

The French Laundry Informational Packet

History of The French Laundry

Now & Then



In the spring of 1992, Thomas Keller visited Yountville, in the Napa Valley, to see The French Laundry. As he walked into the restaurant's quaint courtyard, he knew it was where he had been headed throughout his career.

The French Laundry, a 1600-square-foot structure, constructed from river rock and timbers, was built in 1900 by Scottish stonemason Gus Clark for Frenchman Pierre Guillaume. It was built as a saloon; however, a 1906 state law forbidding the sale of alcohol within a mile of the Veterans Home precipitated Guillaume's sale of the building. After the sale and at times during its history, the building has served as a residence and at one point, a brothel. During the 1920's, it was owned by John B. Lande and his wife, who operated a French steam laundry, the "French" because of the high degree of skill associated with the service.

In 1978, Don Schmitt, a longtime resident of Yountville and the town mayor, and his wife Sally, renovated the decrepit structure into a one-seating, fixed-menu restaurant. In 1994, Chef Keller purchased the restaurant.

Today, The French Laundry is a member of French-based associations Relais & Chateaux, Traditions & Qualité and Les Grandes Tables du Monde. These organizations are recognized for their dedication to maintaining the highest international standards for hospitality and culinary excellence. The French Laundry was awarded four stars from the San Francisco Chronicle and three stars from The Michelin Guide.



Thomas Keller

Chef and Proprietor



Thomas Keller is renowned for his culinary skills and his exceptionally high personal standards. He has established a collection of restaurants that sets the standard within the hospitality industry. Chef Keller began his culinary career at a young age, working in the Palm Beach restaurant managed by his mother. He relocated to France in 1983, where he worked in several Michelin-starred houses including Guy Savoy and Taillevent.

He opened his first restaurant, Raket, in New York City in 1986, then moved westward to California to work as the executive chef at the Checkers Hotel in Los Angeles

In 1994, Keller took ownership of The French Laundry in Yountville, quickly garnering national acclaim. His French bistro Bouchon debuted down the street in 1998, with Bouchon Bakery following five years later. He now has eight restaurants and five bakeries in the United States, including his home-style restaurant Ad Hoc, also located in Yountville, Per Se and Bouchon Bakery in the Time Warner Center in New York City, Bouchon Bakery in New York's Rockefeller Center, and outposts of Bouchon and Bouchon Bakery in Las Vegas and Beverly Hills. The Beverly Hills location includes Chef Keller's newest concept, Bar Bouchon, in an adjacent space.

Laura Cunningham

Vice President of Branding & Creative Development



For more than twenty years, Laura Cunningham has been responsible for much of the consistency, elegance and success of the Thomas Keller Restaurant Group (TKRG) brand. Laura's keen sense of aesthetic, and alignment with Chef Keller's vision, naturally position her for her current position as the brand director. In this role, Laura manages all branding activities and marketing, philanthropy and key partnerships for the organization. She collaborates with in-house creative teams and design agencies to ensure the continuity and excellence of the TKRG brand.

Before taking on the responsibilities of the brand director, Laura was the director of operations for The French Laundry, and before that the general manager. In both roles, Laura was instrumental in establishing the impeccable service and design standards for which the restaurant is known. During the initial opening phase of Per Se, Chef Thomas Keller's restaurant in New York City, Cunningham was in charge of hiring and training front of the house personnel as well as establishing its service procedures. She has also aided in the opening of each Bouchon Bistro and Bouchon Bakery property, Ad Hoc, and recently oversaw the design and vision of Finesse, The Store.

Laura began at The French Laundry as an assistant manager two months before the restaurant's opening in 1994; within a year she was promoted to the general manager position. She began her restaurant management career after earning a combined bachelor's degree in Art History, English Literature and Italian from the University of California at Berkeley.



Thomas Keller Restaurant Group (TKRG) Properties

Yountville

The French Laundry

Bouchon Bistro | Bouchon Bakery

Ad Hoc | Addendum

New York

Per Se

Bouchon Bakery & Café

Bouchon Bakery Rockefeller Center

Las Vegas

Bouchon Bistro | Bouchon Bakery

Miami

The Surf Club (2018)

Napa

Cup4Cup | K+M Extravirgin Chocolate

Seabourn Cruise Line

The Grill by Thomas Keller

Dubai | Kuwait | Qatar

Bouchon Bakery

David Breeden

Chef de Cuisine



As the chef de cuisine, David Breeden leads the day-to-day operations of The French Laundry kitchen, carrying on the commitment to excellence and collaborative spirit that have made the restaurant what it is today. Like the chefs de cuisine he trained under, Corey Lee, Jonathan Benno and Eli Kaimeh, David is a product of a culinary culture shaped by a sense of community and Thomas Keller's mentorship. David first staged at The French Laundry in 2005, parlaying that role into a permanent position as the kitchen's butcher and later chef de partie. In 2006 he assumed the post of chef de partie at Per Se in New York, where, in the course of a six-year tenure, he rose to the role of executive sous chef.

Born and raised in East Tennessee, David grew up exposed to a wide range of culinary styles including traditional Appalachian, low-country and French cuisines. He attended the Charleston, South Carolina, Johnson & Wales University program before working at some of Charleston's finest restaurants, including The Charleston Grill, McCrady's and Woodland's Resort and Inn.

A genuine love of food and an appreciation for the communal pleasures of restaurant dining drew David to the industry. From the start of his career at The French Laundry, he has dedicated himself to communicating Chef Keller's philosophy and executing his culinary vision. In his latest role, which he assumed in 2013, David looks forward to leading the next generation of young chefs in creating the best experiences for guests at The French Laundry, which he considers his culinary home.

Elwyn Boyles

Executive Pastry Chef



In August 2011, Elwyn Boyles was named the executive pastry chef of Thomas Keller's fine dining properties. Based in Yountville, Boyles oversees the dessert menus at both The French Laundry and Per Se, mentoring the team of pastry chefs at each restaurant. He also helped guide The French Laundry through the kitchen remodel of 2015 and is happy to be a part of the team that will reopen the finished new kitchen. In his previous role, Boyles was the pastry chef of Per Se.

A native of the UK, Boyles began his culinary career as a pastry apprentice at London's Café Royal's two restaurants and banqueting department. Boyles went on to work at The Four Seasons in London as well as the Connaught Hotel. Later, while working as Head Pastry Chef at Midsummer House in Cambridge, Elwyn's high standards contributed to the restaurant receiving its first Michelin star.

In 2003, Boyles helped Tom Aikens open his highly decorated and Michelin-starred eponymous restaurant and contributed to its success and critical acclaim through his role as Head Pastry Chef. Boyles later went on to work as Head Pastry Chef at Danesfield House Hotel in Marlow, England where he trained and supervised a team of six chefs and was responsible for the menus, preparation and overall pastry service for the luxury hotel.

Michael Minnillo

General Manager



Michael Minnillo, general manager of The French Laundry, has been a part of the Thomas Keller Restaurant Group almost as long as Chef Keller. A native of Cleveland, Ohio, Michael grew up in the restaurant industry, working at his father's well-received Baricelli Inn. Then with what began as a culinary apprenticeship at The French Laundry in 1998, Michael grew into a chef de partie role before he turned his sights to the dining room, quickly rising to become a captain on the service team.

When Keller opened Per Se in Columbus Circle in 2004, Michael ventured to New York City to train and inspire the new staff. A fixture at Per Se, Michael emphasized attention to detail and dedication to guest experience to help guide Per Se toward many accolades including annual three-star Michelin ratings since 2006 and placement on Restaurant Magazine's World's 50 Best List since 2005. Additionally, in October 2011, Michael led the dining room team as a maître d' when The French Laundry traveled to London to open a pop-up restaurant at Harrods.

Erik Johnson

Head Sommelier



As the head sommelier, Erik now leads The French Laundry wine program, including the wine education of the staff. Erik's passion for his craft drives him to work relentlessly toward elevating the standards of service and more importantly, utilizing the wine program to support the chef's menus each day.

Erik first started at The French Laundry in 2009 as three-month "vintern." Quickly learning the most iconic wines of the world in a hands-on manner, he was asked to stay as the cellar sommelier. Erik then moved on to become a sommelier at Bouchon Bistro in Yountville, attaining the position of head sommelier at Bouchon at age 24. In this role, Erik was awarded Zagat's coveted 30 under 30 distinction just a year later. At Bouchon, Erik oversaw the "Vin en Carafe" program, which showcases local vintners and winery owners producing single barrel, exclusive wines of distinctive varietals uncommon to Napa Valley. In 2012, Erik was one of three sommeliers who were awarded the Enrichment Scholarship from the Guild of Sommeliers to visit and study the wine region of Provence. Erik returned to The French Laundry as an assistant sommelier in 2013 to once again work under his mentor Dennis Kelly, M.S.



Core Values:

The Thomas Keller Restaurant Group (TKRG) is more than a group of restaurants dedicated to quality food and exemplary service. We are a group of individuals committed to the common goal of making fond memories for our guests and ourselves, elevating the standards and expectations of the restaurant industry and developing a secure and ideal work environment. To achieve these goals we must all work at them tirelessly, fearlessly and with the following values deeply imbedded in our core.

Modesty

Work toward achieving greatness, but maintain humility.

Integrity

Use our best judgment; perform our work selflessly, honestly and caringly

Respect

Show respect for our peers, our supervisors, our industry and our guests

Responsibility

Recognize and embrace the responsibility we have to our peers, our supervisors, our critics, our industry and ourselves to uphold the success we have achieved.

Consistency

Maintain our standards of quality moment to moment, day to day and year after year.

Awareness

Keep an open mind. Recognize innovation and realize inspiration, which will result in evolution and growth.

Initiative

Have the courage to take initiative and the conviction to follow through. Search for new ideas and means of improvement.

Trust

Have the confidence that we are all looking out for each other's best interest.

Collaboration

Work together to achieve results that are greater than those we can achieve alone.

Impact

Make a positive difference in the experience of our guests and those around us.

Success

Create fond memories for our guests and each other.

Legacy

Establish a benefit to the guest, the restaurant or the company that outlives us

Classic Dishes:

Gruyère cheese gougers



Atlantic Salmon Cornets



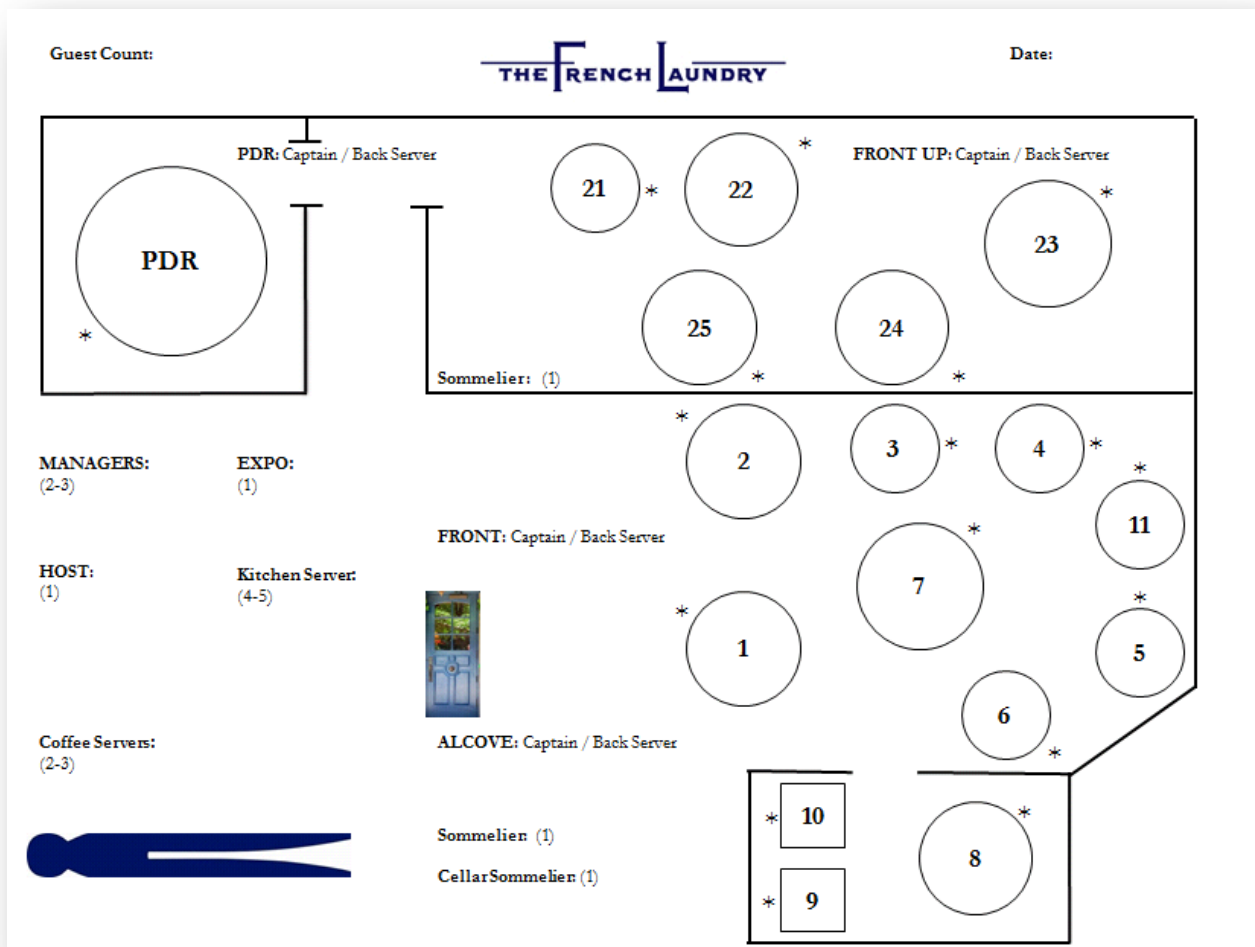
Oysters and Pearls



Coffee and Doughnuts

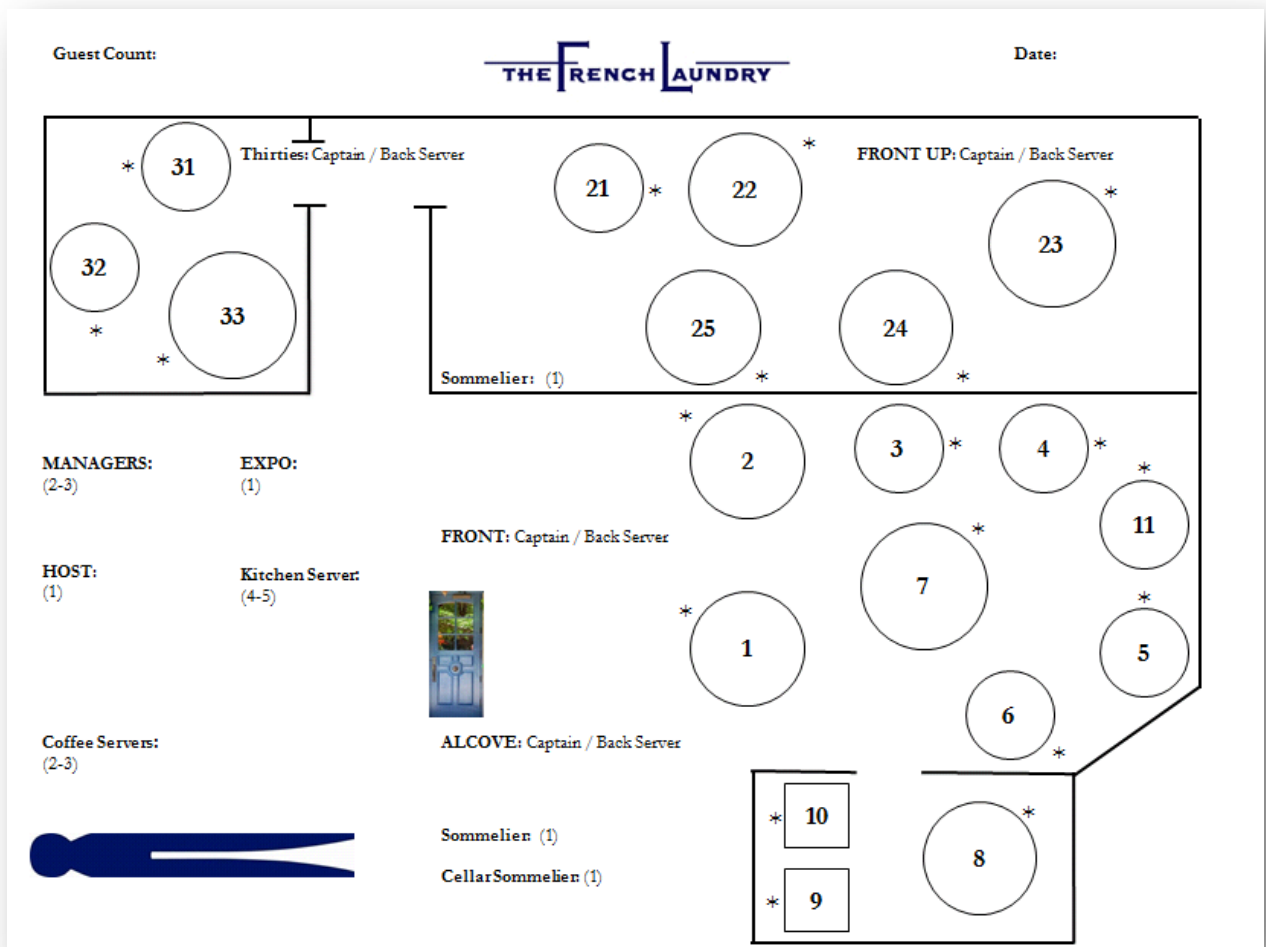
The French Laundry Floor Map

Private Dining Room (PDR) Set Up



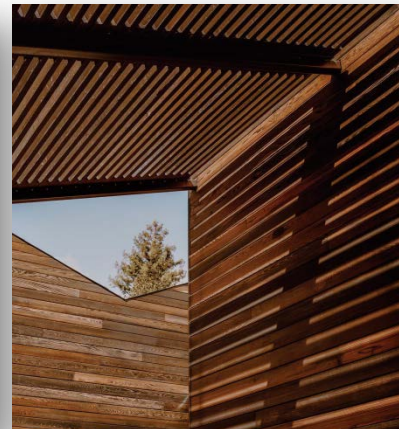
The French Laundry Floor Map

The Thirties Set Up



The French Laundry Construction Project 2014-2017

New Kitchen Renderings | Architecture & Design by Snohetta



Recommended Reading

