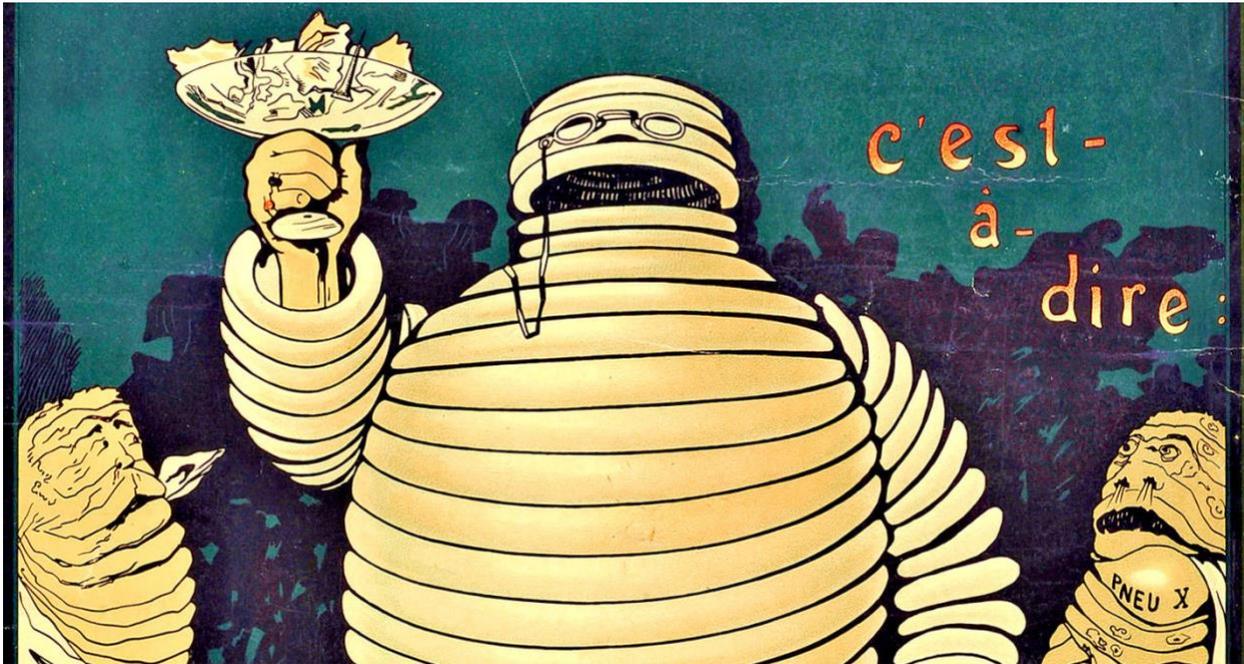


What is Topix?offbeatstarsrewindpassportpawsometempoparenthoodsidelineblackbeat

From Tires To Trattorias: A Quick History Of The Michelin Guide

By Stacie Houglan



[EN.WIKIPEDIA.ORG](https://en.wikipedia.org)

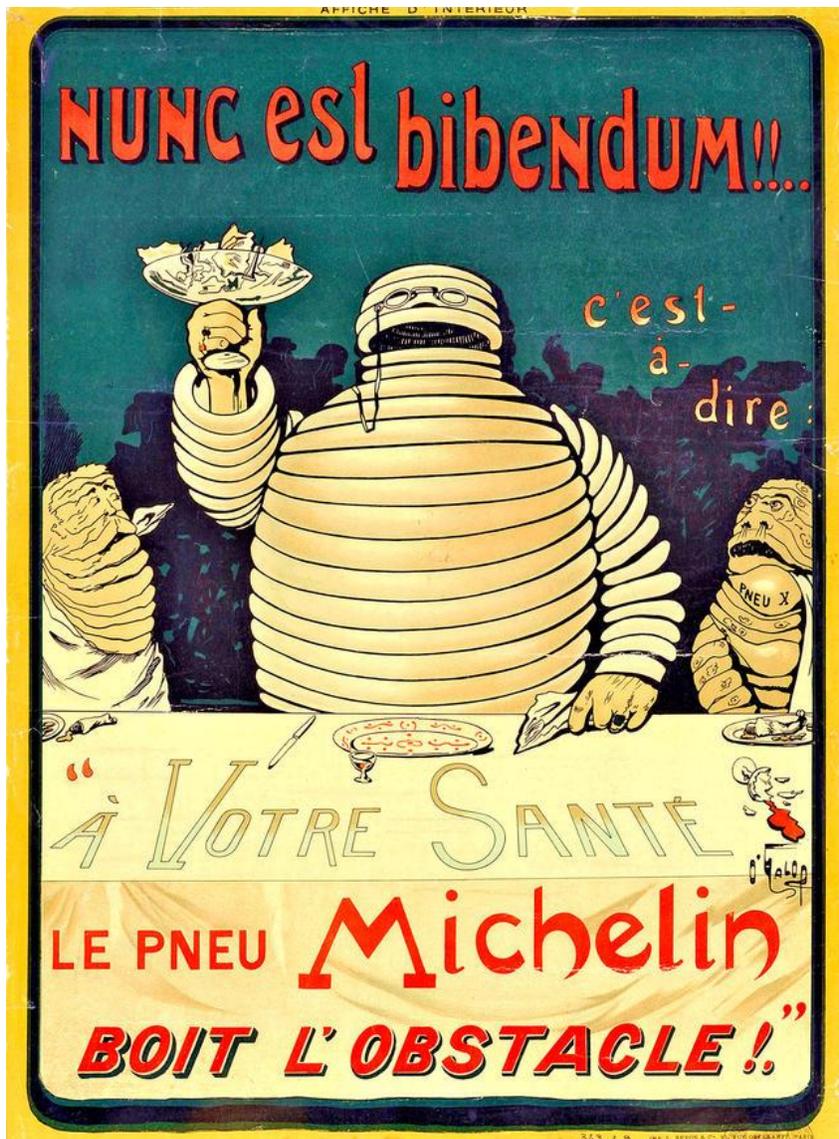
When you hear that a restaurant or a chef has a Michelin star rating, you know it's a big deal in the culinary world. But what's the connection between a *tire* company and a prestigious restaurant guide?

Michelin tires are invented



[COMMONS.WIKIMEDIA.ORG](https://commons.wikimedia.org)

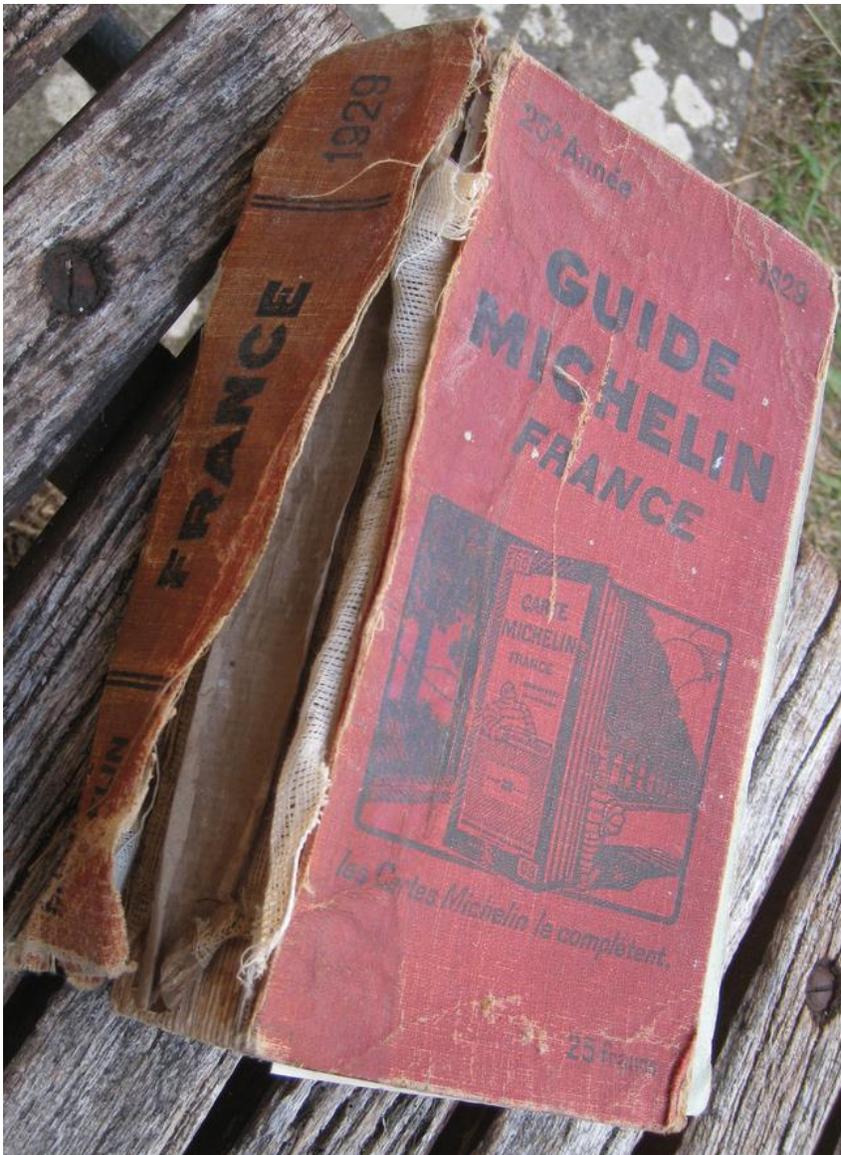
The Victorian era from the mid-1800s coincided with the Industrial Age, when cars were hitting the road in record numbers - but were still considered a luxury item. No surprise, then, that there was an increased need for tires, so French brothers Édouard and André Michelin founded the Michelin Tyre Company in 1888, patenting the first removable pneumatic tire for bicycles.



[EN.WIKIPEDIA.ORG](https://en.wikipedia.org)

The Michelin Man

One of the world's oldest and most recognized mascots is the Michelin Man, made of stacked tires. His formal name is Bibendum from the Latin phrase *Nunc est bibendum* ("Now is the time for drinking"). On this 1989 poster it says in French, "Here's to your health. The Michelin tyre drinks up obstacles."



[COMMONS.WIKIMEDIA.ORG](https://commons.wikimedia.org)

The first guide

Around 1900, seeing a need to help French motorists, the brothers started the *Guide Michelin*. It was a free directory of useful information like maps, tire repair shops, mechanic listings, hotels and gas stations.



Motorists will be
Overlooking a Good Thing
 if they neglect to obtain a copy of the
Michelin Guide to the British Isles.
 Everything you want to know about anywhere you want to go is fully set out in this handy volume

Little John Day
 Had lost his way
 And didn't know how to find it;
 Now he takes on his ride
 A new Michelin Guide,
 And, like me, he is always behind it.

NOTE.—In view of the enormous number of recent libel actions, I hereby do solemnly declare that the said "JOHN DAY" is as unknown to me as "LITTLE BO-PEEP."

The British Guide can be obtained from the Michelin Touring Office on receipt of 6d. in stamps to cover postage, packing, etc., or a copy can be procured from any Michelin Stockist.

MICHELIN TYRE CO., LTD.,
 81, FULHAM ROAD, CHELSEA, LONDON, S.W.

Telephone: 4400 Kensington (6 lines).
 Telegrams: "Pneumelin" or
 "Bibendum," London.

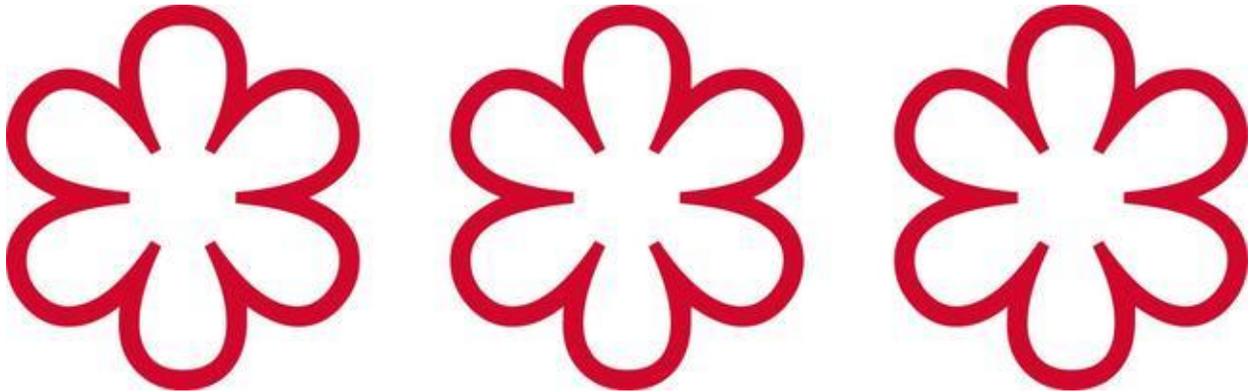
WIKIPEDIA.ORG

Expansion

The free guide was a hit, so the brothers expanded distribution to other countries in Europe and northern Africa and upped the price to about \$2. The Michelins also added restaurant listings, which

proved so popular they hired a team of anonymous critics to review the eateries.

The star system



[WIKIMEDIA.ORG](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Three_star_michelin_guide.svg)

In 1926, a one-star rating system was added to the guide. A decade later, two more stars and an explanation were added:

1 star: "A very good restaurant in its category"

2 stars: "Excellent cooking, worth a detour"

3 stars: "Exceptional cuisine, worth a special journey"

During WWII



[COMMONS.WIKIMEDIA.ORG](https://commons.wikimedia.org)

In the war, the *Michelin Guide* played a bizarre role even though production of it was halted. American soldiers found the pre-war guides, which contained maps, invaluable when road signs and direction posts were destroyed across Europe. It proved so useful, printing of it resumed during the planning of D-Day.

About the reviewers



[EN.WIKIPEDIA.ORG](https://en.wikipedia.org)

Tremendous care was always taken so Michelin critics, traditionally called "inspectors," are completely anonymous. Many have never met company higher-ups and they are encouraged not to tell even family members that they review restaurants. Stars are awarded by panel of inspectors weighing in.

It's work to become an inspector



[NL.WIKIPEDIA.ORG](https://nl.wikipedia.org)

Since the very beginning, inspectors focus mainly on the food on the plate, which is judged on technique, flavor, consistency and presentation. You need to have culinary experience, a passion for food, the ability to eat out every day, travel, and pass a test of your palate.

Why it's such a big deal today



[EN.WIKIPEDIA.ORG](https://en.wikipedia.org)

Today the Michelin star (or even inclusion in the book) is the brass ring of a chef's career - but why *this* humble little guidebook? Over a century, thanks to Michelin's exceedingly high standards, secrecy and inspector anonymity, it became as prestigious as it gets.

The chefs with the most stars



[PT.WIKIPEDIA.ORG](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/L'Atelier_de_Jo%C3%ACl_Robuchon)

That honor by far goes to now-deceased French-food specialist Joël Robuchon, who at one time had a whopping 32 Michelin stars across his many restaurants. He mentored Gordon Ramsay, who once had 16 stars and currently has seven.

Enjoyed the article? Share it with your friends!