

When photographer Jonathan Atkin met The Waterside Inn's most famous resident.

*Dear Sir Baron,*

*Just wanted to wish you a merry 'dog bone' Christmas, having spent one of the most delightful weeks of my life with you, and your colleagues at Waterside Inn. Michel said, "you'll have the run of the place," and I certainly did! I reveled in talking, looking, watching and photographing Waterside's kitchen, staff and culinary treats – an experience to treasure forever.*

*While, dear Baron, we didn't discuss much, I'd like to thank you for your grace and introducing me to all your friends, Chef Alain for sure, who, in his quiet but droll manner, grabbed my respect and is a real anchor for the rest of his amazing and talented staff – and without doubt, his culinary brilliance is clear and stands on its own merits. That brass plaque on the outside wall says it all – Grand Chef. Though Alain and his head chef remain skeptical that the 'American' could actually take a good photograph of them. Hopefully I've proved them wrong!*

*What I have learned from the entire dedicated and passionate staff was the intensity, the preparation and the labor intensive work that goes into every plate. From the vinegar cleansing of each, to the very special French butter the baker uses, to the magical poaching of eggs, to the wrapping of the fat over the lamb or veal meats after deboning. The differing kinds of flour, Spring, Summer or Winter wheat the baker uses, the slow poaching of salmon. The brilliant kitchen design with amazing electric salamanders at every step... wow. Just to see the massive engine, that stove with so many staff workin' its magical burners...that was brilliant.*

*The fish chef...and his understated humour...If I were a fish, I'd be happy to be in his hands. Thankfully I'm not. And ahhh...the treatment of the Bressingham duck versus the Chandres duck – mastery...and Deigo...thank you for pressing those carcasses into the newly plated press.*

*From the directional skill and masterly order that Diego produces in his gracious and theatrical style, which, while seemingly easy-going, doesn't miss a detail anywhere – whether it's how one dresses, speaks, or moves through the dining room or anything else for that matter. But he is grace, he is front of house brilliance! Speaking of front of house, the erudition when the waiters bring about each and every dish, I had a lot of questions, but the waiters took me in their stride and I dare-say we all learned!*

*Then there are all the wonderful sous chefs, pardon me dear Baron for not remembering all their names, but I hope my photographs celebrate each and every one of them, and their very special individuality that blends into a team that is the mark of one of the few and finest restaurants on the planet. And dear Baron, I've seen many. I've photographed in the kitchens, traveled and eaten with most of the food critics of the New York Times. I didn't tell you that when I met you, dear Baron...I wanted you to be yourself – and you as well as your colleagues were indeed that.*

*So dear Baron...thank you for being such a fabulous host. And I forgive you for jumping in the canal at Nunney Castle. I think Robyn does too.*

*Luv ya,*

*Jonathan Atkin*



Jonathan Atkin first photographed Michel Roux for *The New York Times*, now Jonathan focuses on Maritime photography but his passion is still food with his photos of The Waterside Inn staff on display at The Waterside Inn. For more information about Jonathan's photography visit [www.shipshooter.com](http://www.shipshooter.com)