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FOOD

Central to the Mission

Visit **Central Michel Richard** and you might notice a few new, peculiarly spelled dishes that lean toward fine dining—like “lobster begula” featuring lobster risotto that’s puckishly served in a caviar tin surrounded by clear pebbles impersonating ice. Or, onion “carbobara” that replaces traditional pasta with slippery ringlets of onions accompanied by shiitake, bacon, and egg yolk.

They’re reincarnated dishes from **Citronelle**—the shuttered Georgetown fine dining goliath where Washingtonians and the world first fell in love with Chef **Michel Richard’s** ever-playful cooking that married French cuisine and that of the U.S., where he worked for the majority of his career. Bringing back these time-capsuled plates is one way that Richard’s more casual bistro will keep his memory alive.

Richard was 68 when he died Aug. 13 after suffering a stroke. “It’s been a tough month and a half adjusting to not having him with us in the flesh,” Richard’s longtime general counsel and Central managing partner **Chipp Sandground** says ahead of this Sunday’s “Joie de Vivre” memorial service for his friend at the Embassy of France. Though Richard’s health “was never the greatest,” Sandground says, they expected him to be around for many more years.

“We’re very sad at his loss but grateful that he has a restaurant that bears his name—we’ll continue to operate it in his tradition,” he says.

Richard’s ebullient, Santa Claus-esque aura commanded loyalty—maybe even unconditional love—so there are more than a handful of people who clung to him throughout their careers. Not just Sandground but also Central wine director **Brian Zipin** and Central chef, general manager, and partner **David Deshaies**. That these close ties exist means Richard’s food will live on.



Photo of Michel Richard by Darrow Montgomery

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