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# The GRAND Tour

Three chefs - from Australia, China and Italy - who honed their skills in Europe are now in Singapore heading new eateries.

by RACHEL LOI



## John-Paul Fiechtner

IF you're the sort who keeps up with the new restaurants scene, you may have heard rumblings about a modern Australian eatery called Thirteen Duxton Hill, run by Australian chef John-Paul Fiechtner and sommelier Sally Humble. It was a "blink and you miss it" situation unfortunately, since the restaurant closed after barely two months of operations.

"It was just an unfortunate situation that we found ourselves in, but it led to better things," says Chef Fiechtner, who is now working on a new project - Bistro November at Keong Saik - after the duo teamed up with local restaurateur Lok Lik Peng.

"We just want to create a friendly neighbourhood bistro, like the ones you find in Paris or New York. It's going to be produce-driven, simple, interesting cooking with no pretentiousness

whatsoever," says the 36-year-old chef, who has spent a few years working in Europe, Hong Kong and Dubai before co-founding the Melbourne restaurant Lume in 2015.

Although Lume was doing well,

Chef Fiechtner explains that he left because he was looking for a change and wanted to get out of Australia. So when an opportunity came up in Singapore, he decided to make the trip. "We had never been here before, but when we first got here we fell in

love with Singaporeans' love for food," he says.

At Bistro November, Chef Fiechtner intends to work with fresh ingredients from the nearby Chinatown wet market. The menu will likely consist of two parts - an *à la carte* section of

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about 15 classic bistro-style items meant for sharing, and a five-course *prix fixe* menu (\$578++) that will change weekly once the restaurant has settled into a proper rhythm.

Unfortunately, Bistro November currently has an expiry date - it's set to close in November when the lease is up. Beyond that, Chef Fiechtner has no plans just yet. He says: "I've been in the industry for over 20 years now, so I don't see myself leaving it. Maybe one day I'll open my own little restaurant somewhere. But for now we love Singapore and have settled down here really nicely, so there's no rush."

**Bistro November**  
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november.asia





## Emmanuel Xu

FOR Emmanuel Xu, choosing a career as a chef started out as just a means of survival. Recalls the China-born chef: "I wasn't great at school, and I told my Dad I didn't want to study anymore. So he suggested I go and be a cook because that way I would never starve to death."

So at 18, he went to work in the kitchen of a Chinese restaurant in Beijing. After just six months however, he found the environment filthy and uncomfortable, so he packed his bags and moved to France to learn Western cuisine instead.

"When I first got there, I didn't know anything. The first thing I learnt about the French kitchen was that they really prioritise hygiene. Because while no one may know about a good restaurant, everyone will know about a restaurant where someone gets food poisoning," says the 32-year-old who is more fluent in French than English.

It's something he intends to enforce strongly at Ginett – a barely two-month-old restaurant that opened at

Hotel G in Middle Road this year, where he is the executive chef.

There, some of his Asian influences can be spotted on the menu, with elements like soy sauce, ginger, and wasabi in the Tuna Tartare (\$\$21), but most of the dishes are European because of his French cooking background. This includes the signature La Quenelle de Brochet Gratinée (\$\$28)

– pike fish dumplings with chardonnay sauce and La Joue de Boeuf (\$\$32) – braised wagyu cheek with sauteed mushrooms and mashed potatoes.

After all, it was while working in French kitchens that he eventually fell in

love with his work. Explains Chef Xu: "Some farms in France specially grow ingredients for certain restaurants, and I watched the chefs treat them with such respect. Even something like an apple, or something as simple as pumpkin soup. It might sound ridiculous, but they peel it, cut it, and cook it with such care. Because they believe that if you treat an ingredient right, it will treat you right, too."

### Ginett

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