



Next was a year in Rome at the Hotel Cavalieri. “My first really big hotel. I loved the culture and the language, and cooking Italian food. The brigade was mostly Italian and we were like a big family: I was invited to people’s homes for Sunday lunch, where grandma had spent all morning making pasta and all the generations ate together. It was wonderful.”

He travelled a great deal – indeed, he still does: “I was always willing to learn and accept new ideas.” A year in Japan followed “another incredible experience” and then three years in Canada, and stints in five 3-star restaurants in France and Belgium. During this period, he got his master chef’s degree at the age of 25 – one of the youngest ever graduates – and also won a couple of international competitions which brought him to the attention of The Dorchester.

In 1974 head chef Eugene Kaufeler, who had been at the hotel since the 1940s, was retiring and they were looking for a replacement. “It was a fantastic opportunity for a 28-year-old – the size of the place, 132 staff in the kitchen and wonderful support from the manager, Peter Stafford, who encouraged me to make the changes I thought were necessary.” One of the innovations Mosimann brought in from the start was plated service for banquets: “at that time liver service was customary, with the waiter portioning food at the table, which was messy and time-consuming and presentation quality was poor. With plated service presentation was much improved and speeded up. The main task, however, was to improve the food quality. In what became known as ‘Cuisine Naturelle’, he did away with the cream, butter and gelatine to “let the taste of the food shine through”. The idea had come to him gradually, and especially while working in Japan, and eventually he transformed the menu completely, to the great acclaim of his peers – and the Michelin Guide: The Dorchester was the first hotel restaurant

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in the UK to win two stars. “At one time we had a waiting list of 650 people wanting to come and work in the kitchen.”

During his 13-year tenure many young chefs who are now household names passed through his kitchen, including Mark Hix, Anton Edelmann, Paul Gayler and David Nicholls and on his 60th birthday in 2007 more than 80 of his former protégés gathered to celebrate at a gala dinner. Egon Ronay, speaking to the press at the time, is quoted as saying “He was the first not just to appear on TV, but also be talked about by the public and written about all the time. He stands head and shoulders above the rest; no question. Many of the top chefs that followed owe him for creating the atmosphere in which they could thrive.” The TV work was seminal – Heston Blumenthal credits him with the childhood inspiration which made him decide to become a chef.

“Then, in 1987, I turned 40” says Mosimann, “and wondered what to do next. Should I stay at the Dorchester or look elsewhere?” There were offers, of course, as soon as the news got around that he was considering his future, from as far afield as New York, Tokyo and Hawaii, but he decided to stay in London. “I’ve had so much support from friends and colleagues here – London supported me, so I decided to stay.” In the event he didn’t move far – just over half a mile away to a former church on Halkin street, which he refurbished and opened as a private members’ club. “The members are pretty high-profile, but it’s like cooking for friends” he says, “you get to know them, their likes and dislikes, their families, have a chat with them and make sure that you’re providing what they want.”

Since then his ‘empire’ has developed with outside catering – Anton holds a royal warrant from Prince Charles and has cooked for him four times recently – and he still is an inveterate traveller. He was cooking in Vancouver for the 2010 winter Olympics and had just returned from cooking two banquets in Switzerland. In recent years he’s cooked in Beijing, Paris, Argentina, Bolivia, Chile, Peru and has just had a call from Malaysia. His two sons work with

him in the business and hold the fort while he’s continuing with his globetrotting.

Elsewhere, he’s written 13 books – the most recent, *Mosimann’s Fresh*, in 2008 – and appeared many times on television, perhaps most notably in the mid-1980s when he was challenged to cook Sunday lunch for a family of seven for £10, and the series which followed it. Today he has a series in Switzerland and pops up regularly in the UK.

And the future? More of the same: “I’m very lucky, very happy, and can’t wait to get up in the morning and go to work.”

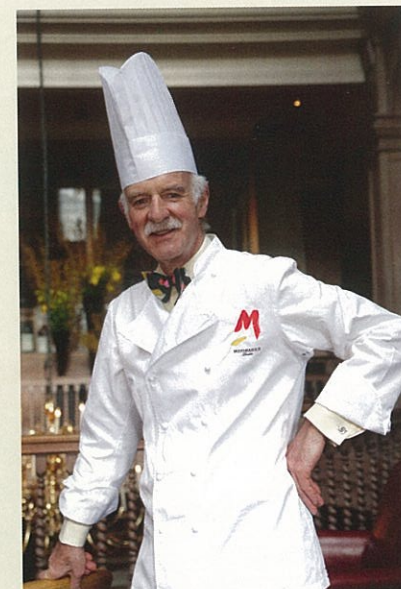
What’s been the proudest moment of your career? “Being awarded the OBE by Her Majesty the Queen. It was tremendous to have achieved that.”

And the worst moment? “Thankfully very few, but there was an incident at The Dorchester when we were making cheese soufflés for 500 and the rotating ovens suddenly stuck. Fortunately the maintenance engineers were on duty and managed to fix it in the nick of time, but we were still about ten minutes late.”

Favourite restaurant? “I love oriental food, especially when I’m travelling. Singapore, Bangkok, Japan, China – I ask the taxi drivers where are the best places to eat and I enjoy good, local, basic food. On a Sunday we go as a family – including the grandchildren – to the Shanghai Restaurant in Knightsbridge and have a leisurely lunch. And we strictly don’t talk about business.”

What do you do to relax? “Well, everybody knows I love vintage and classic cars. I enjoy going rallying, and just driving across the world – China, Mongolia, Siberia, Moscow, Saint Petersburg. It’s a great way to see a country, get to know its people and to buy local food on the road. Sadly, I have no skills as a mechanic, so if something does happen I’ll find a local mechanic and say ‘you fix my car, I cook you dinner’. I’ve cooked a few dinners!”

Favourite car? “I’ve sold most of my collection over the years and only have five cars left. My favourite is the E-type Jaguar, which is such a design classic, and I also have an old Mercedes which I use for rallying, still going strong.”



MARINATED SALMON WITH CORNISH CRABMEAT

BY ANTON MOSIMANN OF MOSIMANN’S, LONDON

Serves 4

Ingredients

Marinade

20g coriander seeds
150g sea salt
150g caster sugar
20g white peppercorns
20g star anise
2 sticks lemon grass
zest of 2 lemons

Salmon

500g salmon fillet, skin on

Crabmeat

100g picked white crabmeat
5g sliced chives
12 leaves coriander
20g finely sliced spring onions
12 pieces pickled ginger

Lemon dressing

juice of 4 lemons
50g caster sugar
a little arrowroot
100ml olive oil
100ml sunflower oil
20ml light soya sauce

Method

- Blend marinade ingredients roughly in a food processor.
- Spread the above mixture all over the salmon. Marinate for 24 hours. Wash the marinade off, skin the salmon and remove the brown fat.
- Slice the salmon in thin slices and arrange on a plate in a 5 ½ inch ring. Keep the ring on the plate.
- Mix together all the crabmeat ingredients. Sprinkle the crabmeat mixture evenly over the salmon. Garnish with the rest of the ingredients and remove the ring.
- For the dressing, bring the lemon juice and the sugar to the boil; combine arrowroot and soy sauce, thicken lemon juice to sauce consistency. Whisk in oil slowly. Clean plate and drizzle the dressing over the top of the salmon and crab.