

# CHRISTIE'S

PRESS RELEASE – PARIS – 13 FEBRUARY 2022 – FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

## *Le festin de Pierre*

*Livres choisis de la bibliothèque gastronomique  
du baron Pierre de Crombrugghe*

Sale on 23 March 2023

Viewing from 17 to 22 March 2023



Paris – Christie's is inviting foodies and collectors alike to explore **four centuries of gastronomic history** through a selection of books coming from **the library of Baron Pierre de Crombrugghe** and with the **collaboration of the experts Jacques T. Quentin and Benoît Forgeot**. Cooking and the culinary arts have been the subject of poems, treatises and educational works as early as Antiquity and the Middle Ages. But it was not until the 19<sup>th</sup> century that the concept of gastronomy emerged in earnest. The Baron's library displays a number of themes that are inextricably linked to the culinary experience and the way it has evolved throughout history. Its shelves provide a rich menu of treatises on how to cut meat, poultry and fish, as well as texts on truffles, oysters and baking. There are also books explaining how to make iced desserts, tea, coffee and chocolate, and how to set the table and fold napkins. **This collection of nearly 200 works**, estimated at around 1 500 000 euros, is an unmissable rendez-vous with gastronomy, displaying an absolute feast of food history!

## The oldest monuments of the genre

The highlight of the library of Baron Pierre de Crombrugghe is the *Cuisinier Taillevent, ou le Viandier*, the first known illustrated cookery

book. This rare incunabulum, written in French, was published in Lyon in around 1495. Decorated with a large woodcut depicting a cook at the stove and bearing the name of the head chef under Kings Charles V and VI of France, the *Cuisinier Taillevent* is the ultimate reference work on French medieval gastronomy. The volume for sale is the only surviving complete copy.

Half a century later came the *Livre fort excellent de Cuisine tresutile*, a culinary bestseller before its time. Containing over three hundred recipes, it had considerable influence throughout the Renaissance period. The copy at auction is one of three listed from the edition published in Lyon in 1542. It is the only copy to remain under private ownership.

*Le Platine en françois*, printed in 1505, is the French version of a treatise on cooking and dietetics published in Rome in 1474 by the humanist Bartolomeo Sacchi, known as Platina. *De honesta voluptate et valetudine* is a **monumental work** that had a very wide intellectual impact during its time. It revolutionised cooking by combining the joys of eating with dietetic rules. It would become Taillevent's most formidable competitor, and its reign went on to span more than a century.

It was not until *Le Cuisinier françois*, a 1651 work by François Pierre (also known as La Varenne), that the customs inherited from medieval cuisine were brought to an end and the foundations of **modern French cuisine** were laid. Now presented for sale, this volume included for the first time a number of recipes and procedures that are nowadays well-known to modern readers, such as the first recipes for snow eggs and puff pastry.

Cuisine and medicine frequently appear alongside each other in treatises on the art of living well, which is why the library of Baron Pierre de Crombrugghe includes a 1531 edition of *Tacuini sanitatis* by Ibn Butlan, a doctor from Baghdad. This richly illustrated volume comprises almost 300 woodcuts, which depict familiar scenes of gluttony, inebriation, food platters and even kitchen utensils.

You are  
what you eat!

In 1687, in *Le bon usage du thé, du café et du chocolat, pour la preservation & pour la guerison des maladies*, Nicolas de Blégné extolled the therapeutic virtues of "exotic" drinks – tea, coffee and chocolate – recently introduced to France. This much sought-after treatise was published at the same time that the first cafés were opening their doors in Paris.

## The Bible of modern cuisine

One of the most extraordinary items in the collection is a second edition of Escoffier's *Guide culinaire*, a substantial **five-volume working manuscript**. Following the original edition published in 1903, Escoffier began work on a new, expanded edition of his pioneering work, still considered the cornerstone of French cuisine to this day. Sauces, desserts, hors d'oeuvres, soups, pâtés, roasts: everything is accounted for in the thousands of recipes he wrote up based on his experiences at the Savoy and the Ritz. For Auguste Escoffier, cooking, "while an art, will become a science and will have to submit its formulas – still too often based on experience – to a method and a precision that will leave nothing to chance."

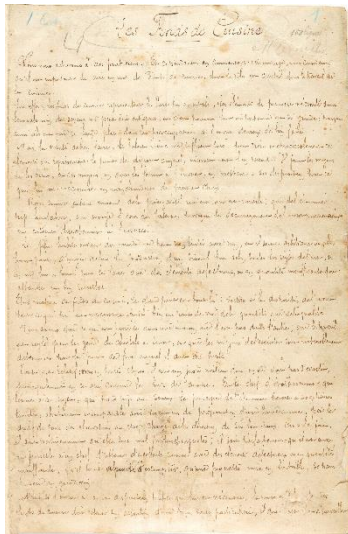
His guidance modernised gastronomy. In the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries, culinary books and treatises were aimed at elites, be they royal, princely or aristocratic. From the 19<sup>th</sup> century onwards, publications gradually diversified and were aimed at a wider audience. Cooking became healthier, less rich, and more affordable.



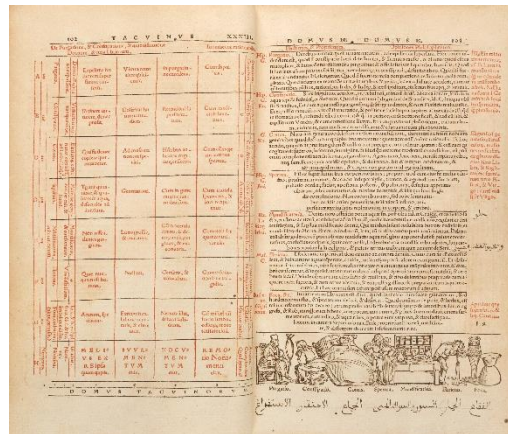
## Gastronomy, a reflection of our heritage

In France and elsewhere, culinary heritage has always been a reflection of the great abundance of regions it comes from. The **library of Baron Pierre de Crombrughe** illustrates this extensively through numerous works, such as *Le gastronome à Paris*, *L'Ancienne Alsace à table*, *Le cuisinier gascon*, *Le cuisinier anglais*, and *La cuisinière de Genève*.

There's a book, and recipes, for everyone!



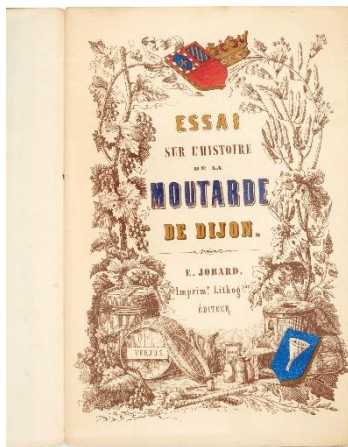
Georges Auguste Escoffier  
*Guide culinaire*  
Second edition, 1907



Dr. Ibn Butlan  
*Tacuini sanitatis*  
1531



*Livre fort excellent de Cuyssine  
tresutile*  
1542, Lyon



*Essai sur l'histoire de la moutarde*



*Almanach du comestible*



*Les champignons de France*

## PRACTICAL INFO

### [Le festin de Pierre - Livres choisis de la bibliothèque gastronomique du baron de Pierre de Crombrugghe](#)

Sale on Thursday 23 March 2023 at 3pm

#### Viewing

From 17 to 22 March 2023

Open every day from 10am to 6pm, except Sunday from 2pm to 6pm

Christie's Paris - 9, Avenue Matignon - 75008 Paris

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#### PRESS CONTACT

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P1: *Le cuisinier françois* and *Le pastissier françois* (circa 1495, Lyon)

P1: Guillaume Tirel known as Taillevent, *Cuisinier Taillevent, ou le Viandier* (late 13<sup>th</sup> century)

P1: Giovanni de Buglhat and Antonio Hucher Compagni, *Banchetti* (1569, Ferrara)

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*\*Estimates do not include buyer's premium. Sales totals are hammer price plus buyer's premium and are reported net of applicable fees.*

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