

Restaurant *La Table* Lausanne Palace



LAUSANNE PALACE
SWITZERLAND

The Stars Align for LA TABLE DU LP's Star Couple Chatting with Sarah and Franck Pelux

In 2020, an extraordinary couple arrived in Lausanne to helm La Table du Lausanne Palace, a temple of gastronomy with a breathtaking view of Lake Geneva. Sarah and Franck Pelux set down their luggage, and unpacked a fresh new era.

Franck and Sarah have worked with the greatest. From 2011, and for five summer seasons, they prepped alongside Arnaud Donckele and Thierry di Tullio at *La Pinède* - which would become the legendary *Cheval Blanc* Saint-Tropez - eventually becoming their assistants. "Arnaud and Thierry are two dedicated virtuosos who have contributed a lot to our vision and helped forge the chefs we have become," Sarah tells us. In the intervening winters, the couple worked with Yannick Alléno at his 1947 restaurant in Courchevel in the French Alps, who entrusted them with responsibility. It was thanks to Alléno that they took over the management of Le Crocodile in Strasbourg, an excellent restaurant whose Michelin star the couple retained in 2018 and 2019. In 2018, Le Crocodile was also named "Best Restaurant in the World" by the users of TripAdvisor; and in 2019, Sarah Benahmed won the Michelin Service Prize.

To crown this period of success, Franck was propelled to the forefront of culinary fame in 2017 with his placement as a finalist in French television's "Top Chef". His fame was soaring.

So, when Franck Pelux and Sarah Benahmed took the helm of La Table du Lausanne Palace, it was a notable event. And they sealed their reputation by winning the restaurant's first Michelin star in 2021, followed by a second star in October 2023.

The common thread of their cuisine? "Everything we eat must have an impact," explains Franck. "I'm constantly challenging myself. I want to underscore our strengths, namely to infuse our menus with the emotion of our travels. I don't want to be creative just for the sake of being creative. I want to update memories. I want to transcribe the sensations we've experienced into this or that dish, in all the stages that marked our journeys."

Sarah continues: "We know our customers by heart because we are there all the time. We aim to 'understand' our customers in the first five seconds. Our waiters are not mere plate carriers: they are there to anticipate, to advise, and yes, to charm."

With one voice, the couple says they prefer to offer à la carte choices rather than a set menu where the chef dictates his whims. "Being able to choose is more respectful of the customer," says Franck. "In 2024," adds Sarah, "we want to feel emotions, vibrations." The couple has nixed formality. High heels and ties are out, sneakers and open collars are in. Attention is paid to scriptwriting and indoor choreography. Meticulousness and attention to detail are key. "That's luxury," says Sarah.

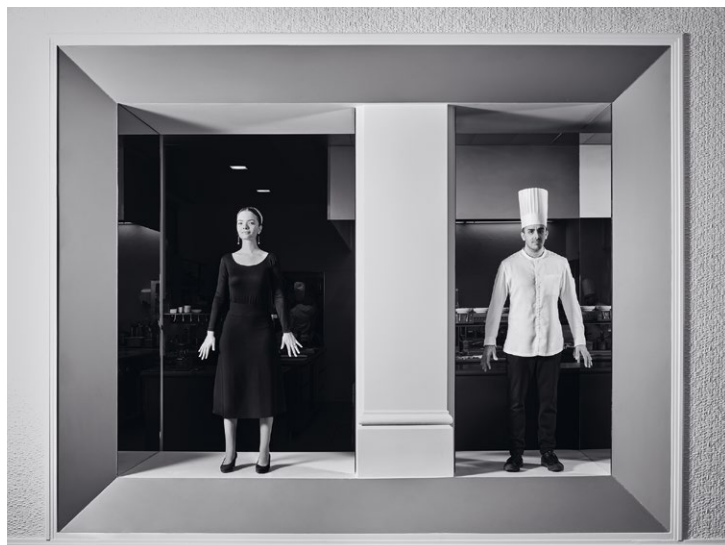
Franck and Sarah highlight the local wines they discovered when they arrived in Switzerland. The chef raves above all about the quality of Swiss produce, such as salmon from Graubünden. "Swiss ingredients are of an incredible standard," says Franck, "it's remarkable. We're able to find the best of everything locally produced, from Wagyu beef, to citrus fruits, and to fish from the lake. I like all the products but I admit to one special obsession: shellfish. There's nothing like the exquisite flavor of a langoustine or a lobster."

We turn to the big debate among chefs these days: how to spend less on raw materials in cooking and thus be more respectful of the planet? Everyone has their own approach. "We're in favor of both unique menus as well as tailor-made meal decided in advance with the customer," says Franck. "It's our job to manage the dining room, to manage the supply. We don't believe in waste: we never throw away. Our thriftiness demands a particularly close relationship with suppliers. If nature only gives us two mullets one day, we have to adapt."

A kitchen is also a question of leadership. Franck feels «like a coach» in the middle of his brigade. "I know how to adapt what I say to each person according to their personality. This is my strength. I am a leader, and my team of 31 people at the Lausanne Palace is loyal to me."

"For Franck, I will go to war," exclaims Sarah. "I call him a 'team emulsifier! He's also a great sausage maker, and an ace with eggs and dumplings. He likes surprises, like the ones he gives his guests with offerings that blend his Burgundy origins with the produce of Switzerland's Canton de Vaud."





“We talk a lot about our feelings, about the evolution of our profession,” explains Sarah. “We’re always challenging ourselves. For example, we gave our team three days off after the pandemic. As much as they were bored during confinement, when we returned, it became difficult for them to be motivated. No one wanted to return to the pre-Covid ‘work-work-work’ dynamic. Our eyes were opened too. Before Covid, we didn’t know the sofa, or the TV series, and we never even took the time to celebrate the weddings of our loved ones. We were only working-working-working; and even when we were with our families, we weren’t really present, too absorbed in thinking about the restaurant. Taking a break made it possible to expand our family with the arrival of our little girl,” Sarah explains, “after 15 years as a pair, this child has been a gift from heaven.”

And now? “The team lives better and so do we. By taking more pleasure in life, we make our passions shine through. Moral of the story? It’s okay to take care of yourself so you’re able to give more. We no longer think like we used to. The menus are designed by season and they change every week. We used to impose rhythms on ourselves to meet only our expectations, not those of our guests.”

Sarah discovered skiing in Villars. The two remember crying together on the slopes of Gstaad, overwhelmed by the beauty of nature and the perfection of the moment. «Switzerland has calmed me down. We go out less, which would have seemed impossible to me when we were in Asia. But now our way of life has changed. We consume less, but better.»

What differentiates this duo from those of other restaurants? Sarah begins: «We discuss everything. For example, we’re totally invested in our respective professions and that’s rare. We can each finish the other’s sentences!»

Another particularity of this fusion couple? «Since we’ve been working for ourselves, we’ve tried not to fall into the box of the classic gastro restaurant. Before, I used to read and watch everything happening in our métier. Now, that’s over. I want to protect myself from external influences and retain my soul. I won’t let our creativity be eaten away.”

“Our aim is to just be authentic,” says Franck. “We welcome our frequent customers with a kiss. Whole families comes to our restaurant, something unknown at most Michelin two-star restaurants.”

The couple brought their team to Bocuse at the end of the year. «It was so powerful. We were welcomed with the heart. It’s exactly what drives us. Customers are not numbers. To guarantee this philosophy, we went from 60 seats to 35 so we’d have more time to share emotions with them. Here, we don’t Google customers, I hate that.”

As for Sarah, she works to preserve an element of mystery around La Table. «We don’t share all the dishes on social media, and when I write the menu I try to be purposefully evasive. We have to preserve the magic. We just want to be human, and not stuffy. We know the first names of our customers and their children, and what they do for a living. Last week, diners at all the tables were suddenly chatting with each other. A lady who was celebrating her 90th birthday told me she’d never seen this before in a gastronomic restaurant. This touched me because we’re pushing for this informal dialogue between the generations. It’s so nice to have people talking to each other, people of all backgrounds and all ages. These moments in life are the reason we do our job.”





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LA TABLE
 SARAH ET FRANCK PELUX



OPENING HOURS:

Wednesday to Saturday from 12pm to 3pm
 (last order at 1pm) and from 7pm to 11pm
 (last order at 8pm)
 Closed from Sunday to Tuesday.

La Table Affaire offers a «Business» menu for lunch on Wednesdays and Thursdays, excluding public holidays and festivities.

The restaurant has two stars in the Michelin guide and 17/20 points in the Gault&Millau.

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