A REAL GEM

KWAME ONWUACHI AIMS TO TURN **THE SHAW BIJOU** INTO A JEWEL OF THE DC FINE DINING SCENE. **BY OUSSAMA ZAHR**

Family affair: Bronx native Kwame Onwuachi—whose grandfather was a professor at Howard University, a stone's throw from The Shaw Bijou—named the restaurant after his mother, Jewel ("bijou" in French).

Kwame Onwuachi, 26, waged such a charm offensive on the latest season of *Top Chef*—what with his preternatural poise and globally-inspired, modern American cuisine—that his sixth-place finish hurt his prospects not one bit. Case in point: The early front-runner is about to open The Shaw Bijou, an ambitious, 28-seat fine-dining concept that boasts a 17-course tasting menu and absolutely *no* white tablecloths.

What's the philosophy behind The Shaw Bijou's menu? "When a dish has a story, it usually has a soul, and it tastes better. The servers can get behind it, the cooks can get behind it. It's an all-around better dish." **How about the vibe?** "We're inviting you into our home. It's going to be very refined, clean, but [also] very warm and homey." **What was the hardest thing about *Top Chef*?** "Giving them my cell phone." **If I recall, you were a bit star struck by Chrissy Teigen's guest spot.** "That's editing!" [Laughs] **You sound a *little* defensive.** "No, no. She's a beautiful woman. What human, male or female, doesn't appreciate beauty?" **How does it feel to join the DC food scene?** "I'm excited to be a part of [it]—reshaping the way fine dining is perceived, making it more approachable." **It's not just about white tablecloths anymore.** "We have *no* white tablecloths. Tablecloths are there to hide ugly tables usually. We're showing off our craftsmanship."

1544 Ninth St. NW; theshawbijou.com ■

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