



GRAEME JENNINGS/EXAMINER

Ripple chef Logan Cox got his start in the kitchen at the age of 15, making bagels at a Chesapeake Bagel Bakery.

Cox cooks: fresh and simple

By **Alexandra Greeley**
Special to *The Washington Examiner*

Just when you think you've got it straight, you find that some of your favorite chefs have moved around. That includes young and energetic Logan Cox, last seen in the kitchens of New Heights. Now overseeing things at Ripple, a move he made more than a year ago, Cox seems to have found his footing in a very comfortable setting. "This restaurant is more casual," he said. "It has a strong focus on quality ingredients: local, sustainable, organic and environmentally sound. It is a restaurant with a conscience."

A hometown boy who has made good, Cox launched his career at an early age, when he gave up playing football to work in the kitchen. One of his first kitchen experiences was making bagels at Chesapeake Bagel Bakery at the age of 15. Then in college, he worked in several fine-dining restaurants. He finally gave up a career in advertising to pursue a full-time cooking career, though he chose not to go to culinary school.

Instead Cox worked for several top-notch area chefs, such as Bob Kinkead of Kinkead's and the now-closed Colvin Run Tavern in Tysons Corner. Cox further honed his kitchen skills by traveling to Italy, where he spent a year learning classic Umbrian techniques from chef Lorenzo Polegri of Zeppelin Ristorante in Orvieto.

A former line cook at Palena, the Cleveland park restaurant owned by former White House chef Frank

What is your comfort food?

Braised chicken legs like chicken cacciatore

What's in your fridge?

A bottle of prosecco, old Thai food and I guess cheeses. I am not home enough.

What has been the greatest influence on your cooking?

I guess traveling to Europe, especially Italy, and noticing the differences in food cultures. I definitely [think] that here

we have an appreciation for ingredients and for using whole animals. Waste is a major concern.

Where is your favorite place in the world?

That's tough, I have been to many places, but Seattle: I love the oysters, and the seafood is spectacular. I could go back.

Which is your favorite ingredient?

I guess right now pork because it is so versatile.

If you go Ripple

- » **Where:** 3417 Connecticut Ave. NW
- » **Info:** 202-244-7995; rippledc.com
- » **Hours:** Daily from 5 p.m.

Ruta, Cox credits Ruta for allowing him to learn proper techniques and to strive for perfection. Before that, Cox had the good fortune to work for another super chef, Tarver King, when he was at Woodlands Resort and Inn in South Carolina. Cox credits King for letting him explore and define his culinary style.

And that brings Cox to the present, where he faces daily challenges with his menu creations. "Local farmers make deliveries once a week," he said, "so the menu changes daily. ... The menu is

hyperseasonal, and that forces me to be creative with what I have." Cox comes up with recipes almost in anticipation of what farmers will bring. Take asparagus, for example. Knowing that the spears were in season, Cox devised recipes for soups, purees and asparagus wrapped in mozzarella cheese.

In addition, Cox stresses that his dishes are straightforward and that each dish showcases flavor and texture. But at least one dish has become semipermanent — his platter of seasonal vegetables. "Some are pickled, others roasted, raw, or blackened. And these are dressed with a cardamom vinaigrette with a charred lettuce puree forming the base," he said.

As it has turned out, his parents, once skeptical of his career choice, now fully embrace his decision. Besides, says Cox, they visit the restaurant at least once a month to savor their son's creations.

The Vine Guy » **Scott Greenberg**

Pinot blanc: Charming and versatile

I was recently invited over to a friend's home for dinner and I, of course, brought a bottle of wine to share. Since he was preparing a classic French dish featuring halibut as the main course, I thought I would offer up one of my favorite wines from Alsace to pair with it, pinot blanc. That's when the mix-up began.

"Interesting," he said, displaying just the slightest hint of confusion while surveying the bottle. "I thought these wines went better with Italian fare," he stated. The look of confusion then spread across my brow until it dawned on me that he was referring to pinot grigio, not pinot blanc. Once I cleared up the misunderstanding, he asked, "Aren't they the same thing?"

While both wines may be white grape varieties that share an ancient paternity claim, and both have the word "pinot" in their name, that is where the similarities end. Pinot blanc originally hails from the Burgundy region of France, where it was commonly mistaken for chardonnay. Through modern testing, it was discovered that pinot blanc is actually distantly related to pinot noir. Today, pinot blanc is very popular in the Alsace region of France, where it tends to be more aromatic and floral. However, it has also found a home in Austria (weissburgunder), Italy and Spain (pinot bianco), Eastern Europe (pinot beli) and the United States, predominantly in California and Oregon.

Pinot blanc is a remarkably versatile grape that can produce wines with different personas depending on region and winemaking techniques employed. They range from dry and refreshing to almost desertlike. Regardless of the country of origin, one common theme is their extraordinary fragrant bouquet and bright acidity, making them one of the most food-friendly white wines around. Retail prices are approximate.

Jean Trimbach is from one of the most knowledgeable wine families in the Alsace region. He should be, considering that he is the 13th generation of the Trimbach family in the business. With that wealth of generational history, it is no wonder that the **2010 Trimbach Pinot Blanc (\$16)** is one of the best values in France. It displays a wonderful bouquet of green melon and orange citrus blossom. Flavors of pear and crisp apple attack the front of the palate while creamy flavors of apricot, citrus and peach combine with a touch of mineral to provide a long, memorable finish. **QPR 9.5**

Oregon's Willamette Valley is famous for their fruit-driven pinot noir wines, but the **2011 Bethel Heights Pinot Blanc (\$18)** is an excellent example of how brightly pinot

blanc can shine in this region. It is a lighter-style version that features a fragrant bouquet of citrus, apple blossom and Asian pear scents. Flavors of green melon, pear and apricot shine through on the core of the palate while notes of smokey undercurrents combine with nice acidity that leaves a lasting impression on the finish. **QPR 8.5**

The wine that inspired this column is the **2009 Weinbach Pinot Blanc Reserve (\$22)**. What I really like about this wine is the aromatic nose of fresh melon and ripe stone fruit and the remarkable balance between the refreshing acidity and the luscious flavors of apple, pear and apricot fruit. Tangy minerality on the long, mouth-watering finish keeps the tongue invigorated. **QPR 9.5**

The central coast of California has been a hotbed for pinot blanc for several decades. One of the oldest wineries in California to plant pinot blanc is Chalone Vineyards, who began planting the varietal in 1946. Today, the **2009 Chalone Vineyards Pinot Blanc (\$26)** from Monterey County is made with newer rootstock but the same dedication, showing off pure flavors of orange blossom, white peach, pineapple and Kadota fig on the front of the palate. Notes of vanilla are enhanced by crisp acidity on the complex finish. **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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