



TOAST BEOFRE DINNER

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40 years ago, shortly after we created the Spanish academy of gastronomy, I thought it would be very interesting if there was an international academy in which the different countries could be represented and highlight that everyone, in general, has an interesting **gastronomic offer** that is worth knowing.

Naturally, I went to Paris and got in touch with the President of the *Académie des gastronomes*, Jean Laurens-Frings. I remember him saying to me: Well, but there is already an international academy, which is ours, we incorporate you and that is enough.

And I answered: I think it's great that you're joining me, but I think that what we intend is to make an **academy of academies**. Since there was a need for at least three, according to French law, I went to London and got in touch with Egon Ronay, who had already published a wonderful guide to restaurants in London, and we created the Academy of gastronomy in England. The three of us, France, England and Spain, created the International Academy of Gastronomy (A.I.G.), which was later joined by academies that already existed, such as those of Belgium, Sweden and Italy.

Shortly after, Michel Genin joined as President, to whom we owe the evolution and success of the A.I.G. and we dedicated ourselves to creating new academies, the first in Switzerland.

The evolution of the A.I.G. **has** really been spectacular, not only in terms of the number of countries that make it up, but also in terms of the number of activities it has carried out, including the trips, which we started with Michel Genin, and which have allowed the people of the countries to get to know each other, since we put ourselves in direct contact with the gastronomy of each country we visited.

I remember a meeting in Madrid presided over by King Juan Carlos. All of this created a kind of international community around something as important as gastronomy.



One of the great initiatives was the creation of the *Grand Prix*, which, curiously, were not limited only to cooking or cooks, to restaurants: from the beginning the *Grand Prix de l'Art de la Cuisine*, the *Grand Prix de l'Art de la Salle*, were created together with a *Prix au Sommelier*. Later other awards were created such as the *Grand Prix de la Culture Gastronomique* or *Prix Multimedia*.

I remember that the first *Grand Prix de l'Art de la Cuisine* went to 2 geniuses of the kitchen: Joël Robuchon and Frédy Girardet. We presented the award to them in Lisbon, presided over by Mário Soares, President of the Republic of Portugal, at the Lisbon Athenaeum. The current President of the Portuguese Academy, José Bento de Santos, was already there.

The first *Grand Prix de l'Art de la Salle* went to Louis Villeneuve, who worked with Frédy Girardet at the Hotel La Ville in Lausanne. If you look at these Awards, you can see the evolution that gastronomy has had in the world over all these years. I think we can be proud of what we have done, of what the different Presidents have done.

Until we get to the current one, Fabien Petitcolas, who is masterfully leading the Academy and who is at the origin of all these events. I would also highlight the participation of the President of the Polish Academy, Maciej Dobrzyniecki and, of course, Nicolas Kenedi and Jacques Mallard, who have worked hard to get us here today and so that we can all raise our glasses together and make a toast for now, virtually. A toast that reads:

*Beber es todo medida
Alegrar el corazón.
Y sin perder la razón
Darle razón a la vida.*
(Drinking is all about measure
Cheer the heart.
And without losing your mind
To give reason to life.)

And the International Academy of Gastronomy, events like this one, Friends like you, make our hearts happy and are one more reason to live. The new gastronomy of the 21st century is a scenario of well-being where everyone, and not just a few, must be able to enjoy and eat healthily because gastronomy must be a fundamental support for happiness.

Thank you.