

MODERN LUXURY

DC



**THE
RESTAURANT
ISSUE 2014**

The 50 Finest

**BEST NEW RESTOS, HOTTEST
CHEFS, MOST INNOVATIVE DISHES
AND COCKTAILS**

BEHIND THE CURTAIN
INSIDE THE JOSÉ ANDRÉS DINING KINGDOM

GRILLING GUAS
CHEF DAVID GUAS GOES NATIONAL

DIVA CUCINA!
GIADA DE LAURENTIIS' DC MOMENT



SPANISH EMPIRE

JOSÉ ANDRÉS AND THINK FOOD GROUP
BUILD THEIR NATIONWIDE BUSINESS
FROM A SLEEK DOWNTOWN SPACE.

By Jennifer Sergent | Photography by Greg Powers

It's not an overstatement to say chef José Andrés is running his growing restaurant empire with military structure. The architecture of Think Food Group's gleaming, open-plan offices and test kitchen is taken, quite literally, from the layout of the McChrystal Group, the Alexandria consulting firm founded by retired Army Gen. Stanley McChrystal and his chief aid from Afghanistan, Dave Silverman (who's married to TFG's former chief operating officer, Hollis Silverman).

The McChrystal office is completely open, where every employee—most of them veterans—can see and hear each other in the same space as they advise corporate clients on management and leadership. "That's where José had his aha moment," TFG's CEO Rob Wilder says, describing the inspiration for their new offices in Penn Quarter, where they moved after long occupying the cramped rooms of repurposed apartments. CONTINUED...



CULINARY THEATER
Clockwise from top:
The office boasts a
living-plant wall and
communal work table,
enabling daylong
collaboration; ideas
for decor; a slice of
the culinary library;
members of the
culinary team
research an
upcoming menu.





KING'S COURT
Clockwise from top: Chef José Andrés holds court in his sleek and comfortable glass-walled office; wines await testing on a football dining table that Andrés designed; the sleek and functional space has been perfect for sharing ideas among team members.



...CONTINUED Andrés, a Spanish Navy veteran, instantly understood how McChrystal's application could relate to his own business overseeing multiple restaurant operations in the United States and Puerto Rico—there will be 20 by year's end. "It's a band of brothers next to each other, where information can travel quickly," he says. "This is King Arthur and the ever-growing table of knights—with a kitchen at the helm."

Architect Eric Gronning and designer Violeta Fiorino followed that idea with a large, horseshoe-shaped table in a central atrium that seats more than a dozen people. It also can be removed easily for events and

parties. A small test kitchen is at the end, where research-and-development chefs Sean Wheaton and Joshua Whigham craft new recipes for the restaurant group. Chefs from the group's local restaurants also stop by frequently to experiment with new dishes, or simply to have lunch and compare notes.

Along the side of that central area are three more stations, where Wine Director Lucas Payá reviews vintners and Cocktail Innovator Juan Coronado tests new pours. Staff also comb the office library or the Internet for research. (Frequent topics include organ references for Andrés' consulting role on the NBC series *Hannibal*.)

CONTINUED...

Genius at Work

Think Food Group's research-and-development chefs Sean Wheaton and Joshua Whigham, along with Cocktail Innovator Juan Coronado, spawn the next talked-about dishes and sips for the company's growing list of restaurants. We peeked into their test kitchen to see what they might unveil next.

Peking lamb—instead of Peking duck—with hoisin sauce, scallions and pancakes

Japanese Kobe tartare with caviar

Cigalas and langoustines with suquet

Chinese Five-Spice Old Fashion, with syrup crafted from traditional Chinese five spices, orange peel and rye whiskey

Dejame Quererte, with quebranta pisco, cocona juice, lemon juice and simple syrup





“This is King Arthur and the ever-growing table of knights—with a kitchen at the helm.”

—JOSÉ ANDRÉS



...CONTINUED “I can see everything,” Andrés says of the layout. “I can go from talking to the CFO to HR to PR and marketing—and then to development to wine to cocktail to social media in less than 10 minutes.”

Likewise, written words are quickly communicated through dry-erase boards that cover most of the walls. Mood boards created for each restaurant further convey themes to everyone involved. Even the glass walls of Andrés’ living room-like office are covered in purple-marker scribbles. “When an idea comes, you kick it up,” Andrés says.

The chef turned to favored brands when it came to the interior design. The test kitchen is outfitted with appliances by the Spanish company Fagor, one of his sponsors; the dark tile and pale wide-plank hardwood floors come from Porcelanosa, another Spanish brand for whom he’s made appearances; and every counter surface is by Silestone, also a sponsor.

Sleek and modern is the theme that links them all. “It very much fits José’s personal sense of style,” says Colin King, Oyamel’s head chef and a test-kitchen regular. “It’s clean and uncluttered, which makes it easy to focus on your work.”

While the layout might have military inspiration, there’s nothing buttoned down about the mood, with its pops of orange, a living-plant wall and a glass-topped foosball table for wine tasting. In the end, Wilder prefers a different comparison.

People come off the elevator and comment that it feels more like a software startup in New York or Silicon Valley, Wilder says, “and that’s awesome.” ■



TRABAJO MAGNIFICO
Clockwise from top left: Exotic spices, oils and other culinary elixirs fill the pantry; Andrés works in the test kitchen with his culinary research team; colorful accents pop up throughout the office space.