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Star-studded kitchens

In Meudon-la-Forêt, not far from Paris, the Arte Charpentier firm designed the **Ecole Ducasse - Paris Campus**, a new school for world-famous chef Alain Ducasse. Nature and the senses are at the forefront

In 2010, the “French gastronomic meal” became a piece of UNESCO intangible cultural heritage: the art of living that combines food and wine excellence with specific social and cultural values. The undisputed star of the culinary sector is Alain Ducasse, from Monaco, who has earned 19 Michelin stars. He commissioned the Parisian firm Arte Charpentier Architectes to design the new site of his school, which was founded

in 1999 in Meudon, about ten kilometers from Paris. The famous chef says, “With the opening of the Paris Campus, we will take another step in one of the best missions in the world: preparing future generations, training new chefs, and passing on the taste of excellence, respect for foods and seasonality.” In three years of working closely with the teams of Ducasse, Sommet Education, and Covivio, the designers developed a highly

Client: Covivio

Assistant client: Artelia

Architecture, landscape and interior design:
Arte Charpentier Architectes

Restaurant design: Jouin Manku for the initial
restaurant design

Structural design: Terrell

Acoustics: AVLS

Environmental sustainability: Green Affair

External finishes: Joseph Ingenierie

Kitchen design: BEGC

Civil engineering: CL Infra

Building contractor: SPIE Batignolles

Lab equipment: Electrolux Professional

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Author: Elena Franzoia

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Identifiable

ambitious concept over 5,000 square meters, meant to accommodate up to 300 people a day including students and outside visitors. “As we were designing near the famous Meudon forest, we wanted to echo this exceptional natural presence in harmony with the Ecole Ducasse’s program which is strongly oriented towards nature,” the architect Jérôme Le Gall explains. “We distributed the complex’s four blocks (inspired by Air, Fire, Earth, and Water) around a well-lit, linear central empty space, the heart of the place and its true backbone, which gives structure to the school’s operations.” Inspired by Paris’s passages, the central empty space with a glass roof delineates a cross-shaped covered path that allows the flowing circulation of people and gives access to the four distinct volumes, fostering interaction and socializing and making places for exhibitions and events. As for the complex’s formal aspects, it has a solid base made of refined, smooth, dark, exposed concrete, which is symbolically linked to the teaching theory. Resting on them are lightweight volumes







projecting from the brushed, undulated aluminum of the “skin,” a metaphor for experience and practice. The main façade is dominated by a large restaurant, 215 m² large, which opens on a terrace. This is the clear realm of Ducasse and the Ecole’s showcase, designed by the specialized firm Jouin Manku featuring a “wunderkammer wall” displaying rare objects belonging to the great chef. Despite the enormous air flow generated by the huge number of kitchens, the complex has obtained the HQE energy certification of excellence, partly by using filtering ceilings. The dual need to accommodate students and food lovers in general inspired the Arte Charpentier team to create a calibrated, interactive visual relationship between

the spaces and to a considered distribution of functions and routes. This enhances the vital core of the school: 9 culinary labs made in partnership with BEGC, a sensory analysis room, 7 academic classrooms, and areas for administration and co-working. The takeaway delicatessen shop and restaurant are open to the public. Wineries, pantries, reception, technical rooms, and covered parking are located on the underground level. Careful attention was also given to the landscape. The school is surrounded by shrubs and fruit trees, evergreen and deciduous species, which along with a “garden of flavors” with edible, aromatic plants, a small cherry orchard, and a lawn, all marking the flowing of the seasons in the name of biodiversity.