



CONNAUGHT



H EL ENE DARROZE

BIOGRAPHY

History and Credentials

French-born H el ene Darroze is currently head chef at H el ene Darroze in Paris, France and H el ene Darroze at the Connaught in London, UK. After completing a degree from l'Ecole Sup erieure de Commerce de Bordeaux, Darroze joined Alain Ducasse's team at the prestigious Louis XV restaurant in Monaco. As a fourth-generation descendent of a family of chefs, Darroze is the only double-Michelin starred female chef patron in the UK, and is a veritable blueblood of French fare, having grown up and worked in her family's acclaimed restaurant in the south-west of France.

After working for Ducasse for three years, she returned to her family's restaurant and helped retain its existing Michelin star. Following this, Darroze received her first Michelin star in 2001 at her namesake restaurant, H el ene Darroze in Paris and was later awarded a second Michelin star in 2003.

Just six months after the opening of H el ene Darroze at the Connaught in London, Darroze was awarded a Michelin star in 2009, with her second for the London location shortly following in 2011. Currently, Darroze holds three Michelin stars in total spanning across her London and Paris restaurants. Darroze herself comments, *'It was a huge honour to be awarded two Michelin stars for*

my restaurant at the Connaught, and this reflects my team's dedication to achieve the best. I live by the philosophy that the ingredients are the stars and you must treat them respectfully.'

Not only has Darroze been honoured for her work by Michelin but Darroze has been awarded the order of Chevalier three times - one of the highest decorations in France. Darroze is a first grade Chevalier de la Legion d'Honneur for her contribution to food, Chevalier des Arts et des Lettres for her contribution to culture and was promoted Chevalier L'ordre du Merite by President Sarkozy himself. Normally to be honoured in this way would be through a friend or colleague. However, the President of the Republic personally nominated her. "I have cooked for Sarkozy at a private event and he also ate at my restaurant a year ago. It's a huge honour to be nominated by him," says Darroze.

Passion for Food

Darroze's attention to detail for sourcing the most wonderful and delectable ingredients translates into the much-loved dishes she creates, ensuring that her customers are treated to an unrivalled culinary experience. Diners can select from the tasting menu using a marble board game, whereby each of the marbles display a key ingredient from which Darroze creates a bespoke dish. At H el ene Darroze at the Connaught, guests are greeted by oversized presentation cubes that are used to display her freshly made breads, cheeses selected by the master fromager, pots of wild herbs and reels of freshly churned butter.

Darroze spends months working on new menus at the Connaught, the core of which celebrates the tastes and textures of each individual item of produce and utilises them in unique combinations. Her culinary skill and style allows each and every ingredient in her bespoke dishes to shine and their unique flavours to take pride of place in her dishes. Darroze takes great pride in tailoring her culinary offering by combining traditional produce from her native Les Landes in South West France with some of the finest ingredients from the British Isles. Darroze is meticulous in her choice of suppliers and of the produce they have on offer.

Darroze's passion for her ingredients often sees her take long journeys to visit her suppliers at the source to discuss their products, and how she can best use them within dishes at both her London and Paris restaurants. One of the producers she often visits is Pierre Matayron, who supplies Darroze with the delectable Noir de Bigorre ham. Though the journey takes Darroze an hour and a half by plane from Paris, she knows first-hand the value of making the trip and forging strong bonds with her beloved suppliers. Not only does Darroze personally visit her trusted suppliers, but she also seeks out new producers on her travels to taste their wares and understand the latest methods and techniques used to produce them.

Personal Favourite Dishes

Growing up in the south west of France evokes many fond memories for Darroze most of which include enjoying a meal with her family. Her grandmother was a fantastic cook. “My absolute favourite dish is roast chicken served with French fries, the way my grandmother used to cook it. I remember my entire family sitting together around a table laden with four or five chickens at one time. She would never let anyone else cook the meal; it had to be cooked by her.”

When I think about my other favourite dishes, I can actually remember the taste of them and they have stuck with me for many years. Alain Ducasse’s vegetables with truffle and Michel Gerra’s signature dish of ravioli and asparagus are all firm favourites. Recently Darroze was in New York and enjoyed Michel Gerra’s sushi. “He took the meat out from the tuna, so only the white nerves were left, and grilled them and put them on top of the sushi. It was such an incredibly flavour.”

Personal Life

Darroze is a single mother to two daughters, Charlotte and Quiterie, both of whom were adopted from different orphanages in Vietnam. Darroze often travels with her children between the two restaurants to ensure they are by her side as often as possible and doesn’t work Sundays. Darroze often tries to get off Saturdays so that she can spend more time at the weekend with them. As a family they love to go to places like Selfridges and Borough Market. ‘The children love going to the market and choosing the products. They eat everything’ says Darroze.

Darroze enjoys spending as much as time as possible with her two daughters. They love to travel and discover new cultures as well as going to the theatre. Surprisingly, even though she cooks most days in her two restaurants, she also loves to cook at home for her family. Cooking, food and family are a big part of Darroze’s passions and everyday life.

Inspiration

Darroze cool and calm demeanour was the influence for the character *Collette* in the Academy Award winning Pixar film, *Ratatouille*. A Pixar production team and filming crew followed Darroze around the kitchen at H el ene Darroze in Paris for a week two years before the film was released. “I found it strange that the production team wanted to follow me around my kitchen for a film about a rat,” Darroze comments. The film was released when her daughter Charlotte arrived, eight years ago, and she still has the little rat teddy Darroze bought for her.

H el ene Darroze of **H el ene Darroze** in Paris, France and of **H el ene Darroze at the Connaught Hotel** in London, UK was named the **2015 Veuve Clicquot World’s Best Female Chef**.