

NOW IN DC

HOME PLATE

HUNGRY MIND

By Lauren Staehle

Virginia-born, New York-trained and Greek by blood, **George Pagonis** has worked his way from line cook in his family's diner to Culinary Institute of America grad and *Top Chef* contestant. After a stint in New York, Pagonis returned to his roots, first at José Andrés' Zaytinya, and then Kapnos, a collaboration with Mike Isabella. Three Kapnos locations later, Pagonis is thriving, taking on his newest role in April as culinary chair at No Kid Hungry's **Taste of the Nation**. April 19, \$100, Nationals Park, 1500 S. Capitol St. SE, nokidhungry.org/dc

How has DC's restaurant scene changed since you first started here? There are more chef-driven restaurants. In the past, it was kind of steakhouse-forward, corporate chain-forward, and now you have a lot of talented chefs who, a lot like me, went off and trained in the big markets like New York, then worked their way back home. **You've worked with some big names—does that create more pressure for you as a chef?** [Andrés, Isabella and Charlie Palmer] have shown me how to operate a restaurant at high levels, and they've shown me techniques. But I put pressure on myself to produce a great product, and working for great chefs, you see

what's right and what's wrong. With Kapnos, so many spots are opening that the only way we're going to survive and stay on top of the game is to hold ourselves to a high standard. **How did you become involved with No Kid Hungry?** No Kid Hungry is a big organization that a lot of chefs are involved in because it's something we do every day—we cook. Working with Andrés and Isabella, we've always participated in these events with our peers. Every time they ask me to do an event for them or donate something, I always say yes. This year, they asked me to be their culinary chair, and I absolutely said yes.



JUST SAY GO

WEEKEND REVIVAL The Ritz-Carlton Spa, Georgetown unveiled a brand-new look earlier this year with a \$1 million renovation, giving the popular day spa even more elements of luxury. The space now has two couples' rooms (the most in any DC spa) and three treatment rooms. Guests also will find a revamped steam room, sauna, relaxation room and fitness center. The hotel worked with natural skincare company ESPA to create an exclusive product line for treatments and retail. And for those who don't want the spa experience to end? The reno also included 13 guest rooms on the spa level aimed at helping patrons address their health and wellness needs throughout their entire stay. *50-minute massages from \$155, 3100 South St. NW, 202.912.4175, ritzcarlton.com/georgetown —Katie Bianco*