

Miranda's notebook



Travel | Supper at 1311 Restaurant, Abbaye de la Bussière, Burgundy

🕒 October 28, 2018 📁 Food, Travel



Please note: my Mum and I were guests of [Abbaye de la Bussière](#), and our meal and wine were complimentary for the purpose of review. All opinions expressed are my own.

We'd arrived at the Abbaye de la Bussière in Burgundy earlier that afternoon (see my post about it [here](#)), and, after a brief exploration, we all went upstairs to change into clothes for our evening meal in the hotel's Michelin-starred restaurant, **1311**.

The Abbaye isn't in the least pretentious, so no more than smart-casual attire is needed in the restaurant, but I always like an excuse to dress up a little. I slipped into a favourite green velvet dress with a Matthew Williamson shawl, dabbed some Coco by Chanel perfume on my wrists, and made my way down the beautiful main staircase to the equally stunning restaurant.



Burgundy is renowned not only for its wine, but also for its incredible food. Burgundian food is not overly 'fussy,' but instead elevates good, simple ingredients to outstanding meals. Classic French dishes such as *boeuf bourguignon* and *escargots de Bourgogne* originated in this part of France. The beef of Burgundy is legendary, and of course Dijon is internationally famed for its mustard. Lightly spiced gingerbread and *crème de cassis* (a sweet blackcurrant liqueur) are also well known delicacies of the region.

The famous food and travel writer, Waverley Root, wrote, 'The most refined professional Burgundian cooking never gets far from the soil in which it is rooted.' In this sentence, Root speaks to Burgundy's heritage of hearty, rustic dishes and the importance of the Burgundian *terroir*.

Guillaume Royer, head chef at the Abbaye de la Bussière, has a clear love for the traditional cuisine of the region and the rich bounty that springs from Burgundian soil. Royer produces highly seasonal menus starring local ingredients (and when I say local I mean it - the trout we ate came from the lake in the grounds of the Abbaye!). He is exceptionally skilled at turning basic produce into the most sublime meals; in his hands, a cabbage (generally one of the duller vegetables) was transformed into one of the most amazing dishes I've had in my life.

But I'm getting ahead of myself. Let me take you through our meal at the 1131....



Situated in the heart of the Abbaye, the restaurant is exceptionally beautiful. Cloistered walls swoop up around you and arch over head. Intricate chandeliers dangle from the ceiling, and candlelight flickers around the room. The attention to detail is exceptional: the coral roses adorning each table matched the orange flame of the waiters' ties. I marvelled at the beauty of some the crystal vases on the tables, which Clive told me were Baccarat, and that he was gradually collecting one for every table.

Mum, Dad and I were all having the Signature du Chef menu, with each course paired with a glass of wine suggested by the sommelier. To start off, we were given flutes of sparkling *Crémant de Bourgogne*, accompanied by *gougères*, which are airy cheese puffs (somewhat reminiscent of the best Yorkshire puddings, only with cheese - yum!) that are traditionally served alongside a glass of bubbly in Burgundy. We gave a toast (it had been my birthday the weekend before, so we were celebrating it again all together) and felt very much in a celebratory mood.



Gougères are absolutely wonderful, and I can't wait to make them at home. I found a recipe for them in my [Cook's Atelier cookbook](#), so I'll definitely be giving it a go soon. The *Crémant de Bourgogne* was delicious too and the perfect aperitif. This sparkling wine is a great alternative to champagne, with its own distinctive but very pleasant taste.

In what felt like no time at all, more delights appeared at our table with two rounds of *amuse bouche*. First, a little platter each of dainty and delectable nibbles arrived, which were then followed up by snails cooked in a delicious savoury broth.



I've only ever had snails in their shells before, and although I've enjoyed them thus in all their buttery, garlicky goodness, done this way, in broth, was far and away the best tasting snails I have ever had in my life.

Our first course arrived: braised cabbage with Morvan bacon, local truffle and Comté cheese, paired with a fabulous white wine from the Côte-d'Or (Guy Maugey Auxois Thorey-sous-Charny, Domaine De la Ruee De la Calo).



I think we all rolled our eyes heavenwards when we tasted this dish, which was packed with flavour. Morvan is apparently a hog-breeding center of France, and so the ham and sausage from this area are particularly prized. The bacon was certainly delicious, and I've honestly never tasted cabbage so good!

Next was the fish course, and plates of fillet of trout arrived under silver domes, which our waiters whipped off in perfect synchronisation. The sommelier arrived and filled our glasses with another Burgundian white wine (Chassagne-Montrachet, Premier Cru Abbaye de Morgeot, 2013), which was my favourite wine of the night. I loved its buttery notes, which paired perfectly with our trout.



The trout was simmered with coconut, mushrooms, spring onions and walnut oil, and its delicate taste was extraordinary. The freshness of the fish, caught right from the lake outside, couldn't be beat!

An example of Burgundy's famous beef was our next course, but this was certainly no run of the mill *boeuf bourguignon*. Instead, having all agreed we'd just enjoyed the best snails, cabbage and trout of our lives, we now said that surely this was the best beef we'd ever eaten too.



Cooked to melting perfection in a red wine and onion sauce, the taste was sublimely rich, and our glasses of Pommard (Domaine Jean-Marc Bouley, 2014), a classic Burgundian red wine, stood up well against the hearty flavours.

You know you're in France when a trolley laden with eye-popping cheeses rolls around pre-dessert! My Mum, Dad and I all adore cheese, so despite our already substantial meal, we all eyed the cart with a good deal of excitement.



I went for a few slivers of local cheeses, which were all wonderful, but the standouts for me were a soft, creamy cheese coated in red mustard seeds and an exceptionally good Comté. Alongside the cheese, we sipped on glasses of a Fixin Premier Cru wine (Domaine Bart Les Hervelets, 2013), a smooth and subtle red.

As always, I somehow managed to find room for dessert. After a palette cleanser of sorbet and nut brittle, we had 'fleurs de Cao,' which was a dark chocolate meringue shell encapsulating a delicious chocolate mousse. Paired with a sweet red wine (Grand Cru Président Henry Vidal - the only wine from outside Burgundy we were served during the meal) that went perfectly with the slight bitterness of dark chocolate, this was a delicious ending to our unforgettable meal.



Or almost ending, as when we ordered coffee and camomile tea (me!), a plate of the daintiest cakes I'd ever seen appeared. They were incredible, bite-sized bursts of flavour of lemon, gingerbread and chocolate. And then, to top it all off, a little birthday surprise for me appeared from the kitchen.



The almond brittle finally defeated me, and I couldn't manage more than a tiny piece, but my Dad managed to polish it off and pronounced it delicious. It was such a kind and thoughtful gesture from the hotel, and I certainly felt that, so far, 32 was looking pretty great!

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Abbaye de la Bussière, Burgundy, France

1131 Restaurant

For further information and for reservations, please visit www.abbayedelabussiere.fr/en. You can also email info@abbayedelabussiere.fr, or call +33 3 80 49 02 29