

THE PINNACLE OF LUXE PARIS

Website www.le-clarence.paris

In November, Le Clarence opened in a grand *hôtel particulier* off the Champs-Élysées. The design is classic opulence with a distinct vision, and moments of lightness and whimsy here and there. The building houses a dining room and a bar reserved for restaurant guests. Downstairs is a wineshop that delivers classic Old World character and elegance. But its ownership promises something far more interesting.

The Clarence in the name comes from Clarence Dillon, the American statesman and banker who purchased legendary Bordeaux first-growth Château Haut-Brion in 1935; the family-owned company, which includes other Bordeaux wine interests, is run by Dillon's great-grandson, Prince Robert of Luxembourg, who has been involved in every detail of the new venture.

Haut-Brion was the first château to brand itself, and thus the first mentioned by name in writing. One important way the brand promoted itself in its primary market was through a London tavern called Pontac's Head, which opened in the mid-17th century. It is to this part of his legacy that de Luxembourg is returning.

Chef Christophe Pelé will run the kitchen. He is best known for running the Paris restaurant La Bigarrade, which served refined classic French cuisine with surprise flavors and won two Michelin stars. He

will work closely with manager and sommelier Antoine Pétrus, who runs the dining room and wineshop as well as a bar and salon. The restaurant will open with Dillon wines only—some 600 selections—but in January will double that and include wines from all over France. It promises rare bottlings of wine and the traditional wild cherry juice from the château as well as surprises such as a whiskey from Burgundy.

Over the course of an evening here, you might have a drink while reading the *Financial Times*, then have a leisurely dinner, then see what unusual bottles are open. It all sounds like visiting your distinguished grandfather's private club, if he ran one of the top wine estates in the world. —O.D.



Restaurant Le Clarence at Hôtel Dillon in Paris