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News

New executive chef appointed to lead The Raphael culinary efforts

Chef Charles d'Ablaing brings strong culinary reputation to Kansas City's historic boutique hotel and its signature restaurant, Chaz on the Plaza

March 24, 2011 – Kansas City, MO – The Raphael, Kansas City's landmark hotel located on the Country Club Plaza, is new home to the culinary talents of Charles d'Ablaing. Chef d'Ablaing, executive chef of Webster House the past five years, emerged as top chef in a national search. "We were fortunate to have found a chef with his talent and leadership skills in our own back yard," said Steve Miller, director of operations. "In Chef d'Ablaing, we found not only a chef that matched our expectations for experience and capabilities, but one who shared our high ambition for Chaz." He assumes his position Friday, March 25.

Chef d'Ablaing's star has risen steadily since landing in Kansas City fifteen years ago, fresh from the Atlanta School of Culinary Arts. His cooking is credited for helping transform the Webster House and establish the Hotel Phillips and its signature Chop House restaurant into significant places on the local dining landscape. Chef d'Ablaing was featured at the James Beard House in 2009 and has been prominent in local charitable events and competitions, including Food Fight, an Iron Chef-style competition on March 28 to benefit Children's Center for the Visually Impaired.

Chef d'Ablaing's cooking style, squarely in the genre of new American cuisine, is defined by his reverent approach to quality ingredients and his emphasis on proper seasoning and cooking technique. His laser focus of each dish is flavor. "It's all about taste," says the chef. "Take good ingredients and make them great through proper aging and the right seasoning." The confident 35-year-old chef is unafraid to go against popular trends or conventional wisdom. He argues, for example, that too many chefs over-reach with seasonings that corrupt the flavor inherent in the primary ingredient. He dismisses the notion that "you eat first with your eyes" as a tired phrase. "When you have a great meal, flavor is what is most remembered," says d'Ablaing. "Next is its aroma and then the way it looked."

Just as d'Ablaing prioritizes the way he appeals to the diners' senses, he prioritizes his long-term goals for continuing to build on The Raphael's and Chaz on the Plaza's reputations. "I want to

bring a style that makes Chaz a household name and build the business.” Elevating in-room dining to a remembered experience is another priority. In the near term, his plans include helping a talented young culinary team grow in their technical abilities and working to improve kitchen efficiencies and economies. He intends to familiarize himself with and tweak the current menu before launching a new seasonal menu in four to six weeks. Chef d’Ablaing will feature daily specials based on what local farmers and suppliers bring to the market. For his long-time fans, he promises to introduce at Chaz his signature fried green tomatoes and a braised “something” on the menu. He will continue butchering his own meat and working with suppliers to assure proper aging. He hopes to integrate sous vie cooking into the menu, continuing to participate in community cooking events, hold occasional cooking classes and feature fun culinary events in Chaz on the Plaza. He is already committed to a Cakebread wine dinner on April 26.

Chef d’Ablaing is a native of Atlanta, Georgia. Being one of eight siblings contributed to his early work in the kitchen and to his self-reliance. He never attended a day of high school but received GED scores that earned him grants and merit scholarships to attend the Atlanta School of Culinary Arts. In addition to his work at Webster House and Hotel Phillips, he has cooked in a diverse array of restaurants, including Carlos O’Kellys in Wichita; Figlio and the now-defunct Fedora Bar & Grill in Kansas City; Landings Club in Savannah, Georgia, the largest private club in the United States; Culpepper Country Club and Pearl Restaurant, both in Virginia; and Wyndham Hotel in Milwaukee. For a talented young chef without ties to Kansas City, it is nonetheless the magnet that has drawn him back throughout his culinary journey. “I missed Kansas City every time I left,” he says. “This is where I’ve put my roots down.” He lives in the Brookside neighborhood with his Brazilian-born and raised wife, Silvia.

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