

Press Release

October 2021

The wind of freedom blows on Rue de Rivoli

A question of generation? With the team of young thirty-somethings put in place by Alain Ducasse at the controls of the restaurant, Le Meurice – Alain Ducasse is becoming one of the favourite addresses for neo-gourmets. Cooking that astounds, relaxed service, a new way of living the starred-meal experience: younger, more innovative, more surprising – in a nutshell: freer.



What can a **starred cuisine that's truly in phase with its times** be when you are in one of the loveliest and oldest Parisian palaces? Amaury Bouhours and his team provide an answer to this question that is as personal as it is brilliant.

The *tour de force* first of all means that none of the **fundamentals** of French *haute cuisine* can be left by the wayside: all the precision of the cooking, all the subtlety of the *jus* are there. His years of experience gained in Alain Ducasse's world offer Amaury the sound technical foundations he needs for his cooking. Likewise, none of the master's precepts are forgotten regarding the **produce**: it all comes from the best growers and the menu quite legitimately pays glowing tribute

to them.

But when Alain Ducasse handed over the reins of the restaurant to Amaury Bouhours, he also gave him the following guiding principle: express your own vision of starred cuisine. He had the presentiment that this young chef who loves mixtures, bitterness and asperities would create a cuisine that resembles him. The circle is now complete: the impeccable technique is there, the exceptional produce is there and above all the **freedom of the young chef** is there.

The flavours – smoked, spicy, bitter, briny – are always **clear-cut and memorable**. The “Kitchen-garden vegetables *au naturel*”, for example, are trenchant, with a striking acidity. The “Confit line-caught seabass / aubergine / mustard / cereal” is resolutely vigorous.

The associations are **unexpected**. The meeting between land and sea, for instance, is perfectly mastered: the smoked yoghurt accompanying the seabream, the langoustine meeting the smoked beef and Lardo di Colonnata, the lamb seasoned with seaweed and abalone.

The journey is full of **surprises**. So, starting with the *amuse-bouche*, the humble crispy chicken foot gives an exotic and unexpected touch in the dining room’s sumptuous surroundings. Or the Lacaune lamb whose fullness and *fondant* come in stark contrast to the received wisdom concerning this meat. And then this infusion – full of sweetness and tang – that comes after the meats, like our ancestors’ *trou normand* palate cleanser did in the past. It is made from the trimmings of all of the meal’s vegetables, infused and spiced up with ginger, mint, verbena and bird’s eye chilli.



Naturally this **freedom of inspiration** is also expressed in the pastries signed Cédric Grolet. Although the pre-dessert “Vanilla pod” recalls his famous *trompe l’œil* creations, the dessert menu chimes perfectly with the restaurant’s cooking. The “Pierre Baud figs / red wine / liquorice”, for example, dares to mix sorbet and a red-wine emulsion, with a touch of acidity brought on by the verjuice.



The service is in unison with this cooking and these pastries: under the direction of Olivier Bikao, the dining room ballet – always impeccable – knows how to be **relaxed** and **spontaneous**. Between the diners and this young restaurant manager – the perfect embodiment of the young generation of dining room professionals – the rapport is instantaneous. Everything is simpler, everything is possible. The meal at each table organises itself in line with the guests’ desires, in total freedom.

Gabriel Veissaire, the Head Sommelier, boldly engages in the adventure. It’s true, he plays the classic role of advisor to perfection seeking out, among the thousands of references, the bottle that will go best with the meal and the diners’ mood. But the restaurant’s new atmosphere encourages him to do more. For example, to accompany the “Barely cooked Noirmoutier seabream / beetroot / rosehip / smoked yoghurt”, he has created a drink that subtly mixes Nakamura sake with the dish’s sauce, in a **free interpretation** of the Peruvian *leche*.

Decidedly, the arrival of this team of young thirty-somethings is blowing the wind of freedom on Rue de Rivoli!



Amaury Bouhours, chef de cuisine

After his studies at the Soissons Hospitality School, Amaury secured an internship at the Louis XV – Alain Ducasse, in Monaco, in 2008. For the young 18-year-old, the experience was crucial: *“I had always wanted to work in haute cuisine restaurants. But there, all of a sudden, I was leaping from dream to reality and that was when everything really clicked into place”*. It was also the beginning of his discovery of the *Ducassian* cuisine, of precision and exceptional produce. Alain Ducasse quickly recognised this promising young beginner’s potential.

So here was Amaury setting off in 2009 as *commis* in the Restaurant Alain Ducasse at the Plaza Athénée, in Paris. He stayed there for six years, successively under the direction of Christophe Moret, Christophe Saintagne then Romain Meder. New establishment, new and significant encounters: *“the rhythm was really intense, but that enabled me to save an untold amount of time. I really learnt about every aspect of cooking, from respect for the produce through to the ideal cooking method and the ideal seasoning.”* He quickly rose to the position of Head *Chef de Partie* then Junior *Sous-Chef*. He then joined Adrien Trouilloud as *Sous-Chef* at Lasserre: *“I learnt a great deal with Adrien too, notably regarding sauces and rotisserie, areas in which he excels”*.

In 2016, Amaury joined Le Meurice – Alain Ducasse as Jocelyn Herland’s assistant *Chef de Cuisine*. When the latter left in June 2020, it was quite natural that Alain Ducasse should entrust the reins of the establishment to Amaury: *“If I chose Amaury, it was because he has the potential to embody a new stage in the life of the restaurant at Le Meurice.”*

Cédric Grolet, Pastry Chef



Cédric Grolet hails from Firminy, near Saint-Étienne. After getting his Pastry-Chocolate-Ice-Cream Certificate of Professional Competence in Puy-en-Velay, he obtained a Technical Trades Certificate at the famous Higher National Pastry School in Yssingeaux. He had already started his collection of distinctions: Best Apprentice in Auvergne and third place for Best Apprentice in France, National Artistic Icing Trophy and first prize at the National Croquebouches Festival in 2005. In 2006, he arrived at Fauchon where he stayed five years. There he was very quickly spotted by the chefs Christophe Adam, Christophe Appert and Benoit Couvrand who he accompanied to Beijing to train the teams in the new boutiques there. On his return to Paris, he took on the highly coveted task of leading Research & Development. In 2011, Cédric joined Le Meurice as *Sous-Chef* and quickly became the Pastry Chef. He was voted Best Pastry Chef in the World in 2017. In 2018, he opened his own patisserie on Rue de Castiglione and the following year his bakery-patisserie on Avenue de l’Opéra.



Olivier Bikao, Restaurant Manager

During his four years of studies at Ferrandi, Olivier Bikao, born in Colombes (Hauts-de-Seine), built up a great deal of experience. Starting with an apprenticeship at Les Vendanges restaurant in the 14th arrondissement of Paris. Followed by a second apprenticeship sequence with Alain Ducasse, firstly at Marcel then at the Publicis Drugstore and lastly, for two years, at the restaurant Alain Ducasse at the Plaza Athénée, the top-of-the-line address where, with Denis Courtiade, he learnt all about the demands of a three-star restaurant. In 2010, he pursued his career alongside Frédéric Vardon for the opening of the 39V as *Chef de Rang*, before serving as Manager from 2015 to 2020. In October 2020, he moved on to Le Meurice – Alain Ducasse as Manager. Olivier is the Ambassador for the “Ô service des talents de demain” association which focusses on transmitting knowledge and promoting the front-of-house professions. He is a member of the extended board of the “Trophée du maître d’hôtel” and administrator of the “Croq’l’espoir” association which supports children with health issues, through gastronomy-related initiatives.



Gabriel Veissaire, Sommelier

On completing his studies in 2004, Gabriel was offered the opportunity to immediately become Head Sommelier in a restaurant in Clermont-Ferrand. Two years later, he accepted to become Commis Sommelier to learn more about the world of palaces. It was Noël Bajor, Head Sommelier at the Louis XV – Alain Ducasse in Monaco, who received him and rounded off his training. This was followed by a return to Clermont-Ferrand for a brief stay at Le Pré, the restaurant where Xavier Beaudimient had just settled in. Then in 2010 Gabriel arrived in Paris, working in Guy Savoy’s restaurant, where he remained for nine years. He joined Le Meurice – Alain Ducasse in the spring 2019 as Head Sommelier, and taking charge of the hotel’s wine cellar.

Practical information

Le Restaurant Le Meurice Alain Ducasse is open from Monday to Friday from 9 to 9.30pm

Collection menu– €340 per person excluding drinks

Discovery menu– €280 per person excluding drinks

Booking: Restaurant.Imp@dorchestercollection.com // +33 (0)1 44 58 10 55

Dress code: casual chic



Le Meurice

Paris

Dorchester Collection

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