



## PALACE HOTEL TOKYO

### Palace Hotel Tokyo Debuts New Culinary Team at Michelin-Starred Esterre

*A budding, young talent is paired with a seasoned star to take the upscale restaurant to new heights*

TOKYO (May 2, 2023) – As international travelers flock to Japan following its re-opening, Michelin-starred Esterre continues to refine its culinary appeal in the star-studded Michelin capital of the world with the appointments of Kei Kojima as chef de cuisine and Normand Jubin as chef pâtissier.

Esterre, which was launched in partnership with DUCASSE Paris in late 2019, is rooted in the flavors of Japan's *terroir* – taking a contemporary approach to French *haute cuisine* that aims to showcase the original flavors of the highest-quality local ingredients using French culinary techniques.

Having spent over two decades under the tutelage of Alain Ducasse's right-hand, Frank Cerutti, Kei Kojima is the perfect fit as chef de cuisine at what is his fourth eatery by Ducasse. Prior to taking the helm at Esterre, Kojima spent five years honing his skills at the Michelin three-starred Le Louis XV at Monte Carlo's famed Hôtel de Paris, including three as its sous chef. In 2006, he returned to Japan to teach at Le Centre de Formation d'Alain Ducasse in Tokyo, a culinary school for professionals, and had a stint at Benoit bistro before segueing to Beige, a restaurant born from a collaboration between DUCASSE Paris and Chanel's flagship boutique in Tokyo's glitzy Ginza district. He played an instrumental role in elevating Beige to its two-Michelin-star status during the more than a dozen years he spent there.



Based in Kamakura – the zen-imbued, beachside town on the outskirts of Tokyo where he continues to reside – Kojima visits the local market every morning to select the freshest ingredients for Esterre before commuting into the city. Having long embraced the concept of drawing from the natural flavors of land and sea by sourcing sustainable, organic ingredients and highlighting the purity and elegant simplicity of their natural flavors, he has been described by Ducasse as “the Japanese chef who understands and practices my culinary philosophy more than any other in the world.”



Just like the town he hails from, Kojima exudes a calmness and a reverence for nature that comes through in his cooking – a notion that is also woven into Esterre's interior design. Design studio SIMPLICITY, founded by award-winning Japanese interior designer Shinichiro Ogata, originally conceived the space as a tribute to nature.



## PALACE HOTEL TOKYO

An earthy color palette and such tactile materials as *washi* (traditional Japanese paper), textile and wood were chosen to create an ambiance that evokes a sense of harmony between people and nature. Also key to the design concept was an elegant simplicity that would allow patrons to dine, converse and soak in the expansive views of the surrounding Imperial Palace gardens without distraction.

Esterre has consistently achieved a one-star standing ever since it drew the attention of Michelin Guide. Like Kojima, 26-year-old Chef Pâtissier Normand Jubin brings with him notable Michelin experience, having previously acted as chef de partie at the renowned, three-star Restaurant de l'Hôtel de Ville in Crissier, Switzerland and, most recently, as pastry chef at the one-star Pelagos at Four Seasons Astir Palace Hotel Athens in Greece.



A Swiss native, Jubin is the third generation in a family of confectioners behind Jubin Confiseur, a boulangerie-pâtisserie-confiserie-in-one with a trio of locations throughout Switzerland. It was there, in his grandfather's and father's kitchen, where as a child, Jubin began cultivating his passion and know-how for baking, pastry-making and the art of confectionery.



New to Japan, Jubin is embracing the country's distinct seasons with his dessert presentations and endeavoring to bring more depth and art to what is presented, whether it brings guests back to the familiar flavors and textures of their childhood or stirs up more recent memories of their time in Japan. His spring dessert of '*crispy and iced buckwheat, torrefied vanilla and anise*', for example, takes inspiration from the three-swirl *mitsudomoe* symbol that has caught his eye while visiting shrines.

As Esterre's menu changes with the seasons, Palace Hotel Tokyo's award-winning Chef Sommelier Takamasa Sato meticulously studies the flavors of every dish before deciding on which pairings to recommend for each course – whether guests prefer alcoholic or non-alcoholic options. With a wine cellar that boasts some 4,800 bottles and encompasses over 500 vintages - of which French labels dominate - there's no shortage of options to choose from, including a selection of organic, natural and bio-wines.





## PALACE HOTEL TOKYO



For Chef Kojima's vibrant and flavorful '*roasted sujiara with winter gourd, courgette and black olive marmalade*' that's on the summer signature prix-fixe menu, Sato suggests a pairing with Château Jun's Koshu, a domestically produced white wine made with *koshu* grapes, a varietal that has been grown in Japan for more than 1,000 years. And for the dish's non-alcoholic pairing, a seasonal mocktail featuring a blend of white grape juice with the *umami*-rich flavors of premium [Royal Blue Tea](#) is suggested.

For Jubin's refreshing summer dessert of '*kivi and tarragon delight with ginger and goat milk emulsion*', Sato recommends a pairing with the [Alain Ducasse Sparkling Sake](#) conceived by DUCASSE Paris Chef Sommelier Gerard Margeon and Ryogo Kitahara, master brewer at Maison Shichiken in Yamanashi prefecture. Alternatively, Belgium's Duc de Montagne non-alcoholic sparkling wine presents an equally refreshing and sophisticated alternative.



As Japan experiences a travel renaissance, Esterre's team plans to continue heightening the dining experience and playing their part in ensuring Tokyo keeps its crown as the Michelin capital of the world.

Esterre's prix-fixe lunch options start from JPY 12,000 and prix-fixe dinners from JPY 22,000 per person. Wine pairings start at JPY 6,000 for two glasses.

For more information, please visit: [www.en.palacehoteltokyo.com/restaurant/esterre-restaurant/](http://www.en.palacehoteltokyo.com/restaurant/esterre-restaurant/)

### ABOUT PALACE HOTEL TOKYO

As the anchor to a billion dollar, mixed-use development that debuted in 2012 to much acclaim, the Forbes Five-Star [Palace Hotel Tokyo](#) commands some of the city's most exclusive real estate and incomparable views of the much-loved Imperial Palace gardens and the surrounding skyline.

Located in the capital's prestigious Marunouchi district, the property features 284 rooms & suites, an evian SPA, and 10 distinctive restaurants and bars presenting an impressive array of dining experiences – including exquisite Japanese and Michelin-starred contemporary French haute cuisine.



## PALACE HOTEL TOKYO

As heir to a legacy going back more than half a century as one of the city's most iconic properties, the hotel remains firmly rooted in its commitment to offering Japanese hospitality at its finest. Drawing deeply from the country's history, culture and art, the [award-winning](#) hotel continues to redefine luxury in Japan with sophistication and authenticity.

For more information, including fact sheets, please visit our [online Newsroom](#).

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### **ABOUT DUCASSE PARIS**

With thirty restaurants in seven countries – from authentic bistros and casual brasseries to three Michelin-starred restaurants – a network of more than 500 addresses selected by les Collectionneurs in Europe, an international education division in culinary and pastry arts, handmade bean-to-bar chocolate shops and handmade coffee-tree-to-cup coffee shops, Alain Ducasse has developed, over thirty years, a different vision of the food service and hospitality industry re-grouped under Ducasse Paris, which he founded in 1999.

For more information on Ducasse Paris, please visit [ducasse-paris.com](http://ducasse-paris.com).

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