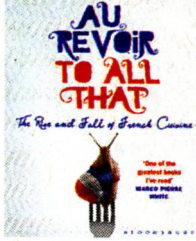


MICHAEL STEINBERGER

Au Revoir to All That: The Rise and Fall of French Cuisine, by Michael Steinberger (Bloomsbury, £8.99)



Dining was once a national pastime in France, the country where it was claimed that the “discovery of a new dish does more for human happiness than the discovery of a new star”. But as the American journalist and Francophile Michael Steinberger shows, times are changing. Today, as one chef complains, young people “spend a lot of money going to a nightclub but not to eat a good meal”. McDonald’s is now hugely popular and France is second only to America as the company’s most profitable market. As fast food (known as “malbouffe”) catches on and home cooking declines, so obesity becomes a problem: levels in France will equal those in the US by 2020. Steinberger views the decline of French cuisine as part of a pervasive “sense of decay” in French culture. Even the cafés are dying. In 1960 there were 200,000, today there are fewer than 40,000. And now - quelle horreur! - there are McCafés. Steinberger’s anger at the sad decline of France’s food culture is heartfelt, and his interviews with top chefs and industry insiders reveal a cuisine that has clearly lost its “sizzle”. **PDS**