

## Sébastien LACROIX

### INTERVENTION POUR LES INTRONISATIONS

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Please allow me a moment to interrupt this wonderful dinner superbly prepared by Hélène Darroze in order to open an exceptional chapter of the Compagnie des Mousquetaires d'Armagnac.

Some words before about this dinner : Alain Ducasse, the most 'starred' of our great chefs and a Gascon as everyone knows, regularly says « *In order to arrive at the summit of your art you must stay close to your culture and to your roots* ». Tonight, Hélène Darroze has once again shown us that she is at the summit of her art, but more than that, she has allowed us to join her on the route to the summit of pleasure.

Well, now, very officially, we, James Rackham, Florence Castarède, Pierre Samalens, Arnaud Lesgourgues, Fabio Giovinetti, Mark Ridgewell, Ian Wisniewski, Jonathan Ray, Simon Difford....) and myself, Sébastien Lacroix, all Armagnac Musketeers, acting for the Compagnie des Mousquetaires d'Armagnac and in the name of its Captain, M. Aymeri de Montesquiou Fezensac, declare open

« THE FIRST CHAPTER OF THE MOUSQUETAIRES D'ARMAGNAC AT THE CONNAUGHT, LONDON, THIS YEAR 2010 ».

Before starting, the Captain of the Compagnie des Mousquetaires d'Armagnac, M. Aymeri de Montesquiou Fezensac, has expressly asked me to pass on his regrets at not being able to be present here this evening, having been retained by his senatorial obligations.

I must say that we are most honoured by the responsibility that has been confided in us, all the Mousquetaires d'Armagnac, here tonight by the Etat Major of the Compagnie to ensure the smooth proceeding of this exceptional Chapter.

Before proceeding with the introduction of our new Armagnac Musketeers, please allow me a few words :

- A few words of thanks; to you all for your presence here tonight for Armagnac, to the Armagnac professionals and the Compagnie des Mousquetaires d'Armagnac, but also to the wonderful team at The Connaught headed by Marlene Gibson Skinner who has been an invaluable help in organising this evening and to our friend and fellow countryman Helene Darroze. Thank you for the wonderful welcome we have received



in this fabulous setting of the Connaught. I would go as far as to say that thanks to you, the Connaught is a little like an Armagnac Embassy in the heart of London and each one of you Armagnacais for the night!

- A few words about the Compagnie des Mousquetaires d'Armagnac :
  - The first Compagnie des Mousquetaires was created in the 17<sup>th</sup> century, an Elite corps to protect the king of France that numbered several famous gascons like Blaise de Monluc or indeed the illustrious d'Artagnan.
  - The current day Compagnie des Mousquetaires d'Armagnac was created in 1951 by Pierre de Montesquiou-Fezensac, descendant of d'Artagnan and father of today's Captain. The spirit of our Compagnie, is the spirit of Musketeers past and present that aspires to demonstrate when necessary, and perhaps this is more pertinent today than yesterday, the qualities of daring, patience, panache and sensitivity.
- The Compagnie unites personalities at all levels and in the most varied domaines: Heads of State, diplomatic representatives, businessmen and women, the arts, science, the press, gastronomy, culture ...
- All have the same thing in common, to be faithful to the Musketeer spirit and to appreciate and serve the soul of Gascony and of Armagnac, products and beings alike.
- As such, the Compagnie is a real community of hearts and like minded people that always keep in mind the famous Musketeers motto: « ONE FOR ALL AND ALL FOR ONE ».
- Lastly, as a Musketeer far from his homeland of Gascony, I would just like to say a few words on Armagnac:

To taste an Armagnac no matter where you are in the world, is to breathe in the perfume of our hills, our oaks, our vines, our cellars. As Armagnac is the fruit of our land and the work of its men and women, of our vineyards and the slow and precious patience of its ageing.

- Armagnac is an author's eau-de-vie, in other words, a masterpiece created from a series of talents and savoir-faire. All its different authors, from the winegrower, the distiller, the cellar master as far as you, sommeliers, bartenders, merchants,

importers, chefs, journalistes and enthusiasts. All are reunited around this product that is synonymous with Pleasure and Sharing.

- To taste an Armagnac, is also a certain Art de Vivre. Made for savouring every moment, the joy of sharing this pleasure on convivial occasions, the pleasure of getting together and the pleasure of exchange.
- It is for all these reasons that we are proud to be with you to share this evening and this induction ceremony.

I would now like to invite Mesdames H  l  ne DARROZE, Delia SMITH, Vanessa PEARSON et Messieurs John Neil MATHIESON et Laki CHRISTOFOROU, to join us.

**Madame DELIA SMITH CBE:** Delia Smith is Britain's best loved and best selling cookery author and television presenter, selling more than 21 million copies of her books worldwide.

Every Briton knows her and has her to thank for hundreds of original and easy to follow recipes that are the mainstay in so many kitchens. When you choose one of Delia's recipes, you just can't go wrong!

One of the Armagnac bureau's favourite books is her 'Winter Collection' that proposes the delicious 'Fallen chocolate souffl   with Armagnac prunes and creme fraiche sauce' or the Prune, Apple and Armagnac Cake with Almond Streusel Topping'. Thank you Delia for being such an avid supporter of Armagnac for so many years.

Delia is also well known, along with her husband Michael Wynn-Jones as huge supporters of Norwich City Football Club.

The Armagnac bureau is most honoured to introduce you into the Compagnie des Mousquetaires d'Armagnac and hope to welcome you to Gascony soon.

**Monsieur JOHN NEIL MATHIESON :** Neil Mathieson, you were retained in Los Angeles some hours ago, so thank you very much to be able to be here, with us tonight.

You started Eaux-de-Vie about 25 years ago initially concentrating on importing the French brandies of Armagnac, Cognac and Calvados. Since then you have added rums, sherries, ports and other spirits of interest to Eaux-de-Vie's broad portfolio.

Your passion for spirits has led you to discover a world of top quality products from individual domaines around the world and Armagnac was one of the first Appellations that you visited in order to search out the special products you wanted.

Armagnac is so fortunate to have such a great ambassador who has always gone out of his way to support all of the events and give his valuable advice when asked.

Thank you Neil for your perpetual campaigning to raise the awareness of Armagnac. I, and The Armagnacs of Baron de Lustrac and Baron de Sigognac are very pleased to welcome you as a new Mousquetaire d'Armagnac.

**Mademoiselle VANESSA PEARSON** : Vanessa PEARSON, you became the spirit buyer of Sainsburys Supermarket early in 2009, and you have established a successful category for the UK's N°3 supermarket group, and you continue to market and develop Armagnac in your range with a premium 8 year old VSOP quality and an exclusive Sainsburys brand under your prestige trade mark TASTE THE DIFFERENCE, an 18 year old Armagnac, a unique offering in the high street encouraging UK customers to buy a super premium quality.

We also know that you really love Armagnac and you are a worthy candidate to join the Compagnie des Mousquetaires d'Armagnac. With Mousquetaires James Rackham and Bruno Gazaniol, and with the Armagnac Marquis de Montesquiou/Comte de Lauvia, we are very pleased to welcome you as a new Mousquetaire d'Armagnac.

**Monsieur LAKI CHRISTOFOROU** : Laki CHRISOFOROU, you have built in five years one of the largest Independent Distribution Companies to restaurants and bars in the UK. Your turnover is over £45 millions, and you have over 3.000 of the best Bars and Restaurants on your list.

Last year, with a partner, you bought Winerack, the specialist wine merchant chain and we know that you are very fond of Armagnac.

With Mousquetaires James Rackham and Bruno Gazaniol, and with the Armagnac Marquis de Montesquiou/Comte de Lauvia, we are very pleased to welcome you as a new Mousquetaire d'Armagnac.

I now ask each one of you to take a glass of Armagnac in your left hand and to raise your right hand.

I will read the oath of the Mousquetaires d'Armagnac

*By Gascony that gave birth to D'Artagnan,*

*By the wine of our hillsides that give our Armagnac*

*For all whom make our country great*

*In spiritual remembrance of the knight Batz*



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*Comte d'Artagnan*

*I swear to always respect this marvellous eau-de-vie*

*Which carries the name, Armagnac*

*Source of all virile virtues*

*And of all feminine enthusiasms*

Say "Je le jure" (I swear)

Ladies and Gentlemen, you are Mousquetaires. (Please remember to sign the Golden Book).

I read a few days ago that the PDG of the MAYBOURNE group, remarked that the Connaught is more than 110 years old and that they are committed to continuing for the next 100 years to come. I say the same prayer for Armagnac. Our eau-de-vie as you know now is 700 years old and we are all working for the next 700 years.

Thank you all, dear Musketeers, in contributing to this adventure. I thank you all.

To conclude I wanted also thank very much Mr Proton and all his team of the UBI France Office in London. And, my last thanks, but not the least, to Sandra and Amanda who organized all this Armagnac day. Thank you very much for all thing you do daily for Armagnac.

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