



FOR **GUILLEM KERAMBRUN**,
GENERAL MANAGER AND BEVERAGE
DIRECTOR AT BENOIT, NEW YORK
CITY, EDUCATION NEVER ENDS

Learn Something Every Day

by David Gadd / photo by Evan Sung

GUILLEM KERAMBRUN KNEW “SINCE CHILDHOOD” that he wanted to go into hospitality: “I’ve always enjoyed spending time in the kitchen and helping on table service. I started my catering school program when I was 15 years old; I learned how to cook and serve, but quickly made my way to beverage.”

While still in France, Kerambrun got a chance to work at famed Paris restaurant La Tour d’Argent—an important step in his career. Since starting with Alain Ducasse in 2003, he has had the opportunity to work with most of the celebrated chef’s other close collaborators. “All of us in the company are honestly passionate and devoted to our job and to the group,” says Kerambrun. “It’s enriching to work with people who all trust and respect each other.”

Guillem Kerambrun now oversees the wine programs at two Ducasse restaurants in the U.S.: Rivea at The Delano in Las Vegas and Benoit in New York, where in addition to being Beverage Director he is also General Manager. Having spent ten years as Deputy Corporate Wine Director for Ducasse, he continues to be involved on a corporate level for larger initiatives.

At Rivea, Kerambrun’s list boasts close to 1,700 selections, with a focus on French and American wines, “specifically those that represent the heart and soul of the Riviera,” he says. “I selected wines made with the same sort of grapes found in Provence, Corsica and the northwest of Italy, but also bringing in some wines from the West Coast of the U.S.”

At Benoit, the list is “much smaller, with only 550 selections—80% French and 20% American.” In addition to West Coast wines, Kerambrun continues to discover East Coast wines and increase their presence on the list. “On both lists we have a lot of iconic wines,” he says, “but also an increasing number of young winemakers with a much smaller production, such as a Pinot Noir from the Finger Lakes made by Nathan Kendall. He made only one barrel of 2011 that represented around 240 bottles. I got 180 of those bottles for Benoit; he kept the other 60 bottles for himself.” Kerambrun likes to dabble in other beverages as well: “I have close to 25 varieties of vermouth from France, Italy and New York State at Benoit.”

Recently, Kerambrun has been drinking American wines at home—“mostly because there are so many wineries and terroirs I have yet to discover,” he says. “I’m far more confident now with California, Oregon, Washington State and New York State production. Next I want to tackle Vermont, Connecticut and Massachusetts.”



THE SIDE BAR

Kerambrun was born in northern Brittany—the only part of France with no official wine production. However, the region boasts many hotels and restaurants, as well as one of the best hospitality schools in France—Lycée Hôtelier de Dinard, Kerambrun’s alma mater—which has a respected sommelier program.

Kerambrun understands the importance of mentoring. “For 12 years in France, I had the opportunity to coach a lot of young sommeliers. Within my first year in New York, I was fortunate enough to meet so many American sommeliers more passionate about wine than in other countries. On my team at Benoit, I’m lucky to have a very talented and knowledgeable French lady as Senior Sommelier and also a young, motivated American guy without a diploma but with strong potential and the desire to succeed. I strive to coach him to the best of my ability until he’s able to become a Certified Sommelier.

“It’s truly important for young people to be motivated and show passion for such an incredibly rich field. A key part of that is ensuring that they learn something every day. It’s that same desire to learn that convinced me to come to New York: to study the diversity of American vineyards that we didn’t get to delve into enough in France. I definitely feel like I made the right decision.”