

Chef Jonathan Wright Biography

Chef Jonathan Wright was born and raised in Billingsley, a small village in idyllic Shropshire, England, an area rich in agricultural tradition. His earliest memories recall rearing goats, sheep, chickens, ducks and geese as well as helping in the family's vegetable gardens. His mother and grandmother were tremendous cooks and Jonathan spent much of his time in the farm house kitchen making everything from cheese, yogurt, jams, pate, pork pies, cakes and ginger beer.

Jonathan spent much of his youth working on local farms, fishing, foraging and bird hunting. Being raised in such a robust agricultural environment, Jonathan developed a deep appreciation for farm-to-table practices and seasonal produce, which created the foundation for Jonathan's commitment to sourcing the best quality ingredients locally and from around the world, with an emphasis on sustainability.

Over the last two and half decades, Jonathan's passion for quality and authenticity, from street food and comfort food to haute cuisine, has guided his professional journey. New ideas, diverse cultures, global cuisines and travel to new places all play a role in his kitchens and have earned him Executive Chef posts in some of the most recognized dining establishments in the world.

Jonathan's first exposure to the culinary industry came while he was a Graphic Designer in Ludlow, England, in need of a part time job. He found work as a waiter / bartender and then as a line cook. In 1987, he began working full time in the kitchen, commencing a five year career with Trust House Forte. While at The Complete Angler in Marlow, under the guidance of Executive Chef Ferdinand Testka, Jonathan decided to find a great chef / mentor with whom to study. This opportunity materialized in the form of a stage at the highly regarded Le Manoir Aux Quat Saison with Chef Patron Raymond Blanc.

During eight years in the kitchens of 2 Star Michelin Le Manoir aux Quat Saisons in Oxfordshire, Jonathan rose through the ranks from Demi Chef de Partie to Executive Chef. He became fascinated and inspired by the quality and freshness of the ingredients, most of which was locally grown or foraged, with many of the vegetables grown in Le Manoir's kitchen garden. Developing relationships with farmers, fisherman and purveyors joined Jonathan's agricultural background with his passion for cooking. The environment and experience at Le Manoir was so captivating, it strengthened his intention to pursue the career path of professional chef.

While at Le Manoir, Jonathan developed and refined his technical skills in classic French haute cuisine. He worked closely with Chef Proprietor Raymond Blanc in developing the cuisine, training and mentoring young chefs, compiling cookery books and, in 1992, launching Le Manoir's cookery school. In 1993 Jonathan was charged with re-creating the revered kitchens of Raymond Blanc at Raffles Hotel in Singapore for a culinary promotion and, in 1995, he returned to Raffles Hotel as Executive Sous Chef.

In 2000, Jonathan opened his own restaurant, La Gousse D'ail in Oxford, England. Restaurant reviewers and food critics touted his food as "thrilling" and his style was described as "extravagance and exactitude in equal measure." After only five months, the restaurant received three AA Rosettes.

After closing his restaurant in response to the post-9/11 economy and foot-and-mouth disease, Jonathan moved to New Orleans in 2002. As Executive Chef at the Windsor Court Hotel (operated by Orient Express), he was also the Chef of fine dining restaurant, The Grill Room. He immersed himself in the Crescent City's vibrant culture and quickly came to know the local purveyors. New Orleans' chefs, music, culture and people made a lasting impression on him.

He revitalized The Grill Room with contemporary dishes as well as modern interpretations of traditional Creole and Cajun recipes. Jonathan's innovative approach and intensity helped to energize and attract new attention to the city's evolving culinary scene. He participated in a myriad of culinary events from the New Orleans Food & Wine Festival to hosting a James Beard Dinner (New York). New Orleans food writer, Brett Anderson, wrote in his Times Picayune review of The Grill Room, "Among chefs in New Orleans, no one brings a more highly refined set of skills to bear on his cooking than Wright" (2004).

Jonathan met his wife, Delia, while in New Orleans. In late August 2005, they returned from their honeymoon in Spain (the highlight was dinner at El Bulli) two days before Hurricane Katrina. Three months after Katrina, the couple moved to Indianapolis, where Jonathan joined the opening team for the Circle City's first 5-star luxury hotel, the Conrad Indianapolis.

Commenting on Jonathan's departure from New Orleans, R.W. Apple Jr. of the New York Times described him as "the most innovative young chef in the city" ("Pralines Flavored with Tears," NY Times, November 2, 2005).

After opening the Conrad Indianapolis, Jonathan moved to Northern California where he became the Executive Chef of the historic Lark Creek Inn (Larkspur, CA). Situated between San Francisco and Sonoma Valley, in Marin County, Jonathan's ingredient-driven dishes at the Lark Creek Inn reflected the highest quality seasonal produce from the farmers markets he visited weekly. He fell in love with the region's natural surroundings--the rugged coastlines, rolling farmlands and expansive vineyards of Sonoma, Napa and the Russian River Valley.

Following his time in California, Jonathan spent more than three years as Director of Culinary and Food and Beverage Operations at the Asian-inspired Setai Hotel Miami Beach for luxury hotel group GHM. Jonathan played an integral role in re-positioning and re-launching the property's restaurants which featured authentic Asian cuisine (The Restaurant) and both innovative and rustic tapas (The Grill at the Setai). He became active in the Miami culinary scene, including the Food Network South Beach Wine and Food Festival and Lucky Rice Festival (New York). Jonathan revitalized the Setai's brunch menu to become known as one of the city's best brunches.

Jonathan spent three years as Director of Culinary Operations and Food and Beverage at the Five Diamond Sandy Lane Resort in Barbados, cooking for well-heeled travelers and celebrities. The luxurious 10,000 acre resort was featured in the final episode of NBC's Today Show's Where in the World is Matt Lauer, Season 10 (2011). While living in Barbados, Jonathan frequented the Brighton Farmers Market and got to know many of the local farmers and fisherman.

In 2013, Jonathan presided over the kitchens of The Raffles Plaza Fairmont and Swissotel the Stamford in Singapore, overseeing a culinary brigade of more than 450 and managing the culinary operations of 15 individual restaurants and bars including Mikuni (refined Japanese), Antidote (modern Tapas), a steak house and oyster bar, authentic Italian, Chinese and Swiss, as well as the fine dining venue JAAN (ranked #17 in Asia's Top 50 Restaurants and #51 in the world, according to San Pellegrino's annual rankings). The combined 2,500-room property and Raffles City Convention Centre was the official caterer of many of the largest, most prestigious off site events in Singapore including Formula One, HSBC Golf, Singapore Air Show, Savour (food and wine event) and SEA (Southeast Asian) Games. While there, Jonathan organized a large rooftop kitchen garden complete with honeybees.

In 2014, Jonathan seized the opportunity to re-open the Rainbow Room at Rockefeller Plaza, New York. He worked with consultant Elizabeth Blau and Associates and ownership company, Tishman Speyer, as they designed and conceptualized the re-birth of this iconic venue which included special events, a la carte dining, Sunday

brunches, a private dining club, sushi bar and modern tapas. The Rainbow Room, re-opened in October 2014, was the setting for numerous high profile events and guests including Oprah Winfrey (Thanksgiving 2014), Clinton Foundation, Tiffany, Chanel, Restoration Hardware, Vanity Fair, Formula One, Victoria's Secret, Revlon, American Express and James Beard's Annual Gala Dinner (2015). The Rainbow Room was named by OpenTable as one of the Top 100 Best Brunch Restaurants in America (2015).

Jonathan has cultivated a reputation for delivering incredible cuisine while creating guest experiences that are intimate, authentic and seamless. Jonathan now resides in Westchester, New York. He is an active Board Member for the SUNY-credited FarmOn Foundation at Empire Farm (Copake, NY).

Accolades:

Best Brunch in New York, Steve Cuozzo, New York Post 2015
Open Table Best Brunch Restaurants in America, 2015
Top Ten Restaurants in New York, Zagat 2014
Caterer for Formula One Singapore 2014
Lucky Rice Festival New York 2010
Food Network, South Beach Wine and Food, New York 2008, 2009
Food Network, South Beach Wine and Food, Passage to India 2009
Gallivanter's Guide 2008 Editor's Choice, Best Cuisine Worldwide
Food Network, South Beach Wine and Food, Best of the Best 2008, 2009, 2010
Gallivanter's Guide 2007, 2008, 2009 Best Hotel / Resort Cuisine Worldwide
Conde Nast Traveler, US & UK 2008- The Gold List Top Ten Worldwide Cuisine
Great Chefs of the World Television Series 2007
Zagat, 29 / 30 Cuisine 2004
Best Chef in New Orleans Magazine 2004
Four Beans, Times Picayune 2004
Best Hotel Chefs of America, James Beard Foundation 2004
Named Rising Star Chef New Orleans 2003
Fab Five Chefs in USA, by John Mariani in Polo.com 2003
Best New Chef, New Orleans Magazine October 2003
Esquire Magazine, Best New Chefs in America 2003
Dinner for British Consulate in Houston, Texas 2003, 2004
Zagat 29 / 30 Cuisine 2004 (Grill Room, Windsor Court, New Orleans)
Chefs Dinner for Food and Wine Magazine, New York, 2003

Guest Speaker at the Chef's Conference in London, 1998
19/20 Gault Milau Executive Chef at Le Manoir aux Quat Saison 1996 - 2000
Two Star Michelin, Executive Chef at Le Manoir aux Quat Saison 1996 - 2000
5 Rosettes Cooking with Albert Roux, Michel Lorain, and Bruno Loubet, London
Meridien, 1993
Named Restaurant Newcomer of the Year after opening Gousse D'ail, 2000
Culinary Promotion representing Raymond Blanc at Raffles Hotel, 1993
Raffles Food & Wine Experience Promotions with Chefs Alain Ducasse, Pierre
Gagnaire, George Blanc, Guy Martin, Jean Louis Palladin, Bruno Loubet, Dieter
Koffman
Achieving 3 AA Rosette rating within six months of opening Gousse D'ail Heart of
England Salon Culinary, Cuisine Modern Gold Medal, 1990
Heart of England Salon Culinary, Cuisine Modern Gold Medal, 1990
Hotel Olympia International Salon Culinary Fat Carving Bronze Medal, 1989
Hotel Olympia International Salon Culinary Fat Carving Bronze Medal, 1989