

SINGLE THREAD FARM-RESTAURANT-INN

AN EXQUISITE 3-STAR MICHELIN RESTAURANT

| BY TRACY ELLEN BEARD

Chef/Owner Kyle Connaughton and his wife Katina take wine-country cuisine to the next level. Kyle and Katina were high school sweethearts in Los Angeles, and later they spent years living in Japan. They have incorporated many Japanese touches into SingleThread, including artisanal products, dishes, and food. The cuisine at SingleThread is farm-driven and seasonally inspired.

Chef Kyle and Katina opened the restaurant in December 2016. By 2017 SingleThread was already renowned in the culinary industry and received four stars from the San Francisco Chronicle and a James Beard Foundation Restaurant Design Award. SingleThread is the first and only restaurant in Sonoma County to receive three Michelin stars and was named #37 at the World's 50 Best Restaurant Awards in October 2021.

CHEF KYLE'S STORY

As a young boy, around eight or nine, Chef Kyle fell in love with Japanese cuisine. His father worked in Japan frequently, and the family often traveled there to visit. His parents hosted several Japanese exchange students during his youth, and he couldn't help but fall in love with the cuisine and the culture.

Chef Kyle began his culinary career in high school where he worked as an apprentice at one of the oldest Japanese restaurants in Southern California. He attended the Southern California School of Culinary Arts after this experience to obtain an education in classical and modern cuisine. He later expanded his knowledge by working in renowned kitchens in Los Angeles, including Spago Beverly Hills, Lucques, AOC, and the Dining Room at the Ritz Carlton Huntington Hotel.

To pursue his love of Japanese cuisine, Chef Kyle attended the California Sushi Academy and Sushi Chef Institute which led him to internships in several Japanese kitchens in Los Angeles and Western Japan. After stints cooking in other illustrious restaurants and serving

as a consulting culinary educator at the Culinary Institute of America, he and Katina began their adventure together at SingleThread.

KATINA AND THE FARM

Katina is responsible for the high-quality fruits, vegetables, and flowers at SingleThread Farms. She oversees the farm, a 24-acre garden, the beehives, and the chickens. The restaurant uses approximately one-third of the farm production.

Katina grows 22 varieties of tomatoes. Her attention to detail and ability to distinguish the slight nuances between the varieties is phenomenal. Chef Kyle uses these varieties in many of his dishes in the summer when they are at their peak.

The Michelin Guide recognized the efforts of Katina and her team, and SingleThread was honored with a Green Star Award in October 2020. The Green Star Award is given to recognize outstanding individuals or organizations that have made remarkable achievements in preventing, preparing for, and responding to environmental emergencies. The 2020 was the first time Michelin awarded restaurants in the United States for their efforts in sustainability.

AN INCREDIBLE DINING EXPERIENCE

I recently dined at SingleThread with Ken, a long-time family friend. My expectations were high, which can be risky, yet they were exceeded on every level. SingleThread boasts three different 10-course menu options: vegetarian, pescatarian, and omnivore. Wine pairings are available with each option, and I highly recommend including these pairings as part of your dining experience.

Ken and I began the evening with a glass of bubbles in the rooftop garden. Spending time in the garden—equipped with a firepit, well-designed heat lamps, well-appointed couches and chairs, and stylish tables—is the

perfect start to dinner at SingleThread.

Inn guests have the most access to this one-of-a-kind rooftop space. They can have breakfast on the rooftop instead of in their rooms and enjoy the area at their leisure. Diners at the restaurant are welcome to reserve time on the roof for up to 30 minutes before their scheduled dinner reservation.

The rooftop garden boasts herbs, fruit trees, flowers, and a greenhouse, and each summer the greenhouse is used to dry seaweed that Chef Kyle uses in the restaurant. Katina assisted in designing the rooftop garden.

After sipping on a decadent glass of bubbles on the rooftop, we took the elevator back to the main floor to watch the culinary team work their magic in the kitchen. Just inside the restaurant entrance, there is a viewing window where guests can watch the staff plate the chef's exquisite dishes.

Chef Kyle takes Japanese cuisine to new heights. The wine pairings were sublime, and the dining experience was a compilation of mouthwatering flavors, delectable textures, and artful presentations.

PIECES OF EDIBLE ART FROM THE TABLE DISPLAY

We arrived at our table to discover a stunning centerpiece composed of greenery, flowers, and single-bite dishes. After being seated, our sommelier brought out the first pour for the tasting menu, a glass of 2012 Dom Pérignon Champagne. Ken and I made a toast and then sat back to sip the decadent bubbles and ponder the trajectory of our upcoming extraordinary culinary journey.

Our dinner began with offerings from the centerpiece. The sweet water oyster topped with Zee Boy Green tomato ice was light, refreshing, and tasted of the sea. Next was a bowl of cucumber gazpacho thickened with almonds and a pastry shell filled with duck liver



SingleThread Exterior
photo courtesy of
Garrett Rowland



duck liver parfait in a pastry shell with radish and an Albion strawberry from the garden. Photo by Tracy Ellen Beard



Tracy Ellen Beard.

parfait, radish, and an Albion strawberry from the garden. This strawberry is celebrated at SingleThread as it was the first variety grown on the farm.

The yellow pattypan squash, designed as finger food, was filled with Japanese A5 wagyu tartare, and the skewered wagyu top sirloin with Japanese eggplant was another tasty treat. These were my favorite small-bite dishes from the centerpiece; each was exciting and different.

THE TEN+ COURSE DINNER

After we finished the dozen or so hot and cold single bites from the table display, we began the ten-course dinner. Although each course was delicious and perfectly paired with wine or sake, find my favorites below.

One of our first delicious wines was a 2020 Rootdown, Riesling, R2, from Cole Ranch, Mendocino. The winemaker began crafting wine at the age of 19. This riesling was a nod to an Austrian/Alsatian-style dry riesling, and it paired deliciously with the Usuzukuri Madai, a light dish of zucchini, olive oil, and squash blossom. Another exceptional dish, the Nodoguro, followed it.

The Nodoguro comprised a black throat seaperch known as “Rosy Seabass” or “Akamutsu.” This fish is highly sought after and caught along the coast of the Sea of Japan. The fish was served with three preparations of corn: a corn mochi cake, corn dashi velouté (potage), and torched corn. Spinach, basil, and Jimmy Nardello peppers, a sweet, thin-skinned Italian frying pepper, accompanied the seabass, and a small sprig of flowering sea asparagus ornamented the dish.

The next wine was a lovely Arnaud Lambert 2018 Clos de la Ru, Brézé, Saumur from the Loire Valley, France. This wine was light and bright with the perfect amount of acidity.

I loved the Sungold Tomato dish made with Dry Creek peaches, yuba, and thyme. The sorbet of sungold tomato sat on top of a peach gel and cucamelons, little balls that look like baby watermelons, and crème fraîche filled the bottom of the glass. Sweet and tender tiny tomatoes surrounded the dish. The sorbet was spectacular, the peach gel added sweetness, and the crème fraîche added a creamy texture. A warm sake, Ninki, Uka

Black Label, Junmai Daiginjo, from Fukushima, Japan, was paired with this delightful cold dish.

Moving into some of the heartier fares, the Duclair Duck course with mulberry, walnuts, and smoked beets was decadent. The 2015 small vines, Pinot Noir, TBH from the Sonoma Coast, paired deliciously with the medium rare duck. This wine, made in the Burgundian style, was made with grapes grown in small clusters that provided exceptional flavor.

The Koshihikari Rice Shime consisted of shredded short rib, sourdough Negi cream, and green peppercorns. On the side was a rice cracker with pickled eggplant. Another favorite course was the Sonoma Plums. A black sesame tulle accompanied the plum sorbet and fresh plums.

To complete this luxurious dining experience, Ken and I savored an assortment of single-bite sweets. The sommelier chose a 2010 Chateau d Yquem Sauternes to pair with the sweet treats. The dessert selection included: mini brûléed fig tarts, a white chocolate egg with blackberry and yuzu juice, a Kasu (Japanese sake used to give dishes a lightly sweet yet savory flavor) custard with mixed berries, and a monaka (Japanese cookie) with apricot and cinnamon.

THE INN AT SINGLETHREAD

The SingleThread Inn boasts five rooms on the property. Guests at the Inn enjoy stunning furnishings by AvroKo and numerous other abundant amenities, including fresh flowers and an elaborate breakfast in their rooms or at the rooftop garden.

A MAGICAL EVENING AT SINGLETHREAD

The entire staff at SingleThread was professional and warm, and the restaurant was beautiful and serene with incredible energy emanating from the open kitchen. The rooftop experience was Zen, and the food was not only delectable and distinctive but also each course was a masterpiece of culinary art. If you are looking for somewhere special to dine, SingleThread is the place to go. ♦



Kyle and Katina. Photo courtesy of Eva Kolenko



Nodoguro with mochi, basil, and corn dashi velouté. Photo by Tracy Ellen Beard