



A Celebration of Sous-Vide

Food Arts presents Chef Bruno Goussault with the Silver Spoon Award for his work pioneering the art and science of cooking sous-vide.

FOOD ARTS

AT THE RESTAURANT AND HOTEL FOREFRONT

Bruno Goussault

Silver Spoon *Food Arts* presents the September 2006 SILVER SPOON AWARD for sterling performance to **Bruno Goussault**, for pioneering the art and science of cooking sous-vide and igniting the low-temperature cooking revolution. By significantly lowering cooking temperatures and insisting on precision, Goussault made sous-vide worthy of the attention of three-star chefs like **Joël Robuchon**. Goussault's work separates haute cuisine from boil-in-bag.

Goussault's food science career began in 1967 when he worked for the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations as part of France's compulsory service law. He spent two years in Africa improving techniques for milling millet and sorghum. He continued to work with grains back in France, inventing, among other things, a technique for producing a super-quick-cooking "2 minute rice." In 1972 his employer bought a slaughterhouse and his work turned to meat research. He became a meat specialist despite being completely color-blind. Most people judge the doneness of meat by its color, something Goussault can't do. "I had to correlate the structures and textures people associate with particular colors to exact temperatures," he explains. During his experimentation, Goussault discovered that when cooked at low temperatures, meat retains more juices, has a better texture, and is evenly done throughout. "This fact has been known for centuries by many cultures," Goussault says. "Many traditional cooking procedures are essentially similar to sous-vide, like slowly cooking meat buried in pits over ashes."

Goussault's next round of investigation led him to the vacuum bag. In 1970, he began his foray into vacuum pouch cooking, while it was still restricted to industrial concerns and to the work of Georges Pralus, a chef who was using sous-vide with the **Troisgros** brothers, but at higher temperatures. Now he had to establish the technique's safety. Certain dangerous bacteria, like clostridium botulinum, thrive in the absence of oxygen, the exact conditions inside a sous-vide package. He spent years proving that his procedures effectively destroy dangerous bacteria. "I had to become a microbiologist," he laughs.

In the early 1980s Goussault teamed up with Robuchon on a project for the French train company SNCF, teaching him his sous-vide techniques and, more importantly, their mechanisms and underpinnings. They formed an enduring partnership, and Robuchon convinced Goussault to start a sous-vide training center in France, where many of the finest European chefs have studied. But it is through his work with Cuisine Solutions that Goussault is best known. In 1989 Stanislas Vilgrain, the head of what is now Cuisine Solutions, hired Goussault to create a system for high quality sous-vide food on an industrial scale—with the condition that he not teach sous-vide to any of Cuisine Solutions' American competitors. By the late 1990s, realizing that plastic bag cookery still suffered from a public stigma, Goussault lobbied Vilgrain to allow him to train the top chefs in the United States to improve public perception of sous-vide. It's difficult to find anyone on the cutting edge of cooking today who does not owe some debt to Goussault's work.

—DAVID ARNOLD

