

# DOLCE VITA

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## L'AROMATE

Mickaël Gracieux inaugurated his Aromate at the beginning of this year. After top-notch apprenticeship with Alain Ducasse, Joël Robuchon and Jean-André Charrial, he now presides over the destiny of this restaurant in Nice assisted by his wife Elise. Something of a double entity, L'Aromate offers market-fresh dishes at lunchtime, creative, gastronomic cuisine for evenings. Try the crab in ginger-flavoured jelly, Mediterranean anchovies with basil, and a sublime tube of crunchy chocolate for dessert. Everything's homemade, for both lunch (menus at 25, 30 and 35 €) and dinner (50 and 70 €). 20-22 avenue du Maréchal-Foch, Nice (04 93 62 98 24).

This former convent in *Haute Provence* dates back to the 17th century when the nuns made "eco-friendly" beauty products using aromatic plants and natural ingredients. It was relaunched this year by Provence-born Olivier Baussan, who created L'Occitane 30 years ago on much the same lines. He brought in local craftsmen and architect Bruno Legrand to transform the ancient stone buildings into a magnificent hotel and super-spa with two swimming pools, 45 rooms and suites. Based on the nuns' original recipes for creams and lotions, the spa proposes hydrotherapy and top-to-toe treatments :

face and body scrubs are fragrant with convent-grown lemons, olives, verbena and lavender. The gastronomic restaurant "Le

## LE COUVENT DES MINIMES HOTEL & SPA

Cloître" has been entrusted to Philippe Guerin (ex-Negresco and Château Saint-Martin) who delights in organic produce from his vegetable garden, nearby farms and allotments. Starters include crayfish nems with mint and baby peas, ravioli with ricotta, red-pepper jus with thyme and warm saffron *tuiles*. For your main course, try the golden, line-caught sea-bass in spicy fennel soup with herbs, roast Sisteron lamb with courgette flowers or organic chicken from Monsieur Verzeni's farm, roast in the oven and sprinkled with truffles. Goats' cheese follows, drizzled with olive-oil, then light soufflés or a gazpacho of fresh fruit. In summer, the poolside "Bancaou" serves sumptuous buffet lunches, and the chapel hosts musical evenings, art exhibitions, private parties and weddings. Two nights with breakfast, dinner and a spa treatment from 365 €, golf and gastronomy packages also available. **Chemin des Jeux de Mai, Mane-en-Provence (04 92 74 77 77). [www.couventdesminimes-hotelspa.com](http://www.couventdesminimes-hotelspa.com)**



## KEISUKE MATSUSHIMA

In the capital of the Côte d'Azur, one of the most acclaimed talents for sheer refinement comes from the Land of the Rising Sun. Star-rated Keisuke invites you to discover a blend of oriental purity (in the dishes and the decor) and the subtle fragrances of the South of France. Now assisted by head-waiter Michael Amoros (ex-"Pont de la Tour" in London), Keisuke invites international fans to consult his English-language blog on <http://keisukematsushima.blogspot.com> for monthly news on menus (from 39 to 80 €), seasonal produce, the cookery school, the wine, recipe and event of the month. **22ter rue de France, Nice (04 93 82 26 06).**

## PALAZZU U DOMU

THE FALL IS A GREAT TIME TO VISIT CORSICA, AND THIS 4-STAR HOTEL CELEBRATING ITS FIRST ANNIVERSARY SERVES AS AN EXCELLENT BASE. AT THE HEART OF THE OLD PART OF AJACCIO, A FEW YARDS FROM NAPOLEON'S BIRTHPLACE, THE 18TH-CENTURY MANSION OF DUKE POZZO DI BORGO HAS BEEN TRANSFORMED INTO A VERY STYLISH HOTEL WITH 45 ROOMS, SOME OVERLOOKING THE PORT. DECORATOR MARIE VERSINI HAS OPTED FOR A CONTEMPORARY AMBIANCE WITH CLEVER DETAILS AND AN ECLECTIC CHOICE OF COLOURS THAT DO NOT DETRACT FROM THE HISTORIC OPULENCE OF THIS PALACE WITH A CLASSIC FAÇADE AND DELIGHTFUL INTERIOR GARDEN. **12 RUE BONAPARTE, AJACCIO, COR-SICA (04 95 50 00 20).**

