



Consulat général de France à New York

Speech of Mr. Philippe Lalliot,
Consulate General of France in New York

Conference@934 “Is there still a French Gastronomy ?”
Monday, December 12th, 2011

Ladies and Gentlemen,
Dear Friends,

I am very pleased to welcome you tonight to our Conference@934.

Last year we spoke about the Euro and crises, but also about life in space and Egyptology. This year, aside from classical topics such as Iran or the transatlantic relations, we also hosted two great researchers on epidemiology. Diverse and eclectic, I hope the rest of our program will continue to satisfy your curiosity.

This evening, we will be speaking about French gastronomy. This subject, which is a very serious one, at least for us French, goes far beyond the simple notion of cooking or the art – which already is a mystery – of combining food and wine. It is a *savoir-vivre*, for not saying a whole way of living. As such, it is an integral part, and the expression, of a culture. This, I believe, is also how we should understand the admission of the “French gastronomic meal” to the UNESCO Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity.

But this gastronomy, deeply rooted in history and traditions, is not a fixed notion. On the contrary, it constantly renews itself when in contact with new culinary practices. Carême, Escoffier and Brillat-Savarin alongside *fooding*, *slow food* and *fusion food*.

In order to discuss these topics, we are fortunate to have with us tonight two fine writers, who are also two fine gourmets.

A *Times* Journalist, author of several essays about Paris and the French culture, Adam Gopnis received many prizes, including three National Magazine Awards for Essays and for Criticism. Adam is a great connoisseur of our country, where he has spent five years. I am sure he knows more about France, its cuisine and its literature than many of us here. This year, dear Adam, you published a new book entitled *The Table Comes First: Family, France and the Meaning of Food*, in which you analyzed the French meal’s history and spirit.

Layla Demay is a journalist, author and documentary director. Along with Laure Watrin, dear Layla, you have cofounded the famous French series *Les Pintades*, and its last piece, published last year – *Les pintades passent à la casserole*, – explores the culinary and cultural differences between Paris and New York. You were also the New York correspondent of several French and European media.

As usual, after a half-hour discussion between our guest speakers, we will have 30 more minutes of Q&A. We shall end the session at 7:45 p.m. and continue the conversation over a cocktail.

Finally, I would also like to remind you that you may find the photos, video and audio recording of the conference tomorrow on our website. With no further delays, I hand over the floor to Adam, and wish you all a pleasant evening./.