

Speech at the dinner “Goût de France”, Le Méridien 21 March 2019

Dear Guests, dear Hosts and Chefs,

“Eating is a necessity, but cooking is an art”, as the saying goes. And tonight we are here to celebrate the art of cooking à la française, the French gastronomy.

Goût de France/Good France is a gourmet festival celebrating our gastronomy across the world. The event started its journey in 2014, upon an idea of the Chef Alain Ducasse. It now represents thousands of festive "French" dinners organized across five continents, and numerous gourmet initiatives throughout France. It is an opportunity for Chefs to showcase our gastronomy, offering “French-style” menus around the world on the same day. I want to thank all the Chefs and restaurants associated with this initiative, and to thank particularly warmly our host tonight Le Méridien and its Chef, our gourmet friend Austen Reid.

Gastronomy is indeed one of the pillars of France’s attractiveness to tourists. Nearly a third of tourists say that they visit our country for its culinary heritage. The uniqueness of French cuisine, the wide range of local products and the inscription of the “Gastronomic Meal of the French” on the UNESCO List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity, all help France to stay at the top of tourism destinations. Good France promotes the excellence of this expertise. People from all over the world come to us for our cuisine. But tonight our cuisine comes to you! And with a specific touch : sustainability.

Tonight in over 150 countries, in restaurants and French embassies, Chefs will propose their vision of a dinner celebrating sustainable cuisine. That is “A menu for the planet”: each menu will feature dishes that are low in fat, sugar and salt, and reflect our shared concern for good food and the environment. Indeed this year, the Good France theme is “responsible and environmentally conscious cuisine”. Saving the environment and preventing climate change is an issue of survival. If we fail to understand it, the young generation has decided to hammer that truth internationally on Fridays. Governments, Individuals, Organisations, we need to come together and join hands to protect our planet.

Through this ‘green’ edition of Good France we reaffirm our commitment to sustainable development and outline the many aspects of environmental protection. This is why Taste of / Good France has chosen to support, for this 5th edition, the "No More Plastic" Foundation.

I look forward to share this dinner (“casser la croûte”), so, with no further ado, let’s have a taste of France, goût de/good France. Allow me also to hand over this “diploma” to Austen Reid and thank him and his team heartily on your and my behalf.