

## The Coronation of Queen Elizabeth II

### Food for Thought

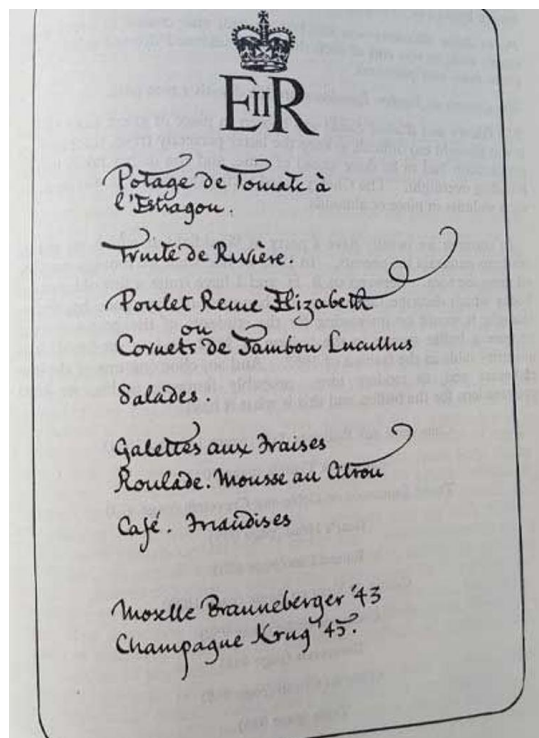
*The Coronation service is long and for all those involved, even those just attending, the day is much longer. Unsurprisingly, food plays a substantial part in the occasion.*

The Le Cordon Bleu culinary school was opened in London by Rosemary Hume in 1933. Twenty years later, its success was confirmed when it prepared the Coronation luncheon for Queen Elizabeth II on 2nd June 1953, for which the Coronation Chicken recipe was created.

The Minister of Works Sir David Eccles, asked Rosemary Hume and her students to undertake the luncheon for Her Majesty's guests, who were mainly representatives of other countries. The Coronation lunch was served to 350 people in the bombed-out remains of School, the great hall of Westminster School, where a temporary roof had been erected and tapestries brought through to help cover the ruined walls.

The coronation service started at 11.15 a.m. in Westminster Abbey. Luncheon was served at 2 p.m. The dish which came to be known as *Coronation Chicken* can be found on the menu as *Poulet Reine Elizabeth*. The original recipe consisted of young chickens poached in water and a little wine to cover, carrot, a *bouquet garni*, salt, and peppercorns, with a cream of curry sauce. At one end of each dish was a well-seasoned dressed salad of rice, green peas and pimentos.

The ingredients used were remarkable for their time, with many of them only just becoming available, while the majority of the country was still under the restrictions of post-war rationing. Before the advent of battery farming, chicken itself was a luxury ingredient.



**Lunch menu for the Coronation Banquet**

The Abbey choristers had been woken at 5.00 am. They had, hidden in their cassock pockets, a few small sandwiches and barley sugar sweets to keep them going during the long day.

One essential element of the coronation is that the people signify their willingness and joy by loud and repeated acclamations of their new sovereign. In mediaeval times the whole crowd would join in\*, but latterly the people have been represented by the Queen's Scholars of Westminster School, who cry "Vivat Regina !" (or "Vivat Rex!", as appropriate) when the crown touches the Monarch's head. At Queen Elizabeth II's coronation they were placed high in the Triforium. Rather than risk the boys being seen with 'bulging pockets', their master had some food, biscuits and chocolate, sent up to the Triforium in advance.

Back in the annexe, a packed lunch of smoked salmon, *foie gras*, sausage rolls, cheese and biscuits was provided for the Queen's party in the retiring rooms. She left Westminster Abbey at 2.53pm and processed in the State Coach through the streets of London before returning to Buckingham Palace at 4.30pm.

(from [Le Cordon Bleu culinary arts institute](#),  
[Westminster Abbey](#) & [Westminster School](#))

\* At the coronation of William the Conqueror, on Christmas Day 1066, the acclamation of the Anglo-Saxon crowd so alarmed the Norman knights in the Abbey that they rushed out and massacred the crowd. Fortunately, that last part did not become traditional.