

THE SPOKESMAN-REVIEW

Park Lodge opens Friday in Spokane's Kendall Yards

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By Adriana Janovich

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Philip Stanton was nearly through the Rs before he arrived at Le Relais Louis 13, a Michelin-starred restaurant on the Left Bank near the Pont Neuf.

He'd been going from restaurant to restaurant, starting with the three-stars, then the two, before he found a chef in Paris willing to take him on for a short-term stage. He landed work experience in the heart of the 6th arrondissement on, according to the establishment's webpage, the remains of the convent where Louis XIII was proclaimed King of France.

Today, some of Stanton's favorite opening menu items – steak tartar, steamed Manila clams, duck cassoulet – remind him of the short time he spent living and working in Paris.

After working in fine dining restaurants from San Francisco to Spokane – with stints in Portland and Los Angeles as well as Paris – he's finally opening a restaurant of his own. Stanton's Park Lodge specializes in locally inspired comfort food with – at least for this first menu – a Mediterranean influence. When it opens Friday in Spokane's Kendall Yards, it will easily take a place among Spokane's top restaurants.

"The menu is reflective of what comfort food means to me," Stanton said. "This is me in my comfort zone."

At its center is an applewood-fired grill, visible from a row of booths situated between the bar and semi-open kitchen.

"A gas grill makes things a lot easier," Stanton said. "But it's not necessarily good for developing flavor."

And, he said, "I'm not looking for an easy answer. I want people to taste the food and be reminded of something. But I want them to look at it and see something they haven't seen before."

His rendition of chili, for example, features white bean ragu, scallions, sour cream, cheddar emulsion and ancho-braised short rib meat encased in pork-belly membrane. The presentation, elegant and elevated with classic French influences, likely isn't what most diners expect when they see chili on a menu.

The dish is one of just a couple of the American comfort foods on Stanton's first Park Lodge menu. The other, the Park Lodge Burger, features onion-bacon jam, Vermont white cheddar and green peppercorn aioli on a house-made pretzel bun.

"The menu is heavily Mediterranean right now," he said.

But look for Asian influences in the future.

"I like doing a lot of Japanese and Chinese cuisine," he said.

Meantime, reminiscent of his time in Paris are the duck cassoulet with white beans and bread crumbs, steak tartar with a quail egg and grilled crostini, and steamed Manila clams with white wine, garlic, chili flakes, parsley and grilled sourdough.

Look for influences from North Africa and the Middle East, too – in the falafel wrap served with fries and tahini sauce, seven-vegetable tagine with couscous and honey-mint yogurt, and a mezze platter with hummus, baba ganoush, cucumber yogurt, tabbouleh, falafel, marinated olives, zaatar-spiced feta and grilled pita bread.

Stanton, 32, worked for nearly three years as the sous chef at Italia Trattoria in Browne's Addition while planning and searching for a location for his own eatery.

"Ultimately, that is what I wanted," he said. "I feel like I can put more passion into the food when it's being done the way I think it should be done."

How he thinks it should be done is "all from scratch" and wood-fired when possible.

Stanton, a 2004 graduate of St. George's School in Spokane, went to California after high school to pursue a culinary career. Two years later, he graduated from the California Culinary Academy in San Francisco, where he worked at the Cliff House and La Folie.

He spent about three years in the greater Los Angeles area after that, working at Spago in Beverly Hills. He also spent about three months in Paris and another three years in Portland – working at the now-closed Wildwood, as well as Castagna and his own food truck – before returning to Spokane, which Stanton described as "a good place to raise a family."

He and his wife, Helen Stanton, married about five and a half years, have two children, ages 1 1/2 and 3 1/2.

Stanton is named for his late grandfather, who led the Spokane-based Washington Trust Bank like his father before him and his son after him.

But the younger Philip Stanton's calling was not in banking.

Stanton knew, he said, from the time he was in eighth grade that he wanted to be a chef. So, at his dad's urging, he got a job as a teen as a dishwasher at Denny's.

"I think he thought that would snap me out of it," Stanton said of his father, Peter Stanton, the current chief executive officer of Washington Trust Bank.

Instead, working in a kitchen helped solidify what would become a longtime dream of someday owning a restaurant.

Park Lodge takes its name from Olmsted Park, located across the street from the restaurant. It's also inspired by its location along the Centennial Trail overlooking the Spokane River and Peaceful Valley.

"I feel like cooking has a connection with nature. That's where we get our ingredients from," Stanton said. "I like being able to look out over the river and the trees and feel connected to nature."

Planning and building took about a year. Stanton worked with architect Austin Dickey of Copeland Architecture and Construction and Tammie Ladd of Tammie Ladd Design. He said he wanted a natural ambiance "and a lodge feeling."

The space is light and bright and airy, with ceilings that stretch some 25 feet high and walls of windows overlooking the trail and river at the west end of Kendall Yards. Floors are polished concrete. Wood beams are exposed. Colors are neutral – cream, tan and charcoal – with blond wood and custom-made maple tables and benches.

Seating is a mix of booths and two- and four-tops as well as a community table that sits 12 just inside the front door. Above it hangs a custom light fixture fashioned from driftwood found in the Netherlands.

In all, there's room for about 100 guests inside and outside – with 10 at the bar and about 20 on the patio, where the plan is to install a fire pit and plant an herb garden. Stanton wants to grow his own pineapple sage, fennel, chervil, tarragon, basil, rosemary, burnet and lavender.

Meantime, starters include lentil soup with garlic croutons by the cup or bowl; butter lettuce salad with radishes, herbs, Parmesan and Champagne vinaigrette; and chicory salad with radicchio, endive, frisee, fennel, baby beets, candied walnuts, blue cheese and burnt honey vinaigrette.

Entrees include sturgeon "chowder" with potato puree, Manila clams, broth, pancetta and charred leeks; grilled prime New York strip steak with fries and Bearnaise sauce; Sterling tenderloin with roast fingerling potatoes, grilled asparagus, Bordelaise sauce; and roast half chicken with potato puree, wild mushrooms and chicken jus.

Look, also, for a Lyonnaise salad with house bacon, frisee, a poached egg and warm bacon vinaigrette; grilled lamb leg with Parmesan polenta, panzanella, olive-feta vinaigrette and lamb jus; roast duck breast with asparagus, radish, turnips, cippolini onions, parsnip puree and duck jus; and wild mushroom risotto with tomato confit and fiore sardo.

Sides include potato puree, fries, couscous, a green salad and grilled asparagus with Bearnaise sauce.

For dessert, there's a cookie plate with assorted favorites – snickerdoodle, chocolate chip, white chocolate-macadamia nut – apple crisp with house-made cinnamon ice cream and caramel sauce, house-made ice cream or sorbet by the scoop, and a chocolate trip with a chocolate cupcake with chocolate frosting, house-made chocolate ice cream and chocolate pot de creme.

Park Lodge employs about 20 people. Rounding out the team is sous chef Colton Connor, who most recently worked at Wild Sage; general manager Josh Brewster, who previously worked at the Wandermere Twigs Bistro and Martini Bar; and bar manager Josh Neumeier, who tended bar at Durkin's in downtown Spokane.

Eventually, Stanton would like to start offering multi-course tasting menus, which allow chefs to be creative, show off their culinary skills and feature local, fresh and seasonal ingredients.

"Tasting menus are how I like to cook," he said. "My goal is to be able to create a full experience for the guest."

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Park Lodge

Where: 411 N. Nettleton St.

Hours: 4 to 9 p.m. Sunday through Thursday, and 4 to 10 p.m. Friday and Saturday

Happy hour: 4 to 5 p.m. in the bar and at the community table

On the web: parklodgerestaurant.com

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Captions

Philip Stanton, the chef and owner of Park Lodge in Kendall Yards, poses in front of the wood-fired grill at his restaurant, which opens Friday, April 27, 2018. (Adriana Janovich / The Spokesman-Review)

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<http://www.spokesman.com/stories/2018/apr/24/park-lodge-opens-friday-in-spokanes-kendall-yards/#/4>