

KITH AND KIN *cont. from pg 19*

aspiring culinary star. Besides completing a successful stint on Top Chef, he wielded his whisk at New York's acclaimed Eleven Madison Park. In November, 2016, Onwuachi unveiled Shaw Bijou in Washington's thriving Shaw neighborhood. In his splashy debut, he showcased an ambitious \$185, 15-course tasting menu. He soon dropped the price, but after two and a half months and less than stellar reviews, Shaw Bijou abruptly folded. But Onwuachi wasn't giving up. Instead, he learned from his experience, regrouped, and reinvented his concept. He honed his skills, developing new dishes at local pop-ups. For example: Teaming up with an old friend from New York, chef Hiyaw Gebreyohannes, he briefly operated an Ethiopian-inspired stall in Union Market called Gorsha.

Vive la difference...

Kith and Kin is quite different from his previous endeavor. Kith and Kin is more casual. The décor



Photo: Rey Lopez

Kwame Onwuachi in his new Kith and Kin kitchen

is muted, with shades of beige and grey. Placemats look woven, perhaps a nod to Africa. Bar stools are comfy, with padded seats and backs. A wine wall — holding nearly 400 bottles — looms between the main dining area and a private party space. Artist Emily Eisenhart's enormous black and white mural, featuring chefs' quotes, dominates a back wall.

While less expensive than Shaw Bijou, Kith and Kin is still not cheap. Lunch for two, as this writer

experienced, can run close to \$100. In contrast to many restaurants' gargantuan helpings, Kith and Kin's portions are small. A \$29 "meat and cheese" tasting is a black plate dabbled with smoked chicken pate and quince jam, a swirl of jerk duck prosciutto, and rounds of cheeses. However, presentation is dramatic. A server hoists a glass cone from the plate with a flourish, releasing a cloud of aromatic smoke, yielding a memorable experience.

Entrée portions might include a pair of "torched" mackerel pieces, accompanied by tongue-tingling, golden-hued jollof rice. Heartier options feature oxtail stew and curried goat. Veteran bartender Zachery Hoffman's innovative cocktails — including "gin and reggae" (concocted from Jamaican rum, Plymouth gin, and mango tea) — are tagged in the mid-teens as are wines-by-the glass.

Mom as guide and inspiration...

"Mom always said, 'You're only as good as your last event,' and it's true," he said. As Kwame Onwuachi settles into his new restaurant, he cites his mother and her struggles as his inspiration. "I thought, if she could do it as a single mom with two kids in New York City, there's no reason I couldn't. My mom's the person I look up to most. She's my hero."

LOCATED AT 801 WHARF ST., SW (InterContinental Hotel), Kith and Kin is open daily for breakfast, lunch, and dinner. Call 202-878-8600 or visit www.kithandkindc.com.

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