

LE LOUIS XV

Alain Ducasse

Monaco

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An encounter with the Mediterranean

When the Société des Bains de Mer offered him the position of chef des cuisines at the Hôtel de Paris in Monte-Carlo, not only did Alain Ducasse accept the challenge, he also agreed with a clause in his contract to obtain three stars within four years and to make "Le Louis XV" one of the world's most prestigious restaurants. Today, he has won that challenge. In Monaco, the Chef which holds simultaneously three stars for three different restaurants in Paris, London and Monaco, presents HIS cuisine that he outlines in three sentences:

*If it were a color... it would be blue just like the Mediterranean Sea,
If it were to be defined by just one taste, it would that of extra virgin olive oil... subtle
and aromatic,
If it were to be described in just one word... it would be "essential"...*

because it takes nothing for granted and gets back to roots. Back to the ingredients' origins. Exactly where one finds the flavors and aromas that a cook can reveal but cannot create.

Alain Ducasse was one of the pioneers of this sun-kissed cuisine that left its mark on the end of the 20th century. . . a subtle balance between all things traditional and the progression of modernity. It was a love of the Mediterranean area and its produce that lead Franck Cerutti — chef de cuisine and Alain Ducasse's right-hand man — to make known the tastes and the textures of this regional cuisine. The lengthy preparations are carried out with great precision. There is judicious use of just two or three incredibly tasty seasonal Mediterranean ingredients. That is what "essential" means.

It was at "Le Louis XV" that Alain Ducasse learnt the methods and constraints of the enterprise. His thirst for knowledge, his creative bulimia, and his desire for new places pushed him towards other perspectives.

Le Louis XV–Alain Ducasse

"Le Louis XV" is situated in the very heart of the Hôtel de Paris. . . amongst the exquisite fabrics and woods. The decor boasting gilt and pastel shades certainly does not let us forget the wealth of the past. For more than a century, although the Hôtel de Paris has constantly been adapted and transformed, luxury and tradition have always been respected.

Since 1987, Alain Ducasse has excelled in the art of fine wining and dining at "Le Louis XV". In the Versailles–style dining room, swathed in gold and bathed in light, each fixture and fitting, and each piece of cutlery is an example of exceptional refinement. . . the ceiling fresco painted by Félix Hyppolite Lucas; the thick floral–patterned carpet; the portraits of La Marquise de Pompadour, La Comtesse du Barry and the courtesans who flocked around Louis XV; the huge mirrors reflecting every detail of the live culinary show much to the delight of the guests, and the marble clocks dotted here and there with their hands set at midday. . . a reminder that this is a place where one comes for the pleasures of the palate.

Huge French windows open out onto a terrace looking over the continually busy Place du Casino. On each table, little silver warblers — created by Christofle — peck at the imaginary crumbs left by the guests. In the centre of the room, an enormous bouquet of flowers adds a special touch to the cosy bucolic ambience in the restaurant.

For its 20th anniversary in May 2007, the restaurant treated itself to a new look. The armchairs were redesigned in the style of the "four seasons" fauteuil — popular at the time of Louis XIV — by Style & Confort – Henryot et Cie, master chair–makers since 1867. Upholstered in satiny violet to celebrate the arrival of spring and soft warm beige velvet for the winter, the dining room changes with the seasons. Their structure, like the pedestal tables and the footstools for handbags, has been given a slightly contemporary twist.

The lighting has been improved by Mathieu Lustrerie from Gargas in Provence. This firm, going back three generations, is specialised in the restoration of historical chandeliers such as those found in the Palace of Versailles. The chandeliers have been enhanced by the addition of gleaming rock crystals and fitted with light bulbs imitating the glow of a candle. Finally, in the centre of the room, the table à gibier designed by Sept et Plus, is made of hand–sculpted wood and gilded with 24 carat gold leaf. It is a unique model made from a drawing and topped with brèche de benou marble.

In 2007, the chef, Franck Cerutti becomes executive chef of all Hotel de Paris restaurants (le Grill, le Côté Jardin and la Salle Empire). The kitchen of Le Louis XV is now directed by Dominique Lory. Alain Ducasse, in agreement with Monte–Carlo S. B. M. entrusts these two talented chefs to deliver his cuisine. He remains himself, more than ever, the inspirational force of this world–renowned restaurant.

The menu — a Mediterranean symphony changes with the seasons. The autumn menu plays tribute to game and both varieties of truffle: the white one from the Piedmont that is served starting in October, followed by the black diamond of gastronomy. The Riviera is just as generous during the winter. . . the first citrus fruits on the market stalls provide a touch of freshness. It is at the beginning of spring that the asparagus, morels and artichokes appear much to the delight of gourmet taste buds. Then it is the turn of that 'forever summer' vegetable — the tomato which is at its best in June, its spicy aroma seducing the lovers of sun-kissed flavours.

The menu offers such a large palette of fine fare, that the 'dish of the day' is sometimes welcome such is the vast choice. There are several sections: the kitchen garden (vegetable starters, veloutés and pasta), the plentiful sea which, throughout the year, is a source of locally-caught fish, crustaceans and shellfish, the farm (featuring "Yellow pullet from the Landes region, truffles, roasted on a log fire" and "Pyrenean suckling lamb studded with summer savory"), and the pastures that propose an unusual selection of cheeses matured especially for us. As for the desserts, one finds compositions of seasonal fruits such as wild strawberries with Mascarpone, chocolate, (including the famous "Louis XV praline croustillant") as well as traditional puddings. In addition to the above, there are home-made ice-creams and sorbets, sweet fritters or madeleines according to the season, dainties and chocolates. . . Although the special "Pour les Gourmets" and "Les Jardins de Provence" menus simplify the choice, they do not bewilder the spirit: 4 courses, 1 cheese platter and 1 dessert.

Now for the wines. Bottles, magnums and jeroboams share the starring roles to the great joy of the connoisseurs. There are 18 different sorts of bottled water. The choice of coffee is like a 9-stage journey from Brazil to Africa. The list of teas and infusions stops fifteen times on its journey around the world. And the finishing touch? 15 different tobaccos and a triumphant cigar at the end of the meal.

The Louis XV chef and 20 cooks (including a butcher, baker, pastry chef and chocolate-maker) work in a state-of-the-art kitchen covering more than 140m² in the hotel's basement. They have at their disposal a grill, smoke-house, and fish tank. . .

"L'aquarium" is a mini dining-room in the kitchen — equipped with 6 video screens — where Alain Ducasse receives guests and friends.

"Le Louis XV – Alain Ducasse". Open from Thursday to Monday, and for dinner on Wednesdays during July and August. Each year, it closes during December and for two weeks in February/ March. "Club Déjeuner de Saison" menu at 145 €. Lunch and dinner menus at 230€ and 310 €, or à la carte dining.

Those special touches at the Louis XV

Looking for new ideas and those special touches are all in a day's work for Alain Ducasse. As for the "extra special" touches, the Louis XV offers a wide range of frivolous nothings that are essential and epitomise — albeit discreetly — the very sense of the word 'luxury'.

Even greater comfort at the Louis XV

Although the Louis XV seats a maximum of 50 diners at any one time, the number of special 'courtesies' served to the 100 guests who lunch or dine in this remarkable setting greatly outnumbers this. Each client uses more than 50 pieces of cutlery, china, and glassware. Each diner has 40 people at his service, thus making this culinary experience a truly unforgettable one.

Greater choice

The highly prestigious cellars at the Hôtel de Paris house more than 400 000 bottles, 950 different wines, 40 "great and rare vintages", and 16 "fine and exceptional bottles" which guarantee the cellar's perpetuity. As for the herbal teas, the choice is vast — citronella from Madagascar to verbena and sage — more than 10 varieties adorn the fresh infusion trolley.

Greater variety

Nothing is left to chance at Le Louis XV. Between the main courses and desserts, the bread trolley — a principal element of the feast — plays a major role. From the bran michette niçoise flavored with olive oil to the country bacon fougasse and, of course, the small baguette. . . more than 300 pieces are kneaded by our bakers every day. These small appealingly shaped buns can be compared to really tasty jewels.

Greater originality

A meal at Le Louis XV is rather like a show. The butter service is an example. Served on a marble plaque and covered by a blown

glass cloche designed by Jean Claude Novaro, two types are proposed: a lightly salted butter and one from Normandy. The latter is served in pats, shaped with a spoon, and arranged delicately in a marble butter dish. As for the starters, you will find some highly original ones. Small raw ready-to-crunch vegetables are served in unique and unusual crystal glasses from Murano, hand-engraved by the master glassmaker "Carlo Moretti". Now, at last, it's time for dessert. . . and the whole table — from the napkin ring to the chocolate box — is set with a new white and blue china collection from belgium designer Pieter Stockmans.

Greater perfection

In order to achieve the pinnacle of elegance, the couturier Georges Feghaly has designed the tailor-made uniforms of the dining-room staff. Charcoal grey jacket and trousers, white shirt and silk tie. The greatest of attention has been paid to the tiniest details of these incredibly chic outfits that are in perfect harmony with the restaurant's decor.

Greater finishing touches

It is the chef himself who concocts the menus for certain guests who, for years to come, will keep their own menu card, bearing the date, and printed on a personalised Louis XV card.