

## The Convivial Cedric Maupillier

1. (adj.) relating to or fond of feasting, drinking, and good company;

2. (n.) The product of chef-proprietor Cedric Maupillier's vision of "a restaurant for our time"



Convivial is a word that has the same meaning both in English, and Cedric Maupillier's native French. Aptly, it is also the name of his handsome new restaurant in DC's Shaw neighborhood.

The French-American café opened in November, 2015 and was recently named one of Washington's Top 10 New Restaurants by Tom Sietsema for *The Washington Post* in his 2016 Spring Dining Guide.

It's Maupillier's second collaboration with local businessman Said Azali. Their first venture Mintwood Place in Adams Morgan has been a roaring success and was named one of *Washingtonian's* 100 Very Best Restaurants in 2015.

Maupillier was born and raised in Toulon in the south of France, where his grandmother kept the family well fed, cooking regular feasts for large cohorts of cousins, aunts and uncles who gathered to eat outside at a long table amidst the trees, enjoying the bounty of the family garden, wild game (pheasant, squab, pigeon, hare) hunted by his grandfather and fish caught by his uncle.

A self-described teenage rebel, Maupillier dreamed of traveling to the American Wild West of John Wayne and Clint Eastwood films as a young man. His grandfather persuaded him to parlay his love of travel into a career in the kitchen, and from there his journey into the restaurant world began.

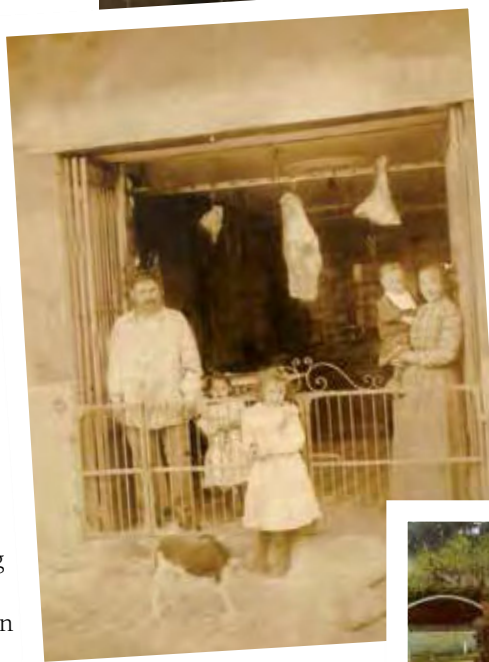
Enrolling in a two-year vocational program in culinary arts, Maupillier found himself among kindred spirits — most of his fellow students were even more rebellious than he was

and he found himself, much to his own surprise, to be a natural leader and mentor to others. During his apprenticeship, he did manage to get himself permanently banished from Monte Carlo. But that is a story for another day.

After completing additional studies in hospitality management, the early-20-something Maupillier went "straight to London" where he lived in a windowless closet and spent a challenging six months in the kitchen of the Soho House, a private club. He then passed two idyllic years at the Green Dragon, a classic English pub in Haddenham, Buckinghamshire, a few hours outside of London, working under the French-trained British chef Julian Ehlers.

Maupillier knew that in order to realize his culinary dreams, he needed to work at a Michelin-rated restaurant, and so he lined up his next gig at the 3\* Michelin, Relais & Châteaux La Côte St. Jacques in

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Joigny (Burgundy) in France. The restaurant has been operated by the Lorain family, one of France's most powerful restaurant dynasties, for more than 70 years, and it was where Maupillier really came into his own as a chef. In his two years there he rotated through various stations — learning how to de-feather poultry, butcher fish, prepare lobster and langoustine, tasting caviar for the first time, preparing the restaurant's signature boudin noir (blood sausage) and traveling regularly to the Rungis wholesale market outside of Paris to gather provisions for the kitchen.

At La Côte St. Jacques Maupillier first encountered the man who would become his lifelong friend and colleague, David Deshaies (now the executive chef/general manager at DC's Central). The two young chefs began a fierce but friendly competition that pitted themselves against each other not only in the kitchen (where they vied to see who could cook the most memorable meal for the Lorain family) but also outside the restaurant, where they challenged each other to a variety of physical feats including pétanque, running, bicycling, bowling, swimming and ... throwing rocks!

These days their old rivalry has matured into mutual admiration. Maupillier served as best man in Deshaies' wedding, and he (Maupillier) says he would not be the chef he is today without Deshaies, who taught him that "passion and hard work opened doors."

In 2002 Maupillier responded to an ad in L'Hôtellerie (a French industry newspaper) placed by DC's Fabio Trabocchi for a spot in the kitchen of the Trabocchi's Italian

eatery Maestro in the Ritz Carlton, Tysons Corner. Maupillier joined Maestro's kitchen crew (which ironically had more French cooks than Italian ones) on a J1 visa, his first job in the United States.

He then persuaded Michel Richard to sponsor him for an H1B (professional worker) visa at the French fine dining restaurant Citronelle, where David Deshaies was working as chef de cuisine. After a few years Richard asked Maupillier to open the more casual bistro-style Central, and there he worked "seven days a week for two years straight" to win The James Beard award for Best New Restaurant in 2008 and ultimately received his well-deserved green card as a chef of extraordinary ability.

This February, Maupillier was sworn in as US citizen. He attributes his professional success as a chef to his longtime partner and fiancée Dawn Swaney, but also to the many immigrants like him who toil every day in the kitchens of America, and without whom he would not be able to feed the hungry citizens of DC.

According to Maupillier, "communion around a table" is one of the most important events of the day for any family, anywhere in the world. This is the fondest memory he has from his childhood in France, and it's a sense he hopes to recreate for his guests, at Convivial.

**BECKI L. YOUNG**, co-founder of Hammond Young Immigration, is a business immigration attorney with 20 years of experience in the field. She has represented more than 100 of the world's most prominent hotels and restaurants, and facilitated the sponsorship of foreign professionals, trainees, interns and individuals of "extraordinary ability." Ms. Young is an active member of the American Immigration Lawyers Association. She can be reached at 301-917-6900 or byoung@hyimmigration.com.

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