

## discovery: ONE PERFECT MORSEL



# How to Eat a Mille-Feuille

People come from all over the world to have a mille-feuille at the Café de la Paix at Paris' InterContinental Le Grand Hotel.

I thought I was pretty expert at properly eating most any type of food put before me. But I met my match in Paris, at the gorgeous, lavishly-renovated InterContinental Le Grand Hotel Paris, home of the renowned Café de la Paix. If you have been to Paris, you know that a mille-feuille (sometimes called a napoleon) is a wonderful thing: thick layers of rich pastry cream sandwiched between crisp puff pastry layers. It's luscious and creamy and crunchy, all at once. And the Café de la Paix is known for making one of the best in the world. I had the good fortune to order one after lunch. Marie-Béatrice

Lallemand, the directrice of the hotel, told me that the mille-feuille is the Café's best-seller, that visitors from all over the world come in morning, day or night for the heavenly creation. It sat high on the plate, a tall rectangle of very thin puff pastry with halfinch layers of vanilla cream. But as I went to pierce it with my fork, she asked me, "Do you know the proper way to eat a mille-feuille?" Since obviously I did not, I asked for her recommendation. She told me that, of course, if I put my fork into the pastry and pressed down, the cream would ooze right out the sides and I would be left with plain puff pastry and a puddle of cream beside it. Of course, she was right. "You need a perfect mouthful, layers of pastry and cream. Turn it on its side," she instructed, and I did. "Now cut straight down," which I also did. I could see already that she was right. What I now had before me was a miniature of the larger mille-feuille, perfectly intact. It was just the right amount to pick up with my fork, while keeping the integrity of its structure. What's more, I was able to make about a dozen of them (this is no small dessert). Each and every mouthful was wonderful, with terrific contrast between the rich vanilla pastry cream and the crunchy sugar-glazed pastry. So now you (and I) know where to find great mille-feuille, and, most importantly, how to eat it.



OPPOSITE: People come from all over the world to have mille-feuille at the Café de la Paix. THIS PAGE: Chef **Carl Marletti** and his staff prepare hundreds of mille-feuille pastries every day.