



Zynodoa

Mollie Cox Bryan

Photos by Molly McDonald Peterson

After six years in the kitchen at The Inn at Little Washington, chef Michael Lund steps out on his own, with his mentor's local food principles guiding the way.

Walking into Zynodoa from the streets of historic downtown Staunton, Virginia, is a pleasant surprise. Sleek and contemporary in design and color, the restaurant immediately sets itself apart from other local establishments.

Of course, the buzz around Zynodoa is not just about its elegant design. The restaurant recently welcomed a new executive chef: Michael Lund, who ventured out on his own after working for Patrick O'Connell, the world-renowned chef at the five-star Inn at Little Washington in Washington, Virginia. In his last year at the inn, Lund was executive sous chef.

"He [O'Connell] talks about the concept of ambassadorship and I am hoping to carry on his traditions," says Lund, who is just as dedicated to local food as his mentor always has been—even before it was called the "local food movement."

As Lund moves through the kitchen, where his two-person kitchen staff is working, he points out the scrap bucket. "I think it's really important that we see where it all goes—you know, all

the peels and bits. We use it all. Right now, we are feeding a local pig with it. That pig will be on the menu in a few weeks."

An Artist's Studio

Susan Goode, one of the owners of the two-year-old establishment, can hardly contain her enthusiasm at having Lund working at her 65-seat restaurant. "We are extremely lucky to be able to offer our customers this wonderful dining experience here with Michael. We created the palette. We just needed the artist."

Lund's palette includes a small but efficient kitchen, a dining area with beautifully appointed mahogany tables, and a long couch placed along the store window offset by comfortable cushions with bold geometric patterns. The atmosphere is upscale but relaxing.

The menu Lund is creating at Zynodoa offers "creatively prepared Southern cuisine," an apt reflection of the setting and the people behind the restaurant. This sense of a perfect fit also

encompasses Lund's life away from the restaurant. He has a one-year-old daughter and now lives just a seven-minute walk from his work. His in-laws live close by and can be more a part of their lives. With all these things coming together, he is really able to focus on the details of his work. Does that spoon and bowl combination give the eater a comfortable experience? Are all the plates coming out of the kitchen perfect? Are the bathrooms and windows clean?

"I really feel like it's all a reflection of me. I just want to give the guests the best experience," he says.

The Whole Team

Lund began his food training at Walters State Community College in Sevierville, Tennessee. While majoring in hotel management, he ended up working in a local restaurant as a kitchen



manager. Then he took an externship at The Inn at Little Washington, where, he freely admits, his real culinary education began. He also credits his many years as a rugby player with giving him an appreciation for teamwork. "It works the same way in the kitchen," he says. "If one person isn't a team player, or is having a bad day, it shows."

His new team includes the restaurant staff and many local farmers, food artisans, and winemakers—almost 50 of whom are listed on Zynodoa's website. In fact, the origin of most ingredients is made clear on the menu. Roasted Elk Run acorn squash and Critzer ginger gold apple bisque

Mustard Braised Polyface Chicken with Napa Cabbage, Fennel Slaw & Pear Barbeque

This dish makes wonderful use of the legs and thighs of a whole chicken. Believers of "waste not, want not," we use the chicken breast for a main course and the wings and carcasses for stock. This dish turns the legs and thighs into a scrumptious appetizer sampling, using end-of-the season vegetables from local farms—onions from Bob Pingry, Napa cabbage from Elk Run Farms, fennel from Harvest Thyme, pears from Critzer Family Farms—a Polyface chicken, and vinegar from Vinegar Works. The beauty of this dish is that the chicken-cooking process yields the "slaw" marinade. —chef Mike Lund

Preparation time: 30 minutes

Cooking time: 45 minutes

Makes 2 large or 4 appetizer servings

Preheat the oven to 400 F and line the bottom of an oven-safe pan. (An 8-by-8 casserole dish is perfect.)

For the slaw

- ½ sweet onion, fine julienne
- 1 small head Napa cabbage, finely sliced
- 2 bulbs fennel, hearts only, finely sliced, fronds reserved for garnish

Mix the onion, cabbage, and fennel together. Spread in the casserole dish.

For the chicken

- Salt and fresh ground black pepper to taste
- 2 chicken thighs and legs, split
- 2 tablespoons clarified butter or cooking oil

Liberally season the chicken on both sides. In a heavy-bottomed sauté pan or cast iron skillet, heat butter. Add chicken, skin-side down, and sear until golden brown and crispy, about 3 minutes. Turn and sear on flesh side for 2 minutes. Arrange the chicken skin-side up on the cabbage mix.

For the braising liquid

- ¼ cup apple cider vinegar
- 1½ cups chicken stock
- 2 tablespoons whole grain mustard

In a small saucepan over high heat, reduce the vinegar by half. Reduce heat to medium, whisk in stock, and then simmer for 5 minutes. Whisk in mustard. Remove from heat and pour evenly over chicken and cabbage.

Cover dish tightly with aluminum foil and bake for 45 minutes.

For the sauce

- 1 tablespoon clarified butter
- ½ sweet onion, roughly chopped
- 2 pears, cored and chopped (peels are fine)
- Salt and fresh ground black pepper to taste
- 1 tablespoon apple cider vinegar
- ½ cup chicken stock
- 1 tablespoon whole grain mustard

In a small sauté pan over medium heat, add butter and sauté onion and pears until translucent. Season with salt and pepper. Deglaze with vinegar and cook for 1 minute. Add stock and cook for 4 minutes. Then whisk in mustard.

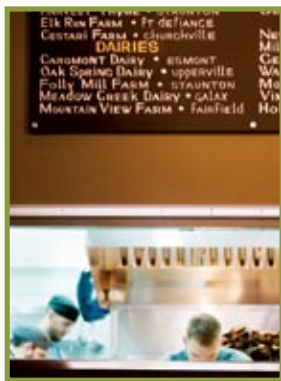
Remove from heat and purée until smooth. Return to the pan and hold warm until ready to serve.

To plate

Spoon a generous helping of the slaw on the center of the plate. Arrange chicken on top of the slaw. (If you're up for the task, quickly separate the meat from the bones and discard the bones before plating the chicken. If your guests aren't afraid to use their hands, then don't bother with the de-boning!) Drizzle the sauce on top.

Garnish with the reserved fennel fronds.

with curry cream. Polyface Farms chicken Parmesan with Singing Earth eggplant, oven-roasted cherry tomatoes, Mona Lisa pappardelle pasta, and Parmesan broth. Moroccan stuffed Casta Line brown trout with Perfect Flavor “logurt” tzatziki, garbanzo bean salad, Caromont Farm fresh feta, capers, and kalamata olives.



*“We created the palette.
We just needed the artist.”*

— co-owner Susan Goode

Two and half years in, Goode says they are certainly still learning. “This year we planted way too many tomatoes and had to be extremely creative in using them,” she laughs.

“Eating locally is exactly what our grandparents have always done. I think it’s a shame that the pendulum has swung so far in the other direction, but

now it’s coming back to a more balanced view. One that makes sense for everybody,” Lund says.

Mollie Cox Bryan is the author of Mrs. Rowe’s Little Book of Southern Pies and Mrs. Rowe’s Restaurant Cookbook: A Lifetime of Recipes from the Shenandoah Valley.

Bountiful Shenandoah

Sarah and Jeff Goode named the restaurant after Zynodoa (*zín-ah-DOH-uh*), a Native American whose name—reworked into Shenandoah—was also given to this valley and its river. As they explain on the website, “Zynodoa was an Indian brave known for his strength, courage, and appreciation of our valley’s bounty.”

Lund and the restaurant’s namesake have a bit in common. “I am in awe of the local produce. It’s an amazing experience taking these local ingredients and applying my classical French training,” says Lund. “I’m amazed by the local farmers market here. It’s almost ingredient overload, at times.”

The Goode family is more than amazed by it. They are part of it, being farmers themselves. In fact, they grow much of the produce for the restaurant in nearby Swoope. They are finding that farming, like the restaurant business, is best learned hands-on.

Zynodoa

115 E. Beverley St., Staunton, VA
(540) 885-7775
zynodoa.com
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