

‘... poulet pour le dîner des enfants’

Among the materials one might stumble upon at the Archives Nationales du Monde du Travail is a book which, in spite of its rather unassuming appearance, has an interesting and eventful history to reveal. Claire-Amandine Soulié explains its significance.

Roughly covered in brown craft paper, which can be lifted up to reveal a green cardboard-covered volume underneath, the book neither has the aura of officialdom, nor does it give the impression, at first glance, of being in any way precious. The book was first discovered by Bertrand Gille, the economic historian once commissioned by de Rothschild Frères to put the records of the bank in order and write a history of the French House.¹ Along with a number of idiosyncratic records, which did not have any natural place in the catalogue he created, he left the book aside, with a view, presumably, to reintegrating it later into the body of the collection. As a consequence, the book remained for a long time within Gille’s personal records, and it was only recently that his original intention was put into effect and the book reunited with the rest of the collection.²

1832. Récapitulation du 8 au 15 *Nov*

		Boucherie			
Journé du 8.	12. 8	De 8.	8.	70.	3/4.
De 9. 2 Enten 2 Gros Poules	258. 15	De 9.	9.	140.	1/4
Journé du 10.	10. 12.	De 10.	10.	71.	1/2
De 11. 3 Enten 1 Gros Poule	52. 15.	De 11.	11.	72.	1/2
Journé du 12.	15.	De 12.	12.	55.	1/2
De 13. 3 Enten 1 Gros Poule	55. 7.	De 13.	13.	90.	1/2
Journé du 14.	19. 15.	De 14.	14.	71.	1/4
Journé du 15.	10	De 15.	15.	50.	
	<u>436. 12</u>			Vinade	621 1/2
	<u>434. 7</u>			Argent...	434 7.
	<u>870. 19</u>				
<p>Novembre Reçu de Sérère</p> <p>De 9. 62 deup de appelle Sara</p> <p>De 10. 15 deup.</p> <p>4 de 11. 1 deup</p> <p>7 deup de 1 deup 2 deup</p> <p>6 deup.</p> <p>16. de deup</p> <p>1. 100 deup.</p> <p>21 1/2 de deup</p> <p>De 13. 21 de deup</p> <p>4 deup.</p>					

A page of summaries of purchases, including a list of game.

1832. Journée du 14. N. Octobre		
	1 poulet pour les enfants	3. 15
	1 pain pour les enfants	9.
	1 pain pour les enfants. dîner	3.
	Dîner d'office de la dévotion de poitrine pour le Siret de la poutre	4.
	5. de la cuisine de la fin	" "
	1 Pain pour le Consommé des Enfants.	" "
		<hr/>
		19 15.
Journée du 15.		
3/4	1 poulet pour le Dîner des Enfants.	4. "
	1 pain pour le Consommé	" "
	1 pain de Boeuf.	6.
3/4	1 pain de la fin d'office et dîner.	" "
		<hr/>
		10. "
1.		
3.		

(opposite page)
Children's meals are recorded in these pages from the kitchen account book.

(pages 52 to 53, overleaf)
Entries in the kitchen account book for 10 to 12 November 1832, featuring Potage aux Vermicelles à l'Allemande, Venaison Anglaise, Saumon à l'Allemande, Filet de Boeuf à la Napolitaine, Poitrine de Veau à l'Allemande, Gâteau Napolitain.

The book, which, in Gille's writing, is identified as a 'Livre des comptes de cuisine' [Kitchen Account Book] for the period 15 October 1832 – 15 September 1833, has no other formal label or any clue to information that might be contained inside. Browsing through its contents, though, is both interesting and entertaining as it records all the ingredients of the meals eaten by James de Rothschild and his family for a period of just over a year between 1832 and 1833.

One regular entry, 'poulet pour le dîner des enfants' signals that chicken was served to the children on most nights. However as one can imagine, the amount of entertaining and dinner parties that took place in rue Laffitte is reflected in the long lists of expensive ingredients, and records of lavish meals. Truffles, lobsters, and champagne jelly, were at once on the menu of the dinner of 17 November 1832, along with countless, sophisticated accompaniments, and sweet delicacies for dessert. Browsing through the book, one cannot help but make amusing guesses: which statesman, which diplomat, which financiers, did they entertain, on the 11 and 12 November 1832, for there to be so many foreign dishes on the menu? Potage aux Vermicelles à l'Allemande, Venaison Anglaise, Saumon à l'Allemande, Filet de Boeuf à la Napolitaine, Poitrine de Veau à l'Allemande, Gâteau Napolitain ... all these mouth-watering dishes were served in these two days, but who were the honoured guests who merited this undoubtedly unique culinary experience? Who was sitting at the table for the dinner of 22 April 1833, when two soups were served, followed by eight starters, six main dishes with three different accompaniments, and eight desserts, including jellied pineapple and champagne chocolate truffle?

When it was first uncovered, the book was thought to have belonged to Antonin Carême, James' chef, who had also been in the service of Talleyrand, and is still recognised as one of the greatest French chefs of all time. Carême, however, had left Rothschild employment by the time this book was compiled, and he died in January 1833, proving this assumption to be wrong. Can the banquets produced in succeeding years have been so very different, however, to that described by Lady Morgan in 1830, at which she sat at a table tastefully laid with gold, silver and porcelain? There were, she recorded, no 'old-fashioned, strong-tasting sauces, nor over-concentrated jus. Rather, the delicate gravies were made with almost chemical precision ... each vegetable still had its fresh colour, ... the mayonnaise was whipped ice cold.'³

Neither the attribution of the book to a post-Carême era, nor its banal appearance should distract from how truly fascinating a volume it is, in documenting one of the most well-known aspects of Rothschild style: the art of hospitality.

The book has now been digitised in its entirety and is available on the Rothschild Research Forum at www.rothschildarchive.org



NOTES

1 Bertrand Gille, *Histoire de la Maison Rothschild* (Genève: Droz, 1965).
 2 The Rothschild fonds conserved at the Archives Nationales du Monde du Travail carries the reference 132AQ.
 3 Georg Heuberger, ed., *The Rothschilds, A European* (Frankfurt am Main: Thorbecke / Boydell & Brewer, 1994), p.105.

1832. Journée du 10 Nbre

1	Paix pour le soussou	"	"
2	paquets pour les dîners	"	"
2	paquets de viande pour les dîners	7	"
1	de Beurre fin officier et dîners	"	"
	Potage	4	16
	Gris pour la batterie de cuisine	2	8
	un chopin de crème	"	10
		10	12

Dîners du 11 Nbre

3	paquets de Potage aux truffes et Allemande 2 Paquets	6	"
	Le pied de veau garni de risotto garni	2	"
	La sauce de la sauce tomate	7	"
3	Entrées. Le vol au vent garni d'impureté de gibier et d'œuf	1	10
	L'œuf	"	"
1	Set - Le Dénouement Anglais	"	"
	x Le Saumon et Allemande	22	"
3	Entrées Les Epinards aux croutons		
	Les légumes et Allemande		
	La crème au chocolat fromage et crème	2	10
	Pieds de moutons pour les dîners	6	15
1	paquet pour le dîner des Infans	1	"
1	de beurre pour la sauce et sauce Bord	1	"
1	de Beurre fin	2	"
7	de Verme officier et dîners	"	"
26	œufs de ferme	"	"
		54	15

1832. Journée du 12 Nbre

1	paquet pour le dîner	1	"
	paquets pour les dîners	9	"
2	de Min de Plomb pour le nettoyage de la plaque	2	"
1	Beurre de ferme	1	"
		15	"

Dîners du 13 Nbre

3	Paquets de Potage au Orge et Allemande 1 paquet	3	"
	Le pied de veau et le Potage	10	15
3	Entrées Les Salades au gratin	14	"
	La quessie de paquets et de viande 2 Paquets	7	10
	La portion de viande et Allemande	"	"
1	Set - Le veau d'œuf et Beurre d'œuf	"	"
3	Entrées. Le chicon aux croutons crème	1	"
	Le gratin et le potage fromage et choux	1	"
	L'œuf soufflé et de viande	"	"
5	œufs de ferme	"	"
6	de Beurre Verme	"	"
	report et	1	"
	Champignons citrons pour les salades de viande et de pain	3	2
	œufs pour la cuisson de paquets	2	"
2	œufs de veau pour les dîners	8	"
1/2	Beurre de farine	3	"
		55	1