



A culinary cruise with renowned chef Anton Mosimann on board promises to be a sensory treat, says **James Ellis**

The staircase leading to the third floor of Mosimann's, the private dining club in London's Belgravia, is lined with dozens of photographs that depict a who's who of royalty, entertainment and politics from the last 20 years.

Images of Princess Diana sit next to those of Yasser Arafat, Rod Stewart, Bill Clinton and Kofi Annan. Six prime ministers are pictured, including Gordon and Sarah Brown with George W and Laura Bush. But one man is central to each image – proprietor and master chef Anton Mosimann, who has cooked for them all. “Look at Gordon smiling for a change,” he quips. “I must have done something right.”

Mosimann is particularly animated about his upcoming culinary cruise with Silversea. From January 4, 2011 guests will be able to join him on a 10-day Caribbean voyage on board Silver Cloud, where he will cook his signature dishes, hold demonstrations and host a gala dinner. “Everyone will be able to enjoy a Mosimann dish a day,” he says. “We’ll also talk about my life and career, which have been very, very exciting. Questions, answers... I like to interact as much as possible with the passengers.”

When I meet Mosimann at his restaurant, an oak-walled former chapel where diners come to worship his creations and where

the altar is now the wine cellar, he livens up the drab morning outside with dashes of colour such as scarlet socks and a fuschia and blue bow-tie. But, more crucially, it's 11am and he is wearing chef's whites.

“It's important to me, I'm a working chef,” he says, leading me into one of the restaurant's private rooms. “I still love what I do and I can't wait to come into work every morning and put on my jacket. I think it is only fair that if you have a certain reputation, guests should be able to see you at work, be able to shake your hand and have a chat.”

If you could distil the image of a perfect grandfather, Swiss-born Mosimann (“call me Anton, please”), now 63, would be it. He is tall and lithe, tufts of white hair line his temples, his moustache is perfectly trimmed and he talks in the assured tones of someone with a lifetime of fabulous experiences. His eyes dance with merry enthusiasm when he talks about any of his favourite things: food, family and fast cars.

>> FULL STEAM AHEAD

While celebrity guests on other ships may arrive, do their stint and disappear, Mosimann has no such intention. “We are on the cruise together, people will see me, they can come and talk to me whenever they want, even when I'm on my morning jog,” he says. If the cruise is anything like his last voyage with Silversea, passengers should get the chance to see him do more than run circles around the deck.

“The cruise was a fantastic voyage from Istanbul to Rome – fabulous destinations,” he enthuses. “There was one dish I wanted to prepare on board, *risotto ai funghi*, flavoured with truffle oil. When I gave the recipe to the suppliers, I did not specify ‘white truffle oil’ and arrived to find only black. It is really not

Lofty ideals: Anton Mosimann at his private dining club, Mosimann's, in London

the same thing – a big difference in taste and flavour.”

The perfectionist in him failed to compromise and every time the ship would port, he led a small group of guests ashore. “I would take about 10 people from the cruise to buy vegetables and fresh produce at local markets – they loved it,” he enthuses. It was on one such trip to Palermo that they discovered the elusive oil.

“We came across this lovely fruit, vegetable and fish market, it was very, very exciting,” he says. “That night, we finally had the risotto... I think it was a success.”

>> TO MARKET, TO MARKET

Markets play a huge part in Mosimann's life. They're the first place he visits when in a new destination (“market people are wonderful, so much character, such a good way to get under the skin of a place”), but also the source of flavours most indelibly engraved on his mind and palate.

There's the well-worn tale of his restaurateur father taking him to try produce and him being astonished by the taste of Emmental cheese, while a more recent one is of a car rally he undertook in South America. “We were in Lima, in Peru, and I had a ceviche of scallops,” says Mosimann. “It was white, I couldn't believe it. Normally ceviche is slightly pink in colour as it is flavoured with tomatoes and chilli. But this was fresh, seasoned with just lime juice and a dash of chilli. It was one of those dishes that you never forget.”

Did he try to recreate it on his return? “I did, I love to bring dishes back. I used beautiful hand-dived Scottish scallops – they were really big and juicy,” he recalls, before adding modestly: “It was almost as good as the one I had in Lima.”

Despite his flamboyant appearance and attitude, modesty,

it seems, is a key facet of Mosimann's character. He has multiple awards, including an OBE and two Michelin stars, but talks little of them other than to say he is “very proud and very lucky”.

>> SIMPLE SENSATIONS

Mosimann was also the first true celebrity chef, pioneering healthy eating a quarter of a century before the current fad with his book *Cuisine Naturelle* (“no butter, cream or alcohol”). “People told me it was not eating,” he says. “It is eating. Start with good produce, cook it lightly and the rest takes care of itself. But do I feel like a pioneer? I was just lucky enough to be part of a movement among my contemporaries.”

Mosimann's love of simple cooking first arose when he was awarded the job of head chef at the Dorchester where, at only 28, he managed a staff of 132 chefs. “I knew something had to change when I saw the way the lamb was cooked. The whole saddle went in the oven at 5am and would come out at seven and then cool off. The meat would be taken off, sliced, wrapped in aluminium foil, put on a hot plate and then served at 8pm. It was dry, overcooked and really unhappy-looking meat.”

In complete contrast, expect guests who venture out with him on Silversea to be wearing smiles as big as that of Gordon Brown's on that Mosimann picture wall.

Silversea offers a 10-day sailing from Bridgetown to San Juan, with calls at St George's, St Vincent, Roseau, Prickly Pear, Gustavia, Basseterre, Marigot and Road Town, departing January 4, 2011. **From £2,538pp**, based on two people sharing a Vista Suite, excluding flights. An additional \$500 on-board spending credit is awarded per suite. (0844 770 9030; www.silversea.com)

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