

The History of Restaurant Jammet

(abbreviated from Mac Con Iomaire: [The Emergence, Development and Influence of French Haute Cuisine on Public Dining in Dublin Restaurants 1900-2000: An Oral History](#): Doctoral thesis, 2009)

Michel and Francois Jammet

Michel (1858-1931) and Francois (1853-1940) Jammet were born in St. Julia de Bec, near Quillan, in the French Pyrenees to Barthelemy, farmer, and Catherine (née Bourell). The Bourell family were famous hat makers in Carcassonne. The two brothers, aged 12 and 17 respectively, were forced to leave home finding work first in Perpignan and then in Paris where they trained as chefs. Michel Jammet married Josephine Biro, and had one son Louis and one daughter Catherine (Kitty). He first came to Dublin in 1887 as chef to Henry Roe, the distiller. Following four years working in London for Lord Cadogan, Michel returned to Dublin in 1895, becoming head chef at the Viceregal Lodge, when Lord Cadogan became Lord Lieutenant of Ireland. The Cadogans entertained generously, and were intimate with the Prince and Princess of Wales who visited in 1897. Queen Victoria stayed with them in 1900 at the Viceregal Lodge during her final visit to Ireland.

In 1888 Francois became head chef of the '*Café de Deux Mondes*', *Rue de La Paix*, Paris, and then moved to the '*Boeuf a La Mode*', *Rue de Valois*, *Palais Royal*, where he married the owner widow's daughter, Eugenie. The couple legally adopted Catherine, Francois's daughter from an earlier relationship, who later married Felix Auger, a chef, and ran the family restaurant. In 1900 Michel and François Jammet bought the Burlington Restaurant and Oyster Saloons at 27 St Andrew Street, Dublin from Tom Corless. They refitted, and renamed it 'The Jammet Hotel and Restaurant' in 1901, and it became pre-eminent among the restaurants of Dublin. The Jammet family became one of the most influential names in developing *haute cuisine* in Dublin restaurants during the twentieth century.

1900-1922

Thoms' Directory 1901 has an entry for Burlington Restaurant and Oyster Saloons, which was listed as Jammet's for the first time in the 1902 edition. The restaurant opened on the 7th March 1901 and traded at that location until 1926 when the lease reverted to the Hibernian Bank. The restaurant moved to the Nassau Street premises that had previously been Kidd's Restaurant.

The Jammet brothers advertised widely in newspapers and they pointed out that theirs was the only French restaurant in Dublin. Their credentials as 'master chefs' were unquestioned having worked at the highest level of *haute cuisine* in *Restaurant du Bouef à la Mode* in Paris, and in the Viceregal court, Dublin. Both Michel and Francois were involved with the Restaurant and Hotel Proprietors Association of Ireland and subsequent Hotel and Tourist Association of Ireland. François Jammet was elected as Dublin representative of the Executive Committee of the latter in 1906. It is clear that the Jammet brothers were soon accepted among their peers in the Irish catering community as leaders of the culinary arts in Ireland. This is most apparent from the series of correspondence in the letters pages in *The Irish Times* in 1907. The correspondence relates to a failed bid by a syndicate led by the Jammet brothers to run the catering for the International Exhibition. The tender to manage the catering for the Exhibition was given to Messrs. Lyons and Co. of London. Many of the letters support the Jammet bid, with the Hotel and Tourist Association of Ireland particularly upset the contract was leaving the country.

Evidence of Jammet's place among the leading hotels and restaurants of Ireland is available in the form of advertisements for companies such as Gilbey's, who list Jammet's among the leading establishments in which their 'Finest Irish and Scotch Whiskies' are to be obtained. Other evidence is available from the results of the Irish Food and Cookery Exhibition 1912, where Jammet's is the most prolific establishment for prize winners with two awards for Robert Schelling and one each to Adam Pierre, André Fillon, and Lucien Morin.

François Jammet returned to Paris in 1908, where he later became involved in the Hotel Bristol. Michel remained in Dublin running his business until 1927 when he handed over control to his son.

1922-1946

Somerville-Large (1981) describes the entertainment available in Dublin pre 1916 thus:

"Bowler-hatted citizens could attend a few good restaurants like the Bailey or the one opened by the Lord Lieutenant's chef, Monsieur Jammet, in Andrew Street which moved to Nassau Street in 1926".

From the time Jammet's moved to Nassau Street, the responsibility of running the restaurant was passed from Michel Jammet (1858-1931) to his son Louis (1894-1964). Louis was born July 1894 in London and educated in Belvedere College Dublin. He joined the French army as an ordinary soldier during the First World War and was wounded in his right arm. After the war he studied engineering in *l'École Centrale* in Paris where he met his wife Yvonne Auger daughter of Felix Auger and Catherine Jammet, a second cousin, from a strong restaurant family. One side of the family owned the *Hotel Bristol* in Paris and the other owned the *Boeuf à la Mode*, one of Paris's oldest restaurants founded in 1792. Louis worked as an engineer in France until 1927 when he returned to Dublin, and followed his father in running Restaurant Jammet.

When the lease for the Andrew Street restaurant expired in 1926, Michel Jammet acquired Kidd's Restaurant at 45-46 Nassau Street and moved the restaurant to the new premises. He brought some of the fittings from their original premises with him, including four murals depicting the Four Seasons painted by Bossini. The main dining room was described as pure French Second Empire, with a lovely faded patina to the furniture, snow white linen, well cut crystal, monogrammed porcelain, gourmet sized silver-plated cutlery and gleaming decanters. It became the gathering place for the artists and the literary figures such as W.B. Yeats, Liam O' Flaherty, Seán O' Sullivan, Harry Kernoff, Micheal Mac Liammóir, Dudley Edwards, A.E., Brinsley Macnamara, James Stephens, Lennox Robinson, F.R. Higgins, Seamus O'Sullivan, Peadar O' Donnell, Francis Stuart, Frank O' Connor, Miss Somerville, J.M. Hone and Walter Starkie. The Jammet family took pride in the fact that it was Dublin's only French restaurant. From examination of personal documents from the Jammet family it appears that the move to Nassau Street may originally have been meant as a temporary arrangement. A newspaper report in 1934 discusses the Jammet's plan to build a 'super kinema' on the Nassau Street site and move the restaurant to another city centre location. This however never materialised.

The restaurant had two entrances. The exclusive one was at the Nassau Street end the ordinary one was at the Grafton Street side at Adam's Court. It had a smoking room and an Oyster Bar where lunch could be taken at a wide marble counter from a high stool. The clientele were also drawn from the legal and medical professions along with the auctioneering and other businesses. When Josef Reukli, the Swiss *maître d'hôtel* was asked to describe the Jammet clientele, he replied '*La crème de la crème*'.

A profile on Jammet's in *The Irish Hotelier* (December 1949) notes that Josef had previously worked in the *Café de Paris*, The Ritz-Carlton and The Savoy in London, the *Esplanadon* of Berlin, the *Quirinal* of Rome, and the National of Lucerne, where he had seen 'no miracles done there that have not been done better in Jammets'. In 1944 a new Grill Room was opened upstairs, designed by Noel Moffet in a then futurist style.

Louis and Yvonne Jammet had four children, Michel, Raymonde, Patrick and Róisín. They first lived in Queens Park, Monkstown, but moved to the sixteenth century 'Kill Abbey', in 1946 where vegetables for the restaurant were grown in the garden. The Jammets were central to Dublin's social scene, involving themselves in theatre, aviation, and particularly the French Benevolent Society for which Yvonne acted as secretary and treasurer for many years. Louis worked in an advisory role with the City of Dublin Vocational Education Committee (CDVEC) in setting up courses for chefs and waiters in the Parnell Square Technical School, and also worked with the Irish Tourist Association, and the catering branch of the Irish Transport & General Workers Union (IT&GWU) to develop apprenticeship and catering education. A 1928 article in *Vogue* describes Jammet's as 'one of the Europe's best restaurants...crowded with gourmets and wits', where the 'sole and grouse were divine'.

The war years, with food shortages and rationing in Britain created a tremendous demand of appetites, which grew as the war progressed with servicemen crossing the border to sample fine cuisine. Oral evidence for Jammet's during this period was provided by Frank Farren who began working as a third year *commis chef* there in 1945 and qualified as a chef in 1948. He mentions that Jammet's was considered a tough kitchen to work in, and that the head chef was Marc Faure from France and the second chef was Armand Hoffman from Alsace Lorraine. There were about fourteen staff in the kitchen during the mid 1940s, and the main restaurant could seat around fifty people at a time. Also working there as larder chef at this time was P.J. Dunne, who later went on to teach in the Dublin College of Catering, Cathal Brugha Street. Both Faure and Hoffman spent about twenty years each working in Jammet's. Earlier chefs include Carl Opperman who worked in Jammet's prior to becoming head chef in Jury's Dame Street and later in the Gresham Hotel when it reopened in 1927.

1947-1967

The earliest surviving menu available from Restaurant Jammet is from 1949 . Analysis of this menu shows the structure and dishes follow the Escoffier orthodoxy of *haute cuisine*, The style of the food remained constant as evident in the 1961 menu.

When Egon Ronay came to Dublin in 1963 he wrote of Jammet's:

'As if by magic the turn of the century has been fully preserved beyond the swing door...Space, grace, the charm of small red leather armchairs, fin-de-siècle murals and marble oyster counters exude a bygone age. Ritz and Escoffier would feel at home here'.

Ronay awarded Jammet's restaurant two stars – indicating excellence of cooking. After the war, when films began to be made in Ardmore Studios, film stars such as Wells, Cagney and Power converged on Jammet's. It was the place to be seen during the 1950s and early 1960 when the clientele included the Aly Khan, Rita Hayward and Danny Kaye.

Marc Faure was the head chef in Jammet's for most of this time.. It seems that the Jammet family sent Vincent Dowling, from Dublin, to the *Hotel Bristol* in Paris for training, prior to his returning and succeeding Faure as head chef. Faure was head chef on the 10th December 1957 when the Wine and Food Society held its forty-fourth meeting in the Blue Room in Jammet's. The notice of this event was listed in *Good Cooking* (January 1958) and it noted that Faure was from Lyon and had worked in Frascatti's in Le Harve prior to coming to Dublin. Dowling was not the only employee sent to the *Hotel Bristol* for training. Jimmy Beggan, and manager of Jammet's when it closed in 1967, had trained in the *Hotel Bristol* and was described as an 'unrepentant Francophile, he judged all areas of the restaurant and wine business against those of France'.

Analysis of menus from Restaurant Jammet from this period shows continuity rather than change. The menus offer wide choices of dishes under the following headings: *hors d'oeuvres* (appetisers), *Les Potages* (soups), *Les Oeufs* (egg dishes), *Les Poissons* (Fish), *Les Entrées*, *Buffet Froid* (Cold Meats), *Grillades et Rotis* (Grills and Roasts), *Les Legumes* (Vegetables), *Les Entremets* (Dessert), and *Les Savouries* (Savouries). The restaurant also offered daily specials and a range of the finest wines to complement the food. The 1961 menu shows a wide variety of seasonal game including pheasant, plover, widgeon and wild duck which could be ordered roasted, *a l'Orange*, or *a la Presse*. It is interesting to note the French layout of the 1962 menu serving the cheese before the sweet course, and the use of black truffles (*Périgoudine*) and asparagus, both markers of *haute cuisine*.

Louis Jammet died in October 1964, and the running of the restaurant fell to his son Patrick, the only member of the family who had worked in the business. By 1964 conditions in Dublin had changed considerably, parking became a prime consideration in the catering trade. Many of the restaurant's customers had begun moving away from the city centre into the suburbs. In 1967, Patrick closed the restaurant and sold the business. He planned to re-launch a 'Jammet Hotel and Restaurant' on Shelbourne Road, Ballsbridge, but failed to secure planning permission, sparking a public debate in *The Irish Times* letters column. Following its sale, Restaurant Jammet was run for a while as a fish restaurant and steak house by Clayton Love. It then re-opened as a branch of the popular English steak restaurant chain The Berni Inn.