



# PARIS IN SPRING

Brandt Asia Singapore took 20 Asia-Pacific clients and distributors to Paris to witness the launch of **DE DIETRICH'S** new collection, Star Products 2008, and to Alsace to trace the roots of a centuries-old family firm

**T**HE DE DIETRICH BRAND IS AN advanced design and technology trend leader. Fashion aware and synonymous with a sophisticated luxury lifestyle, the company started with Jean Dietrich, son of a banking family in Strasbourg, who bought a forge at Jaegerthal in 1684. By 1761, descendant Jean III was knighted by Louis XV and soon became known as the King of Iron. By the time of the French Revolution, De Dietrich was one of the most prominent businesses in France.

Led by Patrice Charbon, managing director of Brandt Asia Singapore, the group arrived in Paris at hotel Le Méridien Etoile, but headed straight out again to Orleans. This is the home of the De Dietrich cooking factory, the research and development arm.

The innovation of the steam oven received the most attention. Salmon, a mixture of vegetables, including potato, and pudding can be cooked

simultaneously with no loss of colour and no interference of aromas.

Dinner on a warm sunny evening in Paris followed and the next day a lightening tour of the city was the precursor to lunch on a Bateau Parisien on the Seine. Then it was time to prepare for the grand launch.

Le Grand Palais was the fitting venue for the most elaborate De Dietrich launch ever. Four hundred guests from 25 countries were treated to a spectacular black-and-white-themed setting with mirrored columns reflecting white orchids. Prior to the unveiling, there was a palpable buzz of anticipation.

World-famous chef, Pierre Gagnaire, presented an extravagant combination of creations such as a caramelised veal loin medley with olive oil emulsion, orange and flowers in bloom, honey cauliflower tops and pea cream. Impeccably cooked using De Dietrich ovens and hobs, the menu entirely verified Gagnaire's philosophy that

"love, art and technique come together to make fine cuisine."

Guests mingled, sampled the food, marvelled at the award-winning, energy efficient Quattro dishwasher, the induction wok hob and the first ever colour programming graphics screen of the Color Matrics oven. A light show high in the dome of the Grand Palais signalled the end of the evening and it was off into the scented warmth of a spring Paris by night.

Flying to Strasbourg the next day, the group visited the first De Dietrich plant at Mertzwiller where, in 1850, the first coal and wood cooker was produced. The plant still makes switch systems, points and crossings for the world's railways.

Henri Mellon, director of the De Dietrich Association, showed the group around the factory and then the De Dietrich castle at nearby Reischoffen which dates back to Jean Dietrich's time. It is now the company headquarters; dedicated to the restoration and preservation of De Dietrich's heritage. The president of the company Marc-Antoine de Dietrich, is last in the line and Mellon's cousin.

In 1902 De Dietrich diversified into automobile construction, hiring a 20-year-old engineer, Ettore Bugatti. While being shown around the 12 hectare park of the castle, a historic event took place. Richard Day, curator of the Bugatti Association, UK, had just arrived in the country with a recreation of a Bugatti engine. Day and an international team took eight years to build the engine from Bugatti's original draw-

ings exactly how he built it in 1903.

Day fired up the engine – the first time in 100 years that a Bugatti engine has made a noise. "The original had a good engine, gearbox, chassis, no brakes and not great steering," explained Day. "It reached 80 to 90 mph and they had no seatbelts. There was a narrow gap between the road and spectators – it was phenomenally dangerous!"

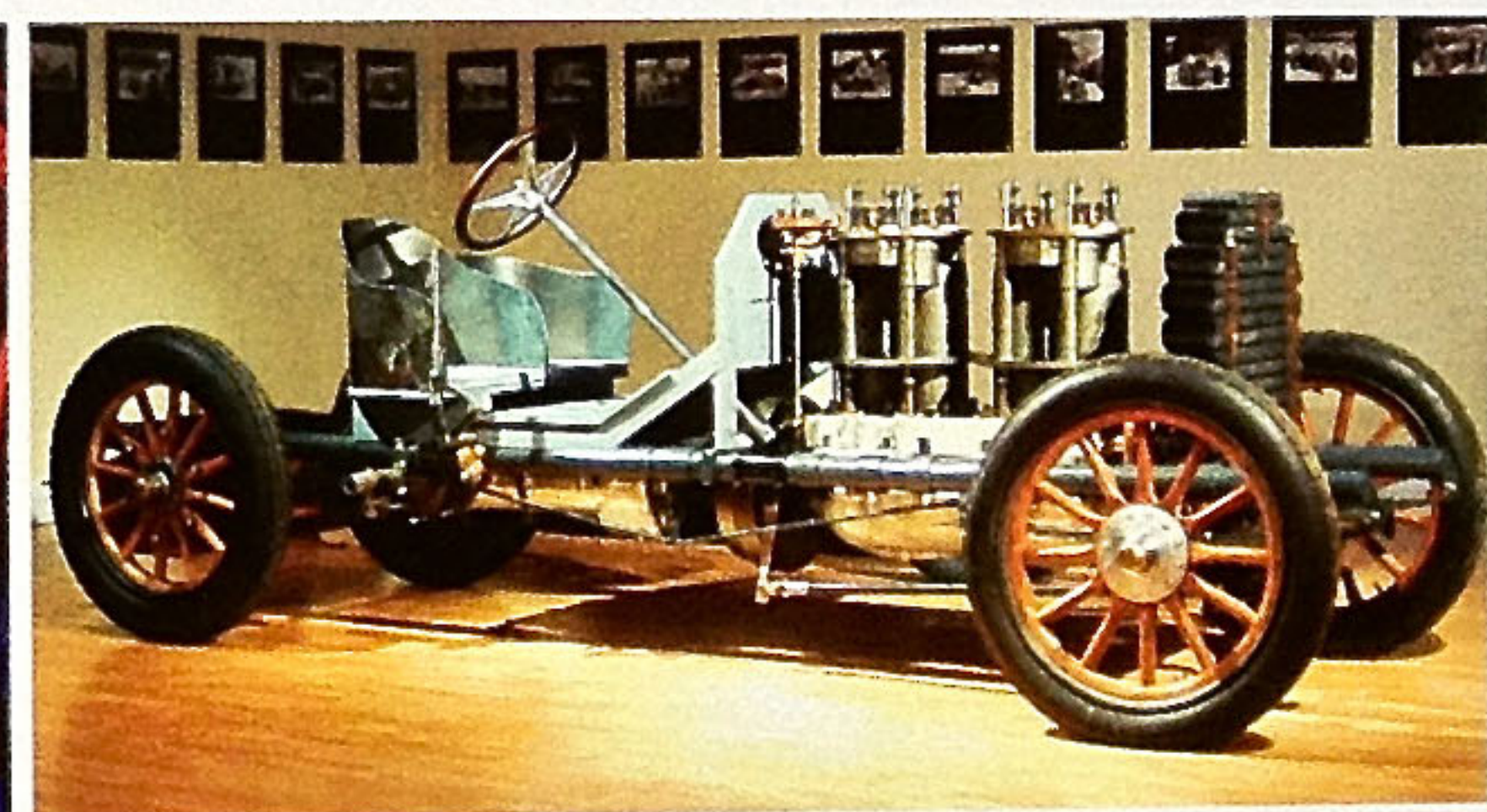
Walking back to the castle itself, two rooms remain as they were before the rest of the inside of the castle was destroyed in the Second World War. Here, the Marseillaise was first sung in 1789 by a Captain Rouget de l'Isle. It had been commissioned as a patriotic hymn to unite the French people by Jean Dietrich's son, Philippe-Frederic, mayor of Strasbourg. In the room today hangs a painting depicting the scene. The mint condition De Dietrich car rests next to this room.

A walk before dinner high in the hills along the Alsace wine route, where generations of De Dietrich's have walked before, took place on the final day of the trip. Flanking the road were vineyards and green fields. Then it was to Mulhouse for a traditional pork sausage and choucroute Alsace lunch.

The regional clients thoroughly enjoyed the educational trip. They headed back to Asia with a deeper understanding of the history of De Dietrich eagerly awaiting the launch of the new De Dietrich collection in Asia.

**DE DIETRICH**  
[www.dedietrich.com.sg](http://www.dedietrich.com.sg)

**CLOCKWISE FROM BOTTOM LEFT** The laser show at the end of the evening; The Bugatti Type 5 in the Bugatti Trust, UK; One of the latest De Dietrich cooling range; the built-in wine cellar



**TOP** The 2008 De Dietrich collection