



Domaine Les Crayères, Reims

Celebrating Champagne, a region in its prime



Today, this splendid historic property, member of Relais & Châteaux, embodies French art de vivre with rare finesse. Ever since the Gardinier brothers took over in the early 1980s, it has aged to perfection with a radiant new vision reaching far beyond the terroir of the estate.

It invites guests to view the Champagne region through a kaleidoscope of unique features: its land, its vineyards... and so much more.



PHILIPPE MILLE, FORWARD-THINKING CUISINE

“Bringing out the soul of Champagne in my cuisine takes much more than crafting the terroir... it means penetrating its secrets!”

After two years spent mastering the myriad subtleties of this diverse and complex terroir of wine-makers, our Chef, awarded the coveted title of Meilleur Ouvrier de France in 2011 and a second Michelin star in 2012, considers that finally, today, he is ready and able to offer much more than just locavore, sustainable cuisine.

As soon as he arrived, he reconciled the prestige of the venue with the country life he loves, built a capital of trust and created a virtuous circle encompassing each of the 64 producers, farmers, fish farmers and gatherers who supply him today with the best of everything within 70 kilometres of the estate. Philippe Mille was also determined to share Champagne’s regional identity by featuring its finest historic and creative achievements through original cooking and carving techniques as well as the best local savoir-faire and craftsmanship.

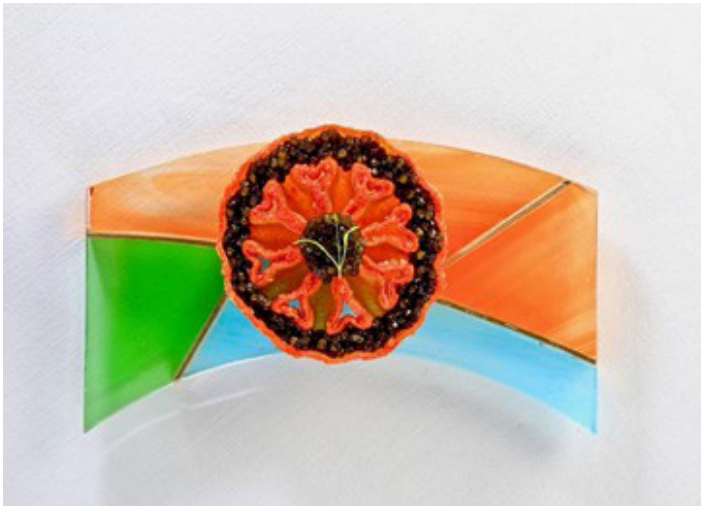


And by surprising his guests! Take this monochromatic, immaculate razor clam recipe, reminding them that shellfish are no strangers to the Crayeux terroir: thousands of shells carpeted the ground some 45 million years ago and left a natural sea salt legacy we can still taste in a glass of Champagne. Served in a wide-rimmed, matte white soup bowl, the colour of limestone cliffs, this razor clam dish reflects his complex culinary thought process.



While Philippe Mille admits that his menu – which, unlike stuffy fine dining menus, is changed 20 to 30 times a year – is sometimes built around a single vineyard or a love affair with a certain wine, every recipe he creates is there to tell the story of his encounter with a wine-grower, farmer or artisan. Take the straw marquetry artist in Nanteuil, Grégory Pierson, who inspired the chef to prepare chicken raised by Monsieur Cogniard in a recipe featuring rye (the straw is made from rye)!

Another example: Vitraux Simon-Marq, the stained glass manufacturer who designed tableware to set off his langoustine marinated in Arbanne grape verjuice, a spectacular tribute to the Reims Cathedral.



His turbot is not only grilled over vine tendrils and served on a Champagne barrel stave, it is served with potatoes cooked on the embers in this forge built by a local metalworker, a cooking method that harks back to his childhood when he would watch his father work as a blacksmith.

By expressing his love of art and architecture in a culinary language infused with the dialect of local craftspeople and farmers, Philippe Mille carves out a permanent place for the Domaine Les Crayères in the multifaceted region it calls home.

Far from being overwhelmed by this geography of fine connoisseurs, our chef has forged himself a singular personality, proclaiming his love for a cuisine enshrined in time-honoured French traditions, featuring powerful flavours which draw their identity, and their savour, from bones and carcasses, slow-cooking techniques, and are enhanced by tableside carving and service.

“Why bother inventing stories in the kitchen or with producers if there is no one to tell them to our clients?”



Ah, but there is! His name is Michel Gebel. Originally from the East of France, he is a man of tact and discretion, two qualities he uses to bring the emotion of Philippe Mille to the table, intact.

This transmission is at the heart of everything he does, drawing on skills forged in some of the world's greatest kitchens - at Drouant, at the Pré Catelan with Frédéric Anton, at Lasserre, at the Ritz with Michel Roth, then at the Meurice working with Yannick Alléno – today he is at the head of his own kitchen brigade, sharing his culinary know-how and vision with the next generation.

“Building product knowledge within the brigade involves cultivating close ties with producers, to understand them and highlight their value.”



This Chef runs his brigade on common sense, lively exchange and mutual respect, creating a calm, supportive atmosphere for every service.

“In a kitchen, know-how and knowing how to work are two parts of a whole. Working as one is the only way to guarantee the highest level of precision,” explains the man who created a competition 11 years ago to motivate young talents. Today, the Trophée Mille has become an international event attracting participants from 14 countries and a number of starred chefs who share their passion and provide support for future greats.



YOANN NORMAND, HEAD PASTRY CHEF, STRIKES THE RIGHT BALANCE

“My pastry has the humble ambition to awaken the child within. I think of it as a logical ending to an exceptional meal: bringing back wonderful memories, mainly the ones from our first twenty years. Our comfort foods very often date back to those early carefree days.”

Yoann Normand chose pastry-making to “keep having fun” and has thrown out the rigid gastronomic pastry-making rule book. School’s out and his 12 pastry-makers are ready to play—as leader of the gang, he grabs every chance to tap into their childhood memories, “it’s fascinating, so many treasures waiting to be dug up”—but he does have three golden rules: use everything the Champagne region has to offer, no more than one “cooked” piece per plate (no multiple style effects or assembled pastries), and focus on the Wow! “Again, I want to amaze, create a dual effect: first the visual wow, like when you get a wonderful surprise, then the taste sensation, because it speaks the language of emotion.”

At 29, this young perfectionist moves towards his own kind of maturity, creating presentations where “everything has a purpose”. Nothing superfluous, nothing that distracts from the focus of the dessert, and mainly fruit, lots of fruit for this sweet-tooth who grew up next to an orchard. Dessert must be “light as a cloud, but without the rain” he smiles. It’s the ultimate indulgence at the end of a dining experience, yet another reason to finish and let desire have the last word. His desserts are a perfect fit with Chef Philippe Mille’s storytelling approach, driven mainly by a craving for something sweet. A craving for a cube of raw Cuban chocolate, for example, inspired by the work of Nicolas Berger who sources his beans himself in a worldwide quest.



A dark brown cube, echoing the dense Argonne forest, drizzled with naturally sweet cherries. “I never add unneeded sugar, only flavourful sugars when they truly enhance the dessert,” adds this artisan of beauty and balance.



Other desserts aren't satisfied with expressing pleasure, but go on to share a slice of life, an encounter. Like his choco-milk lollies smoked over vine tendrils. "A dessert that tells about a visit to wine-grower friends. It celebrates friendship, respect for these people, their work. In fact, we always serve a generous helping of friends..." laughs this fun-loving 'Champion de France des Desserts 2019', and who, despite appearances, never renounces a technical challenge and is always ready to embrace complexity. His championship dessert is always a highlight on the Le Parc restaurant holiday menu: The Angel's Share, a nod to the vapours that escape into wine cellars. "I dreamt up a dessert that could almost be eaten on an oak barrel. I take whisky aged in a maple syrup barrel, a refreshing touch of grapefruit ... all worked into a sorbet sprinkled with Tanqueray Gin candied with pink, red and white grapefruit. Through the hollowed tube shape, we can almost smell the alcohol evaporating through the barrel." It turns out that our artisan of beauty and balance is also a storyteller.



AN EXCEPTIONAL WINE CELLER

Boasting three cellars and 63,000 bottles, the Domaine Les Crayères wine cellar is one of the most impressive in France. And not your run-of-the-mill variety either: its precious stock is kept at ideal temperature in an authentic bunker at the far end of the grounds.

While Head Sommelier Martin Jean has set up a superior ageing cellar to tend to prestigious vertical collections with nearly impossible to find Côte Rôtie du Domaine Jamet and Meursault Coche-Dury, this young Champagne born-and-bred enthusiast also thrives on cultivating another treasure: 9000 bottles of champagne hailing from no fewer than 530 estates.

Just 30 years old, Martin is determined to step up and embrace the new energy that is shaking up the region, and has selected 250 independent wine-growers to join the ranks of his cellar.



These wine-growers are known for their insatiable thirst for knowledge, crafting a personal vision and working with the singularity of their own vineyard soil. The result is a plethora of bespoke wines to choose from. “Young wine-growers have a totally different approach and their journeys into other wine-growing regions, or further afield, have a definite impact,” explains the Head Sommelier. Venerable estate or young independent vineyard, it’s all a question of balance. “In each wine, we look for purity, and for a distinctive signature,” continues this demanding connoisseur who adds only a dozen wines to his list out of some hundred new wines introduced each year, and can remove a bottle or two as well.

He doesn’t believe in the perfect pairing – “Every person has a different perception, coloured by their background, the context, etc.” - but aims only to enhance the meal experience, providing guideposts along the way.



«Despite what many people think, champagne improves with age.

Over time, it develops other aromas, pairs with other dishes...

We can sometimes miss out on things if we drink a champagne when it's too young »

That is why some of his champagnes are also found in the ageing cellar to improve balance in certain vintages, mellow the dosage or enhance complexity. Martin Jean works closely with the Chef, the wine-grower and clients to propose carefully thought-out food-champagne pairings from a by-the-glass menu of a half-dozen champagnes, covering a wide range of different characters, or from the thousands of bottles on what was voted the “Best Champagne List in Europe” in 2021 by World Fine Wine.



CASTLE LIFE

Voted most beautiful hotel in the world several years running by Condé Nast Traveler, flagship of Relais & Châteaux hotels, the Domaine Les Crayères is a full-service destination at the beating heart of Reims.

From the crest of Saint-Nicaise Hill, a listed UNESCO heritage site, the hotel commands a magnificent view of the Saint-Rémi Basilica dome on one side and the Reims cathedral on the other.

A majestic edifice on a human scale, the hotel is surrounded by seven hectares of landscaped nature designed by Jules-Edouard Redont, dotted with Lebanese cedars and hundred-year-old boxwoods, garden beds with over 3000 bulbs and flowers replanted each season.



The construction was launched by Marquise de Polignac, an architectural enthusiast, in the purest Mansart style. Completed in 1904, the Château boasts the most stunning views of the city of Reims and nearby mountains.

Twenty rooms named after European empresses, queens and princesses are perched above the peristyle or in the cottage, a more intimate, countrified lodging in the shade of the park.

Twenty rooms, some with a majestic view, make clients feel like guests in a sophisticated, aristocratic family home. They all feature French art-de-vivre with a warm, down-to-earth welcome, which our Room Division Director, Marie-Liesse Mantsch has been perfecting for nearly 34 years!



A PROUD HERITAGE

The decoration is the work of one of the greatest names in classical style, Pierre Yves Rochon, featuring beautiful fabric, antique furnishings and the famous French *je-ne-sais-quoi*.



Every year, two rooms are renovated, true to Louis XIV style with help from the finest contemporary craftsmanship. Wallpaper and fabric are made using patterns from historical archives of the Pierre Frey house, Dedar velvet and embroidered pieces by Lelièvre.

In recent years, the Domaine Les Crayères has met the challenge of asserting a subtle balance between the unique charms of a historic estate and 21st century amenities.

Throughout the Château, we can admire the elegance of a venue that has stood the test of time, an elegance highlighted by decorating choices such as the array of tartans in La Rotonde bar creating the feel of an English gentlemen's club, the winter garden's artfully draped roof reminiscent of the roaring 20s, the original oak furnishings in the Salon Melchior, Le Parc restaurant dining room with its superb chandelier and family portraits in XXL medallions, the Aubusson tapestry in the Salle Boisée, and, beyond its rounded walls, the views from the terrace...

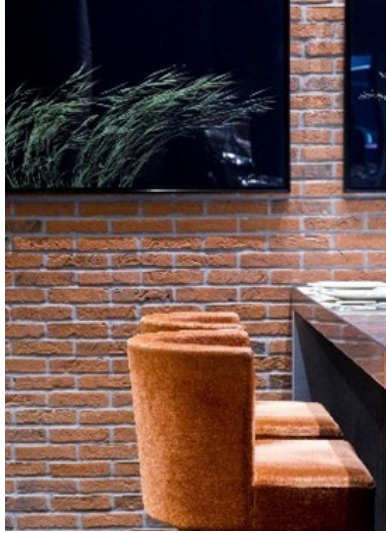


Today, the Domaine Les Crayères offers a journey through time and especially “through Champagne”, with all the contemporary hospitality codes, chic and warm-hearted.



A BREWERY IN THE MIDST OF NATURE

Tucked away on one side of the grounds, Le Jardin offers a two-fold ambiance between its bucolic terrace unlike any other in Reims, and an immense loft-like building, designed in a resolutely contemporary style around an open kitchen.



In this venue, Chef Philippe Mille leaves protocol at the door, creating a free-wheeling menu based, as always, on generosity, headline products and the same demanding sourcing as for Le Parc restaurant.

Precision cooking, fruit cups and “buddy desserts” by Pastry Chef Yoann Normand make this a top-tier bistronomy destination offering a three-course €33 fixed menu at both lunch and dinner!



The selection of wines and champagnes meets the venue’s high standards: Head Sommelier Martin Jean grabs an opportunity to innovate as part of this high-value fixed menu: pouring out pleasure one glass at a time from magnum bottles.



A PRIVATE BAR WITH CULT STATUS

Seating 40, by reservation only, in an iconic mahogany and tartan decor, La Rotonde has become a legendary venue. As a meeting place for the happy few, one of the select addresses that dot the globe, it is famous for its unique atmosphere, part gentlemen's club, part winter garden à la française...



As of the first autumn days, guests can warm themselves in the bar, comfortably ensconced in Ralph Lauren virgin wool and soft velvet, while in spring, the terrace in front of the Château overlooks gardens ablaze with flamboyant sunsets.

The top-shelf selection of spirits is all that can be expected, and then some. The most demanding aficionados can treat themselves to rarer-than-rare brandies, like those from the Tyrolean Rochelt distillery, as well as brown spirits and signature cocktails.



SINGULAR EXPERIENCES: AN “ALONE IN THE WORLD” DINNER

This experience came about as a matter of course in 2021 while the Le Parc dining room was closed: a way of offering the most faithful gastronomic journey in the intimate setting of a guest room with a set menu and dedicated service. The trial period was such a success that the Chef decided to continue offering a “setting-specific gastronomy” experience.



Taking exclusiveness to a new level by detailed staging while guests enjoy an aperitif on the terrace or in the grounds, this finely tuned dining experience offers service of the highest order and carte blanche menu.



THE FARMERS MARKET

To integrate the Domaine Les Crayères into local life and give artisan producers the public visibility they deserve, Chef Philippe Mille launched this annual event in 2010, two steps ahead of the locavore movement. It has become hugely popular, attracting 6000 visitors over a September weekend to enjoy the picturesque setting of the Domaine Les Crayères garden and grounds while learning the secrets of its partner producers.



Among those present are Julien and Patrick Cogniard who raise the milk-fed lambs served in the hotel restaurant Le Parc, Sophie Laluc and her goat cheese, the Spinelli family's delightfully fragrant pink-hued button mushrooms ...

The goal of this event? To remind people that the Champagne Ardennes region is much more than just wine, they are home to a thriving community of farmers, growers and food producers of all stripes.



A WHITE PARTY

Always a highlight, celebrated its 11th edition in 2023



This initiative has snowballed over the years as well, and today 3000 fun-lovers dressed all in white gather on the lawn with a picnic basket made up by the Chef and a bottle of Champagne for two.

Starting at 7 pm, guests enjoy a series of four concerts featuring a mix of local performers and international names, while a Champagne bar helps keep everyone cool throughout the evening ...



KEY FEATURES

Domaine les Crayères: at a glance

French art de vivre

- **The estate Les Crayères:**
 -  - 5 star hotel – Relais & Châteaux: 20 rooms and suites, from 490 to 1500 euros
 -  - 2 Michelin-star Le Parc restaurant: Open for lunch and dinner from Wednesday dinner to Sunday dinner, seats 45, menu from 115 to 390 euros
 -  - Le Jardin brasserie: Michelin “BIB Gourmand”, open 7 days a week, menu 35 & 55 euros, seats 130 people indoors or on the terrace
- **Iconic French and Champagne region establishment:**
 - “Living Heritage Company” Label
 - Named the World’s Most Beautiful Hotel in 2007 by The New York Times
 - Conde Nast Traveller Choice 2021
 - Louis Vuitton Travel Guide
 - First hotel decorated and restored by Pierre-Yves Rochon in 1981
- **Located on the hill of Saint-Nicaise, inscribed on UNESCO’s World Heritage List:**
 - 3-minute walk from the cellars and vineyards of the Pommery and Veuve Clicquot Champagne houses
 - 8-minute walk from the Taittinger and Ruinart cellars
 - TGV: 45 minutes from Paris and 30 minutes from Charles de Gaulle airport, then 10 minutes from the train station
 - Car: 90 minutes from Paris

Le Chef Philippe Mille

- 2022: Le Parc restaurant ranked in the top 150 restaurants in the world and awarded a score of 17.5/20 by le Gault & Millau
- 2021-2022: A banner year for Philippe Mille
 - 2021: TOP 100 French OAD restaurants
 - 2021: 50 Best Discovery
 - 2021: Gault & Milau d’or Région Grand Est 2021
 - 2021: Le Parc restaurant named the 200th best restaurant in the World by LaListe1000
- 2021-2021: New Opus: a product, a craftsman, a creator of art
- 2021: Release of his second book Âme de la Champagne, which has just received the « Livres et Savoir 2022» prize from the National Academy of Cuisine.



- 2016: Release of his book Le goût à l'état brut
- 2012: Farmer's Market was created, 6000 visitors / year
- 2012: Crayères earned its second star
- 2011: Crayères earned its first star
- 2011: Meilleur Ouvrier de France and "Grand Chef Relais & Châteaux" titles
- 2009: creation of the Trophée Mille
- 2009: Bocuse d'Europe and Bocuse de Bronze trophies

Wine cellar

- 63,000 bottles on the estate
- 2,970 different wines including 1,020 Champagnes
- Voted best sparkling wine menu in the World of Fine Wine's in 2021
- Voted best wine menu in the World of Fine Wine's in 2022
- Voted best champagne menu in France and in Europe by The Wine List 2021
- Wine Traveler 2019-2020
- 22,000 bottles in the ageing cellar located in the estate's bunker





PRACTICAL INFORMATION

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