



## INSIGHT

**Where:** Chef Geoff's Downtown, 1301 Pennsylvania Ave NW, 202-464-4461; [chefgeoff.com](http://chefgeoff.com)

**When:** Monday through Saturday, lunch and dinner; Sunday, brunch and dinner



CLOCKWISE FROM ABOVE LEFT: Award-winning journa-  
Gayle King and Norah O'Donnell enjoy dining at  
Geoff's Downtown; the restaurant serves upscale  
bistro fare, including pear and gorgonzola agnol  
it also features a fully stocked bar.

# Television Magic

**CBS THIS MORNING COANCHORS GAYLE KING AND NORAH O'DONNELL DISH ON THEIR SHOW'S TWO-YEAR ANNIVERSARY AND THEIR HOMETOWN CONNECTION.** BY LESLIE QUANDER WOOLDRIDGE

Gayle King and Norah O'Donnell have great chemistry on television and in person. When we meet at Chef Geoff's Downtown, the two *CBS This Morning* anchors give friendly greetings before laughing about everything from their appreciation of bacon to holiday traditions. But they're not all smiles: the award-winning journalists are bringing serious news back to morning television with their third anchor, Charlie Rose. (At press time, the show's weekly ratings were up 16 percent in total viewers versus the same week of the previous year.) And since both have deep area roots—King graduated from the University of Maryland while O'Donnell met her husband, Geoff Tracey (yes, the notable Chef Geoff himself) at Georgetown University—they share a local connection. We talk over lunch as they ponder the success of their morning show and what it *really* means to have it all.

***CBS This Morning's* two-year anniversary is in January. How has the show evolved?**

**Norah O'Donnell:** We have a great time every morning, and we think that we're delivering something distinct to our viewers. We like to say "the news is back in the morning."

**Gayle King:** Those aren't just words to us. For instance, this morning we were talking about the one-year anniversary of [Hurricane] Sandy... and the competition was doing "Hollywood stars' ex-wives' jaw-dropping demands." So when Norah says to you that the news is back in the morning, it's not just a slogan. It really is a way of thinking.

How much input do you have on what you cover?

**NO:** A lot. Several weeks ago, there were talks that there would be protests in

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Norah O'Donnell discuss how they both started news careers in DC.

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Saudi Arabia. Saudi Arabia is the only country where women are not allowed to drive. So I said, "Let's be prepared to do that story," and [it happened].

**GK:** It's a different sensibility.... And it's not to say you can't have fun. We crack each other up. There is a way to tell stories in a funny and entertaining way that doesn't hurt your credibility.

**You two and Charlie Rose are veteran journalists. Have you learned from each other?**

**NO:** I learn so much every day. I come from the world of politics [as former CBS News chief White House correspondent], where you might only get one question to a politician at a news conference. Charlie asks the question that really probes deeply; Gayle asks the question that *everybody* wants to know.

**GK:** I'm very curious... And some people would say [they] want to be the top dog. I never feel that: I think you're always made better when you're working with people who are as good or, in fact, better than you are.

**NO:** Television executives spend decades trying to find the right mix of people.

**GK:** You can't plan chemistry. It's just one of those things you either have or you don't.

**So, Gayle, this is your first time at Chef Geoff's. What was your favorite dish?**

**GK:** I liked the strawberry, Parmesan, and spinach salad. You wouldn't expect to get that this time of year. But what first caught my eye was the cheddar cheese and bacon croquette. It started with that and went up, and that was already pretty damn good!

**NO:** The best thing was that I said, "Let's pre-order; here's the menu, Gayle." And she goes, "Look at this, the cheddar and [bacon] croquette!" And then she put *three* checkmarks next to it.

**GK:** I wanted to make sure people weren't confused. **And what are you doing for the holidays?**

**GK:** If all goes according to plan, I'll be in Hawaii. My son is in China, but I'm hoping Kirby [my daughter] and I will be in Hawaii.

**Aha. Will it feel strange to have no chance of snow?**

**GK:** We just started it last year. I wanted something warm... When your [kids] are little, you like the snow, but mine are 26 and 27, and they're employed and potty trained—

**NO:** [Laughs] And mine are potty-trained but not employed so... they want Santa to come. We'll do Christmas in Washington. We just hang around in our pajamas for a couple of days.

**GK:** I bet your house looks like winter wonderland.

**NO:** It does. I always try to take the week of Christmas off so I can do the decorating and wrap presents. And I like to bake cookies.

**GK:** People say, "Can women have it all?" I offer exhibit A: Norah O'Donnell. Having it all means different things to different women. When I was growing up, it was a successful career and marriage, great kids. She definitely has that. **Gayle, do you think you have it all?**

**GK:** It's pretty good. But ultimately, I'm single, and everybody wants somebody to share their life with. No pity party for me, because I have a great life and great friends. I get to do a lot of things. But if I met the right person, I would definitely be open to getting married again. And if I don't, that's OK, too.

**NO:** Gayle's a great role model. Look how successful she is. She has *two* jobs: [editor-at-large at] *O, the Oprah Magazine* and, of course, *CBS This Morning*.



ABOVE: Bacon herb-crusted salmon. RIGHT: The bustling restaurant attracts foodies and politicians alike.



**"My job is in New York, but my heart is in Washington."**

—NORAH O'DONNELL

And she really is the best mother; she has the best kids.

**You're both still connected to DC. How does it feel to be here?**

**NO:** It is interesting that we all started our careers in Washington to some degree. I did it at Georgetown and then as a print journalist for *Roll Call*.

**GK:** You did? I was a production assistant at Channel 9 with JC Hayward, Maureen Bunyan, and Gordon Peterson.

**NO:** And [Geoff and I] are back and forth to Washington.

**GK:** It's a beautiful city; I love it here. My daughter lives and works here.

**NO:** This is my hometown, where I went to college, where I met my husband, where I had my three babies at Sibley. My job is in New York, but my heart is in Washington. **CF**