



GRAEME JENNINGS/EXAMINER

"I have a real love affair with food," says Seth McClelland, executive chef and co-owner of Dupont Circle's One Lounge.

Seth McClelland: number One chef

By Alexandra Greeley
Special to The Washington Examiner

If you are facing one of those feeling-lazy days, you need a dose of Seth McClelland, executive chef and co-owner of Dupont Circle's One Lounge. This Hollywood-handsome chef cooks for a place that is a mix of restaurant, hang-out and nighttime lounge, and his menu reflects that same eclectic spirit.

An Alexandria native — it means a lot to be a local, he says — he feels like he has become something of a unique character in this transient community. "This is something I compare," he said, "Washington and politicians to Hollywood and the movies. You shouldn't separate yourself from the community. That is why I lived in Dupont Circle." And that is how McClelland knew about the space when the former restaurant vacated it.

Attracted to cooking and all things culinary since childhood, McClelland talks about how his mother, a very good cook, set a good example for the youngster, who had enough savvy and independence to fix his own snack when he got home from school. "First, I learned how to scramble eggs and to take them from the bowl to the pan," he said. "After I ate eggs for a few days, I moved on to omelets with mushrooms and ham. I even taught myself how to flip it over." By the time he turned 12, McClelland was compiling Christmas dinners for the whole family.

What is your comfort food?
Spaghetti and sausage, single malt Scotch, and ramen noodles

Which is your favorite restaurant?
My enjoyment is related to my mood. I go to Fiola for good service, etc., With friends and we order a lot, I go to Proof, Zaytinya and to Fairlington Pizza. A Greek lady makes a chicken parmesan sandwich.

What advice would you give to home cooks?
Cook what you like. Stay away

from butter. Especially as a chef, when I make steak, house-creamed spinach and mashed potatoes, I can taste it.

What's in your fridge?
Salad stuff, veggies, sandwich meat. It used to be stocked, but now I work here. Now I make ramen noodles.

Which chef do you admire most in the world?
My grandmother ... so many people who cook at home who are really good.

If you go One Lounge

- » **Where:** 1606 20th St. NW
- » **Info:** 202-299-0909; oneloungedc.com
- » **Hours:** 5 p.m. to 2 a.m. Monday to Thursday, 5 p.m. to 3 a.m. Friday to Saturday, closed Sunday

By the time he turned 14, he knew he loved to cook, but never really considered a culinary career. Instead, after college McClelland pursued a career in the real estate field, working for a developer. "I was the guy in the field designing buildings," he said. "I was the one working with the contractors."

But several years ago, one of his

mentors suggested that McClelland take a break from real estate. And that's when he strolled by and found the site for his current restaurant. "I understood all the real estate aspects of it," he explained of the site. "That was a real bonus, because I designed and built this place with a crew."

At last, he turned his attention to what is probably his first passion: cooking. "I have a real love affair with food," he said. "[Cooking] is one of the things I do really well. If I smell a dish, I can cook it or even if I see someone doing it, I can replicate it."

To key into the young, hip atmosphere of Dupont Circle, McClelland devised a menu that plays well with the funky setting of bar-lounge-dining room. "I have kept the food international and young," he said.

The Vine Guy » Scott Greenberg Wine-friendly picks for D.C.'s Restaurant Week

I know many people can't wait to get out of D.C. in August. But if you're sticking around next week, there are two things that will work in your favor — less traffic and Restaurant Week.

From Monday through the 19th, more than 200 of the area's finest restaurants will offer three-course meals for set prices. Participating restaurants will offer a three-course lunch for \$20.12 (get it?) and a three-course price-fixed dinner for just \$35.12. For a complete list of restaurants taking part in the promotion, go to restaurantweekmetrodc.org.

Further adding to the value-oriented experience, many of these restaurants will also offer up wine tasting specials that you can pair with lunch or dinner. A few restaurants will even let you bring in your own special bottle of wine — but more on that later.

Vidalia restaurant (1990 M St. NW) is planning on offering some of chef/owner Jeff Buben's classic dishes, such as shrimp and grits, on the weeklong menu. Sommelier Ed Jenks has put together a list of red and white wines that represent great quality and value (including an Argentine torrontes from Don Manuel Villafane), as well as a selection of craft beers and artisanal cocktails made from small-production American craft spirits.

All three of the local outposts of the **Capital Grille** steakhouse are currently featuring their Generous Pour concept, along with dry aged steaks and fresh seafood. The Generous Pour allows patrons to select any number of tastes from a preset list of nine premium wines for \$25. During Restaurant Week, the steakhouse will also offer a three-wine tasting option for \$9.

Owner Dean Gold of **Dino's** (3435 Connecticut Ave. NW) is extending Restaurant Week through Sept. 6. The free corkage policy (Monday through Wednesday) is suspended during Restaurant Week, but Dean will be offering special wine pairings as well as 33 percent off wines more than \$50 on Sunday and Monday.

And speaking of corkage policies, if you are celebrating a special occasion and have been patiently waiting to open an extraordinary bottle of wine, Restaurant Week might be the time to consider taking it out to dinner. But there are a few things you need to know before you tote your wine along with you.

Maryland recently joined Virginia and the District in allowing patrons to bring their own wine into restaurants. However, at of the time of this writing, I could not find any restaurants in Montgomery County



COURTESY PHOTO

Jeff Buben of Vidalia has put together a list of red and white wines that represent great quality and value for D.C.'s Restaurant Week.

that have been issued a corkage permit.

Patrons should remember that corkage is a privilege, not a right. Policies vary widely from restaurant to restaurant and may even vary at the same restaurant depending on the day of the week. Most jurisdictions dictate that a restaurant may not charge more than \$25 per bottle and must allow a two-bottle minimum.

Now that you know that you can take a special bottle or two of wine, let's talk etiquette. I suggest that you always call the restaurant ahead of time to let them know that you are planning on bringing in your own wine and confirm the restaurant's corkage policy. Lastly, I recommend that you always offer a taste of the wine to both the sommelier and your server. A little kindness goes a long way, and a sip of a unique wine just might help the server forget the bottle of wine your table didn't buy. (Tip: I always try to order at least one bottle of wine off of their wine list as a way of showing my appreciation.)

Up to the Minute...
FOR THE LATEST ON LOCAL MUSIC, THEATER AND MORE, CLICK ON WashingtonExaminer.com/Entertainment