

KEVIN RATHBUN

Rathbun's

Chef Kevin Rathbun developed a passion for cooking at a young age and entered the restaurant scene working as an apprentice at age 14. From there he worked his way up, spending nearly 30 years watching and learning before opening Rathbun's, his own restaurant in Atlanta in 2004.

Please provide us with a few thoughts on your time at Commander's Palace and specifically with Ella Brennan.

Commander's Palace was a stepping stone early in my life. At 23, still very impressionable and hungry for knowledge, Commander's gave me an opportunity. There were many lessons I learned, but, most of all, memories of all the characters who worked and ran Commander's. Some of the names escape me but others I will never forget: Jamie Shannon, my co-sous chef, RIP, Mr. Lou, Ms Jill, Mr. Leroy, Mr. Dick, Ms. Dottie, Emeril and most of all Ella. These were people who helped shape how I live and breathe the restaurant business today.

Other takeaways include line-ups with the chefs and front-of-house services every day to talk the day through. One of my fondest memories of Ella was her ability to command a room when she walked in, her attention to details, and her knowledge of the individuals that worked for her. Her confidence and love of the business took the room over when she spoke.

What years did you work at Commander's and in what positions? I worked for the Brennan Family for 4 years in total, 1984-1988. I spent 3 years in Houston as a sous chef and 1 year at Commander's as a sous chef.

What was the most important thing or lesson you learned at Commander's or from Ella Brennan? One of the biggest lessons I learned from Ella was her ability to treat guests like they were in her personal home, which will stick with me and my business forever. The other is the loyalty to the people that work and have worked for her. She gives people plenty of chances to succeed and helps these people in time of need like no other. The longevity of employees in this company and the respect for tenure was just another take away.

*CHEF KEVIN RATHBUN, Rathbun's
Commander's Palace 1987-1988*

What do you think will be Ella Brennan's legacy on the New Orleans culinary scene? Ella's legacy in New Orleans— well let's see, where do we start? Fine dining; table-side service; one of the first kitchen tables ever; many chefs who went on from there to become something; tradition; family; love of the guest; jazz brunch; James Beard; service, service, service; and most of all, confidence will be part of her legacy. Ella has confidence, exudes confidence and generously passes it on to the people who work for her.

What is or was your favorite dish at Commander's Palace that you either helped create or you just love to eat? Quail stuffed with oyster dressing was one of my favorites, along with oyster-artichoke soup. Can't go wrong with these.



Chef Kevin Rathbun of Rathbun's

LAMB SCALLOPPINI WITH WHITE BALSAMIC BUTTER, PANCETTA & AGED GOAT CHEESE

INGREDIENTS

Lamb Scalloppini

12 each - 1 ½ oz medallions of lamb
top round (*pounded thin*)
½ cup all purpose flour
2 tsp salt
½ tsp ground black pepper
2 oz olive oil
½ lb pancetta (*small diced*)
rendered crisp

3 oz aged goat cheese
(*small diced*)

1 tsp mint chiffonade

White Balsamic Vinegar

¼ cup white balsamic vinegar
6-8 shallots, thinly sliced
½ cup butter

INSTRUCTIONS

In a small saucepan, over medium heat, simmer the vinegar and the shallots. Simmer until reduced to *au sec* (almost dry), about 5 minutes. Cut the stick of butter into 6-8 pieces and add to the balsamic reduction one piece at a time. Whisk until all butter is incorporated and sauce is smooth again. Season with salt and pepper if needed. Proceed with rest of recipe instructions.

Pound lamb thin and reserve.

Mix flour, salt and pepper together and dust lamb.

Place in heated olive oil and slowly sauté on both sides for 1 minute.

Place on plate, with 1 oz balsamic butter, garnish with crisp pancetta, aged goat cheese and mint.