

Serendipity in simplicity

A company is only as dynamic as its operator, which is of utmost survival in the gastronomy sector. One entrepreneur who is always on the go is Michel Péclard, owner of Conditorei Schober-Péclard Zürich in Zurich, Switzerland. The company runs a collection of eating establishments in the Swiss metropolis that are as lively and unique as Mr. Péclard himself.



All eating establishments of the company are unique

"It is all me," says the owner. "I cannot even cook, but then I travel to New York, see a packed restaurant and ask myself 'Why does it work?' I do not do mainstream, just unusual things." In spring 2010 Mr. Péclard took over the Camping in Zurich and with it the restaurant located on the grounds, Fischer's Fritz, whose name is a reference to a popular German tongue twister, much like Peter Piper. The campground is a hot spot for wealthy guests who also enjoy the simple things in life. Campers can still savour fish, champagne and fine wine, and there is a small shop on location, as well.

Fischer's Fritz and Camping are not the only enterprises by Conditorei Schober-Péclard Zürich. Coco Grill & Bar offers a holiday atmosphere in a romantic courtyard. There is no menu per se, but it has an open grill and gourmet cuisine. The restaurant Kiosk serves pizza, pasta and gourmet dishes with a side of serendipity. The Péclard Zürich in the Café Schober is pastry paradise in a legendary coffee house. Two final restaurants are the Pumpstation, a summery work of art with popular fare, and the Langenberg. To be sure,

each of the operations serves gourmet cuisine prepared by the best chefs in Zürich.

With just 150 employees in total, Conditorei Schober-Péclard Zürich has a close-knit staff. "We are not like a family; we ARE a family," Mr. Péclard emphasises. "That is what I wanted." The owner knows how important it is to treat family right: Every year he takes a trip with his staff, complete with fully paid five-star hotel and some spending cash. "It can get pricey, but it is worth it! I know how hard it is to find good people, and it is important that they feel good." Contrary to popular management styles, Mr. Péclard does not believe in monitoring his staff closely. "This addiction to constant supervision is a phenomenon of

The Péclard Zürich in the Café Schober is a pastry paradise in a legendary coffee house

our time. I trust my employees, and that is reciprocated."

While Mr. Péclard has no training in marketing, last year's turnover of 15 million CHF proves that he is doing something right. "You can find good food anywhere in Zurich, but we offer our guests a two-hour vacation," he explains the company's philosophy. "The guest should feel like he is in a fairy-tale castle, like it is a secret getaway, and he will tell at least 100 people about it." The simplicity of his ideas makes them stand out from the crowd. "In the Coco we use weeds for decoration instead of designer plants. That is really well received because it is unique." It is the little things: fresh fruits as centrepieces, offering simple dishes and finger foods such as chicken wings, even using a jellyfish for the logo. The entrepreneur intends to infuse his businesses further with creativity spurred by the mainstream. "I love it when people question me. When they say, 'That will not work. You will never make it. You are crazy' – that makes it a challenge. I want to do it even more," says Mr. Péclard. "It was that way with Fischer's Fritz.



Michel Péclard, owner of Conditorei Schober-Péclard Zürich

I went against the grain with our menu, using local freshwater fish from Lake Zurich for sushi, for example. I wanted it simple and cosy, and it is constantly booked for weddings and other events." Despite the rampant success of Conditorei Schober-Péclard Zürich, Mr. Péclard sees his future at home. "I have had a lot of requests to expand, but I am a Zurich. I plan to stay in Zurich." The owner will continue marching to his own beat, drumming up big goals for the coming years. "I want to be known as the top of gastronomy in Zurich." He is also toying with a revolutionary idea for his next project. "I would like to open a hotel. There are a lot of designer hotels in Zurich, but they seem so cold. I want a place where a guest can pamper his wife without paying a fortune. Maybe integrate a bar into the reception. When the guest arrives, he should find something nice and not the same old check-in. And I would get rid of the overpriced minibar. That should be included in the price." ■

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