

Douglas Anderson: A seasonal chef

By Alexandra Greeley
Special to *The Washington Examiner*

A Scotsman to his core, Douglas Anderson, executive chef of Seasons at the Four Seasons Hotel, still considers himself all-American.

Born in Scotland and raised in Illinois in a Scots-centric home, Anderson learned early on that, as he says, “Food is everything in a European family. ... That’s how we identify ourselves. We [our family] had lamb and barley for breakfast.”

Perhaps to underscore his Americanness, however, the teenage Anderson decided he wanted a dirt bike, and to earn the money to buy it he got a job in a Chinese restaurant kitchen. “I started cooking at the age of 15,” he said. “The work was very theatrical, all the insanity of woks, cutting vegetables, peeling shrimp. But my dad let me do it because the job made sense.”

After graduating from high school, Anderson entered the Coast Guard. As fate would have it, he attended the Coast Guard’s Food Service “A” School in Petaluma, Calif. “I spent four months learning to cook soft-shell crab and other stuff you’d never see on a cutter,” he recalled.

But Anderson dove in, studiously reading textbooks and, thus, excelling at the program and the seven-year enlistment that followed. The experience proved a firm founding to his current career: “The Coast Guard standard was, ‘Whatever it takes,’ which instilled a lot of pride. I feel that same energy and pride in the Four Seasons way of doing things,” he said.

After leaving the Coast Guard, Anderson started his culinary career in earnest: He enrolled at the Baltimore International Culinary College. “I ended up working for Georgetown chef Michel Laudier of the Rive Gauche as his sous chef,” he said. “I then applied for a job at a Four Seasons hotel in Boston, and went from line cook to executive sous chef in three years.”

With that training, Anderson’s career was firmly in place, and for the ensuing years he moved from one Four Season Hotel’s kitchen to another, from West Coast to East



GRAEME JENNINGS/EXAMINER

Seasons’ Douglas Anderson served in the Coast Guard before becoming a chef.

What is your comfort food?

The thing I love late at night is tomato, basil, garlic, extra virgin olive oil, with cavatelle. That is the most perfect comfort food in the world. I eat it twice a week.

What is your signature dish?

I would go with the catering menu. It’s the sous vide short ribs with celery root and carrots.

What’s in your fridge?

Tons of vegetables. One of the things I like making is simple curries, vegan-style food. One-percent milk, tons of hummus, cheese. It’s really not as stocked as you’d think.

Which is your favorite restaurant?

Central ... but there are so many I like. I love Oyamel. I like simple, tasty, well-prepared foods. Zaytinya and Palena.

IF YOU GO Seasons

- » **Where:** Four Seasons Hotel, 2800 Pennsylvania Ave. NW
- » **Info:** 202-944-2000
- » **Hours:** Breakfast, 6:30 a.m. to 10 a.m. Monday to Friday, 7 a.m. to 10 a.m. Saturday to Sunday; lunch, 10:30 a.m. to 2:30 p.m. Saturday; brunch, 10:30 a.m. to 2:30 p.m. Sunday

Coast. And 10 years ago, Anderson found himself selected to run the hotel’s very prestigious Seasons and the hotel’s in-house catering business.

But one aspect of his life and career seems more down-home than upscale-posh. Anderson devotes his culinary energies to basing his meals on local, sustainable ingredients. “I have been doing farm-to-table cooking for the past 10 years,” he said. “I work here with the SEED school in Southeast D.C. to grow vegetables. I do other charitable volunteer work with other schools.”

Not only is he conscious of seasonal cooking — fitting when working in a restaurant named Seasons — but also Anderson has radically reshaped the formerly standardized menu. How about starting your day with a portion of lamb kidneys or a bowl of steel-cut oats?

The Vine Guy » Scott Greenberg

Oktoberfest means beer

People are always amazed when I tell them that I really like beer. I know that my moniker suggests otherwise, but my first love before wine was beer.

I even brewed my own for several years — until my wife became pregnant with our first child and she had an “adverse” reaction to the smell of the wort. From that day on, my brew kit was relegated to the dark corners of the basement. But my love affair with beer continues.

With the onset of Oktoberfest, my beer roots bubble up to the surface, so I was thrilled to be invited to join beer sommelier, Marc Stroobandt, for a food and beer pairing at Belga Cafe. Stroobandt, whose accolades include an honorary knighthood by one of Europe’s oldest trade guilds, La Chevalerie du Fourquet des Brasseurs, and the Commander in the Order of De Roze Olifant, first became intrigued with a wide variety of specialty beers during his first year in law school in Belgium. He worked very closely with Belgian brewers and gained an unparalleled understanding of the history and culture behind Belgian beer. A stint in catering school helped Marc develop a passion and expertise for pairing beer with food.

Marc’s passion is to enhance the appreciation of beer through product education, tasting sessions and, of course, food pairings. One of the highlights of the evening came when Marc poured a lambic beer (a beer blended from different “vintages” and crafted for long-term aging) and asked us to try it alone and then following a small spoonful of ranch dressing. The difference was astonishing and drove home the point that, just like fine wine, many beers are brewed to be paired with specific types of food.

Also joining us was Chris Myers, the reigning World Draught Master Champion. The 33-year-old Wisconsin native is just finishing up his one-year world tour, sharing his love of beer. Retail prices are approximate.

Brewing has been an integral part of life in the village of Hoegaarden,

Belgium, since 1318. By the 15th century, Begarden monks settled in the area and began brewing Belgian white (or wit) ales. By the end of the 19th century, the village boasted more than 35 breweries, although the town only had 2,000 people. **Hoegaarden Witbier, Belgian White Ale (\$12/six-pack)** boasts a spicy nose, courtesy of real Curacao orange peel and coriander that are used in the brewing process. Try pairing with salmon or the classic Belgian-inspired moules et frites (mussels with shoestring fried potatoes).

Stella Artois (\$12/six-pack) was originally brewed as a special holiday beer, but demand was so high that it eventually became available year-round. The lager features a creamy, lemony nose and a crisp yet mellow finish. The subtle bitter aftertaste works well with intensely flavored Thai, Asian fusion and Indian dishes such as curries. The bitterness also helps cut through cream sauces in pastas and contrasts the creaminess of flavorful semi-soft cheeses such as havarti and brie.

The monks of St. Norbert began brewing Leffe beer in 1240 for the community surrounding the Abbey Notre Dame de Leffe. The **Leffe Blonde (\$12/six-pack)** is a fruity and lightly spiced dry ale that features a wonderful balance between bitterness and flavor: Roasted malt results in a nose of roasted nuts and roasted coffee. Delicate flavors of orange blossoms and citrus are noted on the front of the palate while a honed finish extends over the back of the tongue and lingers as a subtle aftertaste. Perfect with meat dishes like grilled pork loin or hamburger.

For something brewed a little closer to home, try the deeply amber-colored **Samuel Adams Oktoberfest (\$11/six-pack)**, a seasonal lager beer made in the marzen style. Brewed using five different roasts of malt, it has distinctive notes of roasted coffee, caramel and toffee that are nicely balanced by the refreshing hops on the crisp, bitter finish. A nice match with traditional bratwurst or local half-smokes.

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