

## DISTRICT WINERY *cont. from page 6*

bar menu dispenses oysters, burgers, and cheese plates. Among the desserts are corn cremeux (blueberries, white chocolate, yogurt) and plum tarts (red wine poached plums, mascarpone mousse, crispy cheddar).

Overseeing the winery's day-to-day operations is General Manager Sean Alves, who has also managed Washington's upscale, highly touted Komi. "At District Winery, we all work together as one familial unit," said Alves. "We're extremely fortunate to have this incredible space in such a dynamic community."

Some food experts say you "eat with your eyes," and the interior



of District Winery/Restaurant Ana epitomizes this. District Winery's soaring interior is designed by HapstakDemetriou+ (Peter Hapstak III and Olivia Demetriou) and built

by Potomac Construction Services. The design is inspired by traditional wineries with the juxtaposition of warm and cool finishes, walnut paneling, and brass accents.

Also designed by HapstakDemetriou+ is Ana's décor, which showcases a variety of rich textures including stone, walnut, cement, and steel. Globe pendants dangle from timber beams, and light shades are constructed from recycled cardboard. The 56-seat dining room is appointed with "mid-century" inspired furnishings and custom-designed banquettes upholstered with blue fabric. Encircling the entire restaurant is a spacious patio with fire pits. Ana is open nightly and will eventually serve weekend brunch and weekday lunch.

### THE DISTRICT WINERY AND ANA

location: 385 Water St., SE. For more information, call 202-484-9210 or visit [www.districtwinery.com](http://www.districtwinery.com).

## THE INTERVIEW | *Brian Leventhal and John Stires, District Winery*

### FSM: How did you happen to choose Washington, D.C. for your second location? And what gravitated you to The Yards Park?

**Brian Leventhal:** When we decided we wanted to open a new location outside of New York, a list of major cities was on the table. However, as we began to familiarize ourselves and research potential markets, D.C. immediately stood out as the most viable candidate, from both a business and personal perspective. Both John and I quickly moved to Washington to start District Winery. As for The Yards, it is a special, picturesque place. The developer, Forest City, did a beautiful job building this neighborhood from the ground up. The neighborhood has a collaborative, supportive feel — the better we all are, the better the whole neighborhood will be.

**John Stires:** Although we initially started out with many options, Washington quickly rose to the top of our list as the standout choice. Brian and I take a super hands-on approach to our businesses, and we both ended up in fast agreement that D.C. was the best choice for expansion. Our ultimate goal was to bring something fresh, high-end, and unique to our new location that



Brian Leventhal

Washingtonians would embrace. As for The Yards, what more could you want out of a neighborhood? Being steps away from amazing food, nightlife, and community offerings really made us feel at home from the get-go.

### How did you each get started in the wine business?

**Leventhal:** After attending college at Washington University in St. Louis, I moved to New York City and began my career at a global management consulting firm. While I loved what I was doing in the consulting world, I decided to branch into the tech-startup sphere. I began working at an online video product review company,



John Stires

where I met John. While we were working together in New York, we started making our own wines recreationally in New Jersey with a group of co-workers. After realizing how much fun winemaking is, we quit our jobs to open Brooklyn Winery in New York's (Brooklyn) vibrant Williamsburg neighborhood.

**Stires:** I grew up in California, and, after college, I decided to pick up and move to New York City, where I worked at Marvel for seven years, creating style guides for the licensing divisions. My tenure at Marvel coincided with the rise of the superhero movie craze, and it was great to see our department's work on every item imaginable: t-shirts,

backpacks, socks, toys. Needing to experience something new, I found myself working in online product management at a product review company and subsequently began experimenting with winemaking. Around the same time, I was introduced to my business partner, Brian Leventhal, and the rest is history.

### What advice would you offer to people wanting to start a wine business?

**Brian:** It can be lots of fun but also challenging at times! Do your research and try to source your grapes from small, local growers, understanding that your wine is only going to be as good as the grapes from which the wine was created. Cultivating relationships with vineyards has been key to our success. This cannot be done without extreme thoughtfulness and effort.

**Stires:** For those interested in starting a wine business, I would recommend taking the road less traveled, always choosing the route of quality over quantity. We pride ourselves in having created both a product and experience that we can proudly stand behind.