



GRAEME JENNINGS/EXAMINER

Lauren Petri's passion for baking led her to become the pastry chef at the Hamilton in D.C.

Lauren Petri plans pastries

By Alexandra Greeley
Special to The Washington Examiner

Despite her youth, Lauren Petri, the pastry chef at the Hamilton, has managed to put a lot of mileage into her career. From a childhood in Annapolis to the culinary program at Johnson & Wales University in Charlotte, N.C., to an internship in Switzerland, Petri now rules the sweet side of a prestigious kitchen in D.C.

As it turns out, family members also helped shape her baking passion. "My mom did a lot of baking with me," she explained. "She was a homemaker, so while she was making dinner I'd hang around the kitchen and help her put together a salad or I'd measure out ingredients for cookies. I remember this one book we had was called 'The Alphabet Cookbook,' and it had pictures of tablespoon and cup measurements for each ingredient and every letter would be a different recipe. ... I would pick out the recipe I wanted to make, and my mom would walk me through each step and then let me work through it on my own."

She recalls that as she matured, she started creating her own cookie recipes. "My dad would be gone all day," she said, "and when he came home, he would eat all my cookies." She even started her own at-home baking business in high school to fund a trip to Europe. "My dad would take a basket of baked goods into work each day and sell them to all of his co-workers for me."

When she turned 16, Petri got a job as a hostess in an Annapolis cafe. Later that year, she helped out in a local bakery. "I would scoop cookie dough, put together desserts platters for parties and basically do anything no one else wanted to do. I just couldn't get enough of baking," she said. "I've always thought I've had some sort of madness when it comes to being in a kitchen. I'd work

What is your comfort food?

I would have to think about that. It depends on my mood and what I have in my apartment. Normally it would be something salty because I am surrounded by sugar all the time. ... When I went to school in North Carolina, the hush puppies were the most amazing ... sweet potato hush puppies.

Which is your favorite restaurant?

I have two: I went to Woodberry Kitchen in Baltimore, Md., and fell in love with it. They had thought of everything. Then I went to the Fig Tree in Charlotte, N.C., in an old plantation home. I felt transported back in time. In D.C., 1789 is my favorite, and Smith Commons on H Street.

What would you do with a year off?

I would go on a food tour ... and start out West in California, then

Oregon, and go to Tartine Bakery & Cafe, a gluten-free bakery in Oregon. I want to learn that side of baking. Then I would go to Paris and Japan, and hit as many food places for inspiration.

What's in your fridge?

I eat all meals here [at the restaurant]. Frozen fruit and yogurt for an occasional smoothie, and I also have chicken empanadas that I've made and frozen ... and smoked Gouda with crackers. I have a weakness for banana-flavored Cheerios, really addictive.

Which is your favorite cookbook?

It would have to be "Amy's Bread," and I love her recipes. She has a bread book and a sweet book. All her recipes are amazing. A lot of basic ones, but really well-tested. I have met her before, too, and she is wonderful.

If you go The Hamilton

- » **Where:** 600 14th St. NW
- » **Info:** 202-787-1000; thehamiltondc.com
- » **Hours:** opens 7:30 a.m. Monday to Friday, 8:30 a.m. Saturday to Sunday; closes 1 a.m. Sunday to Thursday, 2 a.m. Friday to Saturday

for four to six hours in the kitchen and then go home and bake Christmas cookies for a few more hours."

While at Johnson & Wales, she enrolled in the school's bakery and pastry courses, and even was elected as vice president of the university's baking club. On breaks, Petri would fly home, walk in the

house and greet her family, then start baking.

In addition, Petri can probably thank her father's father for some part of her culinary passion because those relatives owned their own confection shop in Philadelphia. "Although the shop closed down in the 1930s," she said, "my grandfather would make candies for the holidays out in the garage. I have all his old molds, and I hope to display or use them."

As Petri sets about her daily baking tasks, she acknowledges that baking is definitely a passion, but she thanks her family for its support and encouragement. "It's the encouragement from my parents that has gotten me this far," she said. "They have always been so supportive of my decisions and giving me direction in my life."

The Vine Guy » Scott Greenberg

Craft brews are something to Savor

Back in Black, Interlude, Corruption, Breakaway, Noble Rot, Kismet Saison, Kalifornia Kolsch, Total Domination, Ugly Pug, Good Samaritan, Raisin Apollo, Grumpy Monk, Velvet Rooster, DumpsterDog, Troegenator, Gilgamesh and Razor Wit. Great names for rock bands? Maybe. But I was not at a rock festival. No, I was at Savor, "an American craft beer and food experience."

It turns out craft beer brewing is on the rise in America. According to the Brewers Association, the industry has grown over the last decade from just a handful of small, locally owned breweries to more than 1,900 in 2011. The concepts related to craft beer and craft brewers are generally small brewers whose hallmark is innovation using historic styles with unique twists and the development of new styles that have no precedent. Interesting and sometimes nontraditional ingredients are often added for distinctiveness. And one of the most important factors is that craft brewers have a distinctive, individualistic approach to connecting with their customers.

Savor was definitely a great way for 75 of those breweries to connect with consumers. Brewery owners, brewers and representatives were on hand to pour beer, meet customers and share their stories.

Here are a just a few of my favorite brews from a long list of great picks. Retail prices are approximate.

The elusive Green Flash is the term that sailors use to describe the split-second appearance of a green glow on the horizon that only occurs at sunset when the weather conditions are absolutely perfect. Legend has it that those who witness the flash are blessed with good luck. I was blessed with great luck to sample the **Rayon Vert** from Green Flash Brewing Co. (**\$2.50 per bottle**). The Belgian-style pale ale is made with a combination of hops and traditional malts and fermented with fresh ale yeast and Brettanomyces, which give the beer a horse-blanket nose. The light, slightly creamy mouthfeel has a musky body that holds tight to flavors

of lemon citrus, pears and cloves. It finishes dry but has a wonderfully sour-in-a-good-way aftertaste.

After looking around D.C. and not finding any true local brews on store shelves or bar taps, residents Brandon Skall and Jeff Hancock decided to combine their talents in brewing and distribution to found the DC Brau Brewing Co. Today, they have a loyal following, and it's easy to see why. Their **DC Brau Corruption India Pale Ale (\$12 per six-pack)** is served in cans and has a distinctive malty character up front but delivers a flavor uppercut of full hoppy goodness on the center of the palate. The dry, slightly bitter finish is classic.

The Allagash Brewing Co. began in 1995, on the outskirts of Portland, Maine, with just one employee, Founder Rob Tod. Tod's mission was to bring Belgian-style beers to the attention of the American beer consumer. Today, Allagash has six year-round beers in its portfolio and several one-offs and keg-only releases. My favorite year-round is the **Allagash Interlude (\$14 per six-pack)**, an "American Wild Ale" fermented first with a Saison yeast for three days and then a Brettanomyces yeast for four to six months. Some of the beer is aged in French oak barrels and then blended with its stainless steel-aged counterpart to produce a very dry, crisp beer with notes of pear, nectarine and apricot on the front of the palate and a delightfully yeasty touch on the bone-dry finish.

The Boston Beer Co., brewers of the impressive Samuel Adams beer portfolio, may not seem like a craft beer producer, but that is exactly the vision that Founder Jim Koch had when he started the company back in 1985 and the vision he has held steadfast to since then. The **Samuel Adams Grumpy Monk IPA (about \$2.50 per bottle)** is a testament to the craft beer culture. Made in small batches and sold as part of a "Hop-Ology" pack, this IPA is a tad on the tamer side with a distinctive-but-not-overwhelming hoppy bitterness on the midpalate. The citrusy tang and touches of tropical fruit on the finish add an attention-grabbing dimension for an IPA.



COURTESY OF BREWERS ASSOCIATION