

*I think I'm tired of seeing cookie posts out there. No offense to you bakers that have been slaving over ratios, non-stick baking sheets and the perfect soft batch.*

*Yes, it's most definitely that time of year to make all sort of goodies and even gift them in pretty saran wrap. In fact, I was debating on making my brothers' ex-girlfriend's recipe. She used to give it to all the mothers in the family while they were dating. And, I of course, snuck it away from all of them! K was so sweet, she'd just show up with more batches through New Year's.*

*So, I get it. It's baking time!*

*But, since I'm not baking a damn thing (well other than some flan orders, and I really don't consider that baking since I pressurize them), I figured I'd entice you with this most incredible ketchup recipe I've ever had.*

*Earlier this year, my parents, sis and I went on our bi-annual trip to Monaco. I talked some about it [here](#) and [here](#). But, those were teasers and didn't do the trip any justice. And, truthfully speaking, this post won't either. This is yet another teaser because sharing this recipe alone, won't add any additional grandeur.*

I had the awesome opportunity to visit 4 exquisite and Michelin-rated restaurants, meet the chefs and even do some demo's with them in their kitchens! This trip is what inspired and brought on the Joel Robuchon meeting this past September, which you can read about [here](#).

Among the four restaurants I ate at in Monaco, [L'Argentin Grill](#), nestled in a cozy corner inside **The Fairmont Hotel**, was one of my favorites.

A 4-star hotel lobby restaurant, it boasts offering some of the best grilled meats you'll indulge in.

First of all, my point of contact there was sweetest and enjoyable person to work with before I even landed in the Principality. She ensured me my visit at the restaurant and the more importantly, the chef, would be memorable. And, she did just that.

Shall we talk about the chef? Maryon Gandon is in one word, **DYNAMIC!** He's witty, funny, inviting, personable, spunky and doesn't speak a lick of English! Because I was taping the entire stage, and I went in with my mostly forgotten French, my POC and dad were my translators. Notwithstanding, global hand gestures worked very well, let me tell you!

I swooned as soon as I entered the empty dining room. Tables hug an all glass window wall, giving the diner an unobscured view of the historic Mediterranean Sea. Fittingly, the dining room décor was blue in tone, without swimming in it. No pun intended.

And then the encounter with the chef. "**Bren, finalement, c'est un plaisir de vous connaitre!**" Me: "*Moi, aussi!*" I had NO idea what I was getting ready to get myself into and neither did he, evidently. But the greeting was very affectionate and exciting.

**All of a sudden, I'm whisked into the quiet, but massive kitchen, with 4 or so sous and line chefs lingering, but steadily looking in curiosity.**

As you can see from the picture below, I was immediately given a chef's coat, belonging to chef Isabel. I kinda wanted to take it, but it was way too big. Clearly, she's eating well! I put my coat on, camera starts rolling, and **ALL THIS FOOD** and **mise en place** trays start coming out!!

*(Wait, doesn't the coat look GOOOOOOD!?! Especially with the matching black and gold bamboo earrings!? Such a coincidence.)*

My God, I didn't even know what to say! Since I didn't have any expectation other than not to eat pork or shellfish, everything that was being prepared in HE-MAN fashion, was overwhelming. Chef Gandon's crew were machines on steroids, swiftly heating skilletts, passing ingredients over each other and whisking sauces that had aroma's I'd never whiffed!

I had to ask the videographer to stop rolling for a quick moment to "adjust my coat and pull my hair back in a bun" (really a guise for gathering my thoughts?things were moving really, really fast!).

Everything was gorgeous. The colors, the textures; even the heat of the burners and warmers were infectious! Something about helping this good-looking chef, made it all so unintimidating. Otherwise, I would have been bustin' my ankles. Yes, I was wearing 4? heels while making a white fish sauce for the 2nd course.

The chef prepared us 5 courses, including two desserts which left me speechless. Of the 5 courses (2 pictured above), I'll just quickly touch on one:

## **THE COLOSSAL BURGER!**

Now, you know burgers are not a French thing. **Pommes frites**, maybe, but not burgers. And THIS burger is not even like any American burger I've seen. I was warned I was in for a surprise, and Lord have mercy, was it huge! We all stood there in utter amazement as the only thing we could see was bread! A huge tower of bread. I was hoping the actual meat part of it wasn't as tall as the tower appeared. And thank God, when the chef uncovered the burger, it was almost normal size.

Almost.

How unique. The top half of the burger is used as "basket" for the most perfectly crisp potato wedge.

Okay, so the burger was good. The KOBE beef was juicy and cooked to a delicious point. The tomato was succulent and very chunky, as you can see in the picture. But, the ketchup *mi amigos*, was ALL THAT! I was so impatient, I tasted it even before the servers brought them to the table. Since he advised it was homemade and like none other I'd ever had, I dipped in.

Gasp.

I'll say no more. Really. It was that damn good.

Upon returning to the States, I emailed my now new friends and kindly asked for the recipe so that I can share with you guys! They were kind enough to get right back to me.

Here is an authentic French, homemade ketchup, written by the Chef himself, in the metric system. So go rack your brain and do the conversions while you're baking more cookies! It's more than worth it.

And, here's **mami** debating on how to best attack that beast of a burger, with no shame! Get it *mami* !!

As for more ocean view pictures of the resto, the interview with Chef Gandon and the rest of the courses we prepared and ate, including sexualicious desserts, I'm still working on those posts and I'll even include the video of the entire visit. There are 3 other restaurants to cover, so you're definitely in for a series of super delicious visual, audible and more importantly, edible treat (yes, they've shared more recipes!)

Thanks to the entire PR staff at The Fairmont Hotel, Monte Carlo and the kitchen crew at L'Argentin Grill for fabulous hospitality, food, wine, and generosity!! Most of all, Chef Gandon. I just can't wait to go back!

## CHEF GANDON'S HOMEMADE KETCHUP

### *Ingredients:*

- 1 kg of tomatoes indeed wall up
- 2 soupspoons of vinegar
- 2 soupspoons of cane sugar
- 1 teaspoon of cumin
- 1 soupspoon of olive oil
- ½ l. of pineapple juice
- Nutmeg (*note: I suppose to taste?*)
- salt and pepper (*note: I suppose to taste.*)

*Preparation:*

- Cut tomatoes in fragments
- Make warm the olive oil in a pan on average fire
- Add tomatoes and let melt tomatoes 5 minutes.
- Add the sugar, the vinegar, the cumin and the juice of pineapple
- Grate a little nutmeg
- Salt and pepper at your convenience
- Let cook 1hour on slow fire by moving from time to time. This tomato sauce has to thicken.
- Remove the sauce of the fire