



L'Art Pour L'Art

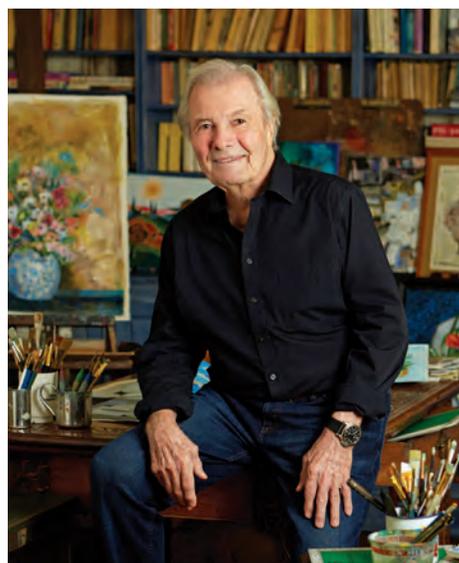
Fall 2022



Culinary Genius and the Artistry of Jacques Pépin



The Peter Michael Foundation was honored to partner with acclaimed chef Jacques Pépin to host the Stars New York experience in 2019 at Wild Ink at Hudson Yards. The restaurant's talented team did an Asian-inspired take on a traditional Pépin menu. Jacques's art was featured on the menu, which at the end of the evening, auctioned for \$7,000 along with his stained chef's jacket.



Jacques Pépin, the most beloved French chef in America, has been cooking for seventy years. He is as relevant to today's culinary culture as he was in the 1990s when PBS first aired the Emmy Award-winning *Julia and Jacques Cooking at Home* television series from KQED in San Francisco.

Jacques received a Lifetime Achievement Emmy in 2019. He has also won twenty-four James Beard Foundation awards in recognition of his ongoing talents and achievements in the culinary arts, hospitality, and media, and has written thirty-one cookbooks, many of which have become instant best sellers.

During the COVID-19 lockdown, more than one million new fans started following Jacques's laid-back style of quick cooking tips on Facebook, taped in the kitchen of his Connecticut home.

Jacques is eighty-six years old, and the camera still loves him. Handsome, with a sparkle in his eye and a wit that occasionally leans to the charmingly naughty

side, Jacques doesn't take himself too seriously, which is probably what makes him so lovable.

When it comes to cooking, Jacques has led a very public life. It's his quieter side that people are just beginning to understand, because in this quiet time, Jacques paints. He says it makes him feel a bit freer.

"When I cook, people analyze what I do and look at me more as a professional teacher. But when I paint, I don't have to prove anything. There's no pressure. What comes out, comes out," he says.

Jacques began painting in the 1960s after he moved from France to New York City to work in the restaurant business. He enrolled at Columbia University to improve his language skills by taking courses in English for foreign students. An elective in painting lured him in, and that summer, he and four friends rented a house in Upstate New York, where they refinished furniture—not unusual for Jacques, whose father was a cabinetmaker. Then he built a stone wall and renovated a bathroom, and throughout the summer, he painted.



ABOVE: Reunion, 2013, acrylic on canvas,
11 x 14 in (28 x 36 cm).

Menu March 19, 2013

7



au public
tout au
Retour de Péris
Michel

Menu Mars 19, 113
Cuis pressé tranquille
La soupe des salades des chinois
Le Meplat de Cornes aux fruits et
Salade aux noix
Purée de butternut squash
Les légumes de Cornes
Fruits secs, fèves et dets

Blanc:
Chevagny 2011
Cornes La Geynule 2005
Produit Michel.
E



For Jacques, **COOKING** and **PAINTING** are both **SIMILAR** and **DIFFERENT**.

“I like working with my hands,” Jacques says. And indeed, whether tiling a shower stall, preparing a classic rotisserie chicken, or creating an impressionistic landscape, Jacques feels most comfortable when he’s doing something with his hands. “Certain trades, like cooking, painting, sculpting, being a surgeon, mason, or jeweler, require a great deal of skill and manual dexterity,” he adds.

“In the kitchen, I tend to emphasize the technique of cooking,” Jacques says. “I am much more a technician in cooking than in painting. I’ve never really learned painting in a professional or organized way, and I don’t try to tie it into one style.”

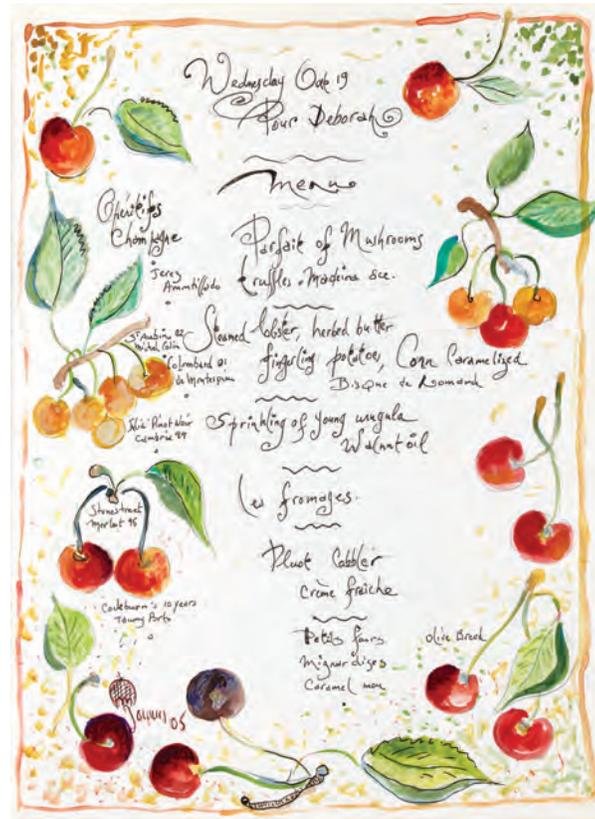
For Jacques, cooking and painting are both similar and different.

“The visual is very important in cooking,” he says. “You make a beautiful meal and enjoy it with special people, and then it’s gone. The only thing left is food memory.”

“I started to paint to capture memories of meals with people who are special to me,” he says. A sentimental and gentle man, he seems surprised at the current demand for his artwork. His hand-created menus were some of his earliest works, and he still makes them to commemorate meals with friends and family or sometimes as a gift for a celebrity dinner he prepares. The borders are colorful, the courses handwritten, and in Jacques’s personal scrapbooks, you can see menus annotated by appreciative guests.

After donating some artwork to a charity auction and being stunned by the prices people paid, Jacques began creating limited-edition giclée prints to make the images affordable to more of his fans. His online gallery, *The Artistry of Jacques Pépin*, is a collection of acrylics, oils, and watercolors in impressionistic and contemporary styles. And then there are his lighthearted chickens, which appear frequently throughout the collection.

OPPOSITE: *Menu*; March 19, 2013; acrylics, markers, and pen on paper; 11 x 14 in (28 x 36 cm). | ABOVE: *Chefs Color*, 2018, acrylic on paper, 18 x 12 in (46 x 30 cm).



*He **BEGAN COOKING** as an apprentice at the **AGE OF THIRTEEN**, and his **MANY ACHIEVEMENTS** include serving as the **PERSONAL CHEF** for Charles de Gaulle, the former president of France.*

In fact, Jacques’s thirty-second book, called *The Art of the Chicken*, is scheduled to come out September 2022, and combines art, stories, and “kitchen talk” about chickens. It’s not a recipe book, although he touches on the ways his favorite chefs have worked, “like the special way my mother cooked chicken back in our home near Lyon and the different ways Julia [Child] approached her chicken recipes.”

Jacques has plenty of stories from his past. After all, he began cooking as an apprentice at the age of thirteen, and his many achievements include serving as the personal chef for Charles de Gaulle, the former president of France. After earning accolades for his artistry as chef at some of New York’s finest restaurants, Jacques became a TV personality, launched a culinary arts program at Boston University, and started the Jacques Pépin Foundation with the mission of teaching cooking skills to homeless individuals, veterans, and people

coming out of prison to help them get back on their feet. But, as life goes on and becomes simpler with age, what excites Jacques these days?

“A good glass of wine, having a good meal, playing boules with my friends, and walking my dog at the beach. All these things excite me. And the foundation, of course,” says Jacques, who sees himself as getting back to the essentials of life.

“I take my granddaughter out to the garden to pick some basil for a beautiful ripe tomato salad. Are you sure that’s the right one? Did you smell it?” This is how Jacques instinctively keeps teaching the art of food. His greatest joy is, and has always been, cooking with family.

“Cooking provides a canvas for people to be able to talk about things,” he says. The canvas is not just a metaphor; it’s Jacques Pépin’s other side as an artist with a paintbrush. It offers a taste of something deeper—a feeling, a tangible impression of life. ✨



OPPOSITE, TOP LEFT: *The Cock*, 2013; acrylic on paper, 11 x 15 in (28 x 38 cm). |
 OPPOSITE, TOP RIGHT: *Menu*; October 19, 2005; acrylic and pen on paper; 10 x 14 in (25 x 36 cm). | ABOVE: *Menu*; July 12, 2013; acrylic and pen on paper; 11 x 14 in (28 x 36 cm).