



VOISIN

A GOURMET INSTITUTION

Everyone in Lyon knows Voisin.
For almost 120 years there has been an unspoken complicity woven between the chocolatier,
who is also a purveyors of coffee and tea, and the inhabitants who,
throughout the generations experience the same pleasure of eating cocoa products
and confectionery made in its brown gold factory in Vaise.

"Importer turned merchant, Léon Voisin opened his first shop in Cours de la Liberté in Lyon in 1897, explains Alain Boucaud-Maître, CEO of Voisin. He was selling foodstuffs from the French colonies – teas, cocoa, spices – and he roasted the coffee beans on his doorstep. His business was flourishing, people enjoyed his flavourful products, so well in fact that despite the difficulties of the First World War, his enterprise was counting about ten shops. In order to meet growing demand and expand production, he opened a new chocolate making facility in Rue de Bonnel and employed a number of master chocolatiers. Having become a man of independent means, and without an heir to succeed him, except for an artist-painter nephew, Léon Voisin entrusted the future of the organisation to my grandfather Joseph Boucaud, who had been at his side from the beginning and who became **Director General**". The foundations of a quality

manufacturer, offering rare products, raw or processed, are set out. A new impetus was given following the Second World War when Paul Boucaud-Maître, after his military service and studies at HEC School of Management, joined his father. His desire and ambition: to select the best, focus on making fine chocolates and be open to new opportunities. This translated into a network of sales representatives introducing the brand in Paris and in Nice through dealers. This competitiveness led to the creation of specialities, which were to become emblematic of the house: the **pillow**, in tribute to the silk manufacturers – chocolate ganache coated with a candied marzipan delicately flavoured with Curacao – the quenelle, a nod to gastronomy – creamy praline covered in white chocolate – Beaujolais vine shoots, chocolate bonbons with old marc or even sweets. The facilities at Part-Dieu became too small, so in 1980 Voisin invested in an old



"The product is timeless but its surroundings must keep up with the times."



> Franck, Alain, Paul and Romain Boucaud-Maître



> Voisin shop



> The Coussin de Lyon

industrial site at Vaise. 5 000 m² where half is dedicated to production. On the occasion of this new and crucial stage, the whole tool was re-designed and refined to better serve the craftsmanship know-how.

PROXIMITY, CONFIDENCE AND QUALITY

Following his studies in business and experience at Kronenbourg breweries, Alain Boucaud-Maître then also joined the company. "I worked for almost 40 years with my father and our desire has always been to ensure that Voisin is and remains the benchmark for chocolate in Lyon". To achieve this ambitious goal, the company managers associate a very rigorous work on the product to achieve outstanding quality and a network of outlets in the city. When mass distribution arrived, Paul Boucaud-Maître chose retail and nothing else and continued to ensure the company's own distribution in order to remain independent.

"The decisions made in sometimes difficult circumstances, in connection with changes in society or changes in consumption, provide the direction and orientation of a company. Today, our strength is a presence in all districts of Lyon, the last shops were opened in Confluence, at Monplaisir and Tassin-la-Demi-Lune in 2014. As we have demonstrated consistency and dependability for more than a century, we have built up a strong level of trust with our customers and they are loyal to us". Especially as the proximity to consumers pushed the product range upmarket while maintaining "reasonable prices"; "at the start we served everyone, it was part of our culture and identity". To add a complementary activity to the heart of its business, Voisin purchased the Cafés au

Nègre brand which has specialised in coffee and tea since 1933.

The brand was renamed La Route des arômes at the end of the 2000's with five active shops. The start of the XXI century saw the arrival of the 4th generation in the company: Romain, Alain's son and his cousin Franck Boucaud-Maître. They brought a breath of fresh air to the company following their studies in business and initial professional work experience. "We have the drive to continue the work started by those who preceded us and to carry on the values of this family business", underlines Romain Boucaud-Maître.

HIGH STANDARDS FROM THE SOURCE TO THE FINISHED PRODUCT

On a daily basis this means mastering totally the quality chain. "We follow the product from manufacture through to the customer, it is fascinating". Sourcing the best product according to origin and growing location is part of Voisin's DNA. The main products, coffee and cocoa, come from subtropical regions. Once the sources have been chosen, the importers, "always the same ones, who know our requirements", provide logistics, send samples from the cooperatives, stock and supply Voisin according to the requirements. "With their colonies, the French were more accustomed to products from Africa, but knowledge and tastes have developed since then. With coffee as with chocolate, we are leaning more and more towards Latin or South America. But a country or continent does not really matter, it is the territory that has meaning, an aroma, and a specific flavour". Voisin thus offers 12 pure coffee origins in its shops, including

- > Production of a giant tablet by a master chocolatier
- > Roasting great origin coffees by our master roaster
- > Production of traditional praline by our 'praline' master

“Lyon is our stronghold, we didn’t want to waste energy elsewhere, to remain able to cultivate well our own garden.”

a coffee of the month, and also provides special hotel blends. The beans are slowly roasted at the factory by its master roasters then taken to the shops.

Specialists also select the coffees and teas in bulk from the plantations for the La Route des Arômes shops. As for chocolate, more steps are necessary. While the company has for a long time processed the cocoa beans itself, it now sub-contracts the grinding process “that does not provide added value” and receives the cocoa mass in order to concentrate on the finished product “We develop our recipes from different cocoa masses to achieve the specific Voisin taste. The basic recipe, used for covers and tablets, is 72% dark chocolate, made from a mix of top quality cocoa from West Africa and South America. Milk chocolate is 36% cocoa. We also work with pure origins: Venezuela, Sao Tome, Ecuador, Papua, Santo Domingo and Tanzania for their specific taste characteristics”.

RAW MATERIALS AND MEN

The same care is given to the choice of the other raw materials used in the manufacture of the different sweets. Voisin sources its hazelnuts from the Piedmont region in Italy and almonds from Valencia. The flavour of these oleaginous nuts is essential as they form the base of the praline. The house uses copper roasters ideal for the long cooking and caramelisation process of the nuts with the sugar. They are then ground more or less finely using a granite grinder to be either fondant or with grains. Cocoa butter is added to enrich the mixture. This ancient method allows us to create a praline palette of 55%

almonds or hazelnuts or a mix of the two. The same approach is applied to fresh fruit, Chasselay cherries, fresh navel oranges with thick juicy skins for candied peel, while the collaboration with liqueur makers of the Alps and Dijon can be found in liqueur sweets. “We are fortunate to be surrounded by a rich farming land and we like to work close to the source, believing in the purity of the products and the human spirit. We have worked for a long time with the same suppliers and the seniority of master chocolatiers and employees is important to us. They are trained in-house to be versatile and acquire the know-how to make ganache, nougats, fruit pastes, pralines...” At the other end of the chain are the shops receiving daily deliveries of fresh products, run by salespeople who play a crucial role. “They like to offer advice, talk about noble products and promote our artisanal processes”, confirms Franck Boucaud-Maître. Moreover, Voisin is also part of the Cocoa Horizons Foundation, through which it chooses to participate in projects to improve the working and living conditions of farmers and their families in West Africa through premiums paid on purchases. Through this rigorous approach, Voisin’s turnover can be broken down into: chocolate 65%, specialities, 20%, coffee 10% and tea 5%.

A THOROUGHLY MODERN HERITAGE

Voisin, soon to reach its 120th year, has consistently followed its ethics and been part of the best chocolatiers in France, receiving various awards over the decades. Last but not least, the Entreprise du patrimoine vivant (Living Heritage Company) label, awarded by the French State,



> Aztec collection box

which honours French companies with excellence artisanal know-how. This recognition was quickly rewarded: a presence at the Universal Exhibition in Milan and then opening a store on Boulevard Haussmann after the sales place in the Galeries Lafayette. That’s not all, Voisin is seen as a French ambassador to Japan, it is in high-end stores in Russia, in fine delicatessens and a partnership has been signed with the Kaviari brand, providing a distribution channel into the United Arab Emirates. “With this label, our brand started to emerge beyond its natural borders, it made sense for this to happen, responding to new demands to expand the business”. Of course, Voisin did not abandon its stronghold, it has recently renovated its Rue Grenette shop, in the city centre, to showcase its manufacturing. “This concept places the customer at the heart of the chocolate factory with a huge picture of the

factory and of the equipment; a way of saying that even though we have grown from humble beginnings, we are still the same artisan producer” explains Franck Boucaud-Maître. An essential tool is the company’s network of shops that are regularly ‘freshened up’ to offer a pleasant environment. Since the outer presentation is as important as the content, the packaging also changes to attract customers and adapt with the times. “We are part of Lyon’s heritage just as the horse of Place Bellecour, but we always managed to evolve. A design agency advises us, as the packaging is essential to carrying our brand image”. In order to keep grandparents, grandchildren and tourists alike happy, Voisin markets its specialities and a range of about 200 chocolates most of which are essential classics and a few new

“The EPV label gives us visibility abroad.
Our authentic products have become ambassadors of French luxury.”



> Quenelles de Lyon



> Fine chocolate with cranberry



> 24- carat gold Palets d'or with fresh cream



> Léon Voisin, the founder

Voisin
CHOCOLATIER
TORRÉFACTEUR
depuis 1897

30 shops
Staff: 200 employees
Turnover: 17 M€



> The first Voisin shop in Lyon, cours de la Liberté