

Warm tones dominate the interior, from the long yellow Italian marble counter and the mahogany wall paneling to rattan light fixtures and even the embroidered peacock fabric that dresses the plush seating.

The floor's electric blue leopard carpet brings a touch of whimsy and finds an echo

in a fresco by French painter Soazig Héaulme, an atmospheric depiction of the sea that draws the eye.

On the plates – signed by the likes of former PR-turned-ceramic artist Fabienne Rossi or Burgundy-based ceramist duo Les Guimards – expect a continuation of Lignac's Saint-Germain-des-Prés culinary signatures that have made him a popular choice with the fashion set.

There will be the just-seared yellowtail with a ponzu sauce and a dash of spicy oil, the luscious "chutoro" cut of tuna with a jalapeño vinaigrette or a crispy cracker topped with crab seasoned

with Madras curry and avocado.

"What I like in Bar des Prés is working around raw ingredients, so a cuisine around fish and vegetables, and around vinaigrettes, condiments and infusions that I use to bring flavor," he explains.

For this Frenchman born in the southern city of Rodez, the art of crudo evokes first and foremost Mediterranean cuisine, encompassing dishes found along the French, Italian and Greek coastlines. "It's really the culture of this whole basin which you can hear in my accent, no matter how much I try to hide it," he jokes.

There's a dash of Japanese influences, owing to his passion for the country, and other influences come to play as well, as his cuisine hinges on his curiosity. "I like to eat, taste, travel," Lignac says.

That doesn't mean one has to pack a bag and fly off to faraway destinations. "What's wonderful is that today, in a multicultural city like Paris, there are

people who have come to live in France with all their knowledge and traditions," he says, confessing a love for Indian food as an off-duty meal. "And that's magical because you have the opportunity to eat all this without having to travel."

The result in his hands is an international cuisine that appeals equally to locals and the fashion set, who flock to Lignac's "light, delicate, silky" lineup of dishes, as he puts it.

Right now, as spring brings the first asparagus and strawberries to his kitchen, the chef confesses to a fondness for citron, the bumpy citrus known in French as cédrat. The one used at Bar des Prés arrives straight from a producer in Corsica, its juicy pulp extracted after picking.

Hearing him talk about how he'd dressed a scallop carpaccio with it, some grapeseed oil and a dash of sesame oil is mouthwatering.

And Bar des Prés Montaigne diners might be the first to experience his next project: a sorbet of sudachi, a rare small green sour citrus akin to a lime.

The opening of these latest addresses also formalizes a new chapter for Bar des Prés as a brand in its own right. Each of the restaurants will now get its location tacked onto its moniker – Montaigne, Mayfair and Saint-Germain.

And Lignac is ready to take it abroad again soon, with Dubai as the next destination, a project the independent restaurateur is developing with the support of a local partner.

"It's a template," he says. "It would work on the Mediterranean, on the Riviera, even in Rome – we could a Bar des Prés anywhere."