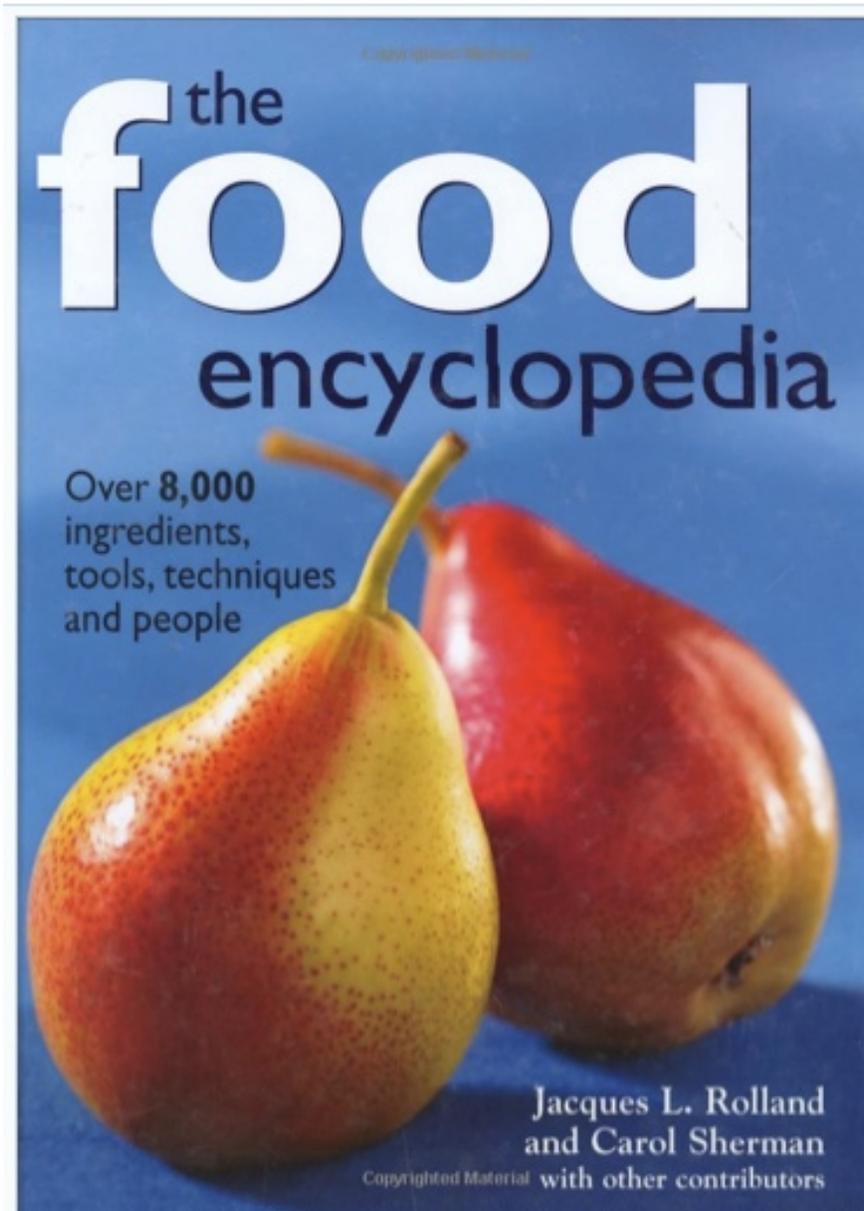


# Culinary Biographies

written for [The Food Encyclopedia, 2006](#)



**Ducasse, Alain** (1956 - ) French chef, restaurateur, hotelier and architect of a hospitality empire studded with Michelin stars. Ducasse was born in the south of France and cooked with Alain Chapel, Michel Guérard and Roger Vergé, masters of modern French cuisine. Ducasse earned his first two stars by the time he was 28. At 33, he earned three for Louis XV in the Hotel de Paris in Monaco, having taken it over just under three years earlier. When he opened his namesake restaurant in Paris in 1997, at the age of 40, he was awarded three stars within the first eight months of opening, making him the first six-star chef in history, with the two restaurants separated by 588 miles. In 2000, he opened a second “Alain Ducasse,” this time in New York City, an over-the-top luxury restaurant of only 65 seats, offering a single seating per night. Special purse benches keep handbags under the table and off the floor, the mineral water sommelier proffers a discerning choice of high-end waters for your meal, and white-gloved waiters cut tealeaves at the table for your pot of tea. Here, Ducasse earned three stars, this time within only five months of opening. Ducasse also ventured into the hotel business, buying and transforming two French chateau-style properties, one of which earned two stars. For a time, he was president of the “Châteaux & Hôtels de France” chain. As well as opening a number of other distinguished stand-alone or hotel restaurants, he launched several concept restaurants in such far-flung locations as London, Tokyo, Monaco, Mauritius, Saint Tropez, Las Vegas and Beirut. He established the Alain Ducasse Foundation, a state-of-the-art training centre that has provided professional instruction for his international brigade of 1,000 since 1999.

**Kroc, Ray** (1902-1984) American entrepreneur and founder of McDonald's, the world's largest quick-service restaurant company. When he met Earl Prince, the inventor of the five-spindled milkshake mixer, Kroc was a paper cup salesman and Prince one of his best customers. Seeing an opportunity, Kroc bought exclusive marketing rights to sell the mixer across the country. In his travels over the next 17 years, Kroc sold eight mixers to Dick and Mac, the McDonald brothers, who ran a busy walk-in restaurant in San Bernardino, California, at a time when the fashion was to be served at your car in the parking lot. Kroc was impressed with the restaurant's economy and the idea of serving a simple menu at the lowest possible price. In 1954, at 52, Kroc bought the restaurant's franchise rights. He created the McDonald's corporation a year later and in 1961 bought out the brothers for \$2.7 million. Two years later, Kroc had opened his 500th restaurant and claimed to have sold one billion hamburgers.

**Reichl, Ruth** (1948 - ) American restaurant critic, author and food editor who returned *Gourmet* magazine to prominence after taking over as editor in 1999. Despite her academic training as an art historian, Reichl began her professional career in the culinary field in the early 1970s in California, where she co-founded a cooperative Berkeley restaurant. She freelanced as a food writer and critic, and published her first book, *Mmmm: A Feasty*, in 1972. Reichl became food editor and restaurant critic at the Los Angeles Times in 1984. Taking over as restaurant critic at The New York Times in 1993, she departed from her predecessors practice of rating only formal, classical, French restaurants - Reichl would rate the city's ethnic establishments and grant star status to a noodle house, for example, if deserving. Reichl has published three books: *Tender at the Bone: Growing up at the Table* (1998), *Comfort Me With Apples: More Adventures at the Table* (2002) and *Garlic and Sapphires: The Secret Life of a Critic in Disguise* (2004).

**Trillin, Calvin** (1935 - ) American journalist, author and humorist. Six years after graduating from Yale in 1957, Trillin became a staff writer at the New Yorker and, later, a reporter for Time and a syndicated columnist whose pieces ran in The Nation from 1978 to 1985. Trillin has written nearly 20 books, among them three, for which he's best known, about food: American Fried: Adventures of a Happy Eater (1974), Alice, Let's Eat: Further Adventures of a Happy Eater (1978) and Third Helpings (1983). When writing about food, Trillin always mentions his family, such as in poking fun at the home cooking of his childhood: "The most remarkable thing about my mother is that for thirty years, she served the family nothing but leftovers. The original meal has never been found."

**Taillevent (Guillaume Tirel)** (1310 - 1395) French chef and author. While working as a young kitchen helper in French royal kitchens, Tirel was given the moniker Taillevent, as well as a coat of arms with three stockpots bordered by roses. He became head chef to Charles V in 1373 and to Charles VI in 1381. Conflicting reports claim that each of these kings commissioned *Le Viandier*, Taillevent's 1379 book of recipes considered to be France's first notable cookbook. Although the literal translation of *viande* is "meat," the word referred to all solid foods, including bread, fish, poultry or vegetables. Meat itself was referred to as *chair*, meaning "flesh." The importance of Taillevent's books was the record of using bread rather than flour to thicken sauces and soups, and a liberal use of spices, specifically cinnamon, ginger, cloves and nutmeg,

**Vatel, François** (1631-1671) French royal steward.

Although Vatel is remembered as the chef who killed himself because he didn't have enough fish for dinner, he wasn't actually a chef. He was a ploughman's son working for the aristocracy. The only account of Vatel's demise comes from a letter written by Madame Sévigné (Marie de Rabutin-Chantal), a writer whose work spawned an epistolary genre of French literature. Her detractors point out that the account was second-hand, while her supporters defend her reputation for accuracy. As she tells it, Vatel was at the docks, waiting for his order of fish at 4 a.m., after 12 days without sleep, because of the elaborate preparations required for a visit from Louis XIV. He was already upset that there had been insufficient roast for two tables the night before, only because of numerous uninvited guests. As the first fish purveyor arrived with his small catch, telling Vatel that this was all he had, Vatel misunderstood him to mean that this included all available fish. Mortified that another shortage would destroy his reputation, he went to his quarters, impaled himself on his sword and died -- but only after three attempts to reach the fatal goal, as his wounds proved. Not long later, boatloads of fish began to arrive for all sides.