

"We wanted to create a revolution in the pastry industry (hence the name), come up with something new and fresh," says George Panaitescu, the Business Development Director and one of the co-founders of French Revolution over coffee and, of course éclairs. And oh, how we can relate. There are dozens of bakeries in Bucharest that claim to be French-inspired, an influence Bucharest has long turned to ever since its days of Belle Époque and tight relations between the countries a century ago. But few actually rise to the challenge. This is where French Revolution sets itself apart, by some distance. The pastry shop does one thing alone, and it does it well.

Why éclairs? "Romanians relate to éclairs, versus macaroons or cupcakes which are not as known yet," he admits. And he is right. Go into any cofetărie (Romanian for pastry shop) and you'll likely find éclairs on sale behind a glass cabinet.

With a production of 1000 éclairs per day, there is rarely a day when they don't sell out. Their secret relies on a simple formula. Éclairs made fresh from scratch every single day. "Actually, there is no secret," Panaitescu says. "It's just that no other competitor takes care of

all the details as we do. No one leaves even for their half-an-hour lunch break without cleaning the counters. It's that crucial to us," referring to the impeccable French Revolution kitchen and lab in Grozăvești. In keeping transparency, the ingredients and allergens are posted on the French Revolution website (implicitly, the recipe as well) and can be found in stores.

But it's not just the product alone, which relies on fresh eggs sourced from local farmers near Bucharest and high-quality French dairy products imported via Elle & Vire Professionnel (the pistachio and hazelnuts are sourced from Italy, while the chocolate comes from Colombia and France).

"The most important aspect for us is the people." By people, he means both employees and customers that come to the store. Offering employees higher than average salaries and full training on the job with shifts that don't exceed six hours, it's clear to see why customers leave happier than in other shops.

We have never seen such sheer panic and surprising camaraderie as when 10 éclairs are left and it's five minutes to closing time, with last-minute customers



# Pastry Revolution

MONICA SUMA MEETS GEORGE PANAITESCU,  
BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT DIRECTOR AND ONE  
OF THE CO-FOUNDERS OF THE ÉCLAIR STORES  
LEADING THE SWEETEST FRENCH REVOLUTION



negotiating between themselves who will take which flavour (luckily enough, stores are now open until 9pm instead of 8pm). Because this is what French Revolution has done in Bucharest. It has built a loyalty base and customers that come again and again, as if on a pilgrimage site, dare we say. Ask any French person visiting or living in Bucharest, from the country that prides itself to be the homeland of the best éclair, and they'll likely confirm the French Revolution éclair is the best they've had. Ever.

Of the 16 total flavours, the favourites are those of caramel au beurre salé (salted butter caramel) and pistache (pistachio). The classically French ones like Paris-Brest or Forêt-Noire are also popular, but for new palates, we urge you to try the orange and ginger or basil and lime éclairs. "As we focus on such a specific niche, diversity is very important to us." Which is why during the first three days of the week, each day has its own éclair on offer: passion fruit éclair on Mondays, melon (cantaloupe) éclair on Tuesdays and white chocolate strawberry éclair on Wednesdays. There are also special editions for holidays such as Christmas, Easter or Valentine's Day.

And that certainly extends to the branding, packaging and social media, the third aspect that makes French Revolution what it is. Not just a pastry shop selling addictive éclairs, but a place where you're likely to run into friends, socialize and pretend not coming as often as you do; because of its modern and fresh visual identity, its attention to detail and consistency. Each Friday, the shop rewards the best photos shared on social media with three éclairs of their choice – a smart approach in staying current and welcoming. If you've ever stopped by the original shop opened in 2014 by the Romanian Athenaeum in downtown Bucharest, perhaps Bucharest's most beautiful landmark and home of the George

Enescu Classical Music Festival, you'll know what we mean.

At the much larger second store open in Piața Victoriei within Aviatorilor 8A, the newest state-of-the-art, futuristic office building in Bucharest (including the spectacular Oromolu House housing the Qreator creative hub), an impressive 7.5 metre counter tantalises from the moment you step inside. With the same eye-catching, pop art colors on display (yellow to symbolise the éclair's choux, pink to hint the decorative elements and green to suggest freshness), the temptation to over indulge in éclairs – or mini éclairs – is even higher. Customers can now order freshly roasted specialty coffee from Origo prepared by experienced baristas and linger on for longer on the expansive terrace outside. "We wanted to offer the best experience of having a coffee while enjoying your éclair," Panaitescu explains. Nearby, stunning century-old architecture and lush parks await, an area Panaitescu is fond of riding his bicycle in and seeing the city in slow motion. Sometimes, he crosses the city in hopes of discovering new streets and buildings, from the Armenian quarter, passing through the C.A. Rosetti, Dacia and Eminescu streets, an area full of history and interwar residential beauty.

A registered trademark in the European Union, there is increasing demand to open French Revolution franchises in cities outside of Bucharest, as well as abroad. While a third store is in the works, also in Bucharest, the goal is not rapid expansion, but rather keeping the boutique vibe without sacrificing quality. The community aspect is also very important. "I love to discover new coffee shops with freshly roasted specialty coffee, great food using the best ingredients in new restaurants or Romanian craft beers at garden bars during summer. To meet new people to inspire me, passionate entrepreneurs who transformed Bucharest into a city we love to live in."