

THOMAS BÜHNER

THREE DIMENSIONS

PHOTO ©THOMAS BÜHNER

One of Germany's top chefs for more than twenty years, Thomas Bühner was born in Riesenbeck (North Rhine-Westphalia) to a housewife and a commercial clerk, his first experiences of the restaurant trade came at his grandparents' pub where there was always a slice of freshly baked mixed-grain bread spread with butter and topped with Westphalian ham waiting for him as he came through the door and where he would fall asleep in the evening to the chatter of customers and the sound of people clattering around in the kitchen. Nevertheless, it was a long time before the young Bühner knew what he wanted to do when he left school. While his twin brother decided to become a joiner, the results of an aptitude test at the local job centre suggested that Thomas was best suited to being either a cook, a baker or a farmer. He settled on becoming a cook, and even at that early stage he informed his parents that "if I'm going to be a cook then I'm going to be a good one", a principle to which he remains true to this day. He trained as a chef at the Schweizer Haus in Paderborn, and this was followed by stints at the Düsseldorf Hilton under Günter Scherrer, the Landhaus Scherrer in Hamburg, the Grand Cru Restaurant in Lippstadt and the Restaurant Jörg Müller in Westerland on the island of Sylt.

Then, in 1989, Bühner moved to Baiersbronn to take up a post as Chef de Partie at Harald Wohlfahrt's Schwarzwaldstube. He sees this as a key moment in his career, since in addition to the discipline and consistency that are essential for any successful chef, Bühner was particularly intrigued by the down-to-earth attitude and humaneness that Wohlfahrt showed towards the people who worked for him on a daily basis. He couldn't have been better prepared to take up the position of Chef at the La Table Restaurant in Dortmund in 1991 where he gained his first Michelin star five years later, followed by a second one in 1998. In 2001, Bühner scooped the Gault Millau "Rising Star of the Year" award and was voted "Chef of the Year" just five years later. Together with Thayarni Kanagaratnam he has been running Restaurant la vie in Osnabrück since April 2006. In 2009, Thomas Bühner received the accolade of becoming a Relais & Chateaux "Grand Chef", while the la vie was granted membership of "Les Grandes Tables du Monde" at the beginning of 2010. In 2012, Thomas Buehner was awarded with his 3rd Michelin Star and his now one of only ten German chefs who has three stars.



C. B. Bickel

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“If I’m going to be a chef, then I’m going to have to be a good one.”

This is the standard that Michelin-starred chef Thomas Bühner has held himself to since leaving school. Fortunately, he followed his careers advisor’s suggestion that he become a chef, a baker or a farmer, and Bühner has now been regarded amongst the highest echelon of German chefs for more than 20 years, one of just ten master craftsmen to have been awarded three Michelin stars.

From 2006, Thomas Bühner ran the kitchen at La Vie restaurant until 2018 when it closed its doors. A simple, cosy and relaxing environment – so the diners can truly appreciate the culinary fireworks produced by the avant-garde aroma alchemist. Bühner works with the conviction that there is no more authentic and intense flavour than that of the pure and simple original taste of an individual ingredient. In this spirit, the Michelin-starred chef often spends weeks tinkering and tweaking to fine tune his perfectionist creations. He truly unleashes his creativity it is a feast for both the palate and the eyes, proving that the 19 points awarded to him in the Gault Millau are well deserved.

Since its closure, Thomas Bühner has been active as a guest chef, keynote speaker and consultant for gastronomic concepts and food producers worldwide. In Valencia, for example, he spoke at the Gastronomía Valencia about some of his signature dishes and past experiences. In Amsterdam, he presented his ideas for the reduction of sugar in food to European journalists and scientists in collaboration with Givaudan. In China, he was active as a guest chef for The Ritz-Carlton, in Gütersloh developed a concept for a new restaurant with down-to-earth Westphalian cuisine and in 2020 in Dubai at Glufood – Taste Of The World, Thomas presented a master class on the subject Rethink Food. In the end it is this diversity that excites Thomas. Whether it’s a gourmet restaurant or a pub, a food producer or hotel business – there are no restrictions for Thomas Bühner. Important to him is the dialogue at eye level and an exciting project.



A TOUCH OF...G



COD, OTORO & SAFFRON STOCK



PIGEON JUNIPER SMOKE



SPARGELLACHS



FISCH AUSTERBRIES



POTATO FOAM

Thomas Bühner's inspiration to his culinary creations is a procession of three dimensions...

NATURAL FLAVOUR

The first dimension – the basis for all his dishes – constitutes each individual product's natural flavour. He believes there is no more authentic and intense flavour than the original, pure flavour of a product. He therefore always places the natural flavour in the foreground. "We often work for weeks with various techniques to create my purist 'taste bombs,' going beyond taste boundaries. For example, my 'pure venison' dish is refined from year to year: rather than creating a gravy in the traditional way of lightly roasting meat and vegetables together, a jus was developed using the unadulterated juices of the venison meat. To create this jus, the meat is first coarsely minced and then heated, vacuum-packed, in a bain-marie. The pure juice released from the meat is then boiled down in a vacuum evaporator. The resulting essence is served as a sauce with the venison – without adding any spices, roasted aromas or tannins".

PREPARATION

The second dimension of his cuisine describes how he prepares dishes: characterised by a penchant for low-temperature cooking, the motto is 'take the foot off the gas.' By this, he means not only the time taken to prepare a dish but, above all, the temperature at which it is cooked. Rather than pan-searing a fillet of fish, for instance - braise it for a few minutes in homemade infused oil at just 55°C. In addition, meat and vegetables are cooked 'sous vide,' bringing out the different aromas and automatically creating a more relaxed atmosphere in the kitchen.

EXTENSIVE RANGE

The third dimension represents the extensive range of Thomas' cuisine: a set menu is more than a series of disparate courses; it is composed like a symphony. Sometimes the violin can be heard, at other times the oboe – but strong emotions are only ever aroused when the whole orchestra comes together. Supposed opposites are skilfully staged when composing a set menu: purist dishes are juxtaposed with playfully arranged plates, creating a sensuous dramaturgy.

