

WINCHESTER | DINING ON THE POTOMAC | HOKIES & CAVALIERS

# VIRGINIA

LIVING



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Tidewater Virginia's labyrinthine estuaries make for an abundance of a special sort of dining genre — the marina restaurant. In fall, these restaurants come alive, thanks to warm breezes and a sudden lack of mosquitoes. PAULETTE DININNY reports that Alexandria has one of the more interesting of the genre.



# On the Waterfront

Duane Keller's life went from cold to hot — literally. He grew up on the ice and was a hockey player in Calgary, Canada, until he traded his hockey stick for the heat and pots and pans of restaurant kitchens. Today he's executive chef at Alexandria's Potowmack Landing Restaurant, where he put the landmark eatery on the culinary scoreboard with his creativity and attention to quality.

"Preparing food is not difficult. The simpler the better," Keller says. It's a statement that belies his talent, however. He shook up the staid seafood and fish restaurant, increased revenues and made it a destination with his inventive techniques and modern twists. For instance, the "killer" Smoked Salmon Cheesecake that he developed over years remains a hit. "Some people don't under-



stand what it is when they hear the name, but it's a savory appetizer that becomes a favorite wherever I put it on the menu."

Believing that food should speak for itself, he tweaks dishes and produces delicious results such as his Tempura Fried Oysters or the appetizer Captain Daingerfield's Barnacle shrimp, a Dijon-marinated jumbo Gulf shrimp wrapped in bacon with a chipotle BBQ sauce.

A fan of the region's offerings, Keller researches the history of the Potomac, local Indian tribes and ingredients. One result is Iroquois Salad, which combines field greens, blackberries, apples and blue cheese with sun-dried tomato basil vinaigrette. His menus reflect the four seasons with different styles of food throughout the year. Chesapeake Bay Bluefish might be used in a spread with grilled pita and lemon wedges. From May to October,

**Above left, a family visiting from Michigan plays on the lawn in front of the marina with a sailing class behind them. Above, the tomato stack with beef steak tomato, fresh mozzarella, basil, sun-dried tomato pesto and Bermuda onion. Left, indoor and outdoor seating on the Potomac.**



Left, pastrami-cured salmon salad. Above, Duane Keller.

Maryland-style hard shell crabs are served piping hot on the deck overlooking the Potomac River.

To tempt land lovers, Keller might offer veal liver and Vidalia onions served with garlic mashed potatoes, crisp bacon and wild mushroom demi-glaze or Australian lamb chops over wild mushroom risotto with Merlot, fresh thyme and roasted garlic.

Before moving to Potowmack Landing, the award-winning chef was at Blue Point Grille in Alexandria and at Ashby Inn in Paris, Virginia. Keller's resume includes fine hotels and restaurants along the East Coast and in Canada. His inspirations were the late Julia Child and television's "Gallop Gourmet" Graham Kerr. He was honored by being chosen to participate in Child's 90<sup>th</sup> birthday celebration.

Duane Keller comes by his interest in food honestly. While he was born in Saskatchewan, Canada, he grew up in Hershey, Pennsylvania, where his parents entertained often. His mother Jan was a fashion model, and his father Ralph was a professional hockey player who played for Vancouver, New York and Baltimore. Their home often overflowed with guests.

"My parents are both good cooks. Our kitchen was the center of entertaining, and I helped." When he was 9 or 10 years old, Keller came up with a recipe called "Popeye Eggs." He cut a hole out of the middle of a

for a variation on an egg-over-easy.

A graduate of Pennsylvania State University's Hotel and Restaurant School, he studied under many old-school chefs who had trained in Europe. His hockey background has stood him in good stead. He often rides his bike on the trail that runs past the restaurant. "Exercise is so important in this business. You need to stay in shape. You have to use everything you've got to succeed," he says.

## Potomac Views & Cruises | ON THE VIRGINIA AND D.C. WATERFRONT

Potowmack Landing is the only D.C. waterfront restaurant with a phonetic Indian spelling of the river, it is by no means the only waterfront restaurant in D.C. Although many cities' waterfront dining is almost always for the view, in sophisticated D.C., some diners can enjoy the view and something more than surf 'n' turf. In addition, dining on the Potomac can also (and obviously) be accomplished by dinner boat. Check out [OdysseyCruises.com](http://OdysseyCruises.com), [SpiritCityCruises.com/WashDC/bridge.html](http://SpiritCityCruises.com/WashDC/bridge.html) and [DandyDinnerBoat.com](http://DandyDinnerBoat.com).

### Alexandria

**CHADWICKS:** An Old Town casual favorite. A little back from the river. Continental, burgers. 203 The Strand, (703) 836-4442.

**CHART HOUSE:** Part of the famed seafood chain. Restaurant is directly on the water in Old Town at the end of the dock. There is a food court adjacent. One Cameron St., (703) 684-5080.

**MY THAI:** Sophisticated, tranquil with great upstairs river view. New to the Old Town restaurant scene. 6 King Street, (703) 548-0600.

### D.C. Waterfront

**CAFÉ MOZU:** In the Mandarin Oriental Hotel, Asian. Sophisticated, attractive blend of Oriental elements with great views. 1300 Maryland Ave., S.W., (202) 787-6868.

**CANTINA MARINA AT GANGPLANK MARINA:** Casual with tip of the toque to Louisiana, with po' boys with oysters, fried catfish tortillas. Overlooks boats and a view of Washington Monument. 600 W. L St., S.W., (202) 554-9206.

seafood platters, fried seafood. Nightlife too. 800 Water St., (202) 484-6300.

**NICK'S RIVERSIDE GRILLE:** Steaks, pasta and the freshest seafood on the promenade at Georgetown's Washington Harbor. 3000 K St., N.W., (202) 342-3535.

**PHILLIPS FLAGSHIP:** Beginning as an Ocean City, Maryland institution that grew from a crab shack. Patio seating, all you can eat seafood buffet and traditional mid-Atlantic seafood. 500 Water St., S.W., (202) 488-8515.

**PIER 7:** At the Channel Inn Hotel, seafood with view of Water Channel. 650 Water St., S.W. (202) 554-2500.

### Georgetown

**SEQUOIA:** Tiered outside decks and tall windows inside form a modern American, pasta, seafood. 3000 K St., N.W., (202) 944-4200.

**TONY & JOE'S:** Popular with young Washingtonians, tourist-friendly. Riverside location in the midst of lots of activity. 3000 K St., N.W., (202) 944-4545.