

# Sebastien Archambault: Lucky duck

By Alexandra Greeley  
Special to *The Washington Examiner*

Several months ago, Park Hyatt's upscale Blue Duck Tavern restaurant welcomed a new executive chef to fill the very big space vacated by its long-time head honcho, Brian McBride. The new main man behind the stove is the young, talented Frenchman, Sebastien Archambault.

A native Texan, Archambault, spent a good part of his life in Le Bugue, France, where his restaurant-owning parents returned to from their stay in the United States. Back in their native country, his parents opened several other restaurants — Les Trois Fontainers, La Gannerie, and L'Ouvé du Ciel — which proved to be the training ground for their young son.

"I grew up in a restaurant environment, and me in the kitchen, I had a little corner. I was starting at seven to cut potatoes. By the age of 10 to 12, I was working with my dad doing banquets," he said.

Coming from such a food-centric family, it's no wonder that he attended culinary school in Paris, working for two years under such star-studded chefs as Guy Savoy and Alain Ducasse. After graduation, Archambault worked in Paris for chef Jean-Francois Rouquette — who became one of the young man's most important mentors — before moving to cook in Mexico, Corsica and Los Angeles.

There, at the suggestion of Rouquette, Archambault landed the executive chef's job at the RH Restaurant in the Andaz West Hollywood Hotel. While there, the young man met Brian McBride, the then executive chef of Blue Duck Tavern. McBride helped Archambault form the farm-to-table menu at RH, forming a bond between the two — and leading Archambault to become his eventual replacement.

A perfect fit in this new position, Archambault brings with him valuable knowledge about working with seasonal, sustainable ingredients, the mission of the tavern's kitchen. In his new setting, Archambault is learning what is available locally, and loves the



Chef Sebastien Archambault learned the trade in the kitchens of his parents' restaurants in France. He is the new executive chef at the Blue Duck Tavern at the Park Hyatt Hotel.

GRAEME JENNINGS/EXAMINER

### What is your comfort food?

Chocolate or cheese. My favorite is a tomato-and-mozzarella caprese salad with good olive oil, fresh basil, sea salt and pepper. And a nice piece of bread. It is very simple and I love it. I could eat it two to three times a day.

### Which is your favorite ingredient?

I am very simple. If I want to cook, I need butter; it is so good. When you want to add taste, texture, add butter. Duck fat, too, which is more rustic. And a good chicken stock, vegetable and mushrooms. Every dish should have a little story. Put flavor on the plate and reinforce primary flavors.

### What's in your fridge?

Butter, of course, and cheese. Vegetables; I am a vegetable lover. More wine than beer. Nuts such as walnuts and almonds. Cajun spices.

### What is your signature dish?

Baked eggs and mushroom with a little piece of foie gras. It was a great success in Los Angeles.

### What has been the greatest influence on your cooking life?

My dad and Jean-Francois Rouquette, who was my mentor. Also you meet people and different teams, and they are an influence too.

### If you go Blue Duck Tavern

- » **Where:** Park Hyatt Hotel, 1201 24th St. (24th and M streets), Washington, D.C.
- » **Info:** 202-419-6755
- » **Hours:** Daily, 11:30 a.m. to 2:30 p.m., 5:30 to 10:30 p.m.

feeling of the Tavern's kitchen — its ambiance of the wood-burning oven, and the elegant, simple, yet rustic meals, he says. "Here I am discovering so many people are so passionate about food," he said, "including the

farmers with their eggs, goat cheese and vegetables."

And as he creates his menus, Archambault can draw upon not only local sources but also his childhood memories: his grandmother's cooking and his dad's Americanized foods such as fried chicken, homemade barbecue sauce, and pancakes, plus more traditional French dishes. "The menu will have more simply done vegetable dishes," he said. "And the specials on the menu will take what the farmer has that day. ... I will add more specials for variety's sake."

Will that include the pairing of chicken and lobster with spring onions he mused about? Foodies will certainly hope so.

## The Vine Guy » Scott Greenberg

# Roses are red but rosés are for Valentine's Day

This Valentine's Day, there is no better wine to celebrate with than a bottle of bubbly. But not just any sparkling wine. For the day named in honor of St. Valentine, one should choose a special wine that adds color as well as style for this year's day of love. Sparkling rosés are just what Cupid ordered.

Rosé wines are not a specific varietal, but rather they are a style of wine that generally ranges in color from soft pink to light purple, depending on which grapes are used and the winemaking technique employed. Traditional red wines get their color from lengthy contact between the juice and the red grape skins. One of the most popular methods for making rosé is saignée — which literally means "bleeding" — where the grape juices are bled away from the skins soon after the grapes are crushed. The longer that the skins are left in contact with the juice, the darker the wine will become.

Many different wine grapes lend themselves to rosé production. The most popular is pinot noir; but I have enjoyed sparkling rosé wines made from varietals including grenache, syrah, sangiovese and even malbec. The qualities I look for in a rosé wine are fresh red fruits flavors, (running along the lines of strawberry and raspberry), crispness and acidity.

Sparkling rosé wines can be found in just about every wine grape growing in the world. Best of all, many sparkling rosés are a relative bargain and can be found in plentiful supply. Retail prices are approximate.

One of the best values for a sparkling rosé is the **Non-vintage Cristalino Brut Rosé Cava (\$8)** from Spain. Made from roughly equal parts pinot noir and trepat (a grape varietal indigenous to the region), it sports beautiful scents of wild red berries and cherry on the nose. Fresh, clean strawberry and cherry flavors are light and bright in the mouth, with just a touch of ginger

on the crisp, clean finish. **QPR 6.5**

The Piedmont region of Italy is best known for their prized barolo and barbaresco wines, but it is also home to the **Non-vintage Banfi Rosa Regale (\$19)**. Made from the brachetto grape, the wine displays vibrant scents of floral notes, such as rose petals and violets on the nose. Flavors of raspberries and red strawberries are supported by a slightly sweet frame. **QPR 7**

Champagne is not the only part of France to produce sparkling wines. The **Non-vintage Chevalier Rosé Cremant Bourgogne (\$20)** hails from the renowned Burgundy region, where chardonnay and pinot noir grapes are used to produce a delicately fresh wine, with refreshing scents of red fruit aromas on the nose. Flavors of strawberry, red currant and nectarine are supported by tiny, delicate bubbles. The creamy texture is in balance with pleasant acidity. **QPR 8.5**

If you want a domestic sparkler with a champagne pedigree, try the **Non-vintage Roederer Estate Brut Rosé (\$27)** from Anderson Valley, Calif. The cool climate of Anderson Valley is ideal for growing the chardonnay and pinot noir grapes used in this lively rosé. Pretty red fruit aromas of summer raspberries, red currants and cherries are repeated on the equally fruit-driven palate, ending with notes of brioche on the balanced finish. **QPR 8.5**

For a special treat, pop open a bottle of **Non-vintage Jacquart Rose (\$40)**, an authentic champagne from Reims, France. The nose is wonderfully fruity, featuring strawberry and dark cherry notes. The mouthfeel is elegant and refined, where finely tuned bubbles carry flavors of cherry, raspberry and grenadine over the entire palate. The finish is crisp, dry and refreshing. **QPR 9**

**Note:** QPR is a rating system that compares the quality a wine delivers relative to the price. A QPR of 10 is considered an excellent value.



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