

# THE ART *of* DINING

by ANGELA DANSBY / photography JOHAN HOOFT

**Culinary** and visual arts collide at Restaurant Jerom in Antwerp, Belgium, the world's diamond capital. Its owner, 28-year-old chef Filip De Pauw, has created a "diamond in the rough" in an exposed brick building with striking modern art on the walls and plates that make it worthy of three Michelin stars.

De Pauw knew at age 10 that he wanted to be a chef. He went to culinary school at just 14 while also working in a restaurant kitchen, and had already made a name for himself in Antwerp before he opened a gourmet food truck there in 2015. (On opening day, 600 people lined up.) De Pauw opened Jerom in 2017, and word of mouth has kept the restaurant busy since.

Jerom's multicourse cuisine is described by De Pauw as modern Belgian with a French twist and sprinkle of molecular gastronomy. Having grown up near the North Sea, he harvests ingredients from it like tiny shrimp, salmon, and cod. "I try to source ingredients from Belgium as much as possible, but I will fly them in from Japan or elsewhere to get the highest quality," De Pauw says.

Whole, quality ingredients and layers of flavor are his signature; each dish typically combines five flavors. "You combine everything for an explosion of taste [and] let nature do its work," De Pauw notes. "I don't overprocess ingredients."

His culinary art is ephemeral as his menu changes every six weeks, featuring seven dishes that can be ordered partly or in full. Each one is carefully designed by textures and flavors. "I think about textures and physics," De Pauw explains. "For example, sour flavors need fat and crunchy texture must be met with something smooth. I consider acidity and balance to make each dish interesting. Every spoonful has to be an experience."

Named after his paternal grandfather, Jerom exudes a personal touch with its intimate setting, open kitchen, and customer-facing chef. Other family members are honored in De Pauw's Bar Jaak, named after his father, and Art Jean, a gallery and meeting space named after his maternal grandfather. It's all in the family, so to speak, and these businesses have enough pizzazz to pass on to future generations. ●



# Restaurant Jerom

IN ANTWERP, WHERE DIAMONDS ARE AS PLENTIFUL AS STARS, 28-YEAR-OLD CHEF FILIP DE PAUW'S RESTAURANT IS LUSTROUS ENOUGH TO EARN THREE OF THEM—MICHELIN STARS THAT IS—FOR HIS MODERN BELGIAN CUISINE.



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