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New York in the Springtime Is on French Chef's Plate

By FLORENCE FABRICANT

Joël Robuchon, one of the most esteemed chefs in France, has agreed to open a restaurant in the Four Seasons Hotel on West 57th Street in the spring.

The restaurant, to be called L'Atelier de Joël Robuchon at the Four Seasons, will be similar to L'Atelier de Joël Robuchon in Paris, the informal place he opened two years ago after retiring from the restaurant in the Hôtel du Parc in Paris that had his name and had earned three Michelin stars.

Aside from Alain Ducasse, who opened at the Essex House in 2000, Mr. Robuchon will be the only chef with three Michelin stars to have opened a restaurant in New York, although Gordon Ramsay, a three-star chef from London, also expects to open in New York.

Mr. Robuchon, 60, who described his plans by telephone yesterday from his vacation house in Spain, said that his New York restaurant would be similar to the one in Paris, serving mostly small plates at a counter as well as at tables. But there will be only 52 seats. The food in the Paris and New York restaurants, as well as at the Atelier he will open in September at the MGM Grand Hotel in Las Vegas, will basically be French with touches from Italy and Spain.

"The older I get the more I want to do stuff that suits my personal taste," he said. "It has to be less mixed up, less complicated than ever, designed to let the best ingredients shine."

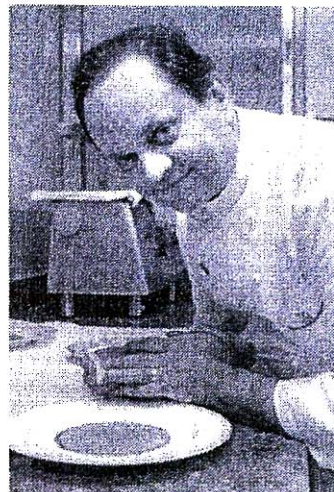
His past will be revived in Las Vegas at the restaurant Joël Robuchon at the Mansion, but his New York offering will remain casual, though still expensive.

The restaurant, which will replace Fifty Seven Fifty Seven, at present the hotel's only restaurant, will be designed by Pierre-Yves Rochon, said Christoph Schmidinger, the general manager of the Four Seasons. Mr. Rochon designed L'Atelier in Paris and the interiors of the Essex House in New York.

Mr. Schmidinger said Fifty Seven Fifty Seven would close by

the end of the year and the hotel's lobby lounge would be turned into another restaurant in the fall. A new lounge area will be created in some unused lobby space. The bar across from Fifty Seven Fifty Seven will eventually serve snacks prepared by the Atelier.

The hotel will actually run the Atelier, which will serve breakfast, in addition to Mr. Robuchon's menus for lunch and dinner. Reservations will not be taken for the counter, and it has not



Michel Euler/Associated Press

Joël Robuchon, shown in 1996 in Paris, is out of retirement.

been decided whether they will be taken for the tables.

Mr. Robuchon also has restaurants in Tokyo, Macao and Monte Carlo and will technically be a consultant at the New York Atelier. But he said he planned to have several chefs who have cooked for him work permanently in New York.

Regardless of his title, Mr. Robuchon said he expected to be in New York for at least a month around the time the restaurant opens, then return frequently.

"As often as possible," he said. "This restaurant is very important to me. Other chefs have come to New York and have had problems. I do not want that to happen to me. Besides, I love New York. I love the shopping."