



**AMUSE-BOUCHE**

## Class Action. Alain Ducasse is here to help you lift your culinary game

A TRANCHE OF WILD SEA BASS WITH green-pea-and-rocket emulsion and *mousserons des prés* mushrooms sounds more like a three-star Michelin meal than a cookery-class assignment. But it's exactly the kind of fastidiously prepared yet surprisingly uncomplicated dish that features on the haute cuisine course at celebrity chef Alain Ducasse's new l'Ecole de Cuisine in Paris.

Pupils work like commis chefs, learning how to brunoise-cut courgettes into perfect tiny cubes to maximize flavor. They make a stock with pea pods (which pureed and served with ricotta makes an instant summer soup). There's detailed instruction on using up leftovers (sea-bass trimmings are transformed into a tartare with lime, coconut milk and chili) and on how to finish an emulsion sauce without it curdling (it involves using cream whipped over ice). Students then get to sit and eat the spoils of their labor.

The chef-tutors have all worked at restaurants within Ducasse's international empire: *chef des chefs* Romain Corbière is from Le Louis XV in Monaco. They willingly pass on insider tips (like crisping *bellota* ham in a dry pan and using the fat to cook

chanterelles to scatter over risotto). What's especially fascinating is the realization that, at the top echelons, it's all about using the very best ingredients at the zenith of their season, using every part of them, and paying fanatical attention to the details.

Not all the courses—either half- or full-day, with a maximum of 12 per class—are for aspiring Michelin chefs. The school caters for two different levels: experienced and beginner, and offers subjects from “traditional cuisine” to “pastry-making.” Neither is Ducasse particularly concerned about luring customers through the door in these cash-strapped times. “People need a hobby, and cooking is a way to forget your worries,” he says. “It's about the joy of giving yourself and others pleasure.”

Located in the chic 16th arrondissement, l'Ecole de Cuisine is stylish in the extreme. Its four vast ultra-contemporary kitchens named Piment, Cèpe, Olive and Truffe are full of covetable culinary kit. Many of the more esoteric gadgets used, plus Ducasse truffle oil, are for sale in the boutique, but dealing with kitchen envy is beyond the curriculum. See [www.ecolecuisine-alainducasse.com](http://www.ecolecuisine-alainducasse.com) for more. — BY SUDI PIGOTT

**Hungry for knowledge**  
 Eager students pick up tips from the great man himself



FROM LEFT: PHILIPPE PETIT; DUENDE VISION