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## Review: wine tasting dinners, Alain Ducasse at The Dorchester

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Alain Ducasse at The Dorchester's new wine-tasting dinners give a glimpse into the restaurant's ample cellars and specialist wineries, says Lucy Thackray



ALAIN DUCASSE AT THE DORCHESTER

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### The lowdown:

**Alain Ducasse at The Dorchester**, one of London's chicest Michelin-starred restaurants, is delving into its cellars throughout 2013 to host dedicated wine-tasting dinners for groups. With great sommeliers and strong relationships with some of Europe's best vineyards, the restaurant is perfectly positioned to give an insight into the expertise and history of its wine suppliers (while showcasing its delicious French fare, *naturellement*).

After a quick tour of the restaurant (light, airy, with a Hyde Park view and a show-stopping 'Table Lumière', surrounded by a swirl of fibre optics and set with Hermès china), we are led to our private salon, just off of the dining room. We sample the restaurant's lighter-than-air choux pastries and make chitchat as a menu of 10 or so grand crus sits intimidatingly before us.

Each 'course' of two Domaine Taupenot wines will be matched with a similarly exclusive dish by chef Jocelyn Herland, but the focus is definitely on the liquid lunch. How will we tell our 2008 Mazoyères-Chambertin from the 2008 Charmes-Chambertin? Luckily the winery's owner, Romain Taupenot, is on hand to talk us through its philosophy and the merits of its various vintages, not to mention their pronunciation. Taupenot was the first to switch the vineyard to organic farming techniques in 2001, and talks passionately about environmentally sound winemaking.

But on to the fruits of his labour: bar a crisp Saint-Romain 2010 white with our canapés, all the other grand crus are light, zesty reds. Burgundy has less acidity, Taupenot explains, and goes better with seafood than reds from other regions. The 2007 Mazoyères-Chambertin versus 2007 Corton Le Rognet grand crus certainly pair well with our sauté gourmand lobster and creamy truffled chicken quenelles (deliciously cooked, but with not quite enough of a truffle hit for me). The 2008 Mazoyères-Chambertin, pretty pungent on the first sniff, is the perfect partner for a buttery duck foie gras in a syrupy gravy.

The food only gets richer, with a super-tender pink pigeon breast and offal with artichokes and, finally, three incredibly creamy Burgundy cheeses (each with its own carefully crafted condiment). But the fun is not over yet — we are brought one bonus wine, a light, rusty-hued number with a whiff of sweetness, and are asked to guess the year. A couple of our more wine-savvy co-diners have a punt, while our expert gently points out clues in its consistency, colour and flavour. Turns out it is an 1983 Charmes-Chambertin — not something most of us would have known, but a fun (and delicious) end to a memorable meal.

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**The good:**

The feeling of exclusivity and an expert in the mix — this would be perfect for a corporate night out with colleagues who know their wines.

**The not so good:**

Despite small pours of each wine, we still end up leaving a little — the food is very rich and some of the reds quite similar.

Top tip: get a seat close to the expert for maximum insight.

**The verdict:**

Though pitched at a high level, Alain Ducasse's wine-tasting dinners are a fascinating introduction to the thought and craftsmanship behind some of the restaurant's finest wines.

**Book it:**

£220 per person. Alain Ducasse at the Dorchester, 53 Park Lane, London, W1K 1QA (+44 (0)20 7629 8866; [alainducasse-dorchester.com](http://alainducasse-dorchester.com))

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