

# Rob Klink: Grille master

By Alexandra Greeley  
Special to The Washington Examiner

It's possible that some D.C. foodies remember Rob Klink as the culinary face of the Oceanaire Seafood Room. While there, Klink became something of a spokesman for the sustainable seafood movement. As an activist, he worked to teach the staff and patrons about the need to protect our deep-sea environs.

But after a short hiatus from a D.C. kitchen, during which he helped his wife open and run a restaurant in southern Maryland, Klink returns to the city's dining scene in the role of executive chef of one of the city's newest eating locales, Del Frisco's Grille.

"This restaurant concept is very different from Oceanaire," Klink said. But he is happy to be back in the city. "I am in the same neighborhood, and I have some of the same clientele. I like the open kitchen here. It has changed the way I do my job. I am now more patient because I am always onstage. That builds better kitchen habits."

Klink explains that the menu features several core items available at other locations of this restaurant group. "But I get my say," says Klink, letting his seafood passion shine through. "The most popular dish is our tuna tacos. I love the tacos, made with a prime grade tuna, fresh lime juice, salt and a spicy guacamole. It's like eating sushi."

Sounds like Klink has not strayed too far from his seafood focus after all, as he further expounds on what must be his favorite topic. "I tend



GRAEME JENNINGS/EXAMINER

**Chef Rob Klink, the former face of Oceanaire Seafood Room, still focuses on seafood at his new home, Del Frisco's Grille.**

to go with seafood as our featured dishes," he explained. Inspiration comes from flipping through magazines, browsing the Web or watching cooking shows with his wife. "I just read a Chesapeake seafood cookbook yesterday," he said. "But I pick up my ideas everywhere. And I collaborate with my staff."

To further underscore his call from the sea, Klink still deals with J.J. McDonnell, a Jessup-based sustainable seafood business. "We try to help local oysters and scallops," he said, "and we use really great local sea scallops." As he considers future changes to the menu, Klink's ideas still entail seafood: "We have oysters on the half shell," he says, "but I am going to change

**What is your comfort food?**

I am a simple guy. So a good salad, and then everything else on the grill. Steaks, grilled asparagus and red bell peppers, all on the grill.

**What's in your fridge?**

A gallon of apple cider, cooked pasta, bottles of orange juice and milk. Some cheeses, condiments, homemade applesauce. Not a lot of food.

**Which is your favorite restaurant?**

Mandu and Matchbox

**Which are your basic ingredients?**

Salt and garlic. Salt can make anything taste good. That is, sea salt and kosher salt.

**Who is your favorite chef?**

Joel Robuchon, I would want to work for him. Then Marco Pierre White.

**If you go Del Frisco's Grille**

- » **Where:** 1201 Pennsylvania Ave. NW
- » **Info:** 202-450-4686; delfriscosgrille.com
- » **Hours:** 11:30 a.m. to 11 p.m. Monday to Thursday, 11:30 a.m. to midnight Friday, 4 p.m. to midnight Saturday, 4 to 9 p.m. Sunday

that to grilled oysters with Parmesan cheese. That is what I cook at home."

Del Frisco's Grille, whose roots extend to Louisiana, also plans to inject some Cajun flavors with a mid-Atlantic spin into some of its creations. Patrons should not be surprised if in the future they come across some Cajun gumbo gracing the menu.

## The Vine Guy » Scott Greenberg Wines to enhance romance

I am a romantic at heart, one of those people who actually looks forward to Valentine's Day, when I can fawn over my spouse. But between hectic schedules, Beltway traffic and work deadlines, just trying to find time for romance becomes a logistical challenge on par with planning a national political convention.

So what's a modern-day, stressed-out couple to do? First, close the laptop and turn off the smartphone. Next, grab a bottle of wine and get a couple of wine glasses out. Then, pour the wine and relax. But which wine should you choose to enhance romance?

For the answer, I decided to solicit advice from some of the busiest people I know and find out what wine they plan to open to tip the scales of love in their favor and ensure a successful love connection. Of course, individual results may vary and, as always, retail prices are approximate.

Eric Ziebold is one of the busiest people I have ever met. The James Beard Award-winning chef manages his time between running the kitchen at CityZen as well as numerous charitable events. When he and his bride, Celia Laurent, find a moment to relax, Ziebold likes to open a bottle of Moscato d'Asti. He loves the off-dry, low-alcohol and slightly carbonated wine. He says, "It's just one of those things that tastes good, is fun, easy and lifts one's spirits." In addition, one of his favorite things to do with Moscato d'Asti is have it with dessert — and use it in the dessert. I recommend the **2011 Prunotto Moscato d'Asti (\$18)** from Italy. It sports vibrant aromas of tropical fruit and white nectarine. The palate is covered in ripe flavors of guava, peach and tangy green apple. **QPR 9**

Writers and editors are constantly under stress-inducing deadlines, so I turned to my former boss, Christie, to ask her what wine she plans to serve up. "I met my sweetie through

a mutual friend at a dinner party. The next morning, he Metro'd over. I had just moved, and my new place was a shambles. So we went to my old apartment, now completely empty. We created a kitchen floor picnic with candles, chicken tikka masala and **2010 Byron Pinot Noir (\$28)** from Santa Maria Valley. It's beautifully perfumed, with a rich taste of black tart raspberries, black cherries, smoky oak and rose petals. It has supple tannins and a velvety mouthfeel." I could not have written this better myself. **QPR 9**

Barry and Caren go together like a perfect food and wine pairing. They just fit. But with both having busy schedules, it's amazing that they find plenty of time to spend with their two young children, let alone themselves. But when they do find time to share a quiet moment, they like to share a bottle of **2010 Kongsgaard Chardonnay (\$80)** from the Napa Valley. While it is a bit on the pricey side, the flavors of apple, peach, pear and mineral undertones, in harmony with the pitch-perfect acidity, make it worth the splurge. **QPR 9.5**

When you own and operate six restaurants and are raising two children together, time becomes very precious. To squeeze the most out of every wine moment, chef/owner Cathal Armstrong turns to the non-vintage **Jacquart Brut Rose Champagne (\$29)** from France to relax and woo his business partner and spouse, Meshelle. Aromas of ripe peaches, honeyed nectarines, red raspberries and hints of yeasty notes are buoyed to the surface by tiny, precise bubbles where flavors of baked apples and rich pears mingle with hints of buttered crust on a creamy frame that emphasizes the long, clean finish. **QPR 9.5**

**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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