

BACKGROUND

CULINARY MAGIC AT LA MAISON 1888, WHERE VIETNAMESE INSPIRATION MEETS FRENCH MASTERY



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Where do delicate, floral Vietnamese flavours meet elegant French cuisine in a colonial setting surrounded by lush tropical forest? The answer could only be [La Maison 1888](#) at the Intercontinental Danang Sun Peninsula Resort. There's a sense of magic and whimsy here, with light-filled rooms embracing an imagined past, architecture inspired by the French colonial buildings, and black and white tiles being offset by the greens of potted plants and the jungle outside.

Behind the menu is Chef [Pierre Gagnaire](#), holder of multiple Michelin stars and synonymous around the world with exceptional French cuisine. Gagnaire regularly receives global recognition for his [eponymous restaurant in Paris](#) as well as the iconic [Fouquet's brasseries](#) throughout France, [Sketch](#) in London, winner of Best Restaurant in [GQ's 2020 Food & Drink Awards](#), and his other restaurants around the world in locations as diverse as [Seoul](#) and [Dubai](#). Guests at La Maison 1888 have the opportunity to immerse themselves into Chef Gagnaire's world in a one-of-a-kind dining experience, infused with the spirit of this world-renowned chef and the unique setting of the restaurant.

Having developed a love for Vietnam on family holidays, Gagnaire jumped at the opportunity to operate a restaurant at the resort. "Each of my restaurants has its own energy and its own personality. The spirit of the place, and therefore the cuisine, is influenced by the geographic location, but also by the men and women who work there." And the resort's spectacular

setting is filled with inspiration. "The location of this restaurant is incredible. It lets us provide a unique Gagnaire experience that reflects the region and this perfect position on the bay."

Gagnaire describes Vietnamese cuisine as being "floral and delicate". "The flowers, fragrances like ginger, star anise, and galangal, and even seashells can't help but be superb sources of inspiration." And when it comes to the menu, he says that the idea was to develop French cuisine with a Vietnamese influence, incorporating the incredible products he sources locally, such as the daily catch from local fishermen, vegetables grown in a monastery, and invigorating spices.

The culinary team at La Maison 1888 also find inspiration in the ingredients native to Vietnam. They use an encyclopaedic list of local plants in their dishes, ranging from rice paddy herbs to wild watercress, anise basil, palm leaf, pennywort and more.

And when it comes to the use of spices, Gagnaire believes that the Vietnamese have mastered the art of controlling the exact amount to create the perfect balance. "I perfume and play with spices, and do a lot of test recipes to make sure I'm finding the right amount needed. We can ferment spices, infuse, mix and grate them to discover just how we can use their flavours." He uses spices such as turmeric, black cardamom and black, grey, white and red pepper, with fragrances and flavours differing depending on the region in which they're harvested.

If you have a sweet tooth you won't want to miss the "*Grand Dessert*", a symphony of flavours combining the best of France and Vietnam. Says Gagnaire, "The desserts are created the same way as the 'salty' dishes. I try to translate the spirit of the pastries I create in France to the world, keeping in mind always to make the best use of local products, and to use them as much as possible." Amongst Gagnaire's sweet creations you'll find ingredients such as coffee flower honey, pho sticky syrup, and Vietnamese Li Chu chocolate sitting comfortably alongside raspberry brandy Chantilly and muesli crumble.

A fine dining experience wouldn't be fine dining without exceptional service to go with it. Although La Maison 1888 is inspired by Vietnamese culinary culture, unlike Vietnamese cuisine, which is often served sharing-style, each meal here is served in the French way. With each dish being served course by course, the service team has the opportunity to connect with guests over each plate, sharing the stories and inspiration behind each item.

As you dine, try to tear your eyes away from your plate to take in the exceptional design that complements the exceptional cuisine. Like the rest of the resort, it's designed by Bill Bensley, and features a playful imagining of a fictitious French family who supposedly built their home here in 1888. The restaurant sprawls over numerous different spaces all inspired by different members of the family, including the elegant conservatory-like La Verandah, Michel's Room, filled with travel paraphernalia from the son's global wanderings, and the "Accounts Office", full of antique adding machines. When La Maison 1888 first opened, Architectural Digest



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lauded it as one of the [10 Most Beautifully Designed New Restaurants in the World](#) and it's certainly standing the test of time.