





ÉDITO

"Chocolate is a promise of bliss, to which we voluptuously relinquish ourselves. It bewitches me to an ineffable point. It opens doors to imagination and creation. On condition to know it well, as this noble and demanding ingredient is the fruit of a precise craft, one whose hidden riches can only be revealed by the artisan chocolatier. Like a hidden treasure, it demands a high level of method, precision and proficiency. I invite you into this unique world."

ALAIN DUCASSE



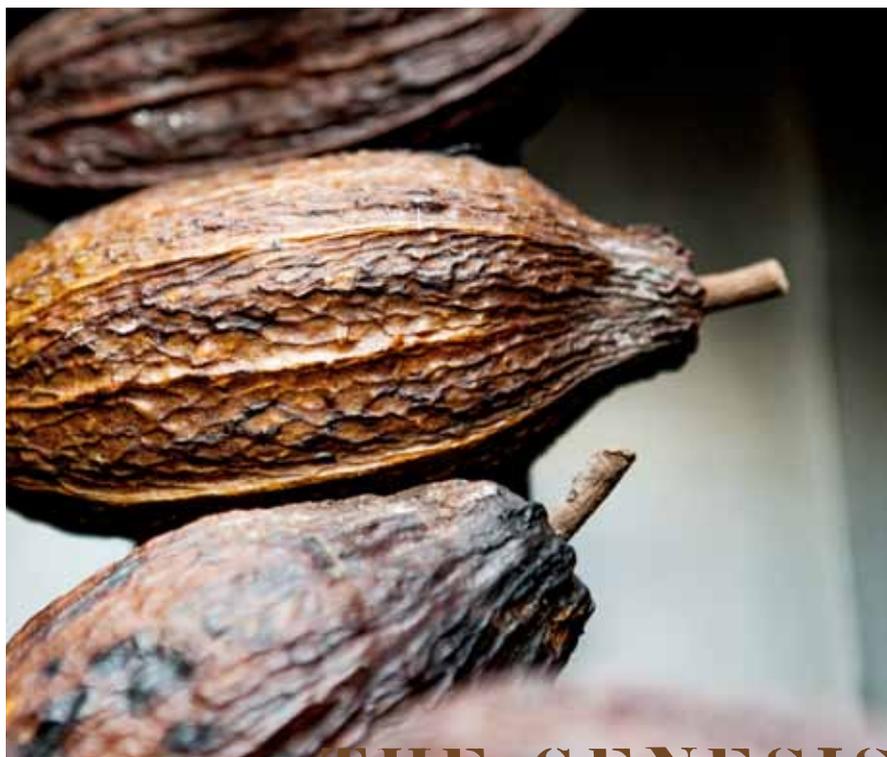
A UNIVERSE

At the back of the small cobbled courtyard of 40 rue de la Roquette, the sound of machines kneading, mixing, grinding, crushing and manipulating rises in a purring and hypnotic tempo. Aromatic, tart, wooded and caramelized aromas permeate the air. Dozens of burlap bags are stored in piles at the door, an image that evokes faraway travels : Peru, Sao Tomé, Madagascar, Dominican Republic, Trinidad, Vietnam. These are cocoa beans selected from the four corners of the planet, waiting for their turn to be transformed into chocolate. Chocolatiers are hard at work behind the heavy steel and glass door.. On the sales counter, bonbons, chocolates, bars and other sweets beckon to taste.

In the heart of the bustling Bastille neighborhood, we enter into a unique place : the “Le Chocolat Alain Ducasse”, a workshop where chocolate is traditionally handcrafted, from bean to the bonbon, with “vintage” machines using traditional, time tested methods.

Alain Ducasse has entrusted Nicolas Berger with the keys to the Manufacture, reuniting with the essence of the craft. Together they are rediscovering the precise and laborious process required for making chocolate.

Ducasse acts as the artistic director, defining flavors, while Berger, adjusts, adapts, and then works some more, each day, with expertise and ingenuity. Together, both men taste and fine tune to create chocolates that best express their origins and character.



THE GENESIS

In the 1970s Alain Ducasse served as a young apprentice cook to Michel Guérard, and each day he learned about pastry from Gaston Lenôtre when passing through Eugénie-les-Bains. Ducasse went to Paris to meet Michel Chaudun, where he discovered that pastry fascinated him more than he could ever know. From there, Ducasse began working for Alain Chapel in Mionnay, devoting his days off to work beside Maurice Bernachon, artisan-chocolatier from Lyon.

Since then, Ducasse has developed his passion for chocolate, “A terribly sensual and bewitching creation,” he says. So much so, he believes, that the chef ultimately chose a cooking profession. For over 30 years, his fascination with chocolate never left him... and has taken true form today, with the opening of the Manufacture.

Since the very beginning, the chef’s culinary philosophy has been based on a rigorous selection of quality products, fully

exposing their original flavors and fragrances, a practice that comes through in chocolate making.

Ducasse wanted to make his own chocolate to serve in his restaurants. To achieve this, the chocolate had to be made from start to finish, beginning with selecting beans from around the world.

Berger, who met Ducasse in New York in 2000, fell under the spell of chocolate as a child, spending days with his father, coating bonbons in his workshop. After working in esteemed establishments such as Hévin, Peltier and Ladurée in Paris, Nicolas traveled abroad to practice his talent. After years in Genoa and New York, as pastry chef at Payard Pâtisserie, Alain Ducasse hired Berger as head pastry chef for his restaurant in the Essex House, and then at his restaurant at the Plaza Athénée, in Paris. Eventually, Berger became corporate pastry chef for the entire group of establishments, overseeing the Ducasse kitchens around the globe.



THE BRAND

The Alain Ducasse chocolate Manufacture is born from the desire to return to the source, the very essence of what chocolate is made of: precise, meticulous and creative work, a craft that works with bespoke machinery, a drawn out process. In a world in constant motion and at an increasingly rapid pace, this environment returns to a slower, more patient time.

Alain Ducasse and Nicolas Berger invite the public to rediscover the physical, sensory and sensual world of chocolate. The factory exposes all the secrets and inner-workings of the complex chocolate-making process.

Le Chocolat is made traditionally, and each step of the confection process is mastered and controlled. Craftsmen can allow themselves to explore and innovate. Why not create some chocolates less smooth than others, with a more rustic and sustained texture? Marked, smoked flavors, full of personality? Blend the cocoa with coffee? Imagine comparative tastings of chocolate and coffee of the same origin? "Here, we can allow ourselves certain things, creative choices that could not be attempted in an industrial context," Alain Ducasse rejoices.



THE PLACE

Set in from the bustling rue de la Roquette, a popular neighborhood steeped in history, lies the Manufacture du Chocolat Alain Ducasse. For three years, Ducasse searched for the perfect location - in the heart of Paris, while meeting all the technical requirements.

The workshop is an ode to craftsmanship, with its industrial and authentic décor. “We do not aim to sell a brand or an image,” explains Alain Ducasse. “We are primarily selling a product and expertise. We want to work in depth, in truth.”

The space features brick walls, frosted glass partitions that allow customers to peer into the factory, steel and cast iron structures, and was designed to last for generations and write its own history.

The majority of the furniture was unearthed in flea markets and antique shops, then ingeniously adapted to the space. The heavy steel gates with brass handles once guarded a former Bank of France. Same for the shelves, where today tools are lined up, placed alongside boxes and chocolate bars. The majestic grills that adorn the outer court and shop were retrieved from an orange grove.

The ceiling lamps once hung from a 1930's military ship. The draining board in the dishwashing area was once a luggage rack. “We are both very fond of vintage items and we love antiquing,” explains Nicolas Berger. “It seemed evident to us to use this passion to decorate and furnish the Manufacture.” Even the molds used for the chocolate Easter fish (French tradition) were recuperated from old family boxes: “Fish with such personality... they don't make them like this anymore!” he adds.



THE MACHINES

The impressive machines outfitting the manufacture were also discovered in surprising places, which proved to be quite challenging and ended up taking four years. “Today, the only machines still manufactured are intended for industrial or semi-industrial use, with a capacity of 5 tons or more.” “However, we needed to find machines a capacity of 150 to 200 kg (330 to 440 pounds)” explains Nicolas.

Advised by mostly retired craftsmen, delighted to transmit their knowledge, Nicolas traveled the four corners of Europe, visiting a dozen old machines, often dusty and left in some dark recess, sometimes put to other uses. The bean roaster “Virey Garnier” was previously used for coffee. The temperature was lowered to 70°C (158°F) and, its speed was adjusted so as not to break the beans. The sorter was used for Jordan Almonds, the Fryma mill was used to grind mustard seeds. Methodically, manuals and technical data sheets were gathered. Missing parts ordered, sometimes custom made.

The bellows on the old tarare, or cocoa crusher, Carle Montanari, recovered from an ancient confectionary in Italy, were reassembled by an artisan blacksmith in the Paris region. Each machine was restored with care. “Very frequently, especially when first restarting the machines, there were a few surprises,” says Nicolas. “Malfunctions have often led me to modify certain procedures in the production line.”

Thus, by passion as by necessity, Nicolas the chocolatier became an outstanding handyman. He can assemble and dismantle his Bühler grinder in a flash, and knows all the secrets of his imposing conche (Pedzholdt). Reinventing his profession on a daily basis and constantly questioning his approach and manufacturing processes, led him to his mantra, “Twenty times on the conche, redo your work”, Nicolas Berger is concurrently a technician, craftsman and artist.



THE VARIOUS STAGES OF PRODUCTION: A COMPLETE PROCESS

The selection

Passionate about the quest for the essential, Alain Ducasse and Nicolas Berger selected cocoa beans based on their purity as much as on their personality. Each taste is unique to its origin. Each bean is worked according to its character. To keep the purity, little amounts of cocoa butter and sugar are included. The origin is key in discovering the Chocolat Alain Ducasse.

At the plantation: harvesting, fermentation and drying

The cocoa pods are harvested twice a year and are opened with a machete. The beans are sorted and then put to ferment in wooden crates, for three to six days to oxidize the mucilage (the white and sweet pulp that surrounds the bean) that endows the cocoa bean with its first organoleptic properties. The beans are then dried in the sun and packed for transport in 70 kg bags.

At the factory : from roasting to grinding

A key step in chocolate making is the roasting, which reveals all the aromas. Cooking should be at the right temperature and in perfect homogeneous rotation, so the bitterness, sweetness, toasted or smoked flavor of the bean is revealed. Roasting is done at approximately 250° Fahrenheit and lasts 20 to 30 minutes. Once roasted, the beans burst open and are then coarsely crushed in the cocoa bean breaker and tarare. Pod residues are removed with a bellow system.

From crushing to refining

The nibs obtained from the cocoa bean breaker are first crushed between two millstones. At the factory, this step is performed on

a mill formerly intended to crush mustard seeds. Heated by friction, the cocoa butter melts, is transformed into “liquor” or cocoa paste. Grainy and acidic, this paste is then mixed with sugar and milk powder (for milk chocolate) in a kneading machine with sugar and milk powder (for milk chocolate). This kneading creates a texture suitable for the final grinding process. Through the cylinders of the big crusher, cocoa paste is crushed until its particle size count reduces to 20 microns. Several passages through the mixer are required to obtain the final required texture.

The conching-refining

To give the chocolate its fluidity and smoothness, while eliminating residual acidity resulting from fermentation, it is subjected to the mechanical action of the conche. Regularly shaken, the crushed powder heats up. Acidity and moisture disappear. The mixture liquifies and becomes more homogeneous. The process can last from 10 to 48 hours, subject to the final expression of the variety of each different bean.

Tempering and moulding

The chocolate removed from the conch must be cooled (tempered) to stabilize. Indeed, cocoa butter molecules must crystallize to give the final product a smooth and shiny coat, as well as its crunch and melt. This step is also known as tabling, as the chocolate is traditionally cooled on a marble countertop. Once tempered, the chocolate is poured in moulds, into blocks or bars, unless it is transformed into ganache or used to coat bonbons. Coating chocolate is stored away from the light, preferably at 63° Fahrenheit.



BONBONS, CHOCOLATES AND BARS

Chocolate bonbons: origins and essential aromas, multiple intensities Alain Ducasse chocolate bonbons revisit the great classics and all time favorites, reinventing gourmet flavors. Square or rectangular, single or double, identifiable through a subtle confectionary signage, the sweets come in “original” ganaches, gourmet, pralines, truffles or bite-size pieces. They are available for purchase as a small assortment of varied intensities and textures.

Pure chocolate ganaches reveal the subtlety of their origins (Java, Madagascar, Venezuela, Peru and Trinidad). The texture is complemented by an assortment of flavors- tart lime, blackcurrant, mint, prune-Armagnac, coco-passion, Tonka bean, vanilla, coffee, caramel, and lemon-tea. The double-bites provide contrasting flavours in one bite, such as caramel praline, passion and coconut praline, raspberry, pistachio marzipan-Madagascar ganache...

For the “old fashioned” pralines, the fondant and crunch are substituted for almonds and hazelnuts and are available in roasted coconut, pistachio or peanut.

Creamy rectangular truffles are offered in dark chocolate ganache, vanilla ganache or orange praline. Garnished with caramelized dried fruit (almond slivers, crushed hazelnuts, roasted coconut), spices and fruits (orange, ginger, raisins, lemon), the truffles are available in dark or milk chocolate, the Rocks or “rochers” are a genuine ode to treats from the past.

The bars :
A unique design, assertive tastes. Designed by graphic designer Pierre Tachon (Soins Graphiques),

the bespoke bars are moulded in uneven lines, reminiscent of the geometry of the bricks in the Manufacture. The bar is designed to break into wedges or squares.

The Alain Ducasse chocolate bar explores the purity and diversity of its origins. Hailing from a dozen countries around the world, the chocolate bars retain the flavors of the cocoa beans’ location; from smoky Indonesian Java to the delicate and powdered Trinidad, intense and typified Papua New Guinea, the tart Madagascar, and strong flavors from Venezuelan Chuao and Peruvian Porcelana, and the botanical aroma of Vietnam. The bars are available in 75% cocoa, five varieties at 65%, as well as at 100% (sugar free). As for the milk chocolate, it comes in four origins and three intensities- the Métis at 55%, less milk and sugar, the classic at 45%, and the “super milky” at 35%.

tribute to old fashioned confectionary, the “Mendiant” bars, with caramelized almonds and hazelnuts, pistachios and pine nuts, nibs and candied fruit are offered in a dark chocolate version at 75% or milk chocolate at 45%. The “filled” bars (hazelnut praline-fleur de sel, pistachio-marzipan, crunchy praline-caramel mousse, coconut-passion fruit, etc.) and the traditional bars (un-conched, Espelette pepper, Ethiopian Arabica coffee, nougatine-fleur de sel) are all personal expressions, unique and delicious, of a chocolatier in love with authenticity.

In giant bars, Alain Ducasse dark chocolate takes on a fun and practical side. Ranging from two to six pounds, they make an exceptional gift and a unique pantry staple.



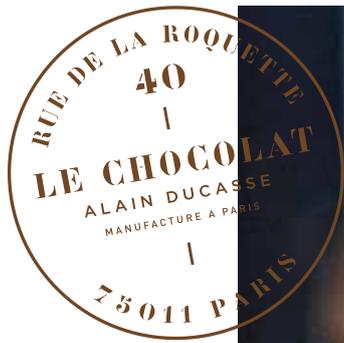
PACKAGING & GRAPHIC IDENTITY

Packaging is created in line with the image of Le Chocolat Alain Ducasse : earthy and essential. Micro-grooved cardboard boxes and special greaseproof paper protect the chocolate and preserve the aroma. A bronze lining in the interior of the chocolate box adds a touch of elegance to the rustic packaging.

The bars are packaged in an airtight bag to maintain flavor and aroma so that customers can open and close the bag whenever there is an urge to indulge. On each bar, there is a stamp explaining the beans' provenance and quality.

Le Chocolat Alain Ducasse is 100% French.

Packaging, designed by Pierre Tachon of agency Soins Graphiques, is created to reflect the interior contents. The font mimics the writing found on the bags of cocoa beans, to designate their provenance. Colors and natural materials are used, reminiscent of the craft.



INFORMATION

LE CHOCOLAT

ALAIN DUCASSE

MANUFACTURE A PARIS

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40, rue de la Roquette 75011 Paris

Tel +33 (0) 1 48 05 82 86

Métro Bastille

Open Monday to Saturday from 10.30 am to 7 pm

et

Galleries Lafayette Maison - Ground floor

35, boulevard Haussmann 75009 Paris

Tel +33 (0) 1 42 82 34 56 - Métro Havre-Caumartin

Open Monday to Saturday

from 9.30 am to 8 pm - Till 9 pm on Thursday.

contact@lechocolat-alainducasse.com

www.lechocolat-alainducasse.com

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PRESS CONTACTS

Alain Ducasse Entreprise

Emmanuelle Perrier - Director or external relations

Aude Nouailhetas - Media relations

Tel +33 (0) 1 58 00 23 68

presse@alain-ducasse.com

U.S. Contact

Bullfrog & Baum - Jessica Rosen

jrosen@bullfrogandbaum.com