

Getting in the Kitchen with Chef Loïc Autret

By Maritza Cosano
(Photos: Addiel Perera, WPB Magazine)

A good croissant. That's the only inspiration Chef Loïc Autret needed from his hometown of Champagne, France, to make his mark in the Western cuisine scene.

Chef Loïc Autret in his airy, palm-printed space downtown West Palm Beach where he's always crafting fruit tarts, croissants, and other exquisite treats.



Chef Loïc Autret gets pretty excited about croissants, as does much of the world. But his devotion to the puffed pastry, which is a true French innovation, is a taste of home. He fully understands the ingredients [yeast-leavened dough and butter] and the chemical reactions that occur when making this fine, deceptively simple pastry.

“In the kitchen, consistency is key,” he says. “To achieve this, your dough has to have the same texture every time you bake.”

Baking is an exact science, he admits, and something he appreciated when he came to America in 2000 and joined the Four Seasons Resort Palm Beach as head baker and assistant to the executive chef. He certainly took learning English seriously but he focused all his energy on delivering delicious food, and the perfect croissant. And oh, boy, did he master it. When American singer-songwriter, Bruce Springsteen came to the hotel and tasted Chef Loïc’s croissant, he went over the moon about it!

His Cafe and Bakery, Loic Bakery Cafe Bar is at 480 Hibiscus St, very close to Rosemary Square. As you enter Loïc Bakery’s kitchen, you find everything a professional chef would need to reach his regular culinary goals. He has *mise en place*—everything in its place—which equates to happier, speedier cooking.

There’s much more to Chef Loïc, I learned. His inspiration for cooking came from his hometown, Champagne, France, the central hub of the world’s all-time favorite sparkling white wine that bears the region’s name. He learned how to cook at a young age in his mama’s kitchen and was later trained at the École Grégoire-Ferrandi Paris School of Culinary Arts, a prestigious school in Paris, with the most highly skilled culinary craftsmen to be found there.

Since he moved to South Florida, Chef Loïc has earned a reputation throughout the community for quality and great tasting bread and other baked goods. Okeechobee Steakhouse, the oldest steakhouse in the state of Florida, has asked him to bake bread for their restaurant. His baguette matches the restaurant perfectly, as it has the taste of that old-fashioned steakhouse. “I am thankful to them for supporting a small business like mine,” says Chef Loïc, knowing the owners of the restaurant could have bought cheaper bread from a bigger company, but instead chose Loïc Bakery to add to their incredible food.

An expert in the making of pastries, desserts, and bread, Chef Loïc’s eternal quest for loving people is fresh, just like his baked goods. He’s interested in everybody who comes to his business and where they’re from. He is a staunch advocate of using fresh ingredients. And yes, he is a charming and witty Frenchman who’s passionate about anything he can talk about, which usually is about good food, good company, and good topics!

“I talk too much, I know this,” he says with a grin, and then continues to speak with his endearing French accent as he walked around the kitchen.

Asked who inspired his recipes, he took a pause and then said, “I did.” And hearing that, getting in the kitchen with Chef Loïc could have been an intimidating assignment. But, he assured me I was the ideal fit for his popular kitchen, and so, together we set to bake his signature croissant as he talked about his life as a boy in France, the time he spent in the French Army, and what led him to become a chef.

[Entering the kitchen]

What are the top 10 things a cook should have in his kitchen?

First, a sharp knife. 2. Thermometer 3. Cookbook 4. All the herbs and seasonings you can have in your kitchen. 5. Sauté pan. 6. Two spoons: one for mixing and another to taste your food. Always taste your food. 7. Apron 8. Towels. 9. Cutting board 10. Your love and spirit to pour into your food.

What is the number one thing you learned at cooking school?

How to measure everything. You do it by weighing the food, not by using a measuring cup. If you don’t learn the measurement system, you can’t do anything. Baking is very precise. It’s like a science. A good baker has control of the dough. A great chef controls his kitchen, not the kitchen controls the chef.

Here’s a wild question . . . If you wrote a cookbook, what would be your title and what recipes would you include?

“Do it, Correctly!” would be the title of my book and I would put all my secret recipes. That’s risky because I like to be unique and keep my cooking secrets to myself, but I also like teaching and helping people so they can learn how to cook. And you know, school is good, but you learn on the spot, when you are doing it yourself, correctly! If you do stuff correctly, you put your heart into it. That’s the military training in me. I’m like a square. Simple. All the angles are the same so you know where you stand. I like the square, where you can’t go wrong.

Except when you’re making a croissant, which is a triangle like you taught me. [smiling cheekily]

Don’t do that! [laughing]

What’s the most popular croissant in your store?

Without a doubt . . . the pistachio. And the raspberry-filled croissant follows it.

Changing the subject a bit, what have you learned about yourself this past year?

Interesting question, Maritza. When I was in the Army [French Army], I was a Red Beret minesweeper, and through that experience, I learned how to be proactive in the face of danger. So, when you see something happening like Covid-19, you start doing things for people. Your heart breaks because you recognize that they, like us, had a somewhat normal life and suddenly they are disrupted and it’s a shock to them. I’ve been through a lot of stuff in my life. When I was in Iraq, we were scared that the enemy was using gases to kill us so we wore masks for protection.





1. Making a perfect French croissant at home. That was this writer's plan. And so, she asked Chef Loïc Autret to teach her, step by step. 2. After the dough was prepared, he cut it into triangles. "There's no substitute for practice," he said. "So, do it again!" And side did, countless times. 3. The chef and the apprentice comparing their stretched dough, which turned into crisp, flaky layers of deliciousness!





Rolling the dough into a croissant is not easy as it seems. "Make sure that you don't roll it too tightly, or too loosely," Chef Loïc said, again and again! The result, these delicious croissants above.



