LA BISTRO

I. Introduction

A game of owning and operating your own restaurants for 2-6 players

II. Components

- The board shows six **districts:** Ocean Front, Industrial, Slums, Downtown, Neighborhood and Hills plus a **Jobs Board,** a **Renovations Chart, a** money track around the outside edge and three other tracks.
- 24 cubes in 6 player colors
- 6 white and 3 black cubes
- 15 dice
- 1 Payouts chart
- 40 Player sheets (double-sided)

Players need to supply pencils.

About the player sheet. Each sheet permits you to track status for up to two restaurants. Attributes include Price, Quality, Service, Ambiance, etc. Some such as Quality have an initial value, 0. When you improve the value, draw a slash through the old value and write in the new one, but in the proper box, e.g. improving Quality from 2 to 4 would cross out the 2 in the **<2** box and write a 4 in the **3-11** box.

III. Setting Up the Game

1. Place the board on the table.

2. Each player takes
   - a player sheet
   - all of the cubes of a color
   - one die
3. Each places a cube on the **30** (**45** if only two players) space of the money track.
4. Place a black cube on each of the **START** spaces of the Turn and Time Tracks.

IV. Goal of the Game

The player having the most money after four turns (five for a two-player game) and all loans have been repaid in full wins. In case of a tie, the tied player having the restaurant with the most Fame wins.

V. Sequence of Play

Turns consist of rounds,which come in two types. The first round is a **Planning round**. Planning rounds continue until there are fewer than three unused dice or the Time Track cube moves off the end. At this point pick up all of the dice and conduct a **Payouts round**. After a Payouts round the turn ends, each player takes back a die and **Planning rounds** resume.

VI. Playing the Game

Each **Planning Round** has four phases:
1. Generate Employees.
2. Players Select Options.
3. Resolve Options.
4. Time Passes.

The phases in detail:

1. **Generate Employees.**
   If there are fewer than 3 unused dice (the die that each player holds is considered used) available, clear all of the dice and immediately conduct a Payouts round (see below) instead.

   Otherwise, place up to three dice on the Jobs Board using the following procedure.

   a. Roll a die and find the corresponding row on the table.
   b. Roll a second die and find the corresponding column.
   c. Place a die on the intersection, unless a die already present. In this case, do not place the die this round.

   Tip: when placing a die on the Jobs Board,which is choice 5, cause the die to show a result of 5. This may help prevent players from making a mistake when choosing options.

2. **Players Select Options.**
   Each player places a die side face up, concealing it in hand. The die value corresponds of one of the actions. (Find all of the options below and also on the player sheet).

Instead of a die, a player may **conceal a cube** to indicate the **Property Manager** option.

When all are ready, reveal the choices simultaneously and resolve them in numerical order. (All players who chose a cube act first, then all players who chose 1, then players who chose 2, etc.)

Important: on the very first round of the game, every player must choose **Property Manager.** Player order for this round is clockwise after you determine the first player randomly.

3. **Resolve Options.**
   (Cube). Property Manager
   By choosing this option – do so by concealing a cube rather than a die – the player acquires a building to house one of their restaurants.

   Number limit. During the game each player may start at most **two** restaurants.

   Order determination. If multiple players choose this option in the same round, they act in order of most to least money. Decide ties randomly.

   The player points to any vacant building and begins an auction of it among all players who chose this

option on the current round. Players take turns bidding, beginning with the active player who must begin with the minimum price listed on the building, or higher. The auction continues until all but one player, the winner, drops out. The winner pays the amount of the last bid and places one of their cubes so as to cover the building price.

The winning bidder notes on the player sheet its district and street and updates the Ambiance level.

This player no longer participates in auctions this round.

This process continues until each player who has chosen this option receives a building or declines to offer one up for auction.

1. Chef and Accountant
Players choosing this option **must pay 1.**

With this option a player chooses or changes the **cuisine** type of one of their restaurants as well as the **price** at one of their restaurants.

The eight types of cuisine are American, Asian, Barbecue, Fast Food, French, Italian, Mexican and Steak.

In addition, use this action to set the **price** at one of your restaurants, a number from 1 to 8.

Price and cuisine type. Each cuisine type places a condition on price. For example, Fast Food may only use the cheap price category (denoted $$), French only the expensive price category ($$$$) and American the full range of low, affordable or high ($$$$-$$).

Price and location. Location affects price as well. Each building has price indicators, two of high ($$$$), affordable ($$$) or cheap ($$). Each restaurant must employ one of the two pricing levels its location supports.

Order determination. When multiple players choose this option in the same round, they act in order of most to least money on the money track. If there is a tie, decide the order randomly.

Tip: A restaurant cannot earn anything until it has a price and cuisine type.

2. Time Passes.
With this option, the player adds their die to those rolled to modify the Time Track at the end of the round (and then takes it back again).

3. Banker

Players choosing this option take a loan or repay loans.

To take a loan the player adds 10 on the money track and marks the player sheet to indicate the loan.

Alternatively, the player can repay any or all loans by deducting 10 per loan on the money track. Update the number of loans on the player sheet.

Loan interest. At the end of each Payouts round, players must immediately pay 1 per loan (if unable to do so there is no effect).

Loans at the end of play. At the end of the game players must pay 11 per outstanding loan.

4. Ad Agency

Players choosing this option may buy advertising for one of their restaurants in any amount desired, so long as funds remain. Each point of advertising costs 2 on the money track. The player notes it on the restaurant sheet.

Order determination. If multiple players choose this option in the same round, they each secretly record in the Ads space the number of Ads to purchase. Reveal these simultaneously and update the money track.

Tip: Ads do not survive past the end of the next Payouts round.

Tip: Players who want to do nothing on a round may choose this option and simply write down an ad buy of zero.

5. Jobs Board

Players choosing this option may pay the listed price for any available Employee and assign it to one of their restaurants by checking it off the list on the restaurant sheet.

Order determination. If multiple players choose this option in the same round, they conduct one or more clockwise auctions for the right to hire an employee as follows:

  a. The player with the most money bids. If there is a tie for most money, players decide the order randomly using a die roll. The auction continues until all but one player has dropped out; this winner hires the available employee of their choice, assigns it to one of their restaurants and does not participate further for that round.

b. If there are still personnel available and more than one player participating, there is another auction as above, the player having the most money again bidding first. This portion only ends when there are either no more players or no more employees available.

Unique Employees. Some personnel carry the message "if already in play, re-open bidding". Only one player can assign an employee carrying such a title, e.g. "Head Chef", to a restaurant at a time. When this employee type comes up subsequently, the effect of a player choosing it (which is free) is that the existing one that matches is now subject to an auction between the acting player and the current employer. The minimum bid is the employee's listed price and the first bidder the one who claimed it at the Jobs Board. Bidding alternates between the two players until one passes. If the current employer loses out, the winning bidder pays half the total (rounded down) to the bank and half (rounded up) to the former owner (who reflects the loss on the restaurant sheet) and assigns the employee to their restaurant. **Hint:** when a player has such an employee, place a white cube to straddle its board spaces as a reminder.

Employee Type Restriction. Each restaurant may have at most one of each type of employee in the Features/Hires list. To indicate hiring such an employee, check the corresponding box. However, you may hire any employee type that is not in the list (expeditor, food runner, server, waitron) without limit, subject only to availability. **Note:** Waitron/Manager differs from Waitron.

Employee Conditionals. Some employee types specify a condition, e.g. "if Bar". This means that the restaurant does not gain the employee's advantage until the restaurant has the prerequisite. Also, should the restaurant lose the prerequisite, it also loses the advantage.

6. Renovations

Players choosing this option may pay the listed price for any one item on the Renovations board and then assign it to one of their restaurants by checking it off the restaurant's list.

Each renovation adds to one or more of a restaurant's ratings. Update these ratings on the restaurant sheet upon assignment.

Order determination. If multiple players choose this option in the same round, they conduct one or more clockwise auctions using the same procedure as for the Jobs Board.

Renovation Time Requirement. Once the Time marker has passed a Time Track space of a particular renovation, no one may purchase a renovation of the type in the current round.

Renovation Type Restriction. Each restaurant may have at most one of each type of renovation.

Tip: A player purchasing a renovation places a die over its name on the Renovations Board as a reminder that no other player may purchase this item on the current round.

Renovation Conditionals. Some renovation types specify a condition, e.g. "if Large". This means that the restaurant does not gain the advantage until the restaurant has the prerequisite. Should the restaurant lose the prerequisite, it also loses the advantage. **Note:** a large restaurant is one of the those that on the board has a capacity of ten.

Patio. Place two white cubes near your restaurant as a reminder if it has this renovation.

4. **Time Passes.**
Roll a die and advance the cube on the Time Track a number of spaces equal to the result. Roll also the dice of any players who chose the "Time Passes" option and advance the cube further by these amounts.

If the cube advances off the track a conduct a Payouts round immediately.

Resolve each **Payouts round** as follows: **Place the dice.**
1. Roll all 15 dice.
2. Total their results and on the Payouts Chart find the space having that number.
3. Find the number at the top of the column for this space. Place one of the dice showing this result on the space. If none of the dice have this result, continue to each next higher-numbered space until there is one whose column matches a die result and place this die in it.
4. Take a die result showing the next highest number after the one just placed (or if there is no higher

number, the lowest-numbered unallocated die). Place this die in the column corresponding to its number at the top, **but in the next row.** If at the bottom row, continue back at the top of the chart as if it were continuous. Repeat this until you have placed all of the dice.

Resolve the dice.

5. Resolve dice starting at the top left and moving to ever increasing box numbers. Resolving a die is the process of removing it from the Payouts chart and assigning it to the most deserving restaurant. **Note:** to be eligible a restaurant must have a type and price.

   a. **Purple boxes.** Resolve all of the dice on purple boxes, which represent discerning diners, first. The resolution process for these diners differs slightly, as explained below.

   b. **Other boxes.** Return to the top left of the Payouts chart and resolve the remaining dice in the same order.
   Procedure: Examine the text beneath the die, starting with the first criterion listed. If there is a restaurant superior to all others in this category, place the die on that restaurant. If two or more restaurants are tied in the cate-

gory, continue down the list until one of those tied is superior to all of the others or, in the case of one or more restaurants already being full, there is only one qualified restaurant remaining, which thus earns the die.

Gold chip customers. Boxes showing a gold color represent **infrequent Extravagant diners.** When a player's restaurant receives a die from one of these boxes, they immediately receive 5 extra on the money track, per die.

When the four criteria do not resolve a die, there is a **split result.** Each of the tied restaurants receives a share. To calculate the amount in this case, each of these restaurants divides its price by the number of restaurants in the tie and rounds any fraction in its favor. These restaurants receive these payouts immediately. Such a die does not count against restaurant capacity and also does not count for Fame or Novelty calculations at the end of the turn (see below). **Hint:** just place such dice temporarily aside.

Example: Wolfgang's, Luciano's and Chow's tie for the same die. The prices at these restaurants are 8, 6 and 4, respectively. Since there

are three restaurants in the tie, the divisor is 3. Thus, their immediate payouts, respectively, are 3 (8/3), 2 (6/3) and 2 (4/3).

Criteria. For each category, judge superiority as follows:

- **Ads** - the most ads
- **Ambiance** - the most ambiance
- **Fame** - the most fame
- **Novelty** - highest novelty
- **Price** – the lowest price
- **Proximity** – the closest (see below)
- **Quality** – the highest quality
- **Service** – the highest service
- **Cuisine Type** – the exact type specified

Bands. The categories **Ambiance, Price, Quality, Service, Ads, Novelty** and **Fame** values each exist within a particular band. Consider all restaurants within the same band as tied.

Example: The first line in box 7 reads "Service". The top two restaurants in this category are Joe's restaurant with a service of 7, i.e. attentive, and Michael's restaurant with a service of 8, also attentive. Since both restaurants have Service in the same band, it is a tie. This box will have to be resolved between these two using the subsequent lines, i.e. Proximity, Price, etc.

Purple boxes. Spaces having a purple background represent **Discerning** diners. For dice in these spaces, ignore the concept of bands and compare the actual values.

Example: Box 1 is a purple, discerning diner box. Its first line reads "Service". The top two restaurants in this category are Joe's restaurant with a service of 7, i.e. attentive, and Michael's restaurant with a service of 8, also attentive. Both restaurants have Service in the same band, but Michael's 8 is better than Joe's 7. Michael's restaurant wins this diner.

Resolving Proximity. To determine **Proximity**, compare the number showing on the die with the numbers of the six map zones. Restaurants in the zone whose number matches the die result have the highest proximity. Restaurants in zones adjacent to this have the second highest proximity, and so on.

For example: The first line in Box 11 reads "Proximity". There are two restaurants in the game so far. Joe's restaurant is in the Hills (6) while Michael's restaurant is in the Ocean Front (1). Since Joe's restaurant in 6 is closer to the column

of box 11, i.e. column 5, than 1 is, Joe's restaurant wins this diner.

Restaurant capacity. When you assign a restaurant a die, place it on one of the restaurant's sections on the map. When you have filled all of the sections the restaurant does not receive any more diners for the turn; they will go to other restaurants as if the full one does not exist.

6. After you have distributed all dice, perform the following steps:
   a. Reset all **Ads** to 0.
   b. Decrease the **Novelty** rating of each restaurant by the number of diners that arrived at the restaurant this turn. Its minimum value is zero.
   c. Award **Fame** by comparing the number of dice received by all restaurants:
      i. Most dice: 3
      ii. Second most dice: 2
      iii. Third most dice: 1

   Note these amounts on the restaurant sheets.
   Ties. If there is a tie at any level, all of the tied restaurants receive the award.
   d. **Increase Income.** Each player receives income equal to the current amount of **Increase** (see **Price Increase** below) multiplied by the number of dice at each of their restaurants for the turn.
   e. **Regular Income.** Multiply the number of dice at each restaurant by the restaurant's price and add the product to the owning player's total on the money track.
   f. **Interest payments.** Each player having a **loan** pays 1 per loan on the money track. On the last turn, instead each player having a loan pays 11 per loan.
   g. **Price Increase.** Roll a die and cross-reference the result with the number of players on the Price Increase table. The first time this number is not zero place a black cube on this number on the Price Increase Track. On subsequent turns update the cube's position by adding the table result.

Price Increase			
Die Result	Number of Players		
	2-4	5	6
1-2	0	1	2
3-4	1	2	3
5-6	2	3	4

   h. **Turn Track.** Advance the cube on the Turn Track. When the cube reaches the box reading "END" the game ends.

VII. Player Notes

1. In a two-player match, there are many diners available so it's a

good idea to open with a large restaurant. But if there are many players, getting customers is difficult so you may prefer a smaller venue.

2. Pay attention to what other restaurants are doing well. It can be good to reach the same levels as others, but to ensure diners, it's best to be better than any other restaurant in at least one category.

3. Discover the advantages of each cuisine type and use them. Some have more flexibility in setting prices while others are the only types that can use certain types of renovations or personnel.

4. Although a second restaurant tends to dilute ratings, it usually reaps the benefit of better Novelty, especially if it can find a unique price point.

5. Remember that in the end what matters is money. Spend it wisely.

VIII. Glossary

Caller - calls the incoming orders to the cooks.

Cold Food Cook- aka *garde manger,* specialized line cook responsible for all cold food presentation, such as composed salads, pates, canapes and *hors d'ouevres.*

Commis - works under a line cook to learn particulars of a station, through food preparation and plating.

Computer Ordering System - some restaurants are experimenting with touch screens on the table that permit diners to program their orders directly to the kitchen whenever they like.

Expeditor - organizes orders by table and garnishes dishes before the server takes them out to the dining room

Food Runner - picks up the food from the kitchen and runs it to the correct table.

Head/Master Chef - creates specials, orders foods and manages the kitchen.

Line Cook - aka *chef de partie,* any cook working a particular station along the kitchen line.

Saucier - makes all of the sauces, and sometimes meat dishes cooked in a particular sauce; knows the five mother sauces that are the basis of all sauces.

Sommelier - aka wine steward, keeps the wine cellar and advises on wines

Sous Chef - second in command to the master or head chef; often the unsung hero of the kitchen who makes things run. While his name is not on the menu, he or she might well be one who created and cooked your food. Supervises the kitchen, may plan menus, requisition food and kitchen supplies.

Sushi Boats - a sushi bar having a course of water between the diners and the chef in which small bamboo boats containing sushi plates float by. It's fun

choosing sushi this way, but sometimes items get left there too long.

Waitron - waiter or waitress

Waitron/Manager - waiter or waitress, but also the manager of the other waitrons and the dining room in general.

IX. Design Notes

For quite a few years I have lived in the city whose main street is mostly restaurants. As I stroll by them often, I came to make a regular study of how well each was doing, what their enticements were, which stayed in business and which did not and so on. I also frequently watch a local restaurant review program called *Check Please* – you can see it online; Barack Obama was on the first episode – that affords more glimpses along the same line. After a time this appeared to be the perfect subject for a competitive game.

A great and yet interesting challenge was how to model public taste. It seemed that no game had really addressed it in a satisfying way so far. After all, when you're talking about huge numbers it would seem to be a much better job for a computer than a board game.

Dice to represent fickle diners seemed a natural start, but figuring out how to use them well much less obvious. But rather than get discouraged, I decided it was an excellent opportunity to introduce a new

gaming mechanism into the world, which is what you see in the Payouts chart.

Inventing it was just the first part, however. Following this came a lot of trial and error and eventually I used computer studies to roll millions of virtual dice. This allowed me to balance the various boxes, including those boxes which tend to be hit relatively rarely, giving for this reason, an extra payout. So the computer did come into it after all, but happily not in a way that the player needs to notice.

– Rick Heli, March 11, 2017

X. Credits

Playtesters in alphabetical order: Dave Andrews, Dan Blum, Heather Boshears, John Delaney, Gordon Hua, Joe Huber, May Kao, Aaron Schneider, Eveleen Tang, Ken Tidwell, Michael Tsuk, Bernard Yeh. All appear in the first position on my menu.
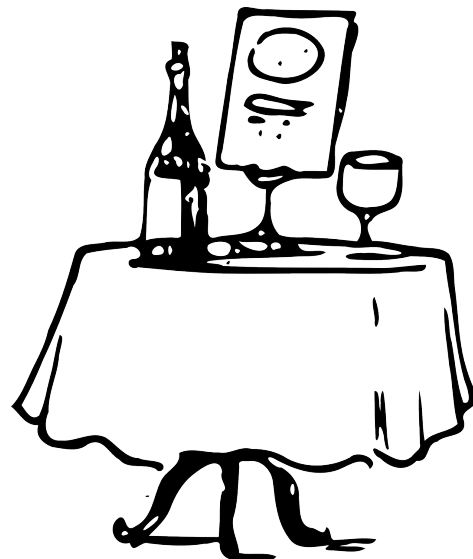
Main Payouts Round Sequence

a. Roll and place dice.

b. Award purple box dice comparing specific values.

c. Award other dice comparing bands.

Each **gold box** pays 5 immediately.

Shared dice pay out – proportionally -- but do not place them on any restaurant.
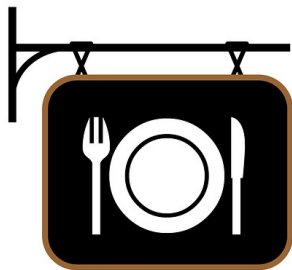
Finishing the Payouts Round

a. **Reset Ads** to zero for all restaurants.

b. **Decrease the Novelty rating** for each restaurant by the number of dice it received for the turn. (Minimum value is zero.)

c. **Award Fame** by comparing the number of dice received by all restaurants:

- Most dice: 3
- Second most dice: 2
- Third most dice: 1

Note these amounts on the restaurant sheets.

Ties. If there is a tie at any level, all of the tied restaurants receive the award.

d. **Pay out Increase Income.** Each player receives income equal to the current amount of the **Price Increase** multip-

lied by the number of dice at each of their restaurants for the turn.

e. **Pay Regular Income.** Multiply the number of dice at each restaurant by the restaurant's price and add the product to the owning player's total on the money track**.**

f. **Make Interest payments.** Each player having a **loan** pays 1 per loan. On the last turn, instead each player having a loan pays 11 per loan.

g. **Update Price Increase.** Roll a die and cross-reference the result with the number of players on the Price Increase table. The first time this number is not zero place a black cube on this number on the Price Increase Track. On subsequent turns update the cube's position by adding the table result.

h. **Turn Track.** Advance the cube on the Turn Track. When the cube reaches the box reading "END" the game ends.

Price Increase			
Die Result	**Number of Players**		
	2-4	**5**	**6**
1-2	0	1	2
3-4	1	2	3
5-6	2	3	4