

Family Knows No Bounds at Kinship

Celia Laurent and Eric Ziebold have opened their first restaurant Kinship together in Washington ... infused with the comfort and joy of family, good times and great food. This is the story of French partner Celia working with her husband, Iowa-born chef Eric Ziebold.



France

- Chef Michel Guérard at Les Prés d'Eugénie, Eugénie Les Bains, France
- Restaurant La Tupina, Bordeaux, France
- Restaurant La Colombe d'Or, Saint Paul de Vence, France
- Hotel Gonnet et de la Reine, Cannes, France

Some of the special touches at Kinship in Mt. Vernon Square can be traced to Celia Laurent's childhood in Bordeaux. The whimsical peanut toffee that ends the meal is a version of a nougat-type candy bar that is eaten with coffee in France – it comes in large “sheets” and you break it with a small hammer into smaller pieces.

The restaurant's Riz à l'Espagnole or Spanish Rice was inspired by a family recipe Laurent's grandmother used to make, with pork in a base of roasted peppers/saffron and rice. Chef Eric Ziebold (Laurent's husband) serves the dish (which was recently reviewed in *The Washington Post*) with either monkfish or swordfish instead of pork.

Laurent was born and raised in Arcachon, a seaside town in southwest France that is known for its oysters. Her Spanish-born grandfather was a career restaurant server, and her father was an avid wine consumer and collector. As a child Laurent learned about gastronomy and the art of the table, and through her family she was regularly exposed to dinner parties, shopping for fresh food at the local market, and convening with friends and loved ones around a great meal.

Growing up Laurent often thought that one day she would run her own “little charming hotel with a very nice restaurant” and she remembers fondly some of the properties she visited in her youth that inspired her to pursue a career in hospitality:

- Castel Marie Louise, La Baule,

At 18 Laurent moved to Switzerland to pursue a degree at the prestigious Lausanne Hotel School. Though the great majority of Lausanne graduates go into the hotel world, Laurent took a different path. In 1997 while still in school she did a six month internship at Feast & Fetes, the high end NYC catering company of chef Daniel Boulud (whose global restaurant empire – Dinex – includes DC's DBGB). When she graduated in 1999 she returned to New York City on a J1 visa in the role of Special Events Coordinator with Boulud's flagship restaurant Daniel, which has been cited as “one of the ten best restaurants in the world” by the International Herald Tribune, has earned multiple Michelin stars and Wine Spectator's “Grand Award.”

Laurent remained with Dinex until 2003, helping to open Café Boulud Palm Beach as her final act with the company. She says she would not be in the US today had it not been for her experiences with Dinex and Boulud.

In 2004 Laurent joined the opening team of Per Se (the newest concept by French Laundry chef/owner Thomas Keller) in the role of Director of Private Dining. There she met Ziebold, the French Laundry chef who was tasked with opening Per Se. Once the restaurant was up and running Ziebold moved to DC to open CityZen in the Mandarin Oriental hotel, and the couple had a long distance relationship (DC



photo: Jennifer Chase Photography

to NY) for several years – which Laurent says was just fine, since both partners had “very challenging and fulfilling jobs.”

Laurent's role with TKRG continued to grow over the years and she advised Keller on private dining operations for his rapidly expanding empire of restaurants until 2009, when she moved to DC to work with Ziebold at CityZen. Soon thereafter the Mandarin Oriental asked Laurent to step into the role of General Manager at Sou'wester, the hotel's more casual dining outlet. Although she had never served in a restaurant management role before Laurent accepted the challenge, and made substantial improvements to the restaurant's operations during her time there.

When top Philadelphia restaurateur Stephen Starr opened his first DC outlet, Le Diplomate, on 14th Street NW in March 2014, he handpicked Laurent as his Service Director – and she added this experience to her impressive list of

restaurant openings.

The past three years have seen a burst of creative energy from Laurent and Ziebold; their first child (a daughter) was born in December 2013 followed by the opening, earlier this year, of Kinship – a 75-seat restaurant serving a modern American a la carte menu, and Métier – a 36-seat more upscale restaurant serving a seven course tasting menu. At both venues, guests will benefit from the superb culinary pedigrees of both Laurent and Ziebold, and to enjoy the warm Franco-American hospitality that the restaurant offers.

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