

Patrick Quillec, Exécutive Chef

A little over forty years ago, Patrick Quillec was born in Brittany, a culinary climate that would raise a passionate and dedicated chef. As the child of a "master crêpiere and chef," Patrick watched his mother make crêpes for her family at least three nights a week, even after turning out hundreds during her work at the local crêperie. During the summer, at the age of 14, he joined his mother and worked fifteen hour days, but it was the start of his day that he rejoiced in. "I would go with the chef to the market and to the port to buy all of the goods, bringing back live scallops and the most beautiful langoustines you've ever seen," he recalls. "I loved the fact that we did everything from scratch there. We killed the goose out back, we went and gathered the snails off the walls after the rain, everything was completely hands-on."

Collecting and preparing food in his rocky fishing community was a way of life for Patrick, but he took a chance in his teens by leaving that life for America. His sister Marie-Therese had opened up a restaurant in Miami, The French Connection, a 120 seat fine dining restaurant, and in 1978 he joined her, his brother Daniel and his sister Nadine. In the kitchen of the Quillec family's upscale restaurant, Patrick learned the labors of preparation and importance of classical technique, under the master eye of Chef Patrick Truard of "Chez Drouant" in Paris and Master Pastry Chef Patrice Caillac of "La Tour D'Argent" in Paris. After a couple of years, the family opened the large 125 seat brasserie Café Europa and this time Patrick was at the head of the stoves. "I worked from 9 a.m. to midnight seven days a week and I was 20 years old," he says smiling. "We did about 150 covers for lunch and 300 for dinner and while the amount of work was incredible, I loved it and became so comfortable in the kitchen that it was like my home."

In 1981, after the death of his sister Marie-Therese, Patrick and his brother Daniel left Miami for Charlotte, North Carolina to take over the small 55 seat restaurant Chez Jean from a retiring French chef. They changed the name to Chez Daniel, set about creating their own menu and almost overnight, a star was born. It was here where Patrick truly came into his own and began exercising his culinary creativity. With his own garden out back, he grew vegetables and herbs, made his charcuterie from scratch, he baked his own bread, made his own cheeses and even made the restaurant's butter. His fresh and delicate creations were often compared in the press to the style of Fredy Girardet, while Gourmet magazine called to request his flourless chocolate mousse cake.

After seven successful years, Patrick's travelling bug bit and he, along with his wife and children, found himself in Puerto Rico, where he cheffed for The Normandy restaurant in The Normandy Hotel. In the following years he had stints as Executive chef and Corporate chef at both the Chattahoochee River Club and the Windsor Hotel in Georgia and as an instructor at the New England Culinary Institute. But it was an offer from The Omni Hotel that brought him to Kansas City in the mid '90s.

Growing weary of club and hotel politics, Patrick recalled that the happiest time of his career was when he worked for himself at Chez Daniel and decided then and there that it was time again to follow his instincts. "Wherever I live I have a vision for the city, not just for me and my restaurant but for the whole city," he says. "I want to live in a city that has the best to offer and if nobody else is doing it, then I'll do it." And so he did.

His first project was Hannah Bistro Café in 1999, a French-inspired American bistro with a touch of Asian influences. Different from either the classical fine dining cuisine or the homestyle brasserie fare he had done in the past, he went out on a limb hoping to bring

something unique to Kansas City's culinary scene. The city and critics alike responded with praise and his flagship restaurant continues to buzz almost five years later. After meeting Kim Weinberger through events at the school their children both attend, the two formed "KC Concept, a Restaurant Group" in 2000, with a main objective of opening more concepts across Kansas City.

In August of 2001, KC Concept opened the quaint progressive French restaurant Café Provence, a culinary standout that continues to enjoy much success.

Less than a year later, in May of 2002, the group opened Café Paris, a traditional boisterous brasserie that was an immediate hit with locals looking for an authentic escape. Due to the Iraq war and subsequent anti-French sentiment, KC Concept made a strategic concept and name change to Hannah Bistro Café in Overland Park which ensured the café's popularity.

In 2006, the team opened Cassis, a modern bistro in Leawood, Kansas. Located in the well-polished Town Center open-air shopping center, Cassis is a self-labeled European-inspired modern bistro. This space is sleek and sophisticated. A theatrically lit booze shelf towers above a glass bar -- the perfect backdrop for champagne sipping and haughty laughter. But the main reason fine diners continually follow Quillec on his cross-town journeys is his diverse and bold fusion cuisine.

"The ideas and the possibilities are endless for this passionate and driven boy from Brittany." All I really want is for people to come from all over, whether they're from San Francisco or New York or wherever, and to come experience what I'm trying to do," he says. "And when they leave I want them to say, 'There are great restaurants in Kansas City.'"

In late 2006, Chef Patrick sold his shares of the KC Concept group and it remains to be seen what his next move will be.