

ZAGATBUZZ

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The Stars Come Out of the Kitchen

"Great cooks teach themselves," Marco Pierre White told his fellow chefs at this year's [Starchefs.com](#)'s 3rd Annual International Chefs Congress, which began yesterday at NYC's the Park Avenue Armory. Well, apparently the nearly 2,000 industry professionals attending the three-day event don't agree, as they have eagerly signed up for hands-on workshops, cooking demonstrations and lectures taught by more than 60 top chefs like Marcus Samuelsson (NYC's [Aquavit](#)), Wylie Dufresne (NYC's [wd-50](#)) and Traci Des Jardins (SF's [Jardinière](#)).



Paul Liebrandt teaching sous vide techniques

The symposium kicked off with Heston Blumenthal's ([The Fat Duck](#) in London) moving keynote address on the multisensory inspirations behind his dishes, and was followed with lectures like [Charlie Trotter's](#) discussion on community involvement and culinary innovation that played on the overall theme of "The Responsibility of a Chef." Workshops on seasoning cocktails with bitters by Toby Maloney (Chicago's [The Violet Hour](#)) and new kitchen technology by Nils Noren and David Arnold of the French Culinary Institute were well attended. But with the increasing popularity of sous vide, it came as no surprise that [Paul Liebrandt's](#) (ex NYC's [Gilt](#)) class "Voulez-vous Sous Vide Avec Moi (Ce Soir)?," or alternatively, "Practices the Health Department May Frown On," had to turn people away at the door. In between lectures and seminars, participants perused the

products fair, which held few surprises except for such sweet fare as chocolate-flavored cheese and chocolates filled with freeze-dried raspberries, passion fruit and Pop Rocks.

The day culminated with an insightful and entertaining discussion between Anthony Bourdain and Marco Pierre White, moderated by author Michael Ruhlman. Both were frank about their likes and dislikes as they spoke about a celebrity chef's role in the kitchen and upcoming trends. White did not hide his disdain for chefs abandoning their highly rated establishments and leaving others to run them, calling [Alain Ducasse](#)'s restaurants "soulless" without him. Bourdain, on the other hand, was more understanding that big-name chefs who own multiple restaurants can't always be present and maintained that it's a "cruel and snobbish notion to expect Keller, 'St. Thomas of Napa', to die behind the stove." As for trends, Bourdain hopes that American chefs begin embracing skin and cartilage. White would like to see tasting menus disappear because they allow chefs to "control their clients by forcing these 12- to 14-course menus down their throats." When he recalled one of his dining nightmares, a meal that lasted three-and-a-half hours and had too many courses to remember (with the chef slipping in extra courses), the audience not only laughed, but some even applauded.

Though White says he cannot actually teach but "just inspire," the chefs in the audience at least learned one thing: when Marco Pierre White enters their dining room, hide the tasting menus. Two courses will do him just fine and he'll pick them himself, thank you very much.

– Jacqueline Wasilczyk