



LE FRANÇAIS FRENCH DINING
One Bangsar, 63-F Jalan Ara,
Bangsar Baru. Tel: 03-2282 2510
Opens Mondays, Wednesdays and
Thursdays, 7-10.30pm. Fridays to
Sundays 12-2.30pm and 7-10.30pm.
Closed on Tuesdays.

Classy and elegant without being snobbish, Le Français – opened in May – is an intimate, cocooned getaway. Red velvet drapes shut out the outside world and lighting is on the low side while the furniture and fittings are in cherry wood. The restaurant can seat 50 and there's a private room towards the back which doubles as the smoking section if it hasn't been booked.

Head chef and co-owner Jérôme Deconinck was formerly the executive chef at the French embassy. One of his aims is to prove that good French fare need not cost an arm and a leg, without compromising on quality.

What he does is traditional French

fare presented in a modern way; the chef values the authenticity of his cuisine and does not intend to compromise it.

The menu is small and focused and changes completely every two months. The wine list is unsurprisingly, 70% French, with the bulk from Bordeaux, and the rest are Australian – Deconinck has kept his wine list to just the two countries he views as the best wine producers at present. A selection of cigars is also available.

The Foie Gras de Canard Poêlé aux Raisins (RM52) was expertly seared so that the texture of the duck liver was creamy and melting. Sprinkled with a little sea salt and served with grapes poached in white wine, this is sure to please *foie gras* lovers.

I also liked the lighter offering of Salade d'Asperges Tièdes, Mousseline à l'Orange et oeuf poché (RM28), a warm salad of asparagus and poached egg with orange mousseline sauce. The runny yolk, crunchy asparagus and subtle cit-

rus zest of the light-textured, buttery sauce is a very effective combination of simple flavours.

One of the less traditional dishes at Le Français is the Magret de Canard Poêlé, Sauce Romeo et Juliet, Flan de Courge et Asperges (RM78). When the chef recommended the pan-seared Magret duck with a sauce made with Romeo and Juliette cigars, the thought had me both curious and slightly apprehensive. My concerns were unfounded however, as the sauce was an absolute masterpiece of subtlety and innovation – intensely savoury, with just a hint of aromatic tobacco, it awakened the flavours of the tender slices of duck in extraordinary ways.

The Paupiette de Saumon au Choux Servis Avec Beurre Truffé (RM50) was another hit; the flaky salmon fillet wrapped in steamed cabbage was served with a light truffle butter sauce. It wasn't easy to cut neatly because of the leaves' middle stalks but the tender



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1. The stylish and understated entrance to Le Francais. 2. Elegant table for a big party. 3. Le Francais is a friend to cigar-lovers. 4. Cabbage-wrapped salmon fillet. 5. The intriguing pan-seared duck with a cigar sauce. 6. An asparagus and poached egg salad with orange mouseline sauce.

layers of cabbage leaves complemented the salmon very well.

No matter what changes are made to the menu, Deconinck is determined that there will always be one soufflé and one crème brûlée on the dessert list.

The Soufflé Menthe Chocolat (RM34) is inspired by After Eight dinner mints; Deconinck used bittersweet Vahlrona chocolate and a reduction of fresh mint for this sweet. Air-light and fluffy, this must be eaten as soon as it reaches the table, lest it deflates.

The Crème Brûlée au Thym Frais (RM24) is also highly recommended. Topped with tiny pieces of fresh strawberry, the thyme-flavoured crème brûlée had a nicely-caramelised top and was redolent of the fragrant herb.

The cheque veers on the high side and portions are only just adequate, but one can argue that it's value for money as the ingredients used are expensive.

What is important to note is that Le Français is the first stand-alone French restaurant capable of offering KLites honest French food of a fine dining level outside a 5-star hotel environment. For this privilege, it deserves our unreserved support. – SL