

Michelin man

ALAIN DUCASSE gives Brunswick's
OLIVIER JAY a lesson in the language of food
and an insight into the fraternity of fine cuisine



“My role? I am an
art director.
I provide the vision
of where we are
and where we want
to go. And I work
to make that
vision happen”

“My principal
characteristic?
Impatience”

“My major
character flaw?
I am greedy and
curious – two faults
I intend to keep”

ALAIN DUCASSE

Alain Ducasse has been dubbed “the godfather of French cuisine” by *The New York Times*. In 2005 he became the first chef ever to be awarded three Michelin stars for three restaurants in one year – in Paris, Monaco and New York. His best-known establishments include Plaza Athénée and Le Meurice (Paris), Le Louis XV (Monaco), Alain Ducasse at The Dorchester (London) and Beige (Tokyo). At 27, he was the sole survivor of a light aircraft crash, was seriously injured and spent a year in hospital. He later told the *Harvard Business Review* that this was a defining moment. “It really improved my ability to delegate, and I understood that I was able to lead without being physically present.” Alain Ducasse Enterprise includes restaurants, inns, cooking schools, publishing and consulting. He defines his business as “culinary pleasures and the art of hospitality.”

OLIVIER JAY is a Partner in Brunswick's Paris office. Previously, he held senior media positions, including Editor of *Le Journal du Dimanche*. He belongs to Les Amis des Bistros, a Paris dining club.

“The heart of *haute cuisine* is a bit like *haute couture*: it's for a few thousand people in the world. But there are also tens of thousands of people whose hobby is to treat themselves to a great restaurant. And there are around 100 of us chefs around the world who can trade in this fraternal business”



“Upmarket? We have always been upmarket. But it should last. The one-shot effect is easy, but you must endure, hang on”

STAR SYSTEM

In 1900, the Michelin tire company launched its first guidebook, and in 1926 started sending anonymous “inspectors” to review restaurants and award stars. The company remains highly secretive about its inspectors, who often visit the same restaurant several times, but it does publish its judging criteria (below).

An inspector told *The Daily Telegraph*, “People do get very confused. They think it’s about the surroundings, service, number of staff, but it’s about the food.” Michelin says it judges “only what’s on the plate: the quality of products, mastering of flavors, mastering of cooking, personality of the cuisine, value for money and consistency.”

The elusive and coveted stars can bring fame, respect – and customers. It has been estimated that a single star can boost receipts by 20 percent. The loss of a star can be an emotional wrench; British chef Gordon Ramsay says he cried when he lost two stars in 2013.

Alain Ducasse holds 19 Michelin stars for his restaurants around the world, having received his first three-star rating for Le Louis XV in Monaco, when he was 33.

THE POWER OF THREE

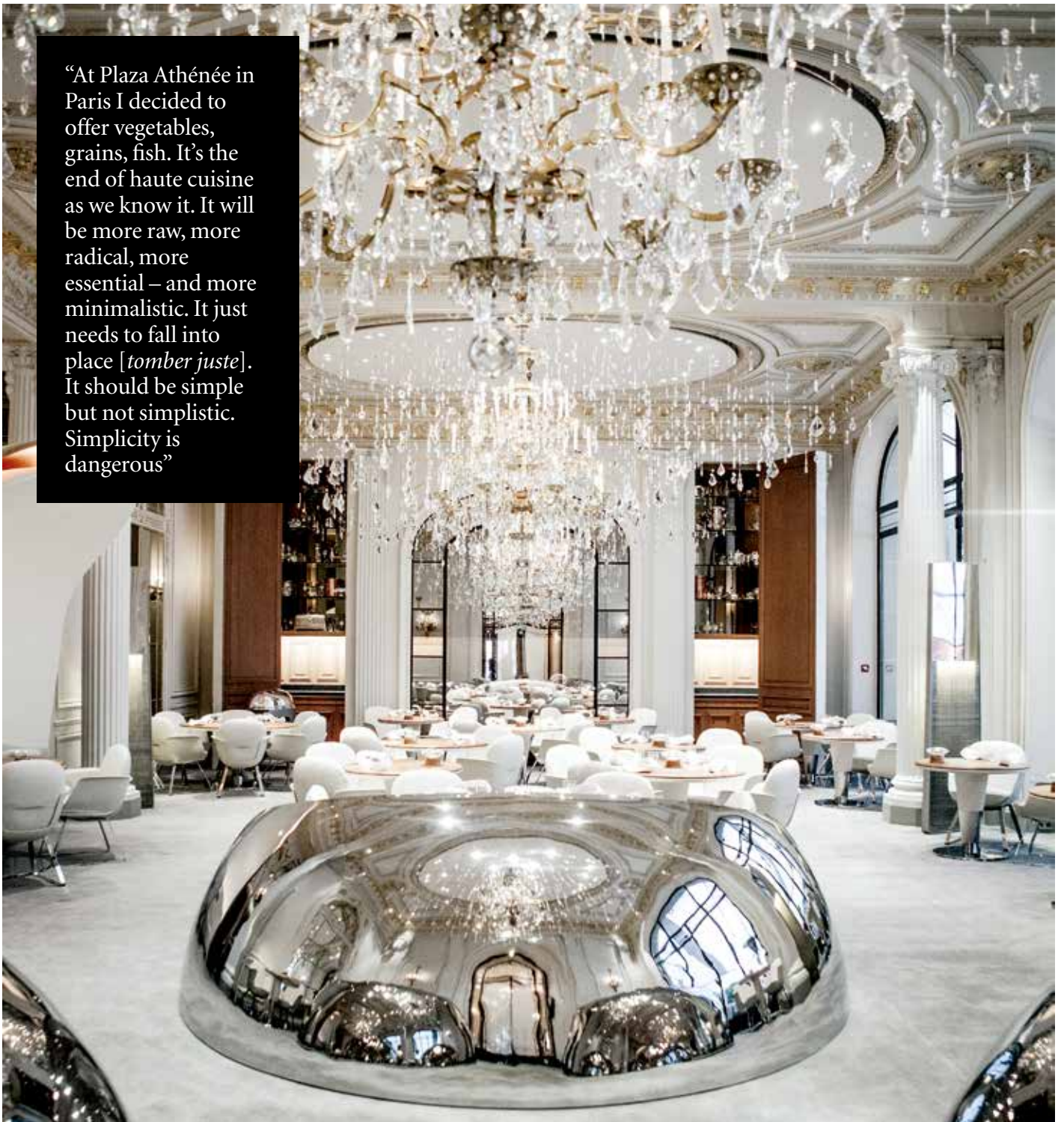
✿ A very good restaurant in its category, offering cuisine prepared to a consistently high standard. A good place to stop on your journey.

✿✿ Excellent cuisine, skillfully and carefully crafted dishes of outstanding quality. Worth a detour.

✿✿✿ Exceptional cuisine where diners eat extremely well, often superbly. Distinctive dishes are precisely executed, using superlative ingredients. Worth a special journey.

“What distinguishes French cooking is the attention that is paid. Elsewhere, it is not taken to the same obsessive level”

“At Plaza Athénée in Paris I decided to offer vegetables, grains, fish. It’s the end of haute cuisine as we know it. It will be more raw, more radical, more essential – and more minimalistic. It just needs to fall into place [*tomber juste*]. It should be simple but not simplistic. Simplicity is dangerous”



“We are in the hospitality business. We are here to host, not to serve. Hospitality is not a form of servitude”

“The table is a place for civilization to share. Around the table, everyone is civilized”

“Cooking is the interpretation of the generosity of nature, of what one has understood of it”

“In my organization, I don’t take personal responsibility for much.

I take on as few obligations as possible, so that I am permanently available. I have many *collaborateurs*. I delegate”



“We have designed food for astronauts. It took us three years to be certified by NASA. We gained nothing. But astronauts who have to eat 370,000 kms from the Earth told us, ‘You have changed our lives’”

“Fusion? Tastes haven’t changed. After a period of fusion, we are once again in a period of cooking with precise identities. In the global village, there is a need to re-identify, to look to the past – one’s roots – and create from there. Fusion was confusion”



A DISH FOR BRUNSWICK

“A variation of Coquilles Saint Jacques, with truffles with bitter herbs – a dish that is modern and traditional, sophisticated and refined. Served with a great Meursault. It falls right [ça tombe juste]”



My favorite dish

“A Mediterranean red mullet (from Esterel, southeast France, where they are redder), between 80 and 120 grams, caught that morning, not scaled, not gutted, unseasoned. It needs a fisherman who knows how to fish and someone who can really cook”



“The archetype of excellence is a fisherman who has respected the fish he has caught”

“Excellence can be found anywhere; in a hamburger restaurant I tried in London, where everything was right: the product, the graphics, the atmosphere – or an amazing restaurant in Kyoto, a 12 m² garage with four tables, where a monk-cook made us his speciality: vegetable roots with tofu on top”

“The quality I most admire in others is loyalty. At the Plaza, the director has been with me for 20 years and at Le Meurice, the Chef Christophe for 18 years – since he was 18.

My managers don’t know where they will be in six months’ time.

One morning, I asked seven people to move – to Osaka, New York and Paris.

They all gave me a positive answer within the same day”

DUCASSE GROUP VALUES

Just love ... and the rest will follow

To delight our guest is our mission each day

Every day, to learn a little more

Act in harmony to deliver a flawless ballet

Be the first one ... the sky’s the limit

Reach perfection with rigorous practice

Always keep our eyes open to the world around us

The melting pot of cultures is a treasure

Strive for excellence through the slightest detail

Respect your peers ... you’ll never walk alone

Do not fear to undertake anything

Remember your roots



Ducasse has published several books, including *Nature*, subtitled: *Simple, Healthy and Good [Simple, Sain et Bon]*, one of his maxims www.alain-ducasse.com