

NEWS

OBITUARY

Fond memories of a great friend and chef

Daily News occasional columnist **John de Bueger** pays tribute to a legendary New Plymouth restaurateur who died yesterday.

New Plymouth will be much the poorer following the loss of the founder of our premier dining establishment, L'Escargot.

Andre Teissonniere died yesterday aged 64. He is succeeded by his son, JP, and daughter, Cleo.

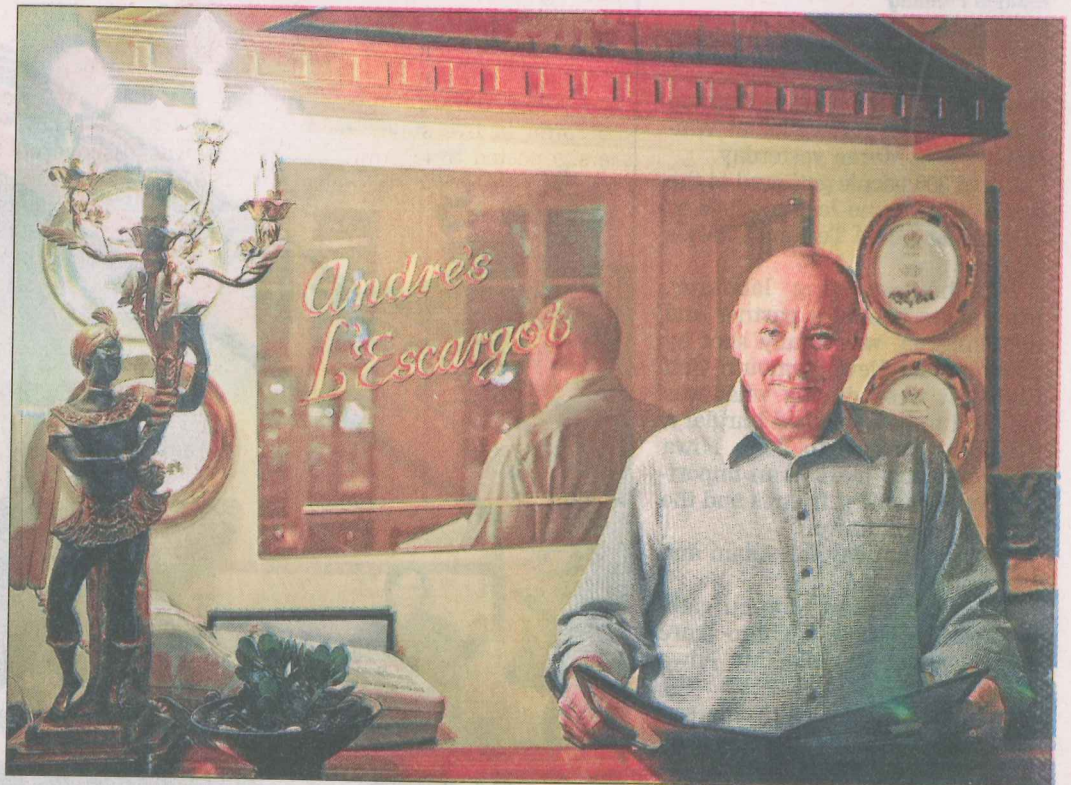
Andre was born in the south of France, not far from Nice, and it was a standing joke between us that, when it came to Salade Nicoise, my late wife had the edge on him. He gave her a few tips though.

Andre had all the right genes and background for his chosen career – his parents ran restaurants, both in Provence and Paris.

He came to New Plymouth in the 1970s as chef in the old Westown hotel – after meeting his Kiwi ex-wife, Josie, in the Cairngorms in Scotland.

Eventually he started up on his own, and his many, long-term customers will have fond memories of the old restaurant on the Hill. The place had a great atmosphere and was often packed out.

To go to the loo you had to navigate your way through the back kitchen where a



Dining in: Andre Teissonniere's old restaurant on the Hill was described as "one beacon of civilisation in a culinary wilderness".

hyperactive Andre was juggling 40,000 dishes simultaneously.

Thirty years later one still recalls the bonhomie, the smoke, and those red and white checked tablecloths. It was a lone beacon of civilisation in a culinary wilderness.

Over the years, as his business in Brougham St prospered, many of his regulars came to regard Andre as much as a friend as a proprietor. And he would put

himself out for them too.

Few top restaurateurs would have agreed to cater for 60-plus guests in a toolshed on the bush-line with no power, and just a cold water tap. But that's what Andre did for our 40th wedding anniversary, and I am eternally grateful.

The secret of Andre's success was quality and attention to detail. Widely regarded as the best restaurant in Taranaki, L'Escargot lifted standards across the prov-

ince. Matt Rilko hit the nail on the head when he suggested restaurants be graded from 1 to 5 in Andre units – L'Escargot being 5 out 5.

So farewell, old friend. We thank you for your dedication. You knew everyone in town who mattered, and were a classic case of someone who had a vision, got off their backside, and left this town better off than when you found it. Your crowning glory, Steak Dijonnaise, was truly the best in the world.