

GUY SAVOY'S INDUCTION INTO THE
ACADEMY OF FINE ARTS - MAY 20 2026
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(EXTRAIT)

Sir,

“Gastronomy is the reasoned knowledge of everything related to man insofar as he nourishes himself. Its purpose is to ensure the preservation of mankind through the best possible food... It is impossible that, within a few years, gastronomy will not have its own academicians.”

Our dear colleague and great mutual friend Jean-Robert Pitte, to whom I send my warmest regards, likes to recall this quote from Brillat-Savarin, and it was indeed alongside him that you, dear Guy Savoy, fought for UNESCO's inscription of the “gastronomic meal of the French” on the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity list.

The author of *The Physiology of Taste*, who died in 1826 and whose memory France is commemorating this year, felt when he wrote this that the people of gastronomy, of whom he was the prophet, were on the threshold of the promised land, but he had no idea that it would take 200 years for the Palais de l'Institut de France to welcome, within the Académie des Beaux-Arts during today's ceremony, the chef that you are.

Brillat-Savarin was a writer; his prose is admirable. he was a poet; he could have taken his place at the Académie Française; his erudition might have earned him a seat at the Académie des Inscriptions et Belles-Lettres; as a champion of the idea that cooking is also a form of chemistry and is developed in laboratories, he might have dreamed that the Académie des Sciences would have a section of associate members. Brillat-Savarin was a lawmaker in his own field; had he lived longer, he might have been counted among the members of the Academy of Moral and Political Sciences at the time of its reestablishment

during Guizot's era—but none of that came to pass.

The election of a gastronome should have been the natural consequence of the Revolution, which brought restaurants and the Declaration of the Rights of Man to the world; of the Empire, which imprinted its taste on Europe; and of the Restoration, which saw the triumph of Antonin Carême, the first to be called “chef” by his contemporaries, but this movement was halted abruptly, a few years after Brillat-Savarin's death, with what was called the “July Regime.”

It took 200 years of dieting for the Academy of Fine Arts to elect you, the first chef here, and for you to ask a musician to open its doors for you.

It was most certainly in Bourgoin-Jallieu, in Isère, that your love of cooking began, thanks to your mother, who had gradually transformed her small café into a renowned restaurant *called L'Esplanade*.

You remain infinitely grateful to your parents, who preferred acts of love to grand declarations and whose moral rigor has remained an absolute benchmark for you.

Developing an interest in cooking as a teenager was frowned upon in school and earned you plenty of mockery and teasing.

So, as soon as you turned sixteen, you began an apprenticeship with Master Chocolatier Louis Marchand.

At 17, in 1970, you began a three year apprenticeship with The Troisgros brothers.

You retain a sense of wonder and deep gratitude for the secular virtuosos, as well as an unwavering friendship with another apprentice, Bernard Loiseau.

Speaking of Jean Troisgros, a brilliant sauce chef, you always describe the elegance of his movements, which fascinated you.

After three years of running La Barrière de Clichy, succeeding

your dear friend Bernard Loiseau, you opened your first restaurant on Rue Duret in 1980 at the age of 27; you earned a Michelin star the following year and two in 1985.

In 1987, you moved to Rue Troyon and opened charming bistros, which often served as a stepping stone for young chefs who had trained under you.

Among these young chefs was Gordon Ramsay, who idolizes you and continues to call you “Papa,” which annoys you slightly, since you’re only a few years older than him. You wrote the foreword to his first cookbook, and you’ve remained very close ever since.

You remained on Rue Troyon for 28 years, perfecting your dazzling cuisine day after day despite the cramped conditions of a two-level kitchen, admittedly larger than the twenty or so square meters on Rue Duret, but far from the ideal you would finally find in your third restaurant.

2006 is a pivotal year for you; it symbolizes the international reach of your endeavors.

You open a Restaurant Guy Savoy within the famous Caesars Palace in Las Vegas—I’d like to acknowledge President Sean McBurney, who insisted on being by your side today—a venue whose design you entrusted to Jean-Michel Wilmotte. You are now colleagues.

It was also in 2006 at the European Institute of Food History and Cultures in Tours, at the initiative of its director, Francis Chevrier, that the idea took root to seek the inscription of French gastronomy on UNESCO’s list of intangible cultural heritage. Jean-Robert Pitte, president of this mission, likes to recall just how enthusiastic a champion of this initiative you were.

Finally, in November 2010, 15 years ago, UNESCO inscribed the noble ritual known as “*The French Gastronomic Meal*” on the Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of

Humanity, and France committed to continuing the study of this major part of our country's heritage, to keeping it alive, to promoting it through various initiatives in France and abroad, and through the creation of the Cités de la Gastronomie.

In 2009, your friend Bertrand Boullé, which was about to issue a call for bids to set up a restaurant.

From that very first visit, which you made almost as a casual onlooker with just a passing interest, it was love at first sight, and you explained that upon discovering these empty spaces, bathed in incredible light, you could already visualize every part of the restaurant.

Did you sense then, as you gazed at the Institut's dome from the windows of a future kitchen, that 17 years later you would be received there? No one will ever know, but what intuition!

There will always be constants in your work; in the kitchen as well as in the dining room, you champion a truly hands-on approach to flavor.

I'd like to sketch out an analysis of this, to play the role of musicologist for your compositions.

Your passion for ingredients and their richness—which often drives you to present a single vegetable or fruit in different textures and temperatures within a single dish, a theme with variations, as we know—results in a form of simplicity, certainly highly refined, yet one that never gives the diner the impression of being a lab rat.

It surely comes to you from the vegetable garden your father created with all his gardening expertise at the town hall in Bourgoin-Jallieu.

Salads, radishes, and other vegetables arrived at the table within half an hour of being picked, and this direct journey from the earth to the plate left a lasting impression on you.

Cooking is the art of instantly transforming products steeped in

history into joy; you have displayed this maxim in the entrance to your restaurant.

The diversity of the produce has fostered a diversity of expertise, which drives you to maintain very close, trust-based relationships with your various suppliers—whom you sometimes gather around a meal, as was already depicted in 1999 in Jean-Paul Jaud’s lovely documentary **Quatre Saisons pour un Festin**.

Alexandre de Lur Saluces did not hesitate at the time to open two bottles of 1899 Château Yquem before the amazed eyes of your guests.

For your famous artichoke soup, you commission a stunning dish featuring a full or half portion of soup depending on your guests’ appetites, into which they’ll be invited to dip a brioche with truffle butter...

"I love sounds, not noise"—that is your motto, and it holds true in your restaurant’s kitchens. The idea of the rush at the height of the service’s crescendo, triggering a veritable frenzy punctuated by the shouts of a neurotic chef, is certainly very useful in a movie scenario but is the exact opposite of the reality of your practice.

It is first and foremost based on respect for the teams with whom you share a genuine, friendly rapport—which, of course, does not exclude authority or control.

Everything unfolds in a surprising calm that stems from your mastery of the tempo, ensuring that every link in the chain is ready at the right moment—and this is one of the key points that brings you closer to the challenges faced by conductors, who, just like you, are the ones who set the rhythm.

It is therefore not surprising that during the production of the film *Ratatouille*, Brad Lewis, the film’s producer—who came all the way from Los Angeles to be with you today, and whom I’d like to welcome—and director Brad Bird wanted to get to know your kitchens and observe several service shifts.

There are no menial jobs in your kitchens; just as no one is secondary in a symphony orchestra, the staff in charge of cleaning or dishwashing are just as important as the cooks, apprentices, maître d'hôtel, servers, or receptionists, because the absence of even one person risks affecting the entire operation. The famous conductor Arturo Toscanini believed that an orchestra is only as good as its weakest musician.

You have established a ritual that perfectly captures the relationship you share with your team. Every Saturday morning at 9:00 a.m., you host a breakfast for them to mark the end of the week.

Everyone gathers in the kitchen; each person, whether alone or in a group, has prepared a dish, and everyone tastes them. It's absolutely incredible, extraordinarily convivial, and it allows you to test the skills and creativity of your team.

This Saturday morning was the occasion for another discovery. Entering the restaurant not through the majestic entrance of the Hôtel de la Monnaie but, of course, through the service entrance, I discovered that the access corridors reserved for staff were adorned, just like the rest of the restaurant, with numerous contemporary paintings.

It seems essential to you that, upon arriving for work, your team be greeted by art, and I could see that everyone is very receptive to it.

When one of your apprentices prepares a dish off to the side, missing out on the view of the Institut de France that opens up from your kitchens, you rush to reposition them at the right angle so they can enjoy this exceptional view. Jacques Denis Antoine's architecture looks to that of Louis Le Vau, much as you read Brillat-Savarin.

Far beyond the culinary arts, it is the art of living that you have cultivated, the love of connecting with others that you have passed on to your children Caroline and Franck—and to whose mother, Danièle, I extend my greetings.

Your seven grandchildren—Léa, Axelle, Elliott, Pénélope, Stella, Ariel, and Noah, whose names are engraved on your sword—are here today to support you through this ordeal, which is only just beginning, dearest Guy...

You have a deeply felt sense of friendship that manifests itself in the form of an affectionate bond with all your friends, but also in the form of wounds, such as the tragic passing in 2003 of your inseparable culinary partner, Bernard Loiseau.

There is also a dimension akin to theater in a grand restaurant like yours. You are the director; you revel in the dialogue, you love the rustle of language, the echoes, and the lights.

The setting, of course, but above all the daily repetition of a ritual and a performance that must maintain the same high quality while constantly reinventing itself, demands a great deal of personal investment. Theater, from antiquity to the tragedies of Racine, is essentially a ceremony. It is a matter of maintaining precision without falling into routine, of constantly keeping the desire to surpass oneself.

You keep an eye on the living rooms as much as the kitchen, knowing that everything must be perfect for guests who are to have an unforgettable time and whom you are committed to welcoming without fail.

In 2026, the famous annual ranking La Liste, created in 2015 by Ambassador Philippe Faure and based on over 1,000 publications worldwide, selected you for the 9th time as the best restaurant in the world.

Your open-mindedness, your thirst for knowledge, and your insatiable curiosity have naturally found their place in our Academy, for while we are officially welcoming you under the Dome today, you have been a full-fledged academician for 18 months, a very diligent participant in our weekly sessions, committees, and juries, because you have perfectly understood

that election to the Academy of Fine Arts was much more than recognition of an artistic career but a commitment to supporting creation, heritage, and the cultural life of our country in all its forms.

You often say that you have nourished gourmets for decades and that now it is you who are nourished by emotions within our Society.

That is a very incomplete statement, Dear Guy, for your humanism and your life experience are a great source of learning for us, making us feel as though you have always been with us.

So welcome, dear Guy, to a Society where you have nothing but friends who have become admirers who have become partners and who share with you the desire to support Art in all its forms.
