



Jakob White and Fernanda White (MET'09) in the kitchen of their Newton, Mass., restaurant, Comedor.

Chef-Owners Making Their Mark

Couple met at MET before launching Newton restaurant

JAKOB WHITE AND FERNANDA White married in 2013 and threw themselves into realizing their shared dream of opening a restaurant serving small plates, “with an open kitchen and fun funky food.”

In October 2014, they opened Comedor, which specializes in Chilean-American tapas-style food, on Union Street in Newton, Mass. It’s been bustling ever since, winning raves for its imaginative yet unfussy food and its service to the community. (They live down the street, offer cooking classes, and host charity events.)

ONLINE: Watch videos of the chef-owners of Comedor in Newton, Mass., prepare quail and roasted baby brussels sprouts at bu.edu/bostonia.

At Comedor, diners can dig into small plates for omnivores or vegetarians, including pork anticuchos (tenderloin with peach, cipolini, and marmalade), squid tacos, spicy pistachio chicken wings, sopaipilla grilled cheese, pumpkin cakes, and sweet and savory salads. A favorite dessert is tempura fried brownie with dulce de leche, a serendipitous recipe born one day when Fernanda was neck-deep in leftover tempura batter.

While Jakob, a native of rural upstate New York, has had a lifelong infatuation with the kitchen and grew up picking corn at his grandfather’s

small farm, Fernanda, who comes from a family of cooks in Santiago, Chile, was a late bloomer. “I studied politics at Brandeis and it was a great experience; I love history and learning things,” she says. But she found politics unfulfilling, and although she had once rebelled against the Chilean expectation that all women learn to cook, she found herself living off campus and hungry for homemade meals. “So I started calling my mom and asking, how do you make that stew that I really like?” she says. “I’d buy books and watch cooking shows, and by the time I was a senior I was deboning entire birds, and I was like, this makes me really happy.”

After Jakob received a certificate in Metropolitan College’s Program in Culinary Arts and Fernanda earned a master’s in gastronomy at MET, the pair worked at some of greater Boston’s top kitchens, together and apart. Jakob started at the innovative Newton Highlands restaurant 51 Lincoln, quickly going from salad maker to sous chef to chef de cuisine. He and Fernanda had lost touch, but he heard she was looking for a job, recommended her, and they began dating. Jakob left in 2012 to become chef de cuisine at Waban Kitchen, but Fernanda stayed on at 51 Lincoln, becoming chef de cuisine and teaching cooking classes. She was named one of Boston’s top 30 Under 30 in the Boston restaurant scene by Zagat that year. “After a point, we felt that in order to grow, we needed

to check out other places, and decided we wanted to look for a restaurant space of our own,” says Jakob.

Comedor’s colorful, narrow 51-seat space fulfills their vision: it offers what they call “a casual vibe.” The kitchen is bathed in light, with end-to-end windows facing the street. “Every kitchen I ever worked at was a windowless room,” Fernanda says, “and here we see the snow, we see people all day walking around, and our employees tell us how much they love it.” The restaurant’s name (Spanish for “dining room”) reflects their philosophy. “We want people to feel like they’re in their own home when they’re here,” Jakob says.

SUSAN SELIGSON