



PHILIPPE LARUELLE, DE BUYER

A career in the hospitality sector always beckoned for de Buyer's development and demo chef Philippe Laruelle given that his parents bought a hotel-restaurant when he was just five-years-old — he later took it over and transformed it into a gourmet restaurant and cooking school. The expansion of the business into catering led to his involvement with various French and international culinary associations, allowing him to connect with fellow chefs and brands such as culinary utensils and cookware specialist de Buyer, which he joined five years ago. He explains why having a kitchen next to the company's factory is so productive, the importance of speaking the language of chefs and the long-term R&D project that has implications for the planet.

What does a typical day entail for you?

One of the key things about my role is that no one day is like another. It varies between working closely with de Buyer's R&D department — testing a new product, discussing the development of a new one or improving an existing utensil from the range — supporting operators in developing new equipment or travelling in France or abroad to train our sales teams and distributors or do cooking demonstrations. As a development chef, I'm in charge of creating new recipes for new products or new packaging. The marketing team involves me in product photo and



video shoots that will be used on our packaging or online platforms. I easily adapt to what is needed from me by the company, our partners and customers.

In what ways is your role able to support operators with the kitchen, equipment or menu challenges they face?

My training and my broad professional experience in many areas — cooking, pastry, catering, professional and retail — as well as my involvement with culinary associations allow me to speak the same language as the operators I meet; I understand their expectations and their struggles. Combined with my knowledge on materials and the de Buyer products, I can give them the right advice that will allow them to save time and gain in efficiency and productivity. For example, we created the L'Ecole Valrhona perforated tart rings which, coupled with de Buyer's perforated trays and perforated mats, give pastry chefs an improved final result — nicer caramelisation while reducing the cooking time by 20% to 30%. Similarly, with the increase of restaurants turning to takeaway service this year, de Buyer's pressure pastry syringe Le Tube, the great alternative to the traditional pastry bag, speeds up the preparation time and guarantees consistency and accuracy in the sauce portions for each dish prepared. This means the teams in the kitchen work faster, are more productive and save money.

CHEF'S SPECIAL: QUICKFIRE Q&A



Favourite dish to cook: Vegetables. There are so many ways to cook them.

Favourite place to eat: Around the table.

Favourite platform to cook: It doesn't matter to me.

Other chef you most admire: My father, who taught me how to cook, and Alain Ducasse.

Funniest thing you've seen in a kitchen: In the kitchen at my

restaurant, when I had gathered my old friends from my 'Ecole hôtelière' and every chef was cooking a dish of their choice for everyone else. That was a special moment of laughter, fun and fellowship.

Best piece of advice you've ever received: To be curious about everything; not only new produce but also art, colours — anything that can inspire you for creating a dish.

Guilty pleasure: Truffles.

What do you think operators get most value from when

visiting your facilities or using your services? Is it the access to new platforms or equipment for example, or perhaps the bespoke menu development support you can offer?

One of the main assets of my kitchen is that it is located at the heart of the factory. When chefs and operators visit us for the first time, we always begin with a factory tour as this is a great way for them to discover and understand more about the importance of using various materials in our product range. I often share the errors I made myself in my own restaurant to create a conversation around how they can become better chefs through a better understanding of materials and their use. For instance, we talk about why they should use steel cookware instead of non-stick cookware depending on their needs. Knowing both sides of the industry means I have the tools to support them in their own cooking journey. Our showroom, located right next to the demo kitchen, displays every single product from our catalogue — over 2,500 items — which is a great way to show our visitors the breadth of our product range.

What would you say is your favourite part of the job?

The core part of being a chef is about sharing, whether it's sharing a dish or one's experience. The other aspect that I love is the research and development. My role is to help imagine and create the new culinary products of the future

INSIDE DE BUYER'S DEVELOPMENT KITCHEN

Set overlooking the beautiful Vosges mountains, de Buyer's demo kitchen is equipped with semi-professional high-end V-Zug induction hobs and a premium oven as standard. However, every training or demo is adapted to the operator with the relevant modular equipment based on what they are looking for. The demo kitchen is at the centre of the de Buyer factory, which allows the culinary team to be very reactive. If a new product is tested, it can quickly be modified and retested again. The demo kitchen features standard multimedia and technical equipment, including a TV screen, optic fibre broadband and the



possibility to film demos for use on social media platforms.

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that will facilitate the cooking process. New ideas come from various sources: exchanges with other chefs, our R&D team coming up with new concepts or a chef coming to me to develop an improved version of an existing product that we offer.

What stands out as the most rewarding project you have been involved with from a new product development perspective at de Buyer?

I am quite proud of the knife that I helped design; it's the FK2 precision carving knife with a short and flexible Santoku blade that is now in de Buyer's catalogue. The advantage of working in the factory with the R&D team on-site

is that it gives us the flexibility to keep on improving our products. Another rewarding project was developing the Geo-forme, our all-in-one rectangular mould range for pâtés en croûte, created with chef Fabien Pairon MOF. We are continuously enhancing this product. These experiences allow me to meet fantastic and inspiring chefs with whom we regularly work to develop new and better products.

You must get to work on a lot of new equipment and products. What piece of equipment have you most enjoyed having in your development kitchen over the past one or two years?

At de Buyer we are focusing on a long-term project around developing products and materials that are 'cleaner' and more environmentally responsible. This is a very interesting area of research for the company and we are collaborating with schools and research centres. It is in de Buyer's DNA to preserve the environment — first locally, as the factory is set in the beautiful Vosges mountains in France, and overall as a way to create products that are more ethical and require less energy, to leave a cleaner planet to future generations. **FEJ**

CHEF'S CHOICE: CARBONE PLUS



The Carbone Plus steel frypan is a must-have product in every chef's kitchen, insists Philippe Laruelle, development

chef at de Buyer. "It is durable, healthy and eco-friendly," he

remarks. "Maintenance is very easy and it adapts to all heat sources. It is very versatile as you can cook every type of food with it: steak, potatoes, omelette. Each steel pan will also get natural anti-adhesive properties once seasoned. If well-looked-after, chefs should be able to keep their steel pan for life."