

# The Washington Post

Food

## Central review: A protege keeps his master's magic alive



Chef-partner David Deshaies will open his own restaurant soon, but continue to consult at Central. (Deb Lindsey /For The Washington Post)



The Thai quinoa salad is finished with a flourish at the table, shaken like a cocktail before being plated. (Deb Lindsey /For The Washington Post)

### Central Michel Richard: 3 stars, Excellent

Central Michel Richard is a downtown restaurant that looks much like it did when it opened almost a decade ago (think drum lights and warm wood) and serves some of the same dishes, including a tuna burger and sky-scraping Napoleon.

Nostalgia recently drew me back. The restaurant's guiding light, the legendary chef Michel Richard, who first made a splash at the late Citronelle in Georgetown, died in August at 68. Was the French native's sole surviving business still good? With the debut of a fall menu in October, I had fresh reason to return to the American bistro with a French sensibility, under the command of David Deshaies for the past three years.

My hopes were high. The boyish executive chef spent 15 years cooking with his mentor, at both establishments. In addition to kitchen duty, Deshaies, 38, is also general manager and a partner at Central (say sen-TRAL).

The chef had me at the Thai quinoa salad. Even if you're not sold on the mild ancient grain, hear me out. Deshaies packs a little show in the animated first course, layering a glass jar with fluffy steamed quinoa, peppery arugula, julienned carrots slick with sesame oil and cubed pickled daikon. To this, a waiter adds a drizzle of coconut-peanut dressing, closes the lid and shakes the contents as if he were a bartender. Moistened, the ingredients are strewn on a plate to form a tantalizing tropical hedge.



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