

For Immediate Release
Contact: Heather Freeman (800) 987-9806
Heather@HeatherFreeman.com

**A New Culinary Team and Wine Program Director Announced for
Capitol Hill's Neighborhood Favorite, Sonoma Restaurant & Wine Bar**

Washington, DC, (April 8, 2009)--Managing Partner Eli Hengst is pleased to announce the creative culinary team for Sonoma Restaurant & Wine Bar. The new talent, **Chef de Cuisine Nicholas Sharpe** and **Wine Program Director Brian Cook**, are focused on developing a new menu and wine list for spring 2009. The new team will highlight the Italian influences on Sonoma's seasonal Mid-Atlantic menu, and take advantage of the bountiful spring supply of ingredients from local sources.

A graduate of Johnson and Wales University, Nicholas Sharp moved to the nation's capital in May 2006 to work at notable restaurant Vidalia. The following year he joined Chef Fabio Trabocchi at Maestro, later moving to New York City to work under him at the highly praised Fiamma Restaurant. Then in June 2008, Sharpe returned to DC and has most recently spent time working as the sous chef at Mio Restaurant.

"What excited me about Nicholas wasn't just his impressive background working with Chef Trabocchi at Fiamma and Maestro, but his modesty and eagerness to bring his expertise in Italian cuisine and his knowledge of seasonal ingredients to a neighborhood restaurant," states Eli Hengst. "I think Nicholas is going to thrive in a setting where he is free from some of the formal constraints of fine dining, and allowed to focus on the kind of ingredient-driven straightforward cooking that has been a hallmark of Sonoma from day one."

Barton Seaver, who was recently named Executive Chef of Blue Ridge opening in late April 2009, will help guide the culinary team at Sonoma in the early stages of developing the new spring menu. Seaver will serve as a sounding board for the chefs as they implement the ongoing menu changes that are the hallmark of Sonoma's seasonal mission. "Nicholas was a real culinary find, and I'm looking forward to leading what I consider an incredible team of talent at Sonoma and Blue Ridge," states Chef Seaver. "Nicholas will be running the show day-to-day at Sonoma,

but when it comes to developing and tasting new items and ensuring they adhere to our mission, it will be a team effort. “

The chance for Nicholas to collaborate with Barton Seaver is another great opportunity for him and for us, to keep Sonoma constantly improving," notes Hengst. By late spring, guests dining at Sonoma can anticipate a menu that reflects Chef Sharpe's fresh approach to locally sourced, Italian inspired cuisine comprised of four basic groups: artisanal local cheeses, antipasti, and house-made charcuterie; handmade pasta and pizzas; wood-grilled meats and seafood, and seasonal produce and salads. New menu highlights include *Mozzarella risotto with braised bitter greens*; *a selection of house-cured seafood such as smoked sturgeon with almond oil and orange zest*; *marinated razor clams with sorrel vinaigrette*, and *local pork braised with white wine, garlic and ginger*. Typically prices for antipasto and pizza range from \$5 to \$22, firsts from \$6-\$14, and seconds range from \$12 to \$29.

On Sonoma's wine front, Brian Cook is now overseeing the wine portfolio for the restaurant and wine bar as the Wine Program Director. He is presently updating the wine list to include over 100 bottles and 40 wines by the glass in a certified Winekeeper system. His new list is designed to complement the new seasonal menu with Italian, West Coast and Cal-Italian varietals.

Examples include Maretima Verdicchio, Castelli di Jesi (Marches, Italy) for \$7/glass; Argiolas "Costamolino" Vermentino, Sardinia (Italy) \$10/glass; JK Cabernet Sauvignon, Sierra Foothills, CA, \$7/glass; Villa Puccini "Gold" (Sangiovese & Cabernet Sauvignon) Toscana, \$12/glass; Soter "North Valley" Pinot Noir, Willamette Valley for \$20/glass and Benovia Pinot Noir, Sonoma Coast, CA, \$19/glass.

Sonoma, owned by Eli Hengst and Jared Rager opened in 2005, and is an upscale casual neighborhood restaurant dedicated to Italian inspired seasonal, sustainable Mid-Atlantic cuisine. The 6,500 square foot space encompasses two levels. The first floor is a bustling, upscale casual bistro reminiscent of neighborhood *enotecas* found throughout Italy. Outlined in restored brick and decorated in warm woods and soft gray tones, Sonoma features a long bar, a cozy outdoor patio, and communal tables reserved for neighborhood walk-ins. The second floor Avenue Lounge is an airy, elegant, modern space, and is perfect for large cocktail parties, fundraisers, product launches, and personal events up to 150 guests. Sonoma's intimate private dining room,

also on the second floor, is available for seated dinners for up to 40 guests and receptions for up to 60. Sonoma is located on 223 Pennsylvania Avenue, SE. To make reservations call 202.544.8099 and please visit <http://www.sonomadc.com>.

The restaurant's hours of operation are as follows:
Lunch: Monday thru Friday 11:30 AM to 2:30 PM
Dinner: Sunday 5:00 PM to 9 PM
Monday thru Thursday 5:00 PM to 10 PM
Friday and Saturday 5:00 PM to 11 PM
Bar and lounge open at 5 PM daily

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