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FOOD & DRINK

Inside the kitchen of Yannick Bigourdan, owner of Lucie and the Carbon Bar



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Featuring a fancy mustard collection, canned wine and century-old glassware


BY JESSICA HURAS | PHOTOGRAPHY BY JELENA SUBOTIC | JULY 24, 2024

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Yannick Bigourdan, the owner of [Lucie](#), [Amano Trattoria](#), [Bar Notte](#), [the Carbon Bar](#) and the [Berczy Tavern](#), thrives on routine. He achieves inbox-zero daily, his lunch is always one of the same two meals (ratatouille with chicken at Lucie or smoked turkey breast with sautéed rapini at the Carbon Bar) and he plays tennis two mornings a week. With five restaurants, a catering business and a soon-to-launch e-commerce platform for products from the Carbon Bar, it's no wonder Bigourdan has become a master of time management.

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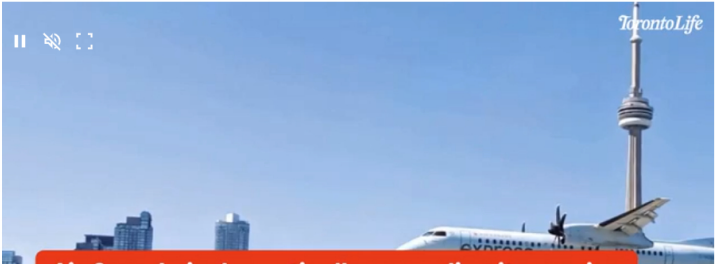
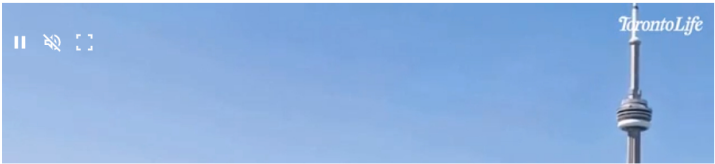
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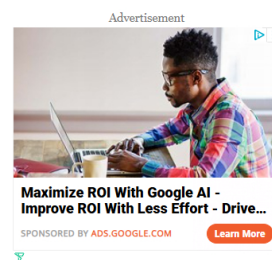
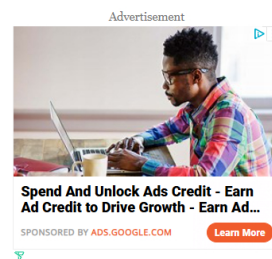
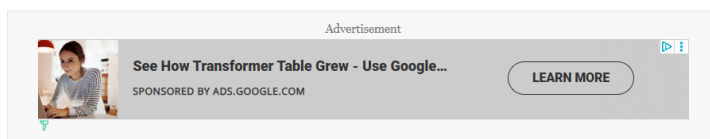
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Bigourdan grew up in the south of France, where his parents ran a delicatessen. “I loved the business,” he says, “but I wanted to get out of the small village we lived in.” After completing restaurant and hotel management studies in Switzerland, he got a job working at Four Seasons Hotels and Resorts. That gig eventually brought him to Toronto, where he met his wife, Kris. In 2001, he took over Splendido, which kicked off over two decades of managing restaurants and segued into his current food empire.



These days, Bigourdan commutes into Toronto daily from his home in King City, where he and Kris have lived for the past decade. They recently moved into a pair of cottages that date back to the 19th century. The couple cooks at home most days and shares kitchen duties. “We love cooking together,” Bigourdan says. “We don’t really have to talk. She knows what she has to do and I know what I have to do.”

Bigourdan does most of the grocery shopping in Toronto, picking up essentials from St. Lawrence Market, McEwan Fine Foods, Longo’s and Pusateri’s. “We don’t have a lot of specialty food stores up north,” he says. They also get fresh produce boxes from Mama Earth delivered once a week.



The fridge is stocked with products from Bigourdan’s restaurants, two kinds of sparkling water (he prefers Perrier for sipping solo and San Pellegrino for pairing

spanning miles (the perfect place for dipping ribs and beer) and a long drive home with food) and Kronenbourg 1664 Blanc ("Because I'm French," he says). The packages of brisket, pastrami and gravlax are part of the Carbon Bar's retail line. "I literally eat a pound of smoked salmon a week," Bigourdan says.



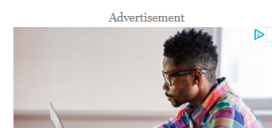
Most of his barbecue sauces come from the Carbon Bar. The exception is the peri peri sauce from Wildly Delicious Preserve Co., which he uses for dousing chicken.



This pile of fresh pasta was made by Amano Trattoria chef Michael Angeloni. This pile of fresh pasta was made by Amano Trattoria chef Michael Angeloni.

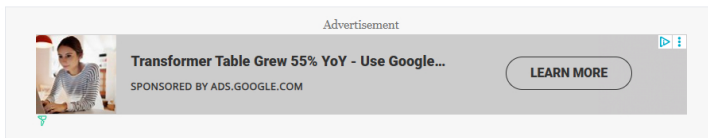
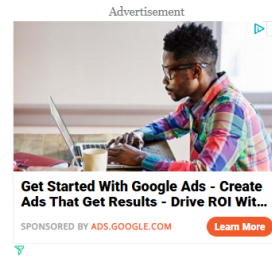


The foie gras was also snagged from one of Bigourdan's restaurants and prepared by Lucie chef Arnaud Bloquel.





This hybrid bread (a cross between a croissant and a baguette) comes from Petite Thuet. “I’m very spoiled because we buy bread from Thuet for Lucie, so I also put in my own orders,” he says. Their burger buns are also from the bakery (the Bigourdans keep them on hand for feeding their sons when they visit).



The household is loyal to Pusateri’s parmigiano-reggiano, but the majority of the cheese and meat comes from Alex Farm Products in St. Lawrence Market.

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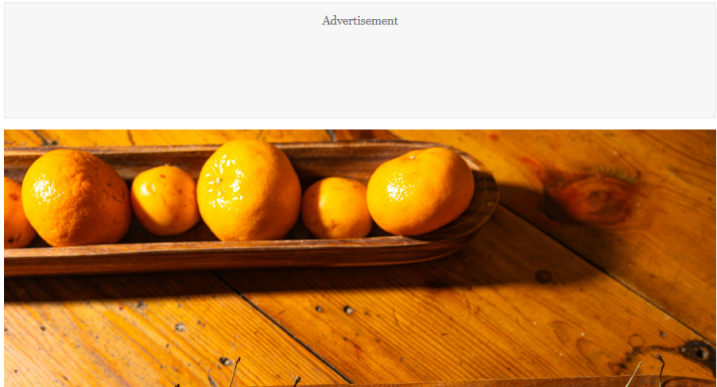
These Limousin steaks are also from St. Lawrence Market. “It’s a French breed that’s raised in Ontario,” says Bigourdan. “My favourite.”



He keeps cans from California’s Hogwash winery on hand for convenient single-glass servings.



Bigourdan has a spontaneous approach to buying fruit, deciding what looks best while he’s in the grocery store. “I choose fruit with my eyes, so I never know what I’m going to buy until I buy it,” he says.





The freezer is packed with frozen items from his restaurants, including these pizzas from Amano Trattoria. There are also frozen empanadas, burgers and demi-glaces from the Carbon Bar.



Olive oils and vinegars are staples in the Bigourdans' pantry (they love to make big salads dressed with vinaigrette). Their current assortment includes pricier stuff from high-end grocers alongside bulk bottles from Costco.

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This is only part of the Bigourdans' mustard inventory (the rest is in the fridge). "I could have mustard with pretty much anything," Bigourdan says. His preferred grainy mustard is the Longo's house brand. "It's one of the best, and it's great value as well."




Bigourdan always has crackers and taralli handy for pre-dinner snacking. He often tops the crostini with smoked salmon and a smear of butter.



The jars of truffles are for adding rich, earthy flavour to risotto and ratatouille, and the pastas are from McEwan and Longo's. "When we make pasta, we want to do it well, so we tend to splurge on it," says Bigourdan.

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He rarely drinks coffee and instead cycles through a stockpile of teas. “I usually have one or two cups in the morning and then put the rest in my Yeti and take it with me in the car.”



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Accumulated gradually over 25 years, this set of Le Creuset and Staub enamelware includes many pieces that were gifts. In the winter, they’re essential for cooking terrines, stews and osso buco.



When Kris gave up alcohol several years back, Bigourdan decided to swap his wine collection for a drink he could more easily savour solo. “Opening a full bottle of wine at home didn’t make sense anymore, but I still wanted to collect something,” he says. “I’ve always loved bourbon, so I made a switch.” He dips into his bourbon stash about once a week, rotating between bottles, though he has a particular fondness for Shenk’s Homestead Sour Mash Whiskey from Louisville’s Michter’s Distillery. “If I had to pick one to have for the rest of my life, it would be Shenk’s,” he says.





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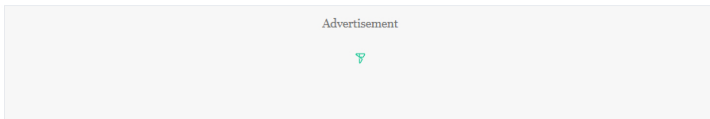




He also has a handful of bottles from Orphan Barrel, a Tennessee-based brand known for its unique releases of rare whiskies. “They go into distilleries and find special barrels that have been forgotten,” he says.



“When I have a glass of bourbon, I really want to enjoy it, so I have special glassware,” says Bigourdan. These glasses, which are over 100 years old, previously belonged to his great-aunt.



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The Bigourdans often reference *Larousse Gastronomique* (which they call “the bible”), *The French Laundry Cookbook* and *Terrines, Rillettes, Saucisses & Pâtés Croûte* when cooking at home.



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Bigourdan's great-uncle operated a canning business in the early 19th century. Some of the original labels for products like boar pâté, pigeon compote, beef tongue and bear patty are preserved and framed in his kitchen.



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Jessica Huras

Jessica Huras is a freelance writer and editor with over a decade of experience creating food, travel and lifestyle content. She's a content editor for the LCBO's *Food & Drink* magazine, and her work has appeared in the *Globe and Mail*, the *Toronto Star*, *Chatelaine*, *Toronto Life* and *Elle Canada*, among other publications.



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A festive drink instantly sets the perfect tone for any holiday gathering. From old-school favourites like party-fave six-packs to dark and moody whiskies, the right pour invites mutual appreciation and enjoyment for the company you keep.

Skipping hosting this year? No problem. This lineup has all the bold, bright and gift-worthy bottles and cans you need to look effortlessly thoughtful. Whether you're shaking up something spirited for a crowd, choosing the perfect bottle for dinner, or hunting for a foolproof host gift, these festive picks will keep the celebrations flowing.





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